Summary

BOOK 1 COMPLETE.
Summary:
Crime and Mystery. Master of Death Story.
Hermione stole Harry from Ginny, trapping him in a loveless marriage for a year. When the fruit of her deceit died, she set him free. Ten years later, an epidemic that affects young British witches and wizards calls her back home. She returns and discovers that legally, she is still the Lady Potter. But the question is why?
Slow-burn romance.

BOOK 2 ONGOING.
Summary:
After learning about what it takes to be the Master of Death from Osiris and Merlin, Harry Potter accepts the responsibility to make things better for himself and his lady. Blessed with one more chance, he goes back in time to fix things. Will things be better the second time around?
Credits to Tiffany for the cover pic.
Prologue

Chapter Notes

Credits to Tiffany for my Cover Image.

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

PROLOGUE
ICW Proclaims Hermione Granger as Chief of Medical Research Department

By: Phyllis Robertson

Hermione Jean Granger, briefly known as the Lady Potter (1998 – 1999), (at 31 years old) has recently been promoted as the Chief of the International Confederation of Wizards Medical Research Department. She is the youngest ever witch or wizard to have been bestowed this honor ever since the founding of the organization.

Ms. Granger is famous for the moniker of Brightest Witch of the Age and for her efforts in the 2nd Wizarding War which ended with the death of Voldemort at her former husband’s hand, Lord Harry James Potter.

After leaving Britain and ending her short marriage to Lord Potter, Ms. Granger completed healer training with the highest records ever achieved by any student in the last 300 years, from the Instituto de Medicina Magica, the world's most prestigious school of magical healing. She stayed in the city of Salamanca working in the research facility of her alma mater for one year and six months. There, she aided in developing cures for Lycanthropy and mitigating the effects of the cruciatus curse before the ICW invited her to join its medical research team. She started as a junior researcher and quickly climbed the ranks ever since. When the former chief retired two weeks ago, Ms. Granger was his only choice for successor.

While we can continue to list all the achievements under Ms. Granger's belt, we at The Times are certain that wizards throughout the world are more curious about her life and the struggles she faced. So, we have been very privileged to be allowed to portkey to Switzerland and secure a one-hour interview with the very busy chief that has helped solve many magical illnesses and thereby made the lives of several witches and wizards better all around the world.

PR: Hello, Chief! First of all, we at The Times give our heartfelt congratulations on your well-deserved promotion. Also, thank you for having us and granting us this interview.

HG: Of course, Phyllis!

PR: I'll get started then. First question, Chief. While the wizarding world is very grateful of all the significant work you have put in medical research, we can't help but wonder why you've been so out of touch after you left Britain. So, could you explain why?

HG: When I left Britain, I just wanted to get away from all the scandal. I then dedicated my life to studying so that I can be the best healer I could be. So, when I learned about the Instituto, I immediately port keyed to Spain. It was the best decision I have ever made. You see, not many people know this, but what makes healer training at the Instituto so extensive is that the one year and six months program is truly very rigorous. The fifty selected students per batch are not allowed to leave the school until they complete training. Furthermore, no one is allowed to contact them to avoid distractions. To this day, I still can't believe I managed to secure the top spot. I owe all that I am now to my teachers at the Instituto de Medicina Magica.

PR: I'm sure the IMM is very proud of the work you have done, Chief. Anyway, second question. And this is a personal one. Why did your sudden marriage to your former husband meet a dramatic
HG: Lord Potter was my best friend ever since I started Hogwarts. We've been through a lot together. He loved me like a sister but he didn't know I was in love with him. I'm sure some of your readers can recall that he was engaged to another woman before our wedding happened out of the blue. The truth is, in a way, I betrayed him. I used all the means possible to steal him away from the woman he loved. Long story short, I seduced him, got pregnant, and due to some obscure law in Wizarding Britain - he was compelled to marry me. Our marriage failed because it started with lies and deceit. I lost my best friend because of that.

PR: You never addressed any of the rumors regarding your marriage, Chief. Why now?

HG: Well, the marriage ended ten years ago. Besides, I reckon it's time to come out in the open. I would not lie about this. Yes, I am not proud of what I've done years ago. But well, they say that people always do crazy things when they're in love.

PR: Wow! I honestly never expected that. The third question, is it true that your marriage ended because your newborn child died?

HG: We got married because of the child. Due to circumstances though, my baby was not strong and healthy. She died in my arms when she was only three months old. I could not do anything to save her. She was my everything! The bright star in my lonely life. When she died, I made a promise to myself that I will set things right. I ended my marriage to Lord Potter and applied to the IMM. He was never happy with our marriage anyway. After that, my baby became my inspiration during the tiresome days and sleepless nights of healer training. I swear that no baby shall ever die under my care again.

PR: I am so sorry to hear that, Chief.

HG: It's alright. I did agree to a no holds barred interview after all.

PR: Follow up question. Have you ever set foot in Britain after you left?

HG: No. I've never been back to Britain after I left many years ago. I stayed in Spain at the IMM before living in Switzerland to work for the ICW.

PR: Fourth question, is it true that you didn't get anything from your failed marriage?

HG: If you mean alimony or any form of financial benefit, then it is true. I drafted the divorce papers. I did not want anything from Lord Potter. His wealth is all his.

PR: Fifth question, have you talked to your ex-husband since the marriage ended?

HG: The last time I talked to Lord Potter is on the day I handed him the divorce papers. I haven't seen or heard from him since then.

PR: Sixth question, do you even talk to anyone from Britain at all? It seemed you just disappeared after you left?

HG: I still communicate to very few friends in Britain. As you know, because of being known as the "Scarlet Woman of Britain" or whatever it was that the Daily Prophet called me, I left Britain with no more than five friends who still supported me. Those five people, I still keep in touch with. If you wanted to know why the rest of Britain could not find me, it's simple really. I warded myself to not receive any personal forms of communication from people of Britain excluding my remaining friends. I only respond to work-related concerns from Britain ever since. I'm not bitter or anything.
I just want peace.

PR: Seventh question, aside from saving many people's lives with your breakthrough in medical research, what else have you been up to? Is there someone special in your life?

HG: It's pretty much all work for me. I travel to new places once a year and then, of course, I frequently visit my parents in Australia, but that's it. I only loved one person unconditionally and well, she died in my arms.

PR: You are a very attractive and successful woman, Chief. Surely you could still find someone else?

HG: Who says I don't go out on dates?

PR: Care to share?

HG: It's just dates, nothing serious. I have to focus on finding cures for the unknown after all.

PR: Maybe you're still in love with Lord Potter? Is there no chance for you two?

HG: Our marriage ended and any relationship between us is surely over. I only wish him the best in life. After all, he deserves to be happy. Aside from that, I still am sorry for trapping him into a loveless marriage with me. I only hope that he is in a much better place than I am now.

PR: Eighth question. I'm sure you are aware of the new epidemic that's rising in magical Britain, chief. If the case worsens, will you be willing to return?

HG: I am a Healer, Mr. Robertson. I go where my patients need me. Right now, all I can share is that my team has been communicating with the healers in Britain and we're giving it all we got in terms of support. If the epidemic worsens, and it needs more attention, then should there be a need for me to be there, I would surely go. I don't care if I'm called the "Scarlet Woman of Britain" or whatever names they came up for me, due to the scandals of my failed marriage. If my expertise is needed, then I would gladly go and fulfill my duty.

PR: Question number nine, what is your message to young people who would want to follow in your footsteps?

HG: All I can say is, study well, do your best, and follow your passion. You can never go wrong if you do the work that you love. Healing is a very fulfilling profession but it needs a lot of hard work. A single piece of information you read somewhere could be the one key thing that can save a person's life. So, learn as much as you can. If your heart is set on serving others and saving lives, then healing will be a very humbling and rewarding journey for you.

PR: Last question, chief. Where do you see yourself in fifty years?

HG: Living in Switzerland or some other relaxing place. Hopefully, by then, I gave justice to my position as Chief of the ICW's Medical Research Department. I can only pray that under my leadership, more breakthroughs in healing will have been discovered and more lives saved. If I can do all that, then my life's purpose is fulfilled.

PR: Thank you for your time, Chief!

HG: Of course, Mr. Robertson.

We at The Times do wish the new chief all the success in her new role! We are very excited to see
A raven-haired gentleman read the cover story of the American-based wizarding magazine that he immediately bought after seeing a curly-haired brunette in healer's robes featured on the front page. As he read through the article, he got angry. *How dare that woman discuss our private affairs in public as if it were nothing?*

"Well, well, well. You have hidden yourself very effectively indeed, Lady Potter! Big mistake that you decided to have this interview and gave out all your evasive techniques. Now I know where to find you…"
"Chief?", the deputy of the ICW Medical Research Department, Abimbola Omenuko entered her office.
"Good morning, Abim. What can I do for you?", Hermione greeted with a smile.

"Chief, remember the epidemic in Britain? It has worsened. There are now fifteen young witches and wizards with the unknown disease. The Supreme Mugwump has asked me and you to attend an emergency meeting. I just got the notice five minutes ago. The meeting is about to start in ten minutes", the forty-three-year-old African man informed her. Abimbola Omenuko was expected to be the new chief of the medical research department but Abim has always made it known that he does not possess the resolve to be a leader. So, he made a promise to be a very supportive deputy to whoever will be elected since he's always seen himself in a supportive role. Hermione is very grateful for Abim's support and experience. The man has always been very kind and willing to share his expertise in diseases from magical creatures and rare potions. While her expertise lies in the Dark Arts, vile curses, hexes, and surgery, Abim's expertise complements her talents; and together, they make an excellent team.

"Accio emergency kit! Lead the way to Mr. Akingbade's office, Abim", she stated as soon as her emergency kit floated into her hands. Together, they sprinted towards the office of the Supreme Mugwump, Babajide Akingbade.

"Good morning, Mr. Akingbade!", Hermione and Abim chorused as they panted upon entering the large office.

"I wish it were a good morning, Granger, Omenuko. Have a seat", the Supreme Mugwump gestured. Since Hermione's eyes were focused on the Supreme Mugwump, she did not notice the two gentlemen sitting around the large oval desk. As she took a seat beside her deputy, she gasped.

"Mr. Akingbade, before we have this meeting, would you mind if I conduct a test on the gentleman beside Lord Potter, please?", her voice was filled with worry.

"Of course, Ms. Granger. But for you to do that, I would have to ask, why?", Mr. Akingbade asked.

"Bulging eyes, red pigments on the face, and excessive dandruff. I have a feeling that Lord Potter's company has been cursed with the Akilallahm", she explained. Seeing the look on her face, Abim immediately grabbed her emergency kit and nodded.

"Sir, what's your name? Have you been hit by a golden curse that shined bright once but after that you felt nothing was wrong? And then after twenty-four hours, you were starting to get itchy and the red pigments appeared?", she ran to the gentleman beside Harry and asked a series of questions.

"How did you know that? Oh! And my name is Karl Richards, I'm one of the aurors working under Head Auror Potter", the man explained.

"When were you cursed?", she demanded as her wand was busy pointing at the man and conducting diagnostic tests.

"Seven days ago. I only took potions for the itchiness but they don't work. I never visited a healer since it was just an itch", Auror Richards shrugged.

"Shit! Where were you hit?", she asked calmly but she hoped for the best. The Akilallahm was a vile deadly curse. The only way to survive it is to have the flesh-eating parasite removed at once. If he was cursed near the stomach, chest, or on the head, it could be too late for this man.

"I got hit on the left leg, ma'am", the man was now scared since her face was contorted with worry.

"Take your pants off and lie on the desk. Now!", she yelled. The man was aghast but hurriedly complied.
"Underwear off too. We're not sure how far along the curse has spread", she gave the blushing man a pointed look. The man blushed but complied. Abim immediately conjured a blanket and placed it over the man's crotch to preserve his modesty.

"Mr. Akingbade, we have to conduct the operation right here and right now. Because if we don't, any moment we waste will prove to be too late. This curse will be fatal for this man. It is a wonder that he is still alive despite having this curse for seven days in his body. Granted that he was hit on the leg and there are no vital organs there, but if the flesh-eating parasites spread to his groin or worse, his stomach, he can die a most painful death", she explained.

"What does this curse do?", Harry Potter finally snapped out of it and asked. She saw him leave his seat as he stood beside the confused Supreme Mugwump.

"It's an ancient Egyptian curse used by a syndicate that's been smuggling goods all over Europe. I read about it years ago and have operated on five ICW special agents who became victims of the akil allahm, most likely from the same syndicate group that cursed your comrade", she explained as she transfigured her clothes into a smock. Abim did the same. Since surgeries were her expertise, Abim would assume the support function.

"Mr. Akingbade do you know your blood type?", she addressed the leader of the ICW.

"I'm a type O, Ms. Granger", the man replied.

"Damn it! Richards is an AB. He will be needing blood as soon as I remove the parasite out. I'm the only AB in the room. Abim, you know what to do. As soon as I take the parasite out, make a cut on my left ankle and via the blood transfusion tube, ingest as much as you can on Richards and then dose him with blood replenishing potions. Is that understood?", she addressed her very ready and capable deputy.

"Yes, chief!"

"Pepper-up potions, please", she told Abim and the man handed her the potion which was taken from her emergency kit. She opened the vial and drank the potion. If she was going to successfully operate on this man, and donate some of her blood to him, then she surely could use an energy boost.

"Cast a mild stupefy on him, Abim. Afterward, open his mouth and have him drink pain-relieving and numbing potions. You've helped me with this sort of operation twice, and you know it's going to hurt the patient. Mr. Akingbade, Lord Potter, this is not a sight you will enjoy. It can be a very gruesome operation. So, I suggest you leave if you can't take the blood", she addressed everyone in a formal tone.

"I am curious to see this for myself, Granger. I've heard of your talent and this is my chance", Mr. Akingbade gave her a reassuring smile and she nodded.

"Richards is my teammate. I will not abandon a comrade", Harry looked into her eyes and she just nodded.

"Abim, now", she focused all her attention on the patient as her deputy stunned the half-naked man. She gently forced the man's mouth to open while her deputy slowly poured two potions that will help for the operation. After closing the man's mouth, she moved towards the man's left leg. She muttered a diagnostic spell and found the area of infection. She exhaled with a sigh of relief when she discovered that the flesh-eating parasite didn't penetrate the man's groin yet.
"I have identified the spot where the parasite has been feeding on. Abim, please conjure restraints on the patient's upper torso and one for his right leg. The parasite is now at ten centimeters and is steadily moving towards the groin area. We have to take it out as soon as we can. Please bring the scalpels out", she ordered. She conjured surgical gloves for her self and Abim followed. When she gave a firm nod, Abim handed her the scalpel after the restraints were in place.

She made an incision on the area of infection and the patient started to writhe in pain. As the cut got deeper, she could now see the fat black worm-like parasite brought about by the dark curse. Since the parasite has been in the body for a week, a lot of blood and flesh has already been consumed. She petrified the parasite and scooped it from the leg it was munching on. She conjured a metal bowl and placed the nasty worm on it. She cast healing spells on the wound to close the incision she made. Abim handed her some murtlap and dittany to help expedite the formation of new skin on the fresh wound.

"I'll diagnose the northern parts of the leg to check if the parasite has not done some damage there. Once it's clear, I'll Avada the parasite since there's no other way to kill it. When that's done, I want you to make an incision on my ankle and start the blood transfusion. We need one bag of blood to save the patient. Is that clear, Abim?", she instructed.

"Clear, Chief!"

Hermione lifted the blanket that covered the patient's modesty and cast some diagnostic spells on the area surrounding his crotch. Seeing that the parasite did not do any damage there yet, she covered the man again. She nodded to her deputy and the man immediately summoned the tube and other paraphernalia for the emergency blood transfusion.

Hermione took a deep breath and focused her magic. She looked at the petrified parasite with a look of disgust before she yelled, "Avada Kedavra!" There was a flash of green light and the parasite died. She vanished the remains of the parasite as well as the conjured bowl.

"Now, Abim!", she took a seat beside the patient's prone body and lifted one of her legs on the desk. Abim moved toward her and made a deep incision on her left ankle. She winced in pain but held it in. She must save this man's life! Abim inserted the tube into the incision and her blood flowed up the tube. The right wrist of the patient was cut and the other end of the tube was inserted. Her blood started to flow into Richards' body.

"Five ML, Ten ML, Twenty ML, Fifty ML", Abim was keeping track of the blood ingested. They needed to transfer 450 milliliters of blood to expedite the patient's recovery.

When the transfusion neared its end, Hermione felt herself start to get dizzy. The last thing she heard was someone screaming her name before she lost all consciousness.

Harry Potter was pacing back and forth outside a private office in the ICW's medical research department. He was outraged, amazed, and in shock of the events that he just saw. He arrived in Switzerland, with Auror Richards, as representatives of the British Ministry of Magic who is requesting for clemency. The healers in Britain recently informed the Minister, Kingsley Shacklebolt, that there were now fifteen young victims of the epidemic that has spread all over Britain. Furthermore, they are at a loss on how to save the children's lives. So, he was asked to appeal to the ICW, and he brought Richards along even if the man was not feeling well. Given that this mission was just meeting the Supreme Mugwump, he just shook his head and accepted the dedicated young auror's participation. He could relate to Richards' enthusiasm for work since he was also like that when he was still starting his career as a junior auror.
When Hermione and her deputy came into the Office of the Supreme Mugwump, he was surprised to see how much she has changed. Sure, she was still bushy-haired but her curly brown locks gracefully fell behind her shoulders. She didn't grow, still at her petite height of five foot four, but the curves of her body were now more pronounced with age. The thing that changed the most, is the way her face now showed confidence and determination. Something that was never there when she was still his young, penitent, and meek wife. She entered the office and didn't even notice him, which was very astounding. He seemed to recall that he was always the center of her world. Hermione Jean Granger always noticed Harry James Potter for as long as he could remember.

Things immediately went downhill as soon as Hermione realized their presence in the room. She had a shocked look on her face which she hurriedly covered and then she started interrogating Richards about her suspicions on the curse. *Merlin! If only I wasn't worried for the sake of my comrade, I would admit that it was such a big turn on to see Hermione take charge of a situation...*

He was amazed at the raw power and brilliance that Hermione displayed during the emergency operation. It was very clear that she really did deserve her position and she commanded the much older healer very effectively. He went pale as he recalled the way she was used to seeing much blood around her. And then he nearly interrupted the operation when she cast the killing curse on that disgusting worm-like creature she removed from Richards' leg. *My god! Who knew seeing someone cast the killing curse could look so hot? Voldemort would have orgasmed in his pants if he saw the way she displayed her raw power and slain the parasite.*

The thing that scared him the most was when she ordered her deputy to perform the blood transfusion to save their patient. As soon as the cut on her ankle was made and the tube started to extract her blood, it scared him that she seemed to not care that she was in pain. She only cared about saving her patient's life as she controlled the pain she was feeling as she focused on her deputy's counting. Before the transfusion ended, she collapsed. He went ape shit crazy as he ran to her, but the deputy stopped him. As soon as the transfusion ended, the African man removed the tube from Richards and healed the wrist wound. He then did the same to Hermione's ankle. While still unconscious, the male healer gently opened Hermione's mouth and gave her blood replenishing potions. Afterward, he finally got the order that he should take Hermione to her private office in the medical research department.

The deputy informed them that he would take Richards to a private room so the patient could rest. Harry carefully cradled Hermione in his arms and carried her to her private office. The Supreme Mugwump showed him the way to her office which turned out to be at the opposite end of the ICW Headquarters. He remembered the brief conversation he had with the leader of the ICW as they walked the halls...

"Lord Potter, how soon do your healers need the support from the Medical Research Department?", Mr. Akingbade asked.

"We need help as soon as possible, sir. Fifteen victims have been brought to the high-security wing of St. Mungo's and there is still no lead on how to cure those poor children", he answered.

"I'll ask Ms. Granger and Mr. Omenuko to form a team that could be dispatched to Britain in around forty-eight hours. Seeing them work together today is amazing! Ms. Granger deserves her new position", the man glanced at the woman he was cradling in his arms with a big smile.

"Indeed, sir! I have never seen her act like that and that's saying something, considering the problems we encountered together", he looked at the unconscious woman he was carrying and could not believe that she was able to pull through that stunt awhile ago.
"Ah, yes! I heard rumors that she was the ace in your sleeve behind the whole Voldemort operation", the older man chuckled.

"That is true, sir. I could not have done it without her. The most I did was to end Voldemort. Everything else, the planning, the research, and looking for clues, it was all her", he had a fond smile on his face.

"Well if that is the case, then I wonder how your marriage could have ended Lord Potter? Forgive me for saying so", the man shrugged.

"It seems so hazy now, sir. We were young. She made mistakes. I made my own. Our child died and she handed me the divorce papers", he admitted.

"So, what was written in that article for The Wizard Times is all true then? She, for the lack of a better word, tricked you into marrying her?", the man was shocked.

"In a way, what she said was all true, sir. However, she made it look like I was the victim and she was the villain. In truth, I do believe she suffered in the marriage more than I ever did. She just doesn't want people to think ill of me so she made it seem like I was the aggrieved party", he said sadly.

"I don't know what happened to you and Ms. Granger here, Lord Potter. But if I may be so bold? I believe that you still have feelings for her", the Supreme Mugwump said knowingly.

"I'm not going to lie, sir. I am not even sure of how I feel. Maybe it's guilt or shame for what I did to her. Or maybe I just miss my best friend. I don't know", he sighed.

"Oh, here we are!", the man said as they arrived in front of an office that says 'Chief of Medical Research'.

"I'll just get her settled on that bed over there, sir", he gestured to a single hospital bed that was slightly exposed since the curtain covering was only closed halfway. When the Supreme Mugwump nodded, he gently placed Hermione on the bed and closed the curtains. They both left her office together.

"If you want her back, Lord Potter, I cannot blame you. But if you do, please don't take my chief away from the ICW. The world needs her", Mr. Babajide Akingbade left him in the standing in the hallway with a thoughtful look on his face...

His musings were interrupted when he heard noise coming from Hermione's office. Since he was worried about her, he immediately entered the room without knocking.

"Get out! Out!", she yelled angrily as she covered her bra-clad chest by placing the bloody smock over it.

"Sorry! I didn't know you were changing", he muttered as he looked away.

"Get out! I'll call you back in when I'm decent", she yelled.

"Fine!", he obeyed and walked to the door. Before leaving the room he playfully added, "I don't know why you're so shy. It's not like I haven't seen them before". He quickly dodged a book that she threw at him in anger. He laughed as he closed the door. Chief Medical Researcher or not, Lady Potter still has the same horrible temper. Some things just don't ever change...
"You can come inside now", Hermione called out to him as she opened the door to her office. He quietly walked inside, closed the door, and took the seat across from her. He let his eyes roam...
around the large office and he saw certificates lining on the walls.

"What happened to Richards? Did we save him?", her question interrupted his curious observations.

"Richards is brought by your deputy to another room so he can rest properly. You saved Richards! He will be alright", he reassured her.

"That's great! I vowed to never have another person under my care die on me", she remarked. He saw her glance on a picture placed on one side of her desk. His hand went to the frame she was looking at and he turned the picture. His heart broke. It was a picture of their three-month-old baby girl in Hermione's arms. *How did she take that picture?*

"Give it back to me!", she extended a hand and he immediately returned the photo. Hermione hid the frame in her desk drawer and gave him a stern look.

"Hermione, I —"

"What are you doing in Switzerland? Tell me, how many people does the British Ministry of Magic needs? Furthermore, are there specific skill sets required?", she said formally as she wore her reading glasses and then she started writing in some form.

"There are fifteen victims. The healers are desperate. The parents are losing their minds. We need someone with unique skills in healing. We do not have any lead yet", he decided to just go with her flow and talk about the reason why he was sent to the ICW headquarters.

"How much time do you need?", she was writing details on a blank parchment after she completed filling up the form she gently placed on another side of the desk.

"We need someone there within forty-eight hours."

"I'm going there. I'll have Abim take the reins while I'm gone. I need him here to facilitate potions research in case we need potions as the cure. Upon my initial investigation from the reports that reached my desk, I believe potions will play a vital role in healing the victims. I'll bring two others with me. Let me just call them. Wait for a second, please", she told him and then she grabbed a mirror.

"Rosier, will you and Irie come to my office, please. We have a new case that needs our immediate attention. Yes! It's the British epidemic. Of course. I'll see you in five minutes", those were the things Harry heard as she talked to someone on a mirror. It worked like a telephone - he can hear Hermione but she is the only one who could hear the message from the other line. Exactly five minutes later, a tall blonde woman and a six-foot-tall Japanese man entered Hermione's office.

"How's our gorgeous Chief this morning?", the man flirted and Harry rolled his eyes. Hermione gave the man a stern look and the two sat across Harry.

"Everyone, meet Lord -", Hermione started the introductions but she was interrupted.

"Your ex-husband!", the Japanese man said.

"Harry Potter!", the blonde woman chorused.

"Rosier, Irie. Quiet! Lord Potter meet Evangeline Rosier and Kei Irie, they will be coming to Britain with me", Hermione formally introduced.
"Now I know why you dumped your ex-husband, chief. You're too pretty for him", Irie teased and Harry glared at the obnoxious man who gulped in fear.

"Do forgive my idiot of a partner, Lord Potter. His humor is just off ninety-nine percent of the time", Rosier nudged Irie.

"Rosier, Irie, focus. I need you to come to Britain with me. Go home and pack your things. We'll be leaving in twenty-four hours. The briefing will be explained as soon as we arrive. Rosier, I need your help with accommodations", Hermione instructed.

"We can stay at my cousin's place, chief. You know they would be happy to have us over", the blonde woman offered.

"Okay! Please settle with Astoria and Draco. Since they are both healers, we can even discuss our progress while at their home", Hermione nodded.

"What? Why are you staying with the Malfoys?", Harry demanded.

"Rosier, Irie, dismissed. Report back here in my office in twenty-four hours so we can port key to Britain", the two nodded and hurriedly left the room.

"Chief is bound to get angry at her tosser of an ex-husband, eh Vangie?", he heard Irie mutter as they closed the door.

"Why are you staying with the Malfoys?", he angrily asked.

"Draco and I went to the IMM together and we became friends there. Astoria who was still his girlfriend, studied at the IMM when I was a researcher there", she explained.

"How could you be friends with that ferret?"

"Well, that ferret never called me the scarlet woman of Britain for starters. Besides, he was the one who told me about the IMM. We may have left for Salamanca as desperate people who needed a fresh start together, but Draco proved to be a loyal and understanding friend. I am grateful for him and I love his wife Astoria even more", she said crossly.

"You could still stay with me, you know", he muttered.

"Excuse me? Stay with you? And have your new wife or girlfriend hounding on me? I think not. Besides, if you have forgotten Lord Potter, you told me years ago that I'm just an irritating nuisance in your life. Surely you wouldn't want that nuisance back?", she said sarcastically.

"Look, I was an idiot okay? I didn't think things through", he defended.

"Look, Lord Potter, I'll come to Britain, you and your auror succeeded in your mission by coming here to send a distress call to the ICW. As far as I'm concerned, that's all you have to care about!", she huffed as she started writing something in a parchment.

"Merlin! It's so irritating to hear you call me as Lord Potter!", he exclaimed.

"It's your name isn't it?", she raised an eyebrow before she resumed writing.

"Fine! Be that way! I'll see you in Britain, Lady Potter", he smirked as she sat there, slack-jawed.

He left her office and decided to find his recovering comrade. I'd rather be anywhere else than to keep hearing her say Lord Potter over and over again... How do I even tell her that legally she's
"Calm down, Hermione. Focus on the mission. Focus on the lives you need to save. He's just calling you Lady Potter to annoy you. For sure that gold-digger Ginny is the new Lady Potter. Just ignore him. Eyes on what matter most", she said out loud as her ex-husband left the room.

She closed her eyes to calm herself down as her memories took her back to many years ago...

Luna Lovegood and Fleur Delacour-Weasley took each of her hands as both blondes gently led her away to the direction of the beach as she stepped out of the fireplace in Shell Cottage. Two days before, she arrived back in Britain after going to Australia to remove the obliviation spell she cast on her parents. By some sort of miracle, her parents understood her and accepted her eagerly. She wanted to bring them back to Britain with her but her parents were happy and contented in Brisbane. So, she port-keyed home to 12 Grimmauld Place where a letter from her blonde friends waited for her. Her friends requested that she meet with them immediately. Upon reading the note, she sent a Patronus message that she’ll visit the very next day. Now, she finds herself being dragged to the beach but she just let them. She missed her friends after all. When they found a secluded spot, Luna conjured a blanket and Fleur cast privacy spells. They all took their place on the blanket and she saw the two blondes glancing at each other.

"Hermione, we have bad news", Luna started.

"Did something happen to Harry?", she immediately inquired with worry. Upon arriving at 12 Grimmauld Place she’s never seen Harry yet.

"Well he's not sick or anything but Hermione, Harry is getting married", Luna added.

"Getting married? When?", she asked with surprise. She tried her best to not let her pain and disappointment show.

"Ginny and 'arry got engaged two days after you left. Now, 'arry is so busy building Ginny a large manor house because it's a dream of hers to live like a queen", Fleur added with her elegant French accent.

"Well, that's good, I guess. At least they will have a nice home together", she shrugged.

"ermione, Ginny Weasley is just using 'arry for his money. She keeps asking him to buy 'er expensive things and he is so clueless and he just goes with it!", Fleur was disgusted at Ginny's behavior.

"If he's happy with her, then what do you expect? He loves her", she said.

"If she loved him back Hermione, even if she is a gold-digger, we would not mind. But, five days ago, Fleur and I noticed something odd with Ginny's behavior so we stalked her. We found out that she was dating Blaise Zabini. We heard them talking about how she'll marry Harry to get access to his money. After that, she would make it seem like Harry cheated on her, so they can get a divorce, and she can run away with his money. When that happens, she and Blaise Zabini would then live happily ever after", Luna narrated.

"Yes, 'ermione! What Luna is saying is true. Because I asked Bill and he says that the Zabini family is now broke because they had to pay a lot of money as payment for his father's crimes in the war. The Zabinis were rich but they are not Malfoy rich, and so the family is now bankrupt. We asked Neville since he was at 'ogwarts and Neville confirmed that he saw Ginny and Zabini out on
"dates when you were out there looking for 'orcruxes'," Fleur confirmed.

"How can Ginny do that to Harry?", she yelled angrily.

"Hermione the wedding is in three months. You have to prevent that from happening! You have to save Harry from making the biggest mistake of his life", Luna begged her.

"But why me?", she asked with confusion.

"Because you love him, 'ermione!", Fleur exclaimed and Luna nodded.

"What? I do not. I'm like a sister to him!", she denied.

"Don't lie to us, Hermione. We know you're in love with him. I've known since your fourth year. The nargles tell me. And you cannot lie to Fleur about love, her veela magic can tell", Luna said dreamily.

"Alright, fine! I admit! I am in love with him. But he doesn't like me like that", she sighed.

"We have a solid plan, 'ermione! We will make 'arry Potter yours", Fleur winked and Luna smiled. That was where it all began…

Hermione opened her eyes as she recalled her discussion with Luna and Fleur by the beach of Shell Cottage. A week after that, they set their trap in place. Luna was tasked to talk to Harry that Hermione had some left-over curse on her body that can only be cured if she lost her virginity to another virgin. Fleur knew that Harry was a virgin because her Veela magic can smell it. The beautiful half-Veela even had this theory that Ginny was using the no-sex-before-marriage clause to secure Harry's hand in marriage. According to Fleur, Ginny is not a virgin and is using her seduction techniques on an innocent and gullible bloke. To their surprise, when Luna told Harry their made-up lie, Harry agreed to help Hermione out of her 'dark curse'. So, they all agreed when they will perform the love ritual that will cure Hermione. Harry told them that they can do it at Grimmauld place. On the night they were scheduled to make love, Fleur focused her Veela magic on Hermione so that she will end up pregnant with Harry's baby. Luna then added that since Harry is set to be Lord Potter, Harry will be compelled to marry her since they are both virgins while doing the ritual. Furthermore, pureblood tradition will never allow and abandon the first-born heir of an Ancient and Noble House. Everything went according to plan and one month later, Hermione was pregnant with Harry's baby.

As expected, Ginny Weasley along with the rest of the ginger-haired family was livid when they learned about her pregnancy. The wedding was immediately canceled and Hermione married Harry in a very simple ceremony with no witnesses. Only the officiant, the Minister of Magic was there at their wedding. When the news broke out, Hermione was dubbed as the "Scarlet Woman of Britain".

Ginny Weasley was relentless in her pursuit to discredit Hermione's name. She absorbed the sympathy of the rest of the Wizarding World. Harry treated her civilly; he wasn't mad at her because he believed that they were both at fault. One week after their wedding, Harry arrived late at night and he was very drunk. Apparently, he was still seeing Ginny and she compelled him to ask her the truth about how she ended up marrying Harry Potter instead…

"Harry! You're drunk", she immediately went to help steady him since his stance was wobbly but he pulled away from her.

"Mione, tell me, why the fuck did we end up married", Harry asked in a cold voice as he
approached her.

"I'm in love with you Harry. So, I decided to do whatever it takes to steal you away from Ginny", she admitted with tears in her eyes. She refused to tell Harry about Luna and Fleur's involvement in all of this. It was enough for her to be the only one to suffer from the public's harsh comments. There is no need for her friends to suffer the same treatment and all the scandal she is facing.

"I hate you, Hermione! You disgust me", Harry's emerald green eyes stared at her with so much hatred as he walked away from her. She spent the rest of the night crying on the floor.

Since that confrontation, Harry changed. He would keep on bringing random women and shag them while she cried herself to sleep. He would not talk to her and would only scream at her if he wanted something. Two months after their wedding, the manor house that Harry made for Ginny was ready. Things only got worse when they moved into the large new manor.

"Welcome to your new prison, Lady Potter!", Harry said sarcastically as they entered the beautiful manor. She meekly followed him and waited for what he was about to say next.

"Since you wanted to be in my Ginny's place so much, now you have to maintain the palace I built for her, with your bare hands. Expelliarmus!", her wand flew into Harry's hand which he immediately caught.

"Start cleaning now. I have a date tonight!", he said coldly as he left her in the middle of the main hall.

That was her miserable life since then. She cleaned and maintained the large house without magic while Harry got drunk and shagged different women in the master bedroom. She was not allowed to sleep beside him or in the lady's chambers since it was supposed to be Ginny's. She was ordered to sleep in the guest room nearest to the master chamber so that she can hear the moans and grunts when he brought his dates to his manor to spend the night. She endured all his insults, the cleaning, and him treating her like dirt as he shagged other women. She loved him so much that she was willing to endure everything. After all, he may not love her but at least she had his baby - a child that she will nurture and raise. Also, despite all the ways he made her life miserable, she was still happy that she saved him from a terrible fate with Ginny. She was okay with all of that until Harry let her know how much he hated her baby as well...

She was tired of cleaning. At eight months pregnant, she was alone in this large house as she cared for herself and endured the emotional torture from her husband. She was mopping the main hall one afternoon when Harry entered the hall with a scantily clad woman in his arms. Since it was nearly an everyday occurrence, she didn't mind. She averted her eyes away from the amorous pair and resumed cleaning. Her tears were falling silently down her face.

"Isn't that your wife?", the woman asked.

"Yes! That's my wife. I hate her so much", his voice was nonchalant but she could hear the venom in his voice.

"She's so huge now", the woman giggled.

"Yes! My beloved wife is so big due to that blasted baby she's carrying! I hate that child! That child ruined my life", she heard Harry tell his lover. She looked at Harry who was already groping his
lover's backside as they climbed up the grand staircase. She could not believe that he said he hated their child.

"It's alright baby. Mummy loves you", she whispered to her baby as she lovingly rubbed her stomach. That was the day she started to fall out of love for Harry.

Hermione now had tears in her eyes as she remembered the day she gave birth to her beautiful Viola Lily Potter. She took the picture from her desk drawer and traced the delicate face of her baby who would've turned ten years old in two months. If only she didn't die...

She was all alone in the manor since Harry was probably out there shagging some bimbo or getting drunk. She groaned in pain as she felt her water broke. It was a good thing that she was just dusting the furniture in the main hall so she was very near the fireplace. Walking slowly, she grabbed a handful of floo powder and brought herself to St. Mungo's.

She was immediately attended to by the healers there. When they asked where her famous husband was, she only replied that he was not coming for her. Some of the healers looked at her with sympathy. Others tried to hide their chuckles at the sad fate of the "Scarlet Woman of Britain".

After five hours of gruesome labor, Hermione was teary-eyed as she held Viola Lily Potter for the very first time. Her beautiful baby had curly raven hair and Harry's almond-shaped eyes which were still blue but she knew it will turn emerald green as she gets older. The baby looked like a female version of Harry except for the nose and the lips which Viola inherited from her. It was the happiest day of her life.

"Mrs. Potter?", the healer called to her.

"Yes?"

"I have to tell you that there is something wrong with your child. Her heart and lungs are very weak. We have to regularly treat her with potions and she should always be closely monitored", the healer calmly explained.

"What? Why? There must be a mistake!", she said hysterically.

"Mrs. Potter you have to keep calm! I need you to understand some important things on how to care for your beautiful daughter here", the healer said gently.

"Okay", she sniffed.

"Mrs. Potter you have to keep feeding her organ strengthening potions every day for one month. Two drops of potion every eight hours. Also, should anything go wrong, bring her here immediately", the healer ordered and she nodded.

"Ma'am? Why is my baby sick?", she inquired.

"Babies with underdeveloped hearts are usually because the mummies were sad or stressed during the pregnancy", the healer explained with a sad look on her face. Hermione nodded and cradled her baby close to her chest as she silently cried.

"I love you, Viola Lily! Mummy is so sorry that she was not able to save you", she whispered as she caressed her child's picture. She then remembered the last time she saw Harry; on the same day
she gave him the divorce papers.

It's been a week since her little angel, Viola Lily died in her arms. Despite everything she did to help keep her child healthy, she failed. And now, she had in her hand the means to bring her life back in order. She can no longer stay in this prison when she can only remember all the suffering and her child dying in her arms. She knocked on Harry's bedroom. She took a deep breath and prepared herself for the worst sight - him shagging another woman.

"Come in", she heard his deep baritone voice call out. She turned the knob and entered. To her surprise, he was lying flat on his back and all alone in the large bed. How ironic that I get to enter the master chamber on my last day here, she thought.

"I am leaving you, Lord Potter. You can now go back to the real mistress of this manor for whom you built", she said in a dead tone as she placed the divorce papers she already signed on his bed. She took off her wedding ring and the Lady Potter ring and placed it on top of the thick pile of papers.

"You're leaving me as well?", she was surprised when he sat on the mattress.

"You belong to your precious Ginny, Lord Potter", she said coldly as she turned away.

"It's my fault that our daughter died, right, Hermione?", he said sadly.

"You're wrong Lord Potter. It's your fault MY DAUGHTER died! She was mine and mine alone!", she said angrily.

"I was her father and you know that", he insisted.

"You hated her. I know you did. You can hate me all you want and I can take it. But I can't accept why you would hated MY DAUGHTER! She was innocent!", she yelled at him.

"Please don't leave me", he whispered.

"I hate you, Lord Potter! You destroyed all the beauty that's left in my world", she said with venom.

"Please, Hermione", he begged. She could see the tears falling down his face.

"Go back to your precious Ginny Weasley! You two have a blessed perfect life because you deserve each other. The divorce papers are ready. Just sign it and have it notarized. Do not worry about alimony, I can take care of myself", her hand was at the doorknob. She was about to open it when she felt a pair of strong arms wrap around her waist.

"Don't leave me, Hermione. I can't forgive myself if you leave me too", he tightened his hold on her. She forcibly removed his arms and faced him.

"I may have cheated you into marrying me, Harry, and I may have deserved all the hate from you. But MY DAUGHTER did not deserve your scorn! I give up! I could never love the man who contributed to my baby's death", she had angry tears in her eyes.

"I'm begging you, Hermione, please stay. I need you to heal me and to help me take the emptiness away", he knelt down in front of her.

"I gave you everything, Harry. But you threw it all away", she left him kneeling on the floor as she
left his bedroom.

She wiped the tears from her eyes as she strengthened her resolve. *In a few hours, I will be back in Britain again. Back to all the intrigue, the pain, and sad memories. But at least I can visit my Viola's grave again…*
With a nod to her junior researchers, Hermione along with Kei Irie and Evangeline Rosier held tight on an old rope that port keyed them to the main hall of the British Ministry of Magic. After
ten minutes of spinning, they landed on the hard stone floor. As soon as they arrived, wizards and witches immediately focused their attention on the newcomers. Of course, a lot of the ministry employees recognized her and they started to whisper. Hermione closed her eyes and took a deep breath. *Welcome back to Britain!*

"Excuse me, Lady Potter?", a tall dark gentleman approached their team.

"It's Hermione Granger", she replied in a formal voice.

"Oh, sorry, Hermione", the gentleman said sheepishly.

"Sorry but you look familiar", she stared at the man.

"You don't remember me, Hermione? We were in Gryffindor together. It's me. Dean Thomas", the man replied.

"Oh, yes. Of course! Hello Dean! Could you please escort me and my team to the Office of the Minister for Magic, please? Or really to anyone here who requested for clemency at the ICW", she gestured to her team who immediately stood alert.

"Please follow me, Hermione", Dean smiled and led the way.

"These are my teammates, Kei Irie and Evangeline Rosier", she introduced as they hurriedly followed Dean Thomas.

"Please to meet you Healer Irie, Healer Rosier. I'm Auror Thomas", Dean politely replied as they walked the halls.

"Here we are, Hermione. It's good to see you back in Britain. Healer Rosier, Healer Irie", Dean nodded before leaving them as they stood outside the Office of the Minister of Magic. Hermione knocked and to her surprise, Harry Potter opened the door.

"Hermione?", her ex-husband said with surprise.

"Sorry to intrude Lord Potter, but my team and I just arrived. We're here to see the minister for a quick briefing before we head straight to St. Mungo's", she replied formally.

"Please come inside, Lady Potter", Harry widely opened the door and stepped aside. She rolled her eyes at the Lady Potter comment. *Don't give in to the bait. He's just teasing you. Trying to get into your nerves.*

"Did that tosser just called the chief, Lady Potter, Vangie?", Kei Irie whispered to his partner.

"Shut it Kei!", Evangeline Rosier shushed the Japanese fellow.

"Lady Potter! It's so good to see you back in Britain, even if it's due to very sad circumstances", Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt greeted.

"Minister Kingsley", she formally greeted as she shook the man's hand.

"It's good to see the most brilliant mind of Britain and the best healer in the world back in our shores", Kingsley smiled.

"I'm hardly the best healer nor the most brilliant mind. Anyway, let me introduce my teammates. Kei Irie of Japan. He is our expert for genetic mutations and Pathology. And this lovely lady is Evangeline Rosier of France. She is an expert on skeletal diseases and potions. I selected them for a
reason given the initial insights on the epidemic which we received from the British healers through communications", she explained.

"Brilliant! Anyway, Lady Potter, if you don't mind my asking. What is your domain of expertise in terms of healing? Also, how long will you be staying here? And where are you staying for that matter?", the minister inquired.

"Minister, I do hope you call me by my maiden name. I believe it's been ten years since I am entitled to the Lady Potter name", she said formally.

"I beg your pardon, Hermione. It's just, well, per British records, you are still the Lady Potter", the minister explained.

"What? That's impossible!", she was aghast. *Just what in the name of Merlin is going on here?*

"Er, well, this should be a different discussion, isn't it?", the minister said awkwardly while glancing at her ex-husband.

"Right. Anyway, my expertise lies on the dark arts, vile curses, hexes, and surgery. Since we are not certain as to how the epidemic is spread, the three of us are here for that specific reason. Of course, if my initial investigation finds that the epidemic is not due to the dark arts, a curse, or a hex and if the cure does not involve surgery, then I would return to Switzerland and send someone more qualified for the case. Rosier and Irie will stay as long as they are needed here. Our accommodations will be provided by Rosier's cousins, Draco and Astoria Malfoy", she narrated.

"I've heard from Harry over here, how your quick action saved the life of Auror Richards. You are too modest Hermione. The victims will be in a better place if you are here with us", Kingsley stated.

"You are too kind, minister. Anyway, should there be any particular details we should be privy to before we get ourselves settled in St. Mungo's?"

"Here are some papers documenting the cases of the victims. Also, Head Auror Potter will be providing your security here in Britain. You three are here as dignitaries from the ICW after all. I imagine that Akingbade will not be pleased with me if something bad happens to his most talented medical researchers", Kingsley chuckled.

"Thank you, minister. Will that be all?"

"Yes, thank you so much for coming here, Hermione. Thank you also, Healer Irie, Healer Rosier", the minister shook each of their hands.

"Please follow me, I'll escort you to St. Mungo's", Harry led them out of the minister's office and they quietly followed.

"Irie, Rosier, as soon as we arrive, I want you to interview the healers attending the patients. Ask for thorough medical records of each case. I will then be extracting blood samples so Irie can study if there is an observable genetic mutation from the blood cells. If there is a skin irritation visible, then we can lightly scrape the epidermal layer as well. Rosier, I need x-ray scans and an initial list of potions that can be given to mitigate the prevalent effects of the epidemic. If we can't cure it yet, best to focus on two things: how the virus is spread, and to control the worsening of each case. Is that understood?", she briefed her colleagues as Harry led the way.

"Yes, chief!", the team chorused.
"Er, excuse me, Lady -"

"Ms. Granger", she interrupted.

"Fine! Ms. Granger, what about your things?", Harry asked.

"We will be meeting the Malfoys in St. Mungo's and we'll be going home with them when their shift ends. You shouldn't worry so much about us. We'll be fine", she said formally before she returned to her calm and stoic demeanor.

"Here we are. Just yell St. Mungo's and we'll be there soon", Harry gestured to the floo. Hermione nodded to her team and Rosier and Irie went first. When she was about to enter the fireplace, Harry held her arm.

"Hermione, can we talk?"

"We are talking", she replied curtly.

"There is something we need to discuss", Harry insisted.

"Look if this is about what the minister said about the whole Lady Potter thing, then if there was something wrong with the divorce papers I drafted, find a lawyer and draft another one. When it's done, hand it to me so I can sign it", she shrugged.

"That's not the problem", Harry sighed.

"Then what? Oh. Fine! How much alimony do you want? After all, the whole marriage was my fault anyway", she rolled her eyes. *The nerve of this man to seek alimony from me! But fine! Whatever! It's not like I can't afford it anyway.*

"You think I want your money?", Harry was offended.

"Look, Lord Potter, I gave you the divorce papers many years ago. It was ironclad. Now I arrive here and discover that legally I'm still Lady Potter. So just tell me what do you want? You're wasting my time and my patients need me!", she said angrily. She saw that they were attracting attention. Harry noticed too so he held her hand and dragged her to an empty corridor.

"Have dinner with me tomorrow night", Harry gave her a penetrating stare.

"I'll be busy for the next few days. I can't just have dinner with you, Lord Potter", she said sarcastically.

"Fine! I'll wait until you're free", he insisted.

"Look! Just tell me what you bloody want so that the divorce can carry on. I'm sure your girlfriend would want this situation fixed immediately", she glared at him.

"Ah, well! I don't have a girlfriend so I can wait until forever for that dinner", he smirked.

"Fine! Meet me at the Malfoy residence on Sunday night at seven. Then we can discuss this divorce business", she huffed.

"See you at seven. Wear a dress", he smirked. He was happy to have gotten his way.

"I'll be in a bloody smock", she rolled her eyes and walked away. Her jerk of an ex-husband just laughed.
"St. Mungo's", she yelled as she stepped into the fireplace. She glared at her smirking ex-husband before she disappeared in green flames.

"Chief! What took you so long?", Rosier asked as she exited the floo.

"Annoying ex-husband", she whispered and Rosier nodded.

"It's our pleasure to have you here in St. Mungo's Lady -"

"Please, just call me Hermione Granger or chief. Or Healer Granger. Never call me by my ex-husband's last name", she insisted and the healer nodded.

"I'm so sorry, Chief!", the female healer was ashamed.

"No worries", she shrugged.

"Now Healer Carmichael, could you please brief us on what you already know of the epidemic so far", she inquired. Her team immediately had notepads and pens in their hands as they took notes.

Harry Potter arrived at St. Mungo's and immediately inquired about the ICW's medical researchers. The male healer led him to the ward that says **Intensive Care Unit for Unknown Diseases**. When he entered the door, he was surprised. The entire Weasley family was there, sitting on one of the benches across a locked room with fifteen very sick looking children. He could see how sick the children were because there was a large glass window that allows worried family members to see what's happening inside the ward. Hermione and her team were now accompanied by two healers from St. Mungo's. It was clear that Hermione was in the zone doing complicated diagnostic tests while Irie was following Hermione's orders and taking blood samples. Rosier was also busy examining the skeletal structures of each patient using a charm that he's never seen performed before. **Merlin! Hermione may just be the world's best healer indeed!**

"Harry!", he heard Ron's voice.

"Hello, Ron. I didn't know that Freddie and Julianna were affected by the epidemic. I am so sorry", he offered his sympathies.

"Harry, Hermione can cure them, right? Hermione is the Chief of the ICW's Medical Research Department after all!", Ron exclaimed.

"I can't give you any assurance, Ron. I have seen Hermione operate on my comrade though. Bloke didn't even know he was under a dark curse but with one glance, she just knew what to do. She operated on him on the spot and he was fully healed. Hermione may just be the world's best healer, Ron. If someone can find a cure, then it's her and the team she's brought along", he tried to reassure his friend.

"Harry! Please tell me Hermione can cure my grandkids!", Mrs. Weasley wailed.

"Hermione will surely do her best, Mrs. Weasley", he said formally.

"Harry! Hermione is the best, right? She can cure my Julianna, right?", a crying Ginny Zabini approached.

"Mrs. Zabini, I am sure the ICW medical research team will do their best", he curtly replied.
"Hello, Harry!", George greeted.

"I am so sorry about your son, George", he patted the man's back.

"Yes, it is really sad indeed. But with Hermione here, I am confident that she can find the cure. If Hermione helped in finding a cure for lycanthropy, then this epidemic is just like a walk in the park for her", George tried to joke but Harry could see the worry and stress in the man's eyes.

"Of course, George! That's the world's most brilliant healer in there!", he said jovially. His eyes followed Hermione's every movement and he was amazed. This was like watching her operate on Richards but this time, she was more determined. Of course! Since the patients are children, she is more invested in this. Viola died in her arms and the mother in Hermione will not let another parent suffer the pain she experienced...

He saw that Hermione was finished in visiting each patient as she thoroughly conducted diagnostic tests while a parchment and quill automatically wrote notes for each child. Hermione went to Irie and he could see the man nod. Rosier also nodded and the five healers looked at each other before leaving the room. As soon as they exited the room, the family members of the patients immediately crowded Hermione. As their auror guard, he immediately dragged the grieving family members away from the healers.

"Let's please not crowd the healers!", he reminded everyone.

"Hermione! Please tell me you can save my grandkids!", Mrs. Weasley ran towards Hermione but Harry's arm separated the two women.

"Mrs. Weasley, we are doing the best we can. If you'll excuse us, we need to study on the blood samples", she said formally and then turned around to leave with the rest of the healers.

"Chief Healer Granger!", a voice that Harry knew called out. Hermione turned to face the voice and gasped. He was also astounded! Ginny Zabini kneeled in front of Hermione and cried.

"Hermione, I know how much I've hurt you in the past. Hell! My family has hurt you so much. But please, Hermione! Please! You are my only hope! Save my Julianna and George's son, Freddie. Please, Hermione! I'm begging you", Ginny wailed as she tugged on Hermione's robes.

"Mrs. Zabini, please let go of the chief healer!", he admonished as he removed Ginny's hands from Hermione's robes. Ginny slowly let go and cried.

"Please, Hermione! Please!"

"Mrs. Zabini, I promise to do the best I can", Hermione said formally while not glancing at the woman.

"I am so sorry Hermione, I am so sorry", Ginny cried.

"Mrs. Zabini, please get up. Our personal affairs are not included in my relationship with your daughter. I am a healer and your daughter is a patient under my care. You do not need to apologize", Hermione explained while still not looking at the wailing woman on her knees.

"I'll do anything, Hermione. Just heal my Julianna!", Ginny cried.

"If you'll excuse us. The healers and I have to convene", Hermione nodded and turned around to leave the ward. As auror guard, Harry quietly followed the rest of the healers.
"Chief? Isn't that crying woman the bitch who accused you of all those vile things years ago?", he heard Irie ask Hermione.

"Irie! Focus on the work at hand. My personal affairs with that woman are not important! We need to find a cure! Am I clear?", Hermione glared at the obnoxious man.

"Chief, yes, chief!", the man was scared.

"Hermione Granger!", a voice Harry hated called out.

"Draco! It's so good to see you! Thank you for letting us stay at your home. Where is Astoria?", Hermione said happily. To Harry's surprise, Hermione hugged the ferret.

"It's good to see you too Hermione. Astoria is in an operation. A witch is giving birth to twins", Draco smiled.

"That's great! Two new lives brought into this world", Hermione smiled but Harry could hear the pain in her voice.

"Cousin!", Evangeline Rosier hugged Draco as well.

"Drake, meet Kei Irie", Hermione introduced and the men shook hands.

"Enough of this mushy talk. Let's work!", Hermione clapped her hands and everyone immediately took their seats and waited for Hermione's instructions. Harry stepped outside of the healer's office and sat on a bench. After one hour, the ICW medical research team exited the room.

"Lord Potter, why are you still here?", Hermione asked.

"Protection detail remember?", he shrugged.

"It's not like someone's gonna attacks us here", she rolled her eyes.

"I'm just following orders, alright?", he explained and she ignored him.

"Irie, I have a feeling that the virus is spread via tactile interaction. So, please ask a healer here to interview all the parents waiting in the ICU ward about all the children that their kids have recently played with in the last three weeks. That way, we can have those kids checked here, as soon as possible. Once we find Patient A, then we can map how the virus was spread. While we have initial insight on how the curse affects the body, I still need a full pathological analysis, Irie. Rosier, please review each case and see if the x-ray scans reveal anything on the nature of the virus' impact on bones. I need your reports as soon as possible. At the Malfoy home, let's call headquarters and talk about the initial results we have gathered. Understood?", Hermione commanded.

"Yes, chief!", the two chorused before leaving. Hermione walked to another direction which Harry quietly followed. When she noticed his presence, she raised an eyebrow at him as she tore her glance away from the medical records she was reading.

"Just ignore me", he shrugged.

"Aren't you supposed to protect all three of us?", she inquired even if she was busy looking at the medical records.

"Yes, but as chief, you are the most important", he replied.
"Whatever", she replied as she entered a door which says Medical Records. This has got to be my most boring yet entertaining mission!

At ten in the evening, a curly-haired brunette apparated to Godric's Hallow and walked towards the kissing gate. Hermione Granger cast a quiet Lumos and she trudged the way to the Potters' tombstones. When she arrived at Lily and James Potter's tombstones, she conjured some flowers for each of them before she carefully dropped them. After that, she turned her attention to the real reason as to why she came to Godric's Hollow at night. The Malfoys lived in a simple two-story house in London but she quietly left the house just to visit her most beloved daughter's resting place...

Viola Lily Potter

May 9, 1999 – August 25, 1999

Beloved Angel

"Hello, my darling angel!", Hermione greeted, as she carefully placed the bouquet of red roses she bought from Diagon Alley, near her daughter's tombstone.

"I miss you so much, my darling. Mummy is so sorry that she's never visited. Mummy cannot bear to come here and remember that you're no longer with me darling. I think of you every day. I am sure you know that", she squatted on the grass. Tears were already falling down her eyes.

"I love you so much, Vi! I hope that you have forgiven, mummy. I am so sorry that I couldn't save you my darling. I tried! Believe me, I did! But mummy is just not good enough. I do hope you're proud of all the work mummy has done. You are my inspiration, darling!", she continued to talk as she sobbed.

"Vi, there are fifteen children that need mummy's help. It is a very complicated case, Vi. Please pray for me my darling. Give mummy strength. Help mummy keep her promise to you! You were my first patient Vi and you died in my arms. Pray to the gods that are now cradling you in their embrace so that mummy can help these children. Please, my darling! Help mummy! I can't have another patient die!", her forehead was now on the grass as she talked to her daughter and cried.

"I love you, Viola Lily! You are my inspiration! The reason why I wake up every single day to be the best healer I can be! I failed you my darling but I will not fail another patient again!", she cried. Hermione carefully stood up from her position on the grass and touched the tombstone. She kissed her fingertips and touched the stone with her daughter's name.

"I will always love you, my little angel! You are always in mummy's heart, that is a promise", she wiped a tear from her eyes and she walked away.

A raven-haired man hiding under an invisibility cloak had tears in his eyes as he saw the curly-haired brunette walk away. He took the cloak off and knelt by Viola Lily Potter's tombstone.

"I'm so sorry Viola Lily. I failed you and your mother", he tightly pulled on the grass as he cried for the daughter he unknowingly hurt and the wife he killed deep inside.
"Tori?", Draco Malfoy called out to his wife as he turned around to face her.

"Yes, darling?", Astoria Malfoy rolled on her side to face her husband. She was sleepy but she
knew Draco had something important to say. The tone in his voice indicated that whatever it was, it had to be serious.

"Hermione just left the house. My ring keyed to the house wards shifted", he informed her.

"You and I both know that she'll visit her daughter as soon as possible. She's not been there ever since the burial", Astoria said sadly as she cuddled into her husband.

"Do you think she's ready for all this? To be back here in Britain, I mean?", Draco inquired as he rubbed his wife's back.

"It's been ten years, darling. Even if she's not ready, being here again will force her to. Hermione is one of the strongest people we know. If anyone can handle this, it's her", she reassured the man she loved.

"Do you remember when I told you about the time I first saw her after she left Potter?", he chuckled.

"Yes, darling. You told me all about it. You were at Gringott's withdrawing some money and settling your affairs. You saw Hermione Potter, looking distraught and haunted. Until now, you and I both do not know what possessed you to approach her, but I am so glad you did", she replied. Together, the Malfoys looked back on their memories of their dear friend - her journey from being the broken and distraught Hermione Potter, to the headstrong Chief of the ICW's Medical Research Department.

"Pardon my disturbance, but Lady Potter, are you alright?", Draco Malfoy approached the crying woman, who looked nothing like the strong girl he used to antagonize in his youth. The Hermione Granger he now sees in front of him is looking so distraught. Disregarding the consequences given their history as school enemies, he felt compelled to approach her.

"I hate that name! Do not call me that!", she hissed as she continued crying. She didn't even look up at him.

"Would you mind some company then, er, Ms. Granger?", he said awkwardly.

"What do you want, Malfoy?", she looked up to him. Once again, the familiar glare that he associated with the Hermione Granger he once knew was back on her puffy and snot-covered face.

"If you want Granger, we can talk inside my account manager's office. We do not want to attract any more attention here", his eyes gestured to the prying eyes all around.

"Why are you being nice to me?", she gave him a curious look but she stood up from the bench.

"Because believe it or not, Granger, I know how you feel. You think the world hates you and with the Daily Prophet and the Weasel family badmouthing you as the 'Scarlet Woman of Britain', you feel that there is no one else to help you. I think the prophet is wrong. So, you married Potter? Big deal. That does not give them the right to call you names. You are a hero and how dare they forget about that!", he told her sincerely.

"Okay, Malfoy. I believe you. Take me to your account manager's office so we can talk", she gave him one last curious look and sighed. He stood up and led her towards the Malfoy estate manager's office.

"Scion Malfoy, I am surprised to see you back so soon. Is there something wrong?", Sharpfang
"Good morning once again, Sharpfang. This is -"

"Lady Potter, wife to one of Gringott's richest clients", the goblin interrupted.

"Please do not call me by that vile name, sir. I detest being called Lady Potter. Just please call me Hermione Granger. I just ended things with my bastard of a husband this morning", she explained.

"Very well, Ms. Granger. So, Scion Malfoy, what can I do for you?", the goblin clearly understood the woman's grief.

"I just need a place to talk to Ms. Granger without prying eyes, Sharpfang", he replied.

"Of course! Please feel comfortable here, Ms. Granger", the goblin gestured to a seat across his desk. Draco took a seat as the distraught and angry former Lady Potter took the other.

"Should I go?", Sharpfang asked Hermione.

"Oh no, sir! I don't want to be a bother. Besides, maybe you can give me good advice", she said immediately. The goblin looked at him and he understood. He must be the one to get her talking first.

"Granger if you could please tell us what's the matter? Why were you sitting on the side benches of the bank looking very upset?", he inquired kindly.

"As I said, I left that bastard this morning. I gave him divorce papers. I can't live in that hell anymore", she said angrily.

"Did Potter hurt you?", his face contorted with a frown.

"Oh, he's been hurting me ever since I stole him away from his precious Ginny Weasley!", she said bitterly.

"I can't believe Potter would hit his wife, whatever the odd circumstances of your marriage are in!", he said with disbelief and anger.

"Oh, that bastard never hit me. He just makes me clean the manor he built for his beloved Ginny without magic, insults me as much as he possibly can, and parades any woman he can convince to shag him in front of my face!", she hissed as angry tears escaped.

"What? How can he do that to you? I thought he was your best friend!", he could not believe the Golden Boy can do that to his wife, a wife that was his best friend since their Hogwarts days.

"I am not his best friend! If I was, then he would have at least respected me despite the circumstances. No! I'm just someone who's nothing compared to his perfect beauty, Ginny Weasley!", she said with a sad voice.

"So, what are your plans now, Ms. Granger?", Sharpfang asked.

"I visited the bank to check on my accounts. I wanted to see how much money I had so that I can have a fresh start. It's not enough. I planned to go back to my parents in Australia but I know that he could find me there. I just need a place where he can't find me. I need to get away from him! I hate him so much! He is the reason why my daughter died!", she ranted as she cried.

"Ms. Granger you are a very brilliant woman. If you would like, there is a prestigious healer's
academy in Salamanca, Spain. Students who get accepted there are secluded for the entire
duration of the program up until completion. That way, you can have a fresh start and your
husband cannot find you”, Sharpshang suggested.

"That sounds like a brilliant idea. But sir, I do not have any money for that”, she said sadly.

"I'll loan you the money, Granger. Pay it back when you can. It does not matter how long it takes”
Draco offered.

"Why are you doing this, Malfoy?”, she was confused. This was very out of character for Draco
Malfoy after all!

"Because I know how it feels to have the whole world turn their back on you, Granger. And in your
case, you do not deserve it”, he replied.

"Alright”, she said with determination and then they agreed on the terms of the loan as the goblin
handed her pamphlets containing information about the Instituto de Medicina Magica.

"Do you remember how Hermione looked when you first brought her to my apartment, darling?”. Astoria broke into his thoughts.

"Yes! I remember that just like me, one look at her and you immediately felt compelled to help her.
Of course, given that you are way much nicer than I ever could be, you immediately accepted her
under your wing. You hugged her and she cried on your shoulders while we listened to her talk
about her ordeal with Potter”, he answered his wife.

"After all these years, I still cannot believe Harry Potter can do that to her!", Astoria exclaimed.

"Well, I can. Even at Hogwarts, Potter always had this extreme support for any member of the
Weasley family even at the expense of hurting Hermione", Draco explained.

"But darling, you do recall for sure, that Harry Potter never went back to Ginny Weasley, right?
And of course, there are his efforts in building a charity to honor the late memory of their departed
child", his wife reminded him.

"Oh yes! Merlin! Hermione is so going to get mad at us since we did not tell her about the fact that
she is still the Lady Potter in all legalities", Draco winced.

"Well, we can always say that whenever we tried to talk about her ex-husband, she would
immediately change the topic. Besides, when we last visited her in Switzerland, she seemed to be
content. There was no need to break her happy streak by bringing in sad memories by mentioning
her very own version of a he-who-must-not-be-named”, his wife chuckled at the last statement.

"Well, that is true, love. Besides, I reckon Longbottom, Lovegood, and Delacour would have told
her of that detail. That is if she allows them to bring about the topic of her ex", Draco added as an
afterthought.

"Darling, what do you think of Harry Potter's actions? Not getting together with Ginny Weasley,
building the charity, and most especially not pushing through with the divorce?”, his wife inquired
with genuine curiosity.

"For me, love, it means that Potter finally got his shit together and he realized that the most
brilliant treasure in his life, was his wife all along!”
"So, you believe that he's in love with her, darling?"

"Yes! I am certain. I can see the way he looks at her. With longing, regret, awe, and shame. He wants one more chance but I doubt she is going to give it to him. We've seen how she was at the IMM. I even used to conjure pictures of Harry Potter that she tears into tiny bits and pieces with her bare hands when she was so stressed from all our coursework. When that does not work, I conjure statues of Potter which she blasts into smithereens", he laughed.

"Oh, yes! You told me all about that! When she was so wound up with pent-up energy and since there was no outlet at the IMM, given you were not allowed to leave the premises and the only contact from the outside world was the letters that you can receive from a pre-registered list of people whom you wish to contact you while inside the school!"

"Until I introduced her to Pablo Zamora, remember him?", Draco chuckled.

"Ah, yes! The very dreamy Latino who majored in mind healing and psychology", his wife recalled.

"Yes or as we call him, Hermione's sex toy! Merlin! I swear, they would shag like rabbits. I pitied the bloke because he had feelings for her, but sex was all she could give him. Potter screwed her up so much that the only relationship she's willing to try is a physical one", Draco sighed as he felt sad for his friend.

"Well, you can't blame her, darling. Pablo looked like a Greek god who fell from heaven", Astoria sighed dreamily.

"Are you fantasizing about our dear friend's shag buddy, Mrs. Malfoy?", Draco asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Of course not, dear! It's just well when I was studying at the IMM, and Hermione was there as a researcher, she used to tell me that Pablo Zamora was the best shag she's ever had. That time though, she's only had four lovers, I guess. First was Potter, then Pablo, and then there was Muller, oh and I forgot the other one", Astoria narrated.

"Ah, yes! Muller! That German bloke she met at the pub near the IMM. He's the one she called had the biggest prick she's ever seen, right?", he laughed.

"Yes, that's him! Merlin! I used to laugh at Hermione's sex stories. I guess I was living vicariously through her. Since, well, you're my first and only lover darling. And at the IMM, I sure did miss you a lot", his wife pecked him on the lips.

"I really can't believe Potter let go of a vixen such as our dear Hermione. What an idiot!", Draco chuckled.

"Well, Hermione told me she only shagged Potter during that crazy scheme thought about by Fleur and Luna. Potter's never touched her after the wedding", Astoria divulged.

"Really? She did not tell me that", he was surprised.

"Of course, she wouldn't! As close as you two are, there are so many things a woman only tells a fellow woman, darling", Astoria patted his cheek patronizingly.

"Do you think Hermione's seeing someone right now?", he inquired.

"Well from her recent mirror conversation with me, the last time she's shagged someone was ten
months ago. You know how busy she is. Besides, she told me there is a sex toy she uses when she feels frustrated. You know how she goes on dates, shags the bloke, and leaves afterward. The blokes are okay with the setup because they know she's not emotionally available anyway”, Astoria shrugged.

"I just wish she will allow herself to fall in love again. To find what we have. She of all people deserve to be happy", Draco cuddled closer to his wife, the woman who changed him for the better.

"She cannot fall in love again until she forgives herself, darling. She still tries too hard because she still blames herself for Viola's death. Once she lets go of that guilt, then and only then could she finally move on", Astoria said sadly.

"Do you think being around Potter can help her finally accept the painful memories of her past?”, he asked.

"That's one more thing she has to face, darling. From my conversations with her, I could tell how much she loved him. And with the magnitude of that love, comes the immense size of the pain. He destroyed her. If she could finally accept all that's happened in the past, that is the only time she can fully heal. She's a strong woman. But only when she opens up and becomes vulnerable to feel the hurt she buried deep within, and talk to the man who hurt her deeply, only then can she finally move on and let go", Astoria explained.

"Do you think she still loves him?", he inquired.

"That is a very hard question to answer, darling", she sighed.

"Do you think Potter would try to win her back?"

"Harry Potter was stupid in his youth, but he's surely gotten wiser with maturity. I am very certain he would try, darling. That is for sure! Will she take him back? Well, there's a very minimal chance. Another thing I am certain though is -"

"Hermione will make it damn hard for Potter!", Draco finished.

"Exactly!", she agreed before pecking him on the lips again.

"Love, do you think Potter can bring her walls down?"

"To be honest darling, I still believe he is only the person who can. We've seen so many men try and fail. So, I truly believe that it will only be Harry Potter who can truly heal her again", she admitted.

"Well, I am sure that she won't make it easy for Potter though!", he said smugly.

"Of course, she won't! And Potter deserves all the effort and the groveling he has to do to win her back!", she agreed ferociously.

"Ah, well, as they say, 'you will only appreciate what you have when it is gone', should be Potter's new motto", he chuckled.

"Trust me, darling. He's realized that a long time ago", she stated.
Harry Potter laid awake on the large king-sized bed in the master bedroom of his penthouse suite despite the wee hours of the morning. Ever since Hermione left him, the manor house he built for
Ginny only reminded him of all that he'd lost. Viola Lily, his beautiful little girl, who looked like a female version of himself, since their baby seemed to have inherited his hair and eye color. And Hermione, the best friend that anyone could ever ask for...

After a month of drowning himself in liquor to numb all his sorrows and guilt, he sold the manor for a really good deal. With the help of the goblins, he found a penthouse property in muggle London that was very much closer to the ministry. He'd lived there all alone ever since. Now here he was lying all alone since he could not sleep. Ever since he passed by a magazine stand in Diagon Alley, and saw Hermione on the front cover, his lonely world shifted. He knew that sooner or later; he would be facing her again - something that he is excited about but dreading at the same time. The interview on the magazine showed him that Hermione may have moved on from what happened in the past, but her addressing him as Lord Potter made it abundantly clear that she has not forgiven him.

Seeing Hermione cry her heart out at their daughter's grave is a sight that will forever be ingrained in his memory. It was the saddest thing he'd ever seen. He now understood that his stupid mistakes in the past not only killed their daughter, but it also killed Hermione's spirit. The little girl he met on the Hogwarts Express who became his fiercest and most loyal friend was gone. The formidable Chief of the ICW's Medical Research Department is just a shadow of the wonderful woman he once knew. The entire wizarding world may be in awe of the sheer brilliance for the Hermione they now see, but his heart would ache every time he sees her the very strong stoic woman he now sees. Hermione Granger is just a shadow of the person she once was. Someone who is used to be filled with so much passion and fire is now just a brilliant healer with no feelings. The Hermione he now sees only acts like a robot. Her life was dedicated to her patients and finding cures. Her entire life is so focused on her work. Her chocolate brown eyes no longer have any spark of joy. He could see no life in those beautiful brown orbs of hers.

I took out the life in her eyes! I killed her spirit...

As he lay awake on the bed with tears in his eyes, his mind brought him back to the past...

"Harry? What are you doing here?", the sultry voice of his beautiful girlfriend called out to him. He was squatting by an oak tree near the Burrow.

"Hi, Gin! I'm just thinking", he shrugged.

"Thinking about what?", she sat beside him as she sensually glided her fingers on his forearm.

"Hermione. I hope she's found her parents by now. I'm worried about her", he stared at the distance.

"Harry, you do love me, right?", Ginny fluttered her eyes at him.

"Of course, I do", he quickly replied.

"Marry me", she whispered.

"Shouldn't I have a ring first or something?", he chuckled nervously.

"I want to get married as soon as possible. We'd live in a big house. I'll give you the family you always wanted. Besides, Hermione and Ron will get together soon. By then, we'd all be one big happy family together", she straddled his lap and kissed him.

"Okay, let's get married", he agreed.
Looking back now that he's more mature, the way Ginny coerced him into marrying her should already trigger as a red flag. The way she described a perfect world wherein Ron and Hermione would get together, and he with Ginny - was just her way of giving him an illusion of normal. Something she knew that he had always wanted. Of course, the way Ginny used to demand things such as jewelry, expensive clothes, the extravagant wedding, and the manor house is very big signs that point out she was just after him for his money. *I am the world's biggest idiot!*

"Harry, can I talk to you in private?", Luna Lovegood asked him one day when he was lounging around at 12 Grimmauld Place looking at the design plans for the manor.

"Hi, Luna! Sure! I'll just settle the plans down for a sec. Ginny wants the manor to be ready before the wedding", he sighed. Luna waited until he was ready before she started speaking.

"Harry, I hate to break Hermione's confidence by telling you this but she needs your help", Luna said in all seriousness.

"Why? Is something wrong with her?", he was worried.

"You know that Bellatrix tortured Hermione at Malfoy Manor, right? Well, she kept it a secret but now she's been feeling side effects from an obscure dark curse on her body. She told me that she's been researching on a cure so I helped her out. We discovered that the curse can only be lifted using a love-based ritual. It's a blessing that Hermione fits in with the initial requirement, because if she does not, then she would have had to carry this curse until she dies", Luna said in a grave tone.

"What? Tell me all you know Luna! We need to help her!", he panicked.

"Well, the ritual needs for the victim of the curse to be a virgin. Since it's a love-based ritual, then Hermione must make love with a virgin man. Ron slept with Lavender Brown while at Hogwarts so he's out of the picture. All of the Weasley brothers are out as well -", Luna's explanation was interrupted.

"I'll do it! We can't have Hermione suffer!", he was determined to do whatever it takes to help save his best friend, the one person who was always there for him.

"But what about Ginny?", Luna asked.

"She does not have to know. Besides, if she finds out, then she should understand. It's Hermione's life at stake here! We do not know how badly the effect of this dark curse can harm her!", he explained.

"Hermione can find some other man, Harry. You don't have to do this", Luna countered.

"No! I'll do it! Besides, I assume that Hermione would rather, er, do the ritual with me, than to do it with a stranger", he insisted.

"Thank you so much, Harry! I hate to break Hermione's confidence but I know that you will help her", Luna hugged him tightly.

"Luna, when do we need to do the ritual?", he asked awkwardly.

"I'll tell Hermione that you'll do it. We just have to find a venue", Luna said dreamily.
"We can do it here at Grimmauld Place this Sunday evening. I'll think of an excuse to keep Ginny or any of the Weasleys away. We need to do the ritual as soon as possible", he said with conviction and Luna smiled before she stepped into the fireplace to floo away.

Harry closed his eyes as he remembered the only time that he made love with Hermione during the ritual. It started awkwardly; when their lips first touched, he felt guilty about Ron and Ginny, but he strengthened his resolve because he had to do it to save Hermione. When he kissed her again, this time with determination and passion, all thoughts of guilt flew out the window. Something about her lips felt so right. Something about the way her body pressed against his felt like coming home.

He eagerly worshiped her body like a starving man. He made love to her and meant it. The physical connection he felt with her was so different from anything that he ever felt before. Somehow in all the weirdness of the entire situation, it made sense to him to be sharing his body with her. Every touch, every kiss, and every thrust made him feel complete like no other. There are no exact words to describe it, except for the fact that it was a feeling of elation that he never felt before.

To this very day, it remains to be one of his biggest secrets. Everyone thinks that Cho Chang was his first crush at Hogwarts but that was wrong. His first crush at Hogwarts is Hermione Jean Granger. Why else would he have saved her from the troll if he didn't like her in the first place? When he was a young clueless eleven-year-old, Hermione's brilliance always amazed him. Her eyes would sparkle when she reads and he found her bushy hair quite cute. One of the major reasons as to why he was so devastated when she got petrified during their second year, is because he could no longer see her sparkling eyes and her bushy-hair bounce with life. His heart always gave a leap when she smiled at him and hugged him in their first two years at Hogwarts. During their third year, he noticed that Hermione and Ron seemed to have a tension that reminded him of flirting lovers he sees on Aunt Petunia's favorite soap operas. So, he decided to divert his feelings to another smart young lady, Cho Chang. Ever since then, he was able to curb his romantic feelings for Hermione. He was even able to convince himself that he just sees her as a sister. Of course, when I kissed her lips during the ritual and worshiped her body with my own, I only confirmed that it has always been a lie. A lie I convinced myself to believe because of my loyalty to Ron.

He recalled that when Hermione told him she was pregnant with his baby, he felt surprised but he just accepted it. He wanted a family after all and he knew that he was at fault as well because he agreed to do the ritual and he meant everything he did when they made love. The only thing that dampened his acceptance was the reaction from the Weasleys. They got so angry at him and Hermione and he was so sad to have lost the adoptive family he's had for so long. Their hatred pushed him to consume lots of liquor. One night, when he got drunk at the Hog's Head to drown out his sorrows, Ginny Weasley was there and she filled his head with doubts on Hermione's intentions and true character. Ginny filled his mind with thoughts that Hermione was just after him for his money and the prestige of being Lady Potter. To settle his curiosity once for all, he arrived home drunk and immediately asked Hermione as to why they ended up married to each other. Ironic that Ginny called Hermione a gold digger when she is the real gold digger after all! I am the world's biggest idiot for ever believing that devious selfish woman over my best friend.

"Harry! You're drunk", she immediately went to help steady him but he pulled away from her.
"Mione, tell me, why the fuck did we end up married?", he asked in a cold voice as he approached her.

"I'm in love with you Harry. So, I decided to do whatever it takes to steal you away from Ginny", she admitted with tears in her eyes.

How could Hermione betray me like this? I only intended to help her with the dark curse but it was just a ruse all along! She just wanted to trap me in marriage with her! Ginny was right! She is just after the Lady Potter title and my money!

"I hate you, Hermione! You disgust me", he ran to his bedroom and banged the door shut. He punched the wall as his knuckles bled.

"How can the one person I trust most in the world betray me like this? Why?", he said angrily as his magic trashed the room.

"How could you do this to me, Hermione? I trusted you!", he whispered as angry tears fell down his cheeks.

He would always regret the way he treated Hermione after she admitted to tricking him into marriage. It hurt him so much that she betrayed his trust, but the way he had abysmally treated her - bringing random women, the insults, and taking her wand away to force her to manually clean the blasted manor without magic - will always be the biggest mistake of his life. If only he could Avada or crucio himself, then he would. His actions filled her pregnancy with so much pain and stress which affected the baby she was carrying in her womb. His stupidity contributed to the death of his child! A child he even professed to hate in front of her pregnant mother while he was parading his latest conquest! I could clearly remember Hermione's pained expression when I blurted out how much I hated the baby in her womb. That pained face haunts my dreams almost every single night since she left me. I know that was the moment I started to lose her...

He recalled that after he made that rash remark about hating the baby, Hermione never looked at him or cared whatever it was that he was doing anymore. She never even called for him when she gave birth. He didn't even know she already gave birth until he returned home late at night and he could not find her.

"Hermione? Are you here?", he called out upon seeing a wet puddle in the main hall, just a few feet from the fireplace.

"Hermione! Where are you? Clean up this wet puddle, right now!", he yelled. He waited for a few minutes. He was used to her immediately answering his call after all. Although he did notice that she won't even meet his eyes now, ever since he made that comment about hating the baby.

"Hermione?", he called out in a gentler tone but there was still no answer.

"Shit!", he panicked. What if she left? Or what if someone took her? He immediately ran to the library since it was her favorite place. When she was not there, he ran to her bedroom. Upon seeing that she was not there as well, he got scared. Even if he said he hated her, he still did not want anything bad to happen to her. He paused. He then counted the months since the ritual took place before it hit him. She already gave birth to their child!

"St. Mungo's!", he yelled with uneven breaths as he ran from her room to the fireplace.

"Lord Potter, how can we help you?", a female healer batted her eyes at him.
"Is my wife here?", he asked immediately.

"Excuse me, Lord Potter?", another healer addressed him.

"Yes?", he immediately turned to the voice.

"I am Mrs. Potter's healer. I delivered your baby yesterday afternoon", the female healer who looked to be in her sixties informed him.

"Why isn't she home yet?", he asked as he followed the healer who ushered him to an office.

"Lord Potter, I must tell you something important", the healer said as they each took a seat.

"Alright", he said with a nod.

"Mrs. Potter is alright. She'll be up and running tomorrow morning. But your baby, there is something wrong with her", the healer explained gently.

"What's wrong with the baby?", he asked with worry.

"The baby has a very weak pair of lungs. She also has problems with her heart. It would seem that those two organs are not fully developed. She is very sick, Lord Potter", the healer added.

"My baby is a girl?", he was dumbfounded. He was now a father to a baby girl!

"Lord Potter, your daughter can die because she is very sickly!", the healer said bluntly upon realizing that what she said earlier didn't sink into him.

"What?", he screamed in shock.

"Lord Potter, as I said earlier, your daughter has an underdeveloped heart and very weak lungs", the healer stated again.

"But why?", he asked in a defeated tone.

"Has Mrs. Potter been emotionally or physically stressed during the duration of her pregnancy?", the healer asked. The healer's question broke his heart.

"It's my fault the baby is sick! I made Hermione suffer during her entire pregnancy!", he admitted with guilt as tears fell down his cheeks.

"Lord Potter, calm yourself. I already informed Mrs. Potter about the potions that she has to give the baby. Also, whatever or whenever it is, if you feel something is wrong, then take her to St. Mungo's immediately", the healer said in a firm voice. He could only nod as the guilt tore at him.

"Do you want me to show you to Mrs. Potter's room?", the healer asked and he just stood up and quietly followed.

"Here we are, Lord Potter", the healer gestured to Room 314 before she left. He could hear Hermione humming a lullaby to the baby but he can't bring himself to enter the room. He did not deserve to be in Hermione and the baby's presence! His foolishness and pettiness caused Hermione so much pain which ended up affecting their baby! What kind of father is he?

"I can't face them", he whispered to himself. He took out his wand and cast a disillusionment charm on himself. When a healer passed by, he cast a compulsion charm on him so that he would go check on Room 314. As the healer opened the door, he too slipped in Hermione's room.
"Hello, sir! Are you here for Viola's check-up?", Hermione smiled at the healer.

"I am here to check up on you, Mrs. Potter", the male healer said.

"Oh! Of course. I'll just place Viola Lily in her cot", she smiled as she cooed at the baby before gently placing it in the cot beside the hospital bed. He quietly walked to the cot and his heart clenched. Viola Lily Potter looks like a female version of himself except for her nose and lips which she inherited from Hermione. She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen and his stupidity could end up killing her!

"Could you please lie down on the bed, Mrs. Potter", the male healer said. Harry looked at Hermione who immediately complied with the healer's orders. The man waved his wand and diagnostics were conducted.

"All your vital signs appear to be normal, Mrs. Potter. How did your first feeding go?" the healer addressed Hermione.

"My first feeding went fine. Although this little one sometimes pinches on my skin when she feeds", she chuckled.

"Did your husband help you out for the first feeding? Some women need to have their nipples bitten and caressed beforehand to ease the feeding."

"I caressed my nipples myself. I'm fine on my own. I don't need my husband", Harry could hear the venom in her voice.

"Very well then. I'd sign your release papers for tomorrow. You and Viola Lily can go home. I suppose your husband will be helping you tomorrow?"

"My daughter and I will be fine on our own, sir. There's no need to worry", Hermione said with determination.

"I'll be going then, Mrs. Potter", the healer walked towards the door.

"Thank you, sir", Hermione replied. The healer nodded before shutting the door.

"Waaaaahhh!", Viola Lily cried and Harry quietly walked a few feet away. He saw Hermione immediately stand up to cradle Viola from her cot.

"Sssh! Shh! It's alright Vi! Mummy's here! Shh!", she reassured the child as she gently shifted side to side.

"Waaah!"

"Are you hungry?", Hermione moved to the bed and lowered her hospital gown. Viola Lily immediately latched her tiny mouth on her mother's breast.

Harry watched the tender moment between mother and child with shame and regret. It was all his fault that Viola is sick. He knew that Hermione would never forgive him because of this...

"I'm so sorry, Viola Lily. I am so sorry for being so stupid! If only I could turn back time, I would never have hurt you and your mother", he had tears in his eyes as all his mistakes came into mind...

"Viola! Viola! No! Baby, wake up! Please, wake up!", Hermione screamed with agony. Harry
immediately got out of bed as he heard Hermione's screams from her bedroom. He ran and opened
the door. There she was kneeling by the baby's crib, Viola in her arms. One look at Hermione's
distraught face and he understood. Viola Lily Potter is dead!

"Hermione?", he asked in a cracked voice as he went near her.

"Get away from me! I hate you! You're the reason my baby died!", she screamed with venom as
she held the lifeless baby on her chest.

"Hermione, we have to take her to St. Mungo's. Maybe they can do something!", he gently told her
as he walked closer towards her.

"She's dead! I woke up early to feed her but with one glance I knew something was wrong. She was
not crying but she was all pale. I immediately performed the first aid I learned from her healer and
poured her drops of the potion but she still died! She died here in my arms!", she wailed.

"Hermione we should still -"

"How dare you! I know she's dead! If she weren't, don't you think I'd be crying here!", she snarled.

"Expecto Patronum!", it was the first time his Patronus was not Prongs. This time it was just a ball
of mist, he cannot muster enough happiness at this point.

"Please come to Potter Manor. We have an emergency", he ordered his Patronus to head to a
healer in St. Mungo's. After five minutes, he could feel the wards shift and he heard footsteps ran
towards Hermione's bedroom. Since healers are always visiting the manor to monitor Viola Lily's
condition, they already know where to go.

"Lord Potter! What happened?", a male healer asked.

"Our baby. She's dead", he said as tears fell down his cheeks as he gestured to a crying Hermione
who was still cradling their dead daughter.

"Mrs. Potter would you hand us the child please?", a female healer approached Hermione.

"No! Get away from her!", Hermione screamed.

"We're so sorry about this, Lord Potter, Mrs. Potter", the male healer said before he stunned
Hermione. The female healer gently took the baby from Hermione and performed diagnostic tests.

female healer said with sadness.

"Lord Potter, we need you to come with us to St. Mungo's. We need to give Mrs. Potter some
calming draughts and you have to file the baby's death records. Also, you must start to arrange for
the burial details", the male healer addressed him. Harry looked at Hermione who was now laid
on a conjured stretcher. He quietly followed the healer to the fireplace as they flooed to St.
Mungo's. His daughter's death will always bear a large hole in his heart. But if Hermione will go
crazy due to the grief, he would not know what to do...

He would never forget the hatred in Hermione's eyes as he approached her after he finished
organizing Viola Lily's burial details. When she reawakened after being dosed with calming
draughts, he went to her room to check on her. He had never seen such hatred and anger from her
chocolate brown eyes before. He tried to go near her, but she yelled at him to get out with a venom
that he's never heard before. He spent the rest of the night crying outside her hospital room. He knew that their daughter's death will alter her forever...

"Harry Potter! You open this bloody door right now!", an angry voice called out. He did not bother to stand up from his position on the bed. That angry voice did not belong to Hermione anyway. It's been three days since she left him and gave him the divorce papers. All he could do was lie in bed and blame himself for all the mistakes he'd ever done.

"'arry! Open ze door!", another voice called out. He didn't care. Those voices did not belong to Hermione. After all, why would Hermione come for him when he was the reason their daughter died.

"Reducto!", the door of his bedroom shattered into pieces and he didn't flinch. He just continued to stare into space and contemplate his mistakes.

"Harry James Potter! Whatever did you do to Hermione?", an angry Luna Lovegood screamed.

"'arry, how could you do that to 'ermione?", Fleur was just as livid as Luna.

"Do you know where she is?", he asked with a dead voice.

"Hermione left Britain. She wrote to us saying that she filed for divorce. Now answer us! What the hell did you bloody do to her?", Luna stormed in front of him and angrily wrapped a hand on his throat.

"Just kill me, Luna. I deserve it anyway", he replied. Luna slowly let go of his throat but pointed her wand at him.

"Tell us 'arry! What did you do?", Fleur demanded.

"I caused her to be in too much pain and stress when she was pregnant. Viola was born sickly due to the stress. Our baby died. And then Hermione left me too", he admitted as guilty tears started to fall again.

"Why did you hurt 'ermione, 'arry?", Fleur said sadly.

"She broke my trust in her by tricking me into marrying her", he replied. Luna slapped him hard.

"We convinced Hermione to trap you into marriage just to save you from Ginny's plans to steal your wealth!", Luna yelled.

"What? That's not -"

"Do you have a pensieve?", Fleur asked and he nodded. She summoned the pensieve and carefully set it on his bed. He saw Fleur and Luna drop their memories.

"Get your arse in that pensieve right now and tell us what you see!", Luna said with venom. He lowered his face to the runic bowl and he was immersed in the memories. After some time, he pulled out of the pensieve as the memory ended.

"No! No! Please tell me it's not true", he whispered as he sobbed.

"How dare you do that to our friend Harry Potter, when all she's ever done is to unconditionally love you?", Luna spat with venom.
"We thought you would love and respect her 'arry! She was supposed to be your best friend! And you hurt her so much!", Fleur said with sadness.

"I need to talk to her! I need to see her! Please tell me where she is!", he pleaded.

"We know where she is but we will never tell you, Harry Potter! You do not deserve her!", Luna said in a cold voice.

"Please, I'm begging you!", he was on his knees as he cried.

"You do not deserve Hermione Granger, Harry Potter! So just please leave our friend alone!" Luna dragged Fleur to the door.

"She only loved you so much, 'arry! How can you do this to her!", Fleur had tears in her eyes as she and Luna closed the door.

"How could I ever make it up to you, Hermione? What must I do for you to forgive me?", he whispered as he continued to stare at the ceiling. If only I had a time turner...
Confrontations at Dinner

It was one of Harry's most awkward moments when he had to visit Draco Malfoy's office at St. Mungo's just to secure the blonde man's address. The bloody ferret had this amused and smug look.
on his face as he explained that Hermione told him to meet her at the Malfoy residence. Now here is...

He was standing in front a simple yet elegant two-story home which looked peaceful and happy. The ferret sure did get lucky in life! The house is very small compared to the opulent Malfoy manor but he could see that this house was indeed a home. He knocked on the door and Astoria Malfoy opened it.

"Good evening, Mrs. Malfoy. I am here to meet Hermione for dinner", he said politely.

"Who said you were welcome here for dinner, Potter?", Draco Malfoy drawled.

"Draco! Be nice", Astoria warned.

"I'm taking her out, Malfoy", he replied calmly but deep inside he was screaming. This albino ferret is still so bloody annoying!

"Tori? Can I borrow your red sandals, please?", Hermione's voice echoed from the stairs.

"Sure, 'Mione. Oh, and you better hurry up, your, er, Lord Potter's here", Astoria yelled back.

"I'll be down in a few minutes", Hermione replied.

"Listen here, Potter. We don't want any funny business. Have Hermione back here by midnight", Draco scowled.

"She's not your daughter, Malfoy", he glared at his childhood nemesis.

"You hurt her any more than you did, Potter, and I'm coming after you. Hermione is a very dear friend of ours. Besides, we can't have our son's favorite aunt get hurt", Draco told him fiercely.

"Mummy? Where's Auntie 'Mione going?", a little boy who was almost the replica of the young ferret he went to Hogwarts with came down the stairs and immediately hugged his mother.

"Scorpius, say hi to Lord Harry Potter", Astoria told the little boy.

"Hello, Lord Potter!", the little boy smiled politely.

"Hi, Scorpius! Nice to meet you", he greeted with a smile.

"Hi everyone!", Hermione had a big smile on her face as her eyes were trained on the youngest Malfoy. She wore tight-fitted denim jeans and a plain white sleeveless blouse. Her hair was let loose and she had no make-up on.

"Auntie 'Mione you look pretty!", Scorpius hugged his honorary aunt's waist.

"Awww! Thank you, Scorp!", she kissed the little boy's cheeks.

"I'm gonna marry you when I grow up Auntie 'Mione!", the boy had a big grin on his face and the older Malfoys chuckled.

"If only I was your age, Scorp, I'd be happy to. But you're too young for me buddy. When you get older, you will meet a beautiful and intelligent girl who will capture your heart, I promise", she then hugged the little boy.

"I love you Auntie 'Mione!", the boy smiled before returning to his mother.
"I love you too, Scorp", Hermione smiled.

"You be careful around, Potter, Hermione", Draco said sternly and Hermione rolled her eyes.

"I'll see you guys later. If you're still awake when I get back, maybe we can briefly discuss the latest updates on the epidemic, okay?"

"Aren't you bringing a jacket, Mione?", Astoria asked.

"Oh, right! Accio leather jacket", she pointed her wand towards the stairs and a black leather jacket floated.

"Er, are you ready to go?", he asked.

"Of course. So how do we get there?", she turned to him after waving goodbye to the Malfoys.

"Apparition", he held her arm firmly and they disappeared. They arrived in a dark empty corner a few blocks away from his flat.

"Where are we going?"

"I reckon you don't want this talk to take place in the Wizarding World to avoid someone overhearing it", he explained as he led her towards the direction of his flat. As they entered the twenty-story building, he was greeted by the bellman and he nodded politely. He led Hermione to the elevators and a few seconds later, they arrived at the top floor. He tapped his access card and together they entered the penthouse suite.

"Where are we?", she asked with curiosity as her eyes took in the sight of the large apartment.

"I live here", he answered simply.

"What happened to your large manor?", she inquired.

"I sold it years ago."

"I see." 

"So, you hungry?", he pointed towards the dinner table.

"Just a bit. It was a free day for us today but I did some readings on the progress of the research for the epidemic", she answered as she followed him to the dinner table.

"How's that going by the way?"

"Irie finally managed to map how the origin of the epidemic spread. Patient A is Freddie Weasley. He found a toy that when touched, activated the virus. Ever since the first contact to his skin, he immediately became a carrier of the virus. The next pureblood kid he touched, caught the virus as well and so on and so on. We investigated with the non-pureblood kids who had tactile contact with Patient A and those who were infected, but they were all fine. We will be submitting a report to the aurors tomorrow so that you can investigate as to how the toy ever came into the hands of Freddie. We have a theory that it was planted there so he can access it and have the virus spread. Maybe someone is angry at the Weasleys? Or maybe they are just easier to reach assuming George still owns a joke shop? Also, it is interesting to note that only pureblood kids are victims. Maybe there is an anti-pureblood faction in Britain that we don't know of? We're not certain of anything but that's our speculation on the motive. That type of investigation already falls on your lot
anyway; we just thought that maybe these initial leads can be helpful to you. My team and the rest of the healers will now be focusing on the cure and moving forward, creating a vaccine formula", she explained as they sat down.

"Thank you for telling me this. I'll prepare the aurors tomorrow. The leads you have found out will give us a head start on the case", he replied.

"No need to thank me. I'm just doing my job. The sooner we can find a cure for the children and hopefully derive the vaccination formula, then my team and I can return to Switzerland", she said with formality.

"Do you want to talk first and eat or -"

"Let's eat while we talk. That way we can get on with it faster", Hermione interrupted as she cut a slice of pizza and placed it on her plate. He followed her lead as he helped himself to a slice of pizza and some chicken. He also opened the bottle of red wine and poured it to each of their glasses.

"Do you want to know anything? Have any questions?", he broke the silence after he had a few bites of the pizza and chicken he bought from a local bistro.

"Just one. Why did the divorce papers I drafted fail? Is there a stipulation not valid due to pureblood law?"

"No. The divorce papers you prepared were ironclad. It's amazing how detailed the papers were and you knew what coincides with pureblood law", he replied and he saw her frown.

"Then what the bloody hell went wrong?", he could tell that she just reining in her anger.

"I did not sign it. Therefore, I did not pass it to be notarized. I had a lawyer check it and he was impressed. He even told me for someone with no legal education, your work was spot on", he said with nonchalance.

"What the hell is wrong with you? All you had to do was sign it and then have it notarized!", she snapped.

"I'm not signing anything until we talk about the ramifications to our relationship", he said calmly.

"What relationship? Harry, our marriage was a lie from the start! I tricked you, it worked! I got pregnant, we married! I admitted the truth, you got angry! You made me suffer, the baby suffered. Viola died and that's the end. What's there to talk about?", she said with melancholy.

"I want to know why you didn't tell me about Ginny's plan to marry me for my money before she lives happily ever after with Zabini", he demanded.

"How did you know about that?", she was surprised.

"Luna and Fleur came to me three days after you left. They showed me their memories. They showed me Ginny meeting Zabini and talking about their plan to legally steal from me. They also showed me that the whole trickery was their idea. Now tell me, Hermione. Why didn't you come to me about Ginny's plan in the first place? You could have just told me you know", his tone was non-accusatory but he understood she was aware of the hurt he tried to conceal.

"Remember the third year? The firebolt fiasco? I reckon it was the same thing. You were so in love with Ginny that you would not believe the truth even if we showed you the memories. Worst case
if we told you, you would accuse us of tarnishing your dear Ginny's reputation and throw us out. I know how much you love the Weasleys, Harry. You're even more or less blind to their faults", she defended herself.

"While I would like to deny your claim, I would have to admit that you have a very good point", he sighed.

"Look, it's been ten years. I can only say that I am very sorry for deliberately tricking you into marrying me. I did not agree with Fleur and Luna's plan but if it was the only way to save you, then I just went along with it", she sighed.

"Hermione, they planned to have you sacrifice yourself in marriage. Whatever possessed you into agreeing? How could you give up your happiness like that!", he insisted.

"I was in love with you, okay? At that point, after the war, I only wanted you to be safe and happy. I know that it's just money Ginny wanted to steal from you, but that money is all you have from your parents and Sirius. I can't let her do that to you. So, if the consequence of my trickery is all the hate and scorn, then I deserved that. Besides, I was young and naïve then. I loved you so much that I even volunteered to come with you and die at Voldemort's hand", she admitted.

"If you loved me, then why did you leave?", he asked.

"I started falling out of love with you the day you said you hated my baby", she replied as a tear fell.

"And when she died, you hated me", he said sadly.

"Yes", she sighed.

"I understand. I even hate myself for what I did", he admitted.

"The whole thing was my fault anyway", she shrugged.

"We're both at fault! I was young and stupid. And you were crazy in love with me", he conceded.

"See? We were doomed from the start?", she smiled sadly.

"I am so sorry for all the pain I've caused you Hermione", he looked into her eyes so that she could see his sincerity.

"What can your sorry do if the damage is already done, Harry?", she retorted as another tear fell.

"I'll do anything, Hermione. Please! I'm begging you! Just, just, forgive me", his voice cracked as he too now had tears in his eyes.

"It's been ten years, Harry. I don't feel any hate for you anymore. I just feel empty. I am over you. But I have not moved on from Viola Lily's death. You made mistakes. I made a lot too. I could have defended myself, confronted you for all the hurt you caused me during my pregnancy but I did not. I just accepted everything because I thought I deserved it. Maybe I did. Maybe I did not. But I do realize now that we're both to blame for the entire thing. You did your part. And by being not strong enough to defend myself, I also did mine. We're both to blame for Viola's death. We could blame it on our youth. Or stupidity. But at the end of the day, we could not change anything", she sighed.

"I am truly very sorry, Hermione. I did not mean to hurt you so badly. I let my blind loyalty to the
Weasleys and my stupid pride control me”, his tears were now free-falling.

"Then let's set things right, Harry. Just let me go", her tear-streaked face looked so sad.

"I can't Hermione", he replied.

"But why? We both need to move forward", she insisted.

"I can't let you go. I need you", he said in a defeated voice.

"We're just not meant to be together, Harry. So, please, just set me free", she pleaded.

"I'm sorry. But I can't, Hermione. Ask me anything but that", he cried.

"But why?"

"I can't let you go. Not now. When I finally realized how much I'm in love with you", his voice was so sad.

"I'm sorry, Harry. But I am over you", she sniffed as more tears fell.

"I know", he whispered.

"Please, Harry. Set me free. We both deserve to move on from this", she begged.

"Give me one last chance, Hermione. Please just one", he implored as tears continued to fall. His emerald green eyes were so void of life.

"I am sorry, Harry. But I just don't love you anymore", she painfully admitted.

"Please, Hermione. Give me nine months. I'll prove to you that I've changed. But if it's still not enough, then I'll give you the divorce you want. Please, Hermione. Just give me this one last chance", his voice and his eyes were pleading.

"Nine months and then you'll let me go", she conceded after a few minutes of contemplating his request.

"Nine months. That's all I ask", he sighed.

"For the sake of the friendship that we lost, Harry, I'll give you nine months. But if it does not work out, you have to give me your word that you will let me go", she acquiesced.

"I promise", his voice was laced with seriousness and sorrow.

"Alright", she sighed.
Hermione directly apparated from Harry’s penthouse suite to the Malfoy’s front yard. She was confused, stressed, and uncertain regarding the nine-month chance she was forced to give Harry.
Yes, she was forced to give in to his request because it is the only way for her to get the divorce she so wanted. Now, here she was standing at her dear friends’ front yard in need of someone to talk to. Any advice and words of wisdom will do her a lot of good right now!

"Tori? Drake? Are you still awake?", she called out as she entered the house. Her dinner with Harry ended at nine. After their heartfelt discussion, she just felt the need to leave immediately as soon as dessert was over.

"Hello, Mione! How did it go? You look stressed darling", Astoria approached her from the kitchen.

"Oh, Tori! I need some advice. I'm so confused! There I was eager to secure a divorce and then he told me unsettling things. Long story short, I ended up agreeing to give him nine months to win me back. We agreed that should he fail to win my affections, then he will grant me the divorce I want", she explained frantically. Her dear friend gently escorted her to take a seat on the couch.

"Draco darling, please get Scorp ready for bed and come back here once he's asleep. Hermione needs to talk to us"; Astoria told her husband who just entered the living room with their little boy.

"Auntie Mione, why so sad?", Scorpius ran to his favorite aunt and hugged her.

"Just grown-up problems, Scorp. Nothing to worry about. You have a good night's rest, okay?", she kissed the boy's forehead before the boy hugged his mother. Scorpius ran back to his father and they headed upstairs.

"I think we need to call Fleur, Luna, and Neville here. After all, who else should you talk to about this but your last five British friends, eh?", Tori smiled and she nodded.

"Expecto Patronum!", a bright white ball of light appeared and Astoria sent out a message for Fleur Weasley to come to the Malfoy residence immediately since Hermione needs their help. As the Patronus floated away, Astoria got off the couch and floo-called the Longbottoms.

"Lu? Nev? Are you there? It's Astoria!", she addressed the flames.

"Hi, Tori! What's up?", Luna greeted cheerfully.

"Harry and Hermione just had dinner. It's about our divorce. She needs our advice. If you can bring Neville here at our house, all the better", Astoria informed the blonde.

"We'll be there in five minutes, tops. I'll just have Cherry watch over our baby", Luna said before the connection was cut-off.

"Tori, 'ermione, I'll be there soon", a white ball of light hovered over them as Fleur's voice could be heard.

At exactly five minutes later, Luna and Neville Longbottom apparated into the Malfoy's yard. Astoria ushered the couple to get comfortable around the living room. The Malfoy's house-elf, Pinky, brought in some tea and biscuits. As they chatted about each other's day, Fleur Weasley arrived. Twenty minutes after the guests walked in, Draco came down the stairs and sat beside his wife.

"Now that we are all here, Mione could you please tell us what happened", Astoria started the conversation.

"So, when I arrived here in Britain I was surprised to still be addressed as Lady Potter by the
minister himself. Harry was assigned as our Auror guard that day and he escorted us to St. Mungo's. Before I stepped into the floo, he invited me to dinner to talk about the divorce. I grudgingly accepted. This evening, he came here to pick me up and he apparated me someplace near his flat in muggle London. He said that he's been living in the penthouse suite ever since he sold the manor. He asked me if I had questions for him and I only inquired as to why the divorce papers were not legally acknowledged. He told me that his lawyer said the one I drafted was ironclad. The only reason it's not effective is that he did not sign it. Therefore, no signature from him, no notary, meaning no divorce", she explained.

"What else did he say?", Luna asked eagerly.

"You guys owe me big time for not informing me that all this time, I am still the Lady Potter!", she hissed and her friends gulped. Being the most magically powerful person in the room, she can be a formidable witch so her friends have the right to be scared.

"Mione, we tried to tell you but every time we mention Harry you immediately change the topic", Astoria defended and everyone else nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, I reckon that's what happened", she sighed.

"What else did 'arry say?", Fleur prodded.

"He told me that you and Luna went to see him after I left. He said that you showed him the memories of Ginny's plan and how we managed to trick him into marrying me. He asked why I did not just tell him in the first place, then I replied that he was blinded by his loyalty for the Weasleys. I even stated the Firebolt fiasco in our third year as an example", she continued.

"And?", Draco tried to hide his enthusiasm but his face betrayed him.

"He begged me for my forgiveness. I told him I am over him. I pleaded for the divorce. He told me that I can ask him anything except that. Anyway, the point is, he says that he is in love with me. He told him that I do not love him anymore. He begged me for one last chance. He would try to win me back in nine months. If after that, I still won't fall in love with him, then he will let me go. After dessert, I immediately returned here. There's not much talk after we agreed", she finished her narration.

"Well, it was rather obvious that he'd fallen in love with you after you left. At first, we thought it was just his guilt and shame for what he did to you and Viola", Luna stated.

"How do you feel about all this Hermione? Do you want to get back together with Potter?", Draco asked.

"I don't feel anything for him anymore. I do not even hate him now. I just want to be free. I guess the reason as to why I agreed to his request is I wanted to show him that despite everything, I valued our friendship", she sighed.

"Merlin! Why are you so bloody nice, Hermione! Is this a Gryffindor thing?", Draco was exasperated.

"Did he explain why he asked for nine months?", Neville asked.

"Please! Isn't it obvious? Potter will try to impregnate you again. Hence, nine months. If you get pregnant, no divorce can take place. He's a lord! Not just here in the wizarding world, but even in the muggle one. By law, if you get pregnant again, you will be his forever", Draco explained with a scowl.
"Oh. Is that how it is? I thought the nine months was the equivalent for the time he made me suffer", she stated.

"You and Draco are both right. Harry would do his best to make it up to you but I am also damn sure that he will do his best to prevent any divorce from happening. The only way to do that is to get you pregnant", Neville agreed.

"'ermione! You must be careful! You are still very innocent! You haven't been with a man since 'arry! If you want to get the divorce, you must never give in to his seduction", Fleur insisted.

"What? Fleur! That's impossible! Hermione has had around four lovers during her stint at the IMM. That's not even counting her boy toys in Switzerland!", Astoria countered.

"'ow can you say 'ermione has had many lovers?", Fleur asked with a brow raised.

"She told me so. Besides, Draco heard her shagging that gorgeous Latino Pablo Zamora once when he knocked on her door, but all he heard was moaning and grunting", Astoria insisted.

"'ermione, perhaps it is time for you to be honest", Fleur challenged.

"I am so sorry Tori, Drake. The truth is I never slept with anyone but Harry. Er, Pablo Zamora was a closet gay and to hide the truth, he asked me to be his pretend lover. The moaning and grunting Draco heard were staged. I knew you would interpret my not seeing someone else as me pining on Harry, Tori, given your expertise in psychology. So, er, I lied. I am so sorry", she admitted.

"Merlin! I never thought your tales were all lies!", Astoria gasped in surprise.

"What about Muller? The one you said who had the largest prick you've ever seen?", Draco challenged.

"Er, he just wanted me to spread tales about his size so that more girls will sleep with him", she said sheepishly.

"So, all this bloody time, it's still Harry bloody Potter?", Draco was astounded.

"I just don't want to sleep around. Besides, every date I had been on goes two ways. The men either want to bag Harry bloody Potter's ex-wife or have me as a trophy girlfriend with my reputation as one of ICW's best medical researchers", she told her friends.

"Hermione, tell us, are you still in love with Harry?", Luna looked into her eyes.

"I am over him, okay! It's just, I don't want to sleep around. Besides, having sex is painful anyway", she muttered and her friends laughed.

"Merlin! Potter ruined your heart and your you know what!", Draco muttered.

"To give the guy some credit, he only broke my heart. Er, it's just that when we did it, he was, er, well endowed. It hurt like hell so, you get what I mean!", she confessed as her cheeks flushed.

"So, the biggest prick you've ever seen belongs to Potter?", Draco was amused.

"Well since I've only seen one, then yes!", she huffed.

"In Hermione's defense, sharing dorms with Harry, all of his roommates can verify Hermione's, er, predicament. We even thought it was an indicator of his magical power as well", Neville added.
"Fleur, is Neville's theory true?", Luna asked the half-Veela.

"Neville's theory is right in some cases. But for the very powerful wizards, it can be indicated by their phallic size as well", Fleur remarked.

"So, given that Harry is the most powerful wizard in Britain…", Neville muttered.

"No wonder Granger here is scarred! Merlin! Potter must be carrying something quite scary down there", Draco said with a pitying tone.

"Can we please discuss my problem please?", Hermione whined and her friends chuckled.

"While I can sense that you've only been with one man, 'ermione, I can tell that you no longer have feelings for him as well", Fleur looked into her eyes as she made that statement.

"So, if we want to make sure Hermione gets the divorce, we must make sure that Potter won't get any chance to bed her", Draco said matter-of-factly.

"But that is too easy. What if we make it harder for Harry by having him prove his love to her? We give him very difficult tasks so that he will just give up", Luna suggested.

"Er, love, this is Harry Potter we are talking about. Bloke will do anything once he gets his mind into it. He faced Voldemort's killing curse and survived twice, remember?", Neville rebutted his wife's idea.

"That's true, Neville! Potter is one bloody determined bloke! We are also no match for his power, influence, and wealth. If we follow Luna's suggestion, we have to make it hard", Draco agreed.

"Why don't we gather a list of things that Hermione will have him do?", Astoria stated.

"I know Harry, he won't give up easily. What will I do if he accomplishes each task? I can't just get back together with him since he conquered the challenges we drafted", Hermione told everyone.

"'ermione is right! Besides, whether we like it or not, 'arry Potter is one fine looking wizard. You are in danger of falling for his charms all over again", Fleur remarked.

"Hermione, what made you fall in love with Harry in the first place?", Luna inquired.

"Well, he saved me from a bloody troll when he was eleven. Name any other bloke who's crazy enough to do that? And well, he was always a decent friend. He respected me and supported me", she admitted.

"Okay! So, rule number one, Potter must not show Hermione any heroic deeds. You like his knight-in-shining-armor persona so you must avoid instances of seeing him play the hero", Draco declared and everyone nodded.

"What about physical traits, Hermione?" Astoria asked.

"I used to love staring into his green eyes", she confessed.

"Okay! So, no prolonged eye contacts", Neville stated.

"What else?", Fleur prodded.

"He is rather fit", she muttered and the women laughed as the men rolled their eyes.
"Merlin! At the rate this is going, the only way to protect you Hermione is to bring in someone to act like your boyfriend so that Potter will leave you alone", Draco whined.

"Don't be an idiot, Draco. If we bring in a pretend boyfriend, Harry will only work harder to win her over because he'll get jealous. Besides, no offense Mione, Harry Potter is her husband. He has all the claims on her over any other man", Neville said.

"I have an idea!", Luna said with excitement.

"Well?", chorused everyone.

"Draco and Astoria along with your team of researchers should always accompany you when Harry's around. That way, he can't seduce you or try anything. Also, do avoid eye contact and stuff", Luna stated.

"Don't you want to make him suffer, Hermione? To see if his intentions are real? At the very least, he deserves to be humiliated for what he did to you. Remember that horrid articles in the Daily Prophet?", Astoria said.

"'ermione, what if you demand 'arry to reveal all he has done to you during your one year of marriage? That way he would also expose Ginny's plan. The wizarding world needs to know your side. You can have this as one of your conditions", Fleur suggested and the rest of her friends nodded.

"That is a good idea! That way my name could in a way be cleared or at the very least, my side will be heard from his point of view", Hermione saw the merit in the idea.

"I'll write it down here. The things Harry Potter must do to secure your forgiveness", Astoria summoned a parchment and quill.

They all stayed late until midnight as they thought of tasks and challenges that Harry must do to prove his sincerity towards her. After the list was completed, Hermione said goodbye to her other friends and scheduled catch up times with each of them. Draco and Astoria waved her good night as she reviewed the list they drafted together.

The things Harry Potter must do to secure Hermione Granger's forgiveness:

1. Admit all he has done during their marriage and all he knows about why it took place in a wizarding magazine
2. Have all the women he slept with during their marriage to come and apologize to Hermione
3. Present concrete evidence that Viola Lily Potter has forgiven him
4. He should sing in front of the crowd gathered at the Hogwarts Class Reunion
5. Let Hermione's friends hex and beat him for one whole hour without fighting back
6. Convince and secure Hermione's parents' approval of him
7. Convince Hermione's friends that he deserves to be forgiven
8. Donate to a cause that Hermione is highly supportive about
9. Kneel outside the Malfoy residence for 24 hours on one weekend wherein Hermione is living
Hermione looked at the ten things her friends listed. Only two of her ideas were on the list. The first was him singing at the Hogwarts reunion when Luna told her that she was organizing the event. She knew how much Harry hated attention so she figured it would be a real challenge for him. The second was the assurance that he would let her go if she can't love him back. Now she just has to hand over the list to Harry and remember her friends' reminders: (1) avoid eye contact; (2) don't let him get close when you're alone; (3) avoid instances where he can be your knight-in-shining-armor; and the most important one (4) do not give him the chance to get you pregnant.

Meanwhile, in a large penthouse suite, a raven-haired man spent some time talking to the spirit of his beautiful daughter through the resurrection stone…
"I am sorry, Harry. But I just don't love you anymore"

That one line from Hermione has been going on and on in Harry Potter's head ever since dinner.
ended. The way her chocolate brown eyes were filled with such honesty and sadness, he could tell that she meant that statement. It hurt so much that she no longer loved him. She used to be the one person who never abandoned him. Why *am I such a f*cked-up idiot that I screwed over the best thing that's ever happened in my life?*

"**Accio resurrection stone**," he whispered to the empty bedroom as he raised a hand. A few seconds later, the second hallow floated towards him. He turned the resurrection stone three times in his hand and thought about his departed daughter.

"Hi, daddy!", the spirit of a little girl with curly raven-hair, emerald green eyes, and Hermione's face happily greeted him.

"Hello, Viola Lily!", he smiled at the spirit.

"I saw you talking to mummy awhile ago", the spirit informed him.

"You look just like the first time I saw her on the Hogwarts Express during my first year. You too are so alike, except for the hair color and the eyes, of course. Is this how you're supposed to look like if only you were still here with us?", he said sadly.

"Yeah, I guess so, daddy. At least that's what Mister Death said", she giggled. It was such a beautiful sound but it brings such sadness straight to his heart.

"What else does Mister Death say?", he playfully asked. Viola Lily was so full of spunk that reminded him of the young Hermione he first met at Hogwarts.

"Well Mister Death says that if you want to meet my little brother and little sister you must win my mummy back", Viola Lily said in a sing-song voice.

"Your mummy does not love me anymore, baby", he said sadly.

"I know that daddy. I heard you two talking after all! But does that mean that you will give up?", even Hermione's bossy know-it-all attitude was inherited by their daughter.

"Of course not, baby. It's just I know I do not deserve her. I hurt your mummy so much. And it was my fault that you died", he now had tears in his eyes.

"Well, Mister Death said that I was not meant to be with you", Viola stated.

"What does that mean?", he asked tearfully.

"I don't know, Mister Death is weird. He just told me that I was born to just live very shortly this time around. When I asked if time could be changed, he just smirked. He's annoying like that", Viola huffed and he chuckled.

"You know, your mother used to do that a lot. Huff at me when I do something stupid", he told the spirit.

"Well, I was looking at your experiences at Hogwarts with grandma, grandpa, and Sirius. And daddy, you did a lot of stupid things", his daughter said cheekily.

"You are your mother's daughter", he commented sadly.

"I know! Isn't mum awesome? She'll be able to heal those children, I'm sure. Mister Death is a big fan of mum, even if he says that she saves so many people who should just die already", she
chuckled.

"You do know that your mother gives her best every single day because of her love for you, right?"

"Oh, I do know that, daddy! It saddens me that she still blames herself so much. If only I can tell her how proud I am of her", his daughter said sadly.

"I am so sorry for what I did to you baby. If only I can turn back time, I would", he sobbed.

"Oh, I asked Mister Death about that. He says it's possible but you can't do it. He thinks mum can figure out how to do it since he says that she's the smartest person he's ever seen since Rowena Ravenclaw", Viola Lily remarked.

"Death said Hermione can figure out a way to power a long-term time-turner?", he asked.

"Of course! Mister Death says mum's awesome like that! Although, he did remark that mum lacks the power to pull the thing off. I asked him what thing and he just laughed at me. Mister Death is so annoying sometimes", she snorted.

"Do you understand what you're telling me, baby? Did you just tell me I can sort things out by turning back time?", he was very serious now.

"Hey! I just told you what Mister Death told me, daddy", she whined.

"Why are you telling me these things, baby?"

"You called me here daddy, so it's not my fault!", she huffed and he laughed.

"You are such a smart cheeky lady", he remarked and the spirit grinned proudly.

"Daddy, you need to get together with mummy. My little brother and little sister are so annoying. I reckon they are better off with you and mum", she sighed.

"Really? You have a brother and a sister there?", he asked.

"Yes. Mister Death separates spirits here. One for the happy dead which I belong to, one for those who will still be born, and one for the bad ones. He showed me the place where my little brother and little sister are. They can't wait to see you and mum. The only place Mister Death did not show me is the place for the bad ones. He says it's an ugly sight. He told me Mister Voldy something is there", she explained.

"Did Death show other spirits around? Or just you?", he inquired.

"Mister Death says I am the only person who he allows to cross over to the place of the spirits of those still unborn", she said proudly.

"Did he say why?"

"He just says that it's some sort of favor to you for sending Mister Voldy thingy to the bad place", she shrugged.

"Baby, I've been talking to you whenever I can since you have forgiven me. You've never told me things like these before", he remarked.

"Well, I just tell you what I can remember from Mister Death, daddy. I told you he's weird like that!", she rolled her eyes.
"What else does Mister Death say?"

"Not much. I already told you the important things. Oh! I forgot! Rowena Ravenclaw wants to tell mum that she's very proud of her many times' great-granddaughter. She brags to the spirits here when mum saves another life while Mister Death grumbles. It's so funny to watch", she laughed.

"Hermione is a descendant of Rowena Ravenclaw?", he was shocked.

"Yeah. Miss Rowena says that mummy is a descendant from her squib brother. I don't even know what squib means. But Miss Rowena is so smart!", she admired the Ravenclaw foundress.

"You do know that Rowena Ravenclaw is a Hogwarts founder, right?"

"Of course, I do! She along with Mister Godric, Mister Salazar, and Miss Helga built Hogwarts", she stated.

"You met the founders?"

"Daddy! Dead people just meet each other here. Oh, and Mister Godric says that he's so disappointed in you. He told me to tell you that he can't imagine any descendant of his treating a lady so badly. Miss Rowena says that you better watch your back when you die since she's going to hex you for hurting mummy. You really should be careful, daddy. Miss Rowena can be mean when she's angry", her daughter narrated.

"Viola Lily Potter, you are having way too much fun there", he said with amusement.

"It's fun to talk to dead older people. I learn a lot from them", she shrugged.

"I can see why they are so fond of you baby", he sighed.

"So, daddy? What are you going to do about mummy?", she crossed her arms and gave him a stern look.

"I don't know baby", he sighed.

"Daddy! How could you not know? My daddy, Harry James Potter, does not give up! You remember when you first tried to talk to me and I wouldn't answer your call? And then it was grandma, grandpa, Sirius, Remus, and Nymphy who would talk to you? They gave you a good scolding, didn't they? But did you give up? No! I didn't talk to you for a year no matter how much you tried to call me; did you give up? No! So why should you give up now, daddy?", she was yelling now which was frankly so adorable. It's like a mini Hermione going on about a S.P.E.W campaign.

"I know baby but, she does not love me anymore. Frankly, I don't blame her", he sighed.

"My daddy is not a quitter! Get your act together, daddy!", she huffed angrily.

"Fine! Fine! Merlin! It's like talking to a little Hermione when I'm having one of those moods", he rolled his eyes and the spirit snorted.

"You're lucky I inherited mummy's spirit! If I were like you, I'd be all grumpy and moody right now", she said cheekily and he laughed.

"I love you Viola Lily", he said fondly.

"I would love you more daddy if you get your act together and win my mummy back", she scoffed.
"Oh alright, young lady!", he rolled his eyes.

"So? Do you have any ideas?", the spirit asked with excitement, that he could see her bouncing up and down, which in this case, is floating up and down.

"Er, no", he admitted sheepishly.

"Grandma Lily and Sirius were right! You are hopeless when it comes to women, daddy", she scoffed.

"What else do they say?"

"Well, Sirius says that if only he didn't die, he would have given you advice on how to win mum over when you were younger. But now that he's dead and he saw what you did to mum, well, he reckons you should grovel on your feet", she chuckled.

"Great! Even Sirius hates me", he sighed.

"Oh, he doesn't hate you, daddy. Sirius just wants you to learn your lesson. Also, he says it'd be fun to watch you chase mummy just like grandpa did with grandma", she said sympathetically.

"If Sirius wants me to learn my lesson, then why do you even talk to me now, baby? Why do you even forgive me when I hurt you so much?", he said sadly.

"Well, I can feel your sincerity daddy. Spirits can tell when a person is lying you know. Besides, I am proud of how you changed. Also, Mister Death says that you didn't mean what you did to me and mum. He says it's something like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or something. He also showed me that you had a lot of issues growing up. He told me you don't even understand your emotions very well. Mister Death says that you've been in love with mum ever since she almost died when you were in your fifth year but you're just too stupid to realize it. Lastly, Mister Death thinks you were so blinded by Ronald Weasley's claim on mum which is non-existent by the way", she explained.

"You seem close to Death, Viola Lily", he chuckled.

"I told you he likes me because of mum. You know, when mum dies, I should warn her. I think Mister Death fancies her or something", she rolled her eyes in exasperation.

"Talking to you always brings a smile to my face, baby", he sighed.

"I know daddy. But I believe you should get out more. It's not healthy how you spend all your time looking for mummy, visiting my grave, doing your work, managing the charity you built for me, and talking to me", she said sadly.

"My life's just so empty baby", he sighed.

"No, it's not. You're alive. You now found mum. You can get together again!", she cheered.

"I will try my best, baby, but don't expect too much. You know your mother. Besides, I know how much I screwed up", he smiled sadly.

"Do you want me to ask Miss Rowena, Mister Godric, Miss Helga, and Mister Salazar for advice? They are really smart and a lot of spirits rely on them for wisdom", she suggested.

"I'll be alright, baby. You don't need to do that for me", he smiled.
"Well, I would still ask them", she said with determination.

"I can't believe you are friends with Salazar Slytherin", he remarked.

"Oh, Mister Salazar is an interesting fellow. He talks to snakes and other reptiles. He tells me about dragons too. He even tells me I can do all of that as well. He even gave me a baby snake; I can't show her to you though since it's a breed that only exists here. Mister Death won't allow me to show you because he says it's against the rules."

"Really? You are also a parslemouth?"

"Yep! Didn't see that one coming, did you daddy?", she said smugly.

"So, what else did you inherit from me aside from the hair and the eyes, Miss Potter?", he chuckled.

"Well, the founders said that I would have been a Slytherin. Something that comes from you, I believe. Oh, and I do love to fly", she said happily.

"So even the dead play Quidditch?"

"Daddy! The dead ones who live with Mister Death in a happy place can do anything they want. Only the bad ones live in a sad place", she huffed.

"Good to know, baby. Good to know", he chuckled.

"Daddy, why don't you talk to me again next week? That way I can ask the founders for ideas on how to help you win mum back", she offered.

"I thought it hurts you to keep on talking to me, baby?", he asked with worry.

"It used to hurt me but now that you need my help, well, it's alright. It's the older dead people who are most affected by that anyway. Since I died at three months, I don't miss much of the world. I can only remember mummy's voice, hugs, kisses, and your whispers when mummy is asleep and you talk to me", she shrugged.

"I am sorry baby", he sighed.

"Daddy! You've said that like a million times already", she rolled her eyes.

"I know but -"

"I love you, daddy! Now go to sleep and I'll ask the older spirits for help", with that Viola Lily Potter's spirit faded away.

"I love you, Viola Lily. And once again, I am so sorry", he wiped a tear from his eyes as he went to sleep.

The next day, Harry woke up to a sound of flapping wings and screeching from his window. He groggily walked towards the noise and saw a brown barn owl with a roll of parchment on its leg. He opened the window and the owl landed on the side table in his bedroom. He gently stroked the bird and wandlessly summoned some owl treats. The owl lifted its leg and he carefully removed the parchment. The elegant scrawl could only be from Hermione Granger. He'd know her handwriting anywhere due to reading her notes and homework for six years at Hogwarts.
November 25, 2010

Harry,

Per our agreement last night, I believe rules must be in place. Today shall be the first day for the nine-month count. That being said, our agreement will expire on August 25, 2011. Ironically, that is Viola Lily's death anniversary.

I do hope you keep your promise.

Please see the attached conditions my friends and I want you to do. You don't need to do them but I think nine months is just too long a time. Since I gave in to your request, maybe you can give in to mine. Should you have any questions, please feel free to send a reply.

Have a nice day,

Your soon-to-be official ex-wife

Hermione Granger

"Bring it on, Lady Potter!", he chuckled as he read the first note. His eyes then scanned the next one...

The things Harry Potter must do to secure Hermione Granger's forgiveness:

1. Admit all he has done during their marriage and all he knows about why it took place in a wizarding magazine
2. Have all the women he slept with during their marriage to come and apologize to Hermione
3. Present concrete evidence that Viola Lily Potter has forgiven him
4. He should sing in front of the crowd gathered at the Hogwarts Class Reunion
5. Let Hermione's friends hex and beat him for one whole hour without fighting back
6. Convince and secure Hermione's parents' approval of him
7. Convince Hermione's friends that he deserves to be forgiven
8. Donate to a cause that Hermione is highly supportive about
9. Kneel outside the Malfoy residence for 24 hours on one weekend wherein Hermione is living there
10. If he can't secure her love, he will let her go when nine months has passed

"This has Malfoy, Luna, and Fleur written all over it!", he chuckled as he read through the list. When he remembered the fourth condition, he gulped. The Hogwarts reunion was scheduled for the 1st of December. Hermione must be the one to add that condition in!

"Ah, well, at least the woman I'm courting has given me details on what she expects me to do. It's easier than cluelessly doing random things", he shrugged as he levitated the parchments to his
desk. Hmmm...should I send her flowers or something? Merlin! Flowers usually mean a specific thing. I can't make a blunder by sending flowers that could mean, 'I want to shag you' or something equally horrible. What flowers should I send? If only Neville were on my side...
Hermione Granger had a very busy Monday morning. After sending a summary report of their findings on the origin of how the epidemic has spread to the Auror office, she along with her team
went on rounds to check on the status of the patients. They're still not able to find a cure but due to their advanced knowledge and expertise, the spread of the epidemic was mitigated through initial therapies and potions.

While the curse affects only pureblood children through tactile contact, it still makes non-pureblood kids as carriers of the virus. Therefore, she already sent a team of healers to investigate which among the non-pureblood kids made contact with other children as well.

While Irie was finally able to identify the root cause of the virus and how it is being spread, Rosier and the rest are still investigating the gravity of the virus on a victim. Their findings suggest that it affects the skeletal system, something that causes the bones to weaken and eventually deteriorate. Since she was already able to study the toy that activated the virus, they were also able to discover that the charms were made to strengthen the potency of the unknown potion it was dipped in. Now she was sitting on a chair by her temporary desk at St. Mungo's as she examines the arithmancy of the spells on the toy over and over again. Come on, Hermione! Think! There must be something that you have missed here, she thought as she levitated the toy round and round.

"Chief Healer Granger? May I come in?", a masculine voice interrupted her concentration.

"Please come in", she politely replied.

"Chief Healer Granger, I would like to thank you for all that you have done for me during the emergency operation at the ICW headquarters", the auror she remembered to be Karl Richards formally addressed her and then bowed.

"No need to thank me, Auror Richards, I was just doing my job", she said with a polite smile.

"Chief Auror Potter assigned me to be in charge of your team's security for the week. I'm head of your protection detail for this week along with two other teammates who are now following Healer Irie and Healer Rosier as we speak", the man explained and she nodded.

"Thank you, Auror Richards", she said in a formal tone. She was very eager to get back to her work.

"Er, Chief Auror Potter wanted me to give you these", the man summoned something from outside her office and a bouquet floated towards him. The man gently placed the flowers on her desk along with a sealed envelope.

"Okay. If that is all, then I guess I'll see you later", she said as she gestured to the door. The man nodded and left the room. As soon as the door was closed, she glanced at the flowers on her desk. The bouquet was a beautiful arrangement of yellow carnations, pink cyclamen, white rhododendrons, pink candytufts, and yellow begonias. Leave it to Harry to give unconventional flowers...

November 25, 2010

Dear Hermione,

I hope you'll enjoy the flowers. This note is to acknowledge my agreement with your conditions as well as the significance of this day in our nine-month arrangement. I will do my best to comply with your ten requests. I only have a few questions; do I have to do them in chronological order? Also, how do I arrange the schedule for items 5 and 9? Lastly, please specify what cause you would want me to donate in (as well as the amount).
I know how hard it is for you to give me one last chance. I am very grateful that you consented to give me nine months before we officially end our marriage should I fail to win your love once again.

Sincerely yours,

Still your husband

Harry Potter

She can only shake her head and lightly chuckle after she read the note. It would seem Lord Potter is really as determined as I expected him to be...

She was so caught up in reading patient reports, examining the toy, and reviewing the arithmancy that she did not notice the time pass by. She was again bombarded by a knock on her door. She gave a faint reply for the person to enter and Neville Longbottom entered the room.

"Oh my! I'm so sorry Neville! I forgot that our catch-up lunch was today!", she exclaimed and her dear friend chuckled while taking a seat across from her.

"It's alright Hermione! Please take your time, I can wait here", he shrugged as his eyes were glued on the bouquet that was still on her desk. Hermione was busy piling the papers she was reading and then she hurriedly fixed herself.

"Are you ready to go?", she asked as she finished tidying her desk and fixing her wild curly hair.

"Who gave you those flowers? Whoever gave them to you is either oblivious about flower symbolism or is trying to scare you", Neville remarked as he now held the bouquet in his hand.

"What do you mean?", she asked with curiosity.

"Hermione, as a herbologist, I can tell you that these flowers don't mean positive things", he explained.

"Well?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Alright! The cyclamens indicate resignation and good-bye. Candytufts mean indifference. Yellow Carnations symbolize disdain, rejection, and disappointment. Those three are not too scary although it's quite sad. But it's the rhododendrons and the begonias that bother me. Rhododendrons mean danger and that the receiver should flee. While the begonias mean beware", Neville elaborated.

"Really? That sounds interesting", she said with a chuckle.

"How can you make light of this?", he asked incredulously.

"Harry gave them to me. I reckon he's just being clueless", she shrugged.

"You don't think it doesn't mean anything?", he inquired with disbelief.

"Of course, not! Hey! I just got an idea", she took out an empty parchment and dipped her quill in ink.

November 25, 2010
Lord Potter,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your formal agreement and that of the flowers.

A word of advice, please be conscious of the sublime meanings of your gifts.

Per expert word of a herbologist, here are the meanings of the flowers you sent:

Cyclamen = resignation and goodbye
Rhododendrons = danger and to flee
Candytuft = indifference
Yellow Carnation = disdain, disappointment, rejection
Begonia = beware

So, with that, it's either you are threatening me or outright telling me that you are giving up.

Anyway, more details on the conditions will be given as soon as our schedules will be freer.

Confused and slightly offended,

Your determined soon-to-be ex-wife

Hermione Granger

She quickly cast a drying spell on the ink and sealed the note in an envelope. Neville gave her a curious look as she grabbed a purse, her wand, and the envelope. They left her office and she saw Auror Richards standing guard outside. She gestured to her friend to wait for a second as she addressed the auror.

"Auror Richards, could you please give this note to Lord Potter when you see him? Thank you", she handed the envelope to her security detail who nodded and placed the envelope in his pocket.

She looked at Neville and they walked towards the floo. She could feel her security detail tagging along while keeping a respectable distance to give them privacy. Together with Neville, they flooed to Diagon Alley in a flash of green flames.

"Mione, I hope your hungry because this restaurant serves excellent food. Aside from that, it's for a good cause", Neville led her to a street that she could recall was the notorious Knockturn Alley. She was surprised that the dingy street was now bright and homey. It was now filled with illustrious establishments and happy customers. They stopped in front of an elegant restaurant and she gasped as she saw the sign, Viola's.

Neville opened the door and they stepped inside. She was astounded that the elegant façade was a contrast to the inside of the restaurant. Inside, it was like taking a step inside wonderland. It reminded her of the scenery of a fantasy movie with the icy looking chairs and the elaborate paintings on the walls. She saw a lot of families enjoying their meals and her heart warmed at the corner where children get to play and read a few books.

"Lady Potter! Welcome to Viola's! It is an honor to finally have you here", a waiter wearing clothes that reminded him of the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland greeted.
"Er, please call me Hermione", she replied.

"Of course, Miss Hermione", the waiter smiled politely and they were escorted to a table. As they sat down, the waiter handed them menus. When she opened it, she gasped.

_Seventy percent of the profits from the restaurant are for the benefit of the Viola Lily Potter Foundation which provides scholarships for the less fortunate children and aid to our partner orphanages._

"Neville, why did you bring me here?", she asked once she got over her shock.

"I believe that you ought to know about this Hermione. Look, Luna may have avoided all contact with Harry ever since you left but I still am friends with him. I kept it a secret from Luna because I don't want to fight with my wife on this. I respect that you don't love him anymore but I just wanted to show you that he did love your daughter, Mione. Besides, I never betrayed your confidence about your whereabouts and other secrets of yours to Harry", Neville explained.

"How long has this been opened?", she said as her eyes glanced around the room.

"This place opened three years after you left", came the reply.

"Oh."

"I am sorry if bringing you here upsets you Mione but I do believe that it's time for you to confront your past with Harry so that you'll truly move on and forgive yourself. I would never interfere with your decision nor put ideas in your mind. However, I just want to say that you need closure. Hence, I brought you here. If you feel uncomfortable though, we can go somewhere else", Neville said reassuringly.

"No! No, let's stay here. This place reminds me of my Viola after all. And well, you do have a point. I have to completely move on from all of the pain", she sighed.

"You have to allow yourself to finally grieve, Hermione. You have to heal. Whether that healing brings you back to Harry or to leaving him for good, it will always be up to you. But I do believe that you have to confront him for you to finally get over all the things that happened in the past. That is the real reason as to why I added that condition on giving your friends a chance to hit Harry without him fighting back. I know you would never do it yourself because you are too nice to do that. I just want you to release all the angst in some way. Besides, Harry is my friend but I do want to punch him just once for what he did to you before", Neville admitted.

"You're a good friend, Neville", she smiled.

"I blame myself a bit for what happened to you and Harry. I was the one that told Luna and Fleur about Ginny dating Zabini at Hogwarts. I never knew it would end up like that. I know Luna and Fleur already apologized to you, but Hermione, please do forgive me too", he implored.

"Of course, you're forgiven Neville", she squeezed his hand in reassurance.

"You know Malfoy is right. You are too nice for your own good", Neville chuckled.

"It's one of my faults, I guess", she said sadly.

"Hermione, whatever happens, I only hope that the challenges we all drafted for Harry to do will help you regain your self-respect back, even just a little bit. You loved him too much in the past that you let him walk all over you. Which is not healthy at all! I know you don't want to bring up
the past, but believe me, Mione, you need to regain your self-worth. Don't think about this as hurting or getting your revenge at Harry. But think of it as your means to place value on yourself. By loving him too much, you destroyed whatever it was that's left of the Hermione we all once knew", he explained.

"I know, Neville. You're right. By loving him too much, I unconsciously set myself in a self-destructive path. By letting him be the center of my world, I forgot to love and respect myself in the process. Yes! I will give Harry the chance to do the challenges before we finally part ways", she smiled sadly.

"Now I do hope you're hungry Mione because this place may look like a wonderland but the food here is out of this world!", he said with excitement as he gestured for a waiter to approach their table.

I guess I should consider Item 8 on the list to be fulfilled. After all, I am very certain that Harry already spent a fortune in setting up this non-profit business to fund the charity he set up for Viola Lily…
Chapter Notes

Featured Song is Best Thing I Never Had by Beyonce
Harry Potter hurriedly apparated to Hogsmeade Village after quickly going back to his apartment for a quick shower and a change of clothes. It was a long day for him and for the rest of the aurors who were part of the investigation regarding the origin of the epidemic.

Hermione's initial theories regarding the motive for the toy to be planted on the Weasley children were very helpful. It turns out, the smuggling syndicate who attacked Karl Richards, and the other five ICW hit agents Hermione healed, from the *akilallahm* curse, was connected to how this virus came to be. Now they just have to understand why only purebloods were targeted when according to the intelligence gathered, the leader of the syndicate is a pureblood himself.

So now here he is running towards the castle since he was already thirty minutes late for the Hogwarts Grand Alumni Homecoming. If only Item 4 on Hermione's conditions allows him to sing any other time, then he would have skipped this reunion. He just arrived from a two-day trip in Switzerland since he and other five aurors went to the ICW to gather all information about the syndicate. When they presented their findings on the syndicate's involvement to the epidemic, the ICW hit agents immediately gave them access to all classified files they were able to unearth about the blasted group that's been plaguing the European Wizarding Community for more than fifty years. All he wanted to do now was to get a good night's sleep but since it was one of the conditions, he forced himself to suck it up and to just attend the homecoming. *And to top it all, I'm not even sure if my singing will be okay this evening!*

"Good evening, Lord Potter! The homecoming is held on the seventh floor, the *Room of Requirement*. The door has already been opened so some of the other prefects will assist you along the way. Do enjoy your visit!", a petite female Ravenclaw prefect greeted him formally. 

"I wonder if I could see Teddy this evening," he thought as he made his way to the most fascinating room at Hogwarts.

As soon as he entered the door of the *Room of Requirement*, he could see Headmistress Minerva McGonagall standing in front of the crowd as if she were waiting for everyone to settle down. With her signature stern look, the audience fell silent. He let his eyes roam around the venue so he could find a place to sit. When he saw Ron, he immediately walked to his ginger-haired friend who was sharing a table along with the Gryffindors he went to Hogwarts with.

"Hey, Harry! Why are you late?", Ron greeted him as he took an empty seat.

"I just got back from Switzerland. Auror mission", he replied as he focused his eyes on the stage.

"Good evening everyone! Now I see all of you here today and I could not help but feel proud of how the youngsters who were once just my students back in the day have all grown up. Some now have children attending Hogwarts, some are doing well in their chosen fields. A lot has changed since we defeated that evil that used to haunt us more than ten years ago. A few of you have defended this very school when we were under attack. A few of your peers even lost their very lives in defending Hogwarts. So, with all of the outstanding people in front of me, it was difficult to identify who deserves to be awarded as this homecoming's Hogwarts Alumni Lifetime Achievement Awardee", the headmistress said in a clear voice. Her pride in her students is very evident!

"Now, as you know, the Hogwarts Homecoming happens once in twenty years. And for every homecoming, only one exemplary alumnus gets bestowed the honor of being a lifetime
achievement awardee. The person who shall receive this honor tonight truly deserves this award for so many reasons”, the headmistress continued.

"Mate! I do believe it's you", Ron whispered to him but he gave his friend an incredulous look.

"I don't think so, Ron", he chuckled.

"Who else could it be?"

"Hush! Professor McGonagall might hear us", he gently reprimanded his friend.

"The person we will be acknowledging tonight is truly one of the most deserving individuals to have ever received this honor. For this person's brave actions and contributions for the Second Wizarding War, for the many lives, this person has saved as a healer, and for representing Britain in the International Confederation of Wizards. Witches and Wizards, please all rise to honor this year's Hogwarts Alumni Lifetime Achievement Awardee, the youngest chief of the ICW's medical research department, Hermione Jean Granger!", Professor McGonagall announced with pride and joy. Everyone stood up and started clapping their hands. Harry looked around to see where Hermione was but when the applause settled down, he finally saw her walking towards the stage.

Hermione was there, clearly under-dressed. She was wearing dark denim jeans, a sparkly black spaghetti top, which she paired with low-heeled sandals. She had no makeup on except for red lipstick and her curly hair was let loose. She looked so young. He could see that she was rather surprised about the award but she accepted the trophy and the certificate from the headmistress. The crowd applauded once again. When the headmistress gestured for Hermione to say a few words, she pointed her wand to her throat and muttered a **sonorous**.

"First of all, I would like to say that while I am honored to receive this award, I am also sorry to come here under-dressed. I recently came from St. Mungo's before coming here. You all know that the healers are doing whatever we can, to help save the lives of the children affected by the epidemic. While we have made some steady progress, the lives of these children are still not safe. Upon our investigation, only pureblood children are victims of the virus. The non-pureblood kids are carriers. Ladies and gentlemen, what we have here is another case of bigotry and hate. We should all work hand-in-hand to stop all this bias because of blood. Pureblood, half-blood, and muggleborn - at the end of the day we are all just magical people. Witches and wizards. To save these children and their future children, we must act now. Lastly, I admit that I feel undeserving of this award. I did not even dream of being a healer in the first place. So, I would like to dedicate this award to my little angel, Viola Lily, my inspiration. Good evening, everyone!", she canceled the *sonorous* charm and she got a standing ovation. When the applause settled down, Harry saw Hermione being embraced by Luna, Neville, and the Malfoys.

"Shouldn't you go and congratulate your wife, Harry?", Ron prodded and he shook his head.

"She wouldn't want me to approach her, Ron", he said sadly.

"Hermione sure has come a long way from that bushy-haired know-it-all we walked within this very school in, eh?", Ron tried to joke but Harry could hear the pity in his friend's voice.

"She always was the most special among us, Ron", he whispered.

"Well she is the brightest witch of the generation", Ron muttered and he sighed.

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After the awarding ceremony, the host of the event, Luna Lovegood-Longbottom, announced that dinner will now be served. Immediately, food and drink appeared all over the tables. Of course,
Ron quickly filled his plate and stuffed his face with the delicious food. Since he was hungry himself, he too enjoyed the sumptuous dinner provided. Deep inside, he was nervous. He already sent a message to the organizers of the event that he would be singing tonight as soon as he got the note from Hermione which detailed her conditions. When he saw that Luna was hosting, he got more nervous. What if it was part of their grand scheme to humiliate him? *Singing in front of a large crowd is embarrassing enough...*

One hour later, Luna went back to the stage and musical instruments started to appear. When he noticed the change in setup, he gulped. He was getting closer and closer to embarrassing himself. *I hope I don't perform first. I hope somebody else comes first. Please, please, please...*

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure you've had your fill of the food. For those still hungry, well, surely there is still plenty to go around. It's now time for the next part in our program, the exciting and the more entertaining parts. Tonight, we get to see a few of our peers showcase their talents in between some games that the organizers have prepared. So just sit back, relax, and enjoy!", Luna said cheerfully.

"A while ago we witnessed Chief Healer Granger receives the Hogwarts Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award, something that she very clearly deserves. Being Hermione's friend, however, I do know that she has a very special hidden talent in music. So, I want her to come up here on stage and sing for us a song that our friends enjoy when she performs it! Let's give it up for Hermione Granger, everyone!", she announced and the crowd cheered.

"Luna Lovegood! How dare you? I'm not going up there", he heard Hermione yell.

"Hermione! Hermione!", the crowd chorused. After a few minutes of cheering, he saw Hermione reluctantly stand up and approach the stage. She glared at Luna but the dreamy-eyed blonde just whispered to her friend.

"Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for Hermione Granger!", Luna clapped and the audience followed. He saw Hermione take a seat by the piano bench and she cast a *sonorous* once again.

"If I only knew Luna would corner me here to make me sing, I wouldn't have come. But, fine! Luna, Astoria since you all want me to sing this, might as well come over here for back up", she grumbled. The two blonde women walked towards the stage and then stood by their friend. With a quick *sonorous* the women nodded to the pianist and lead singer.

"Er, so, Luna wanted me to sing my favorite muggle song. I like the way it makes use of the piano as accompaniment, so I hope you enjoy it. It's called *Best Thing I Never Had*", Hermione addressed the crowd before she started to make beautiful music as she expertly pressed the keys.

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*What goes around, comes back around*

*(hey, my baby)*

*What goes around, comes back around*

*(hey, my baby)*

*I say what goes around, comes back around*
What goes around, comes back around

Hermione mentally smiled as she pressed the keys and belted out to what her friends call her song for Harry. Since it was their crazy idea to corner her into doing this, might as well have Luna and Astoria be her back-up singers. As she felt the music from the piano while she sang the opening verse, memories ran through her head in a series of flashbacks…

There was a time

I thought that you did everything right

No lies, no wrong

Boy I, must've been outta my mind

So, when I think of the time that I almost loved you

You showed your ass and I

I saw the real you

She closed her eyes as she felt herself get lost in the music. She remembered when she was young. A lonely friendless little bookworm who met Harry Potter for the first time. She recalled how overwhelmed she felt when he saved her from the troll. She vowed to always be there for him ever since. While she knew Harry was far from perfect, she knew that she was blind from all his faults during her youth. She ignored the fact that he always put Ron before her just like the firebolt fiasco in their third year. She also let it slide that he would always be very accepting and forgiving of the Weasleys. Her memories were then brought back to the time that she tricked Harry into marrying her. She expected things would work out between them, but then he made her suffer…

Thank god you blew it

I thank god I've dodged a bullet

I'm so over you

So, baby good lookin' out

She remembered all the faceless women he paraded in front of her. The tears she shed at night as he cheated on her with random women. She could hear his insults in her head which she tried to ignore until the time he said that he hated her unborn child…

I wanted you bad

I'm so through with that

'Cause honestly you turned out to be the

(Best thing I never had)

You turned out to be the
(Best thing I never had)

And I'm gon' always be the

(Best thing you never had)

Oh yeah, I bet it sucks to be you right now

She remembered slowly falling out of love for Harry ever since his callous words about the baby. She thought about how he started to slowly change when Viola was born. He no longer brought women in his manor but she already didn't care. Viola Lily was already the center of her world until she died…

So sad, you're hurt

Boo-hoo, oh, did you expect me to care

You don't deserve my tears

I guess that's why they ain't there

To think that there was a time that I almost loved you

You showed your ass and baby yes; I saw the real you

She vividly recalled the first and the last time she entered his chamber at that large manor he built for Ginny. She remembered him begging her to stay. She could still envision the tears in his eyes as he knelt in front of her. But by that time, she no longer cared. She just wanted to leave.

Thank god you blew it

I thank god I've dodged a bullet

I'm so over you

Baby good lookin' out

She remembered how she tried to hide all her pain from her failed marriage and Viola Lily's death. She focused all the sadness and heartache into her studies. She built herself from the scratch that Harry left her in. She promised to dedicate her life to her profession. She recalled how she slowly rediscovered who Hermione Jean Granger was. She fell in love with herself little by little. She got to know the version of herself without being a shadow to Harry Potter. And she realized how naïve she was to give up everything for one man… A man who never really appreciated her!

I wanted you bad

I'm so through with that

'Cause honestly you turned out to be the

(Best thing I never had)

I said you turned out to be the
Her journey to self-love was a difficult one, but in the last ten years, she finally moved on from Harry James Potter. She no longer loved him because looking back, he never deserved her at all. Theirs was a toxic and one-sided relationship. Her love for him was self-destructive and it was not healthy. She vowed to never let any man into her heart the way she let Harry in ever again.

She remembered their heart-to-heart dinner at Harry's apartment. She could still his face begging her for one last chance. Sad to say, even if she already forgave him, she just doesn't love him anymore. All the love she had for Harry, that was very ardent and pure in her youth, is all gone.

She could not believe how ironic it was that when she was still very much in love with him, he didn't notice her. Now that she no longer cares, he was now claiming that he wants her back. He says that it was now him who was in love with her. That was her very dream when they got married. She dreamt that he would finally notice her and reciprocate her feelings for him. Now that dream has come true, but it's just too late. She is over him. All she wants now is to finalize the legalization of the end of their marriage…
I used to want you so bad
I'm so through with that
'Cause honestly you turned out to be the
(Best thing I never had)
Oh, you turned out to be the
(Best thing I never had)
Oh, I will never be the
(best thing you never had)

Oh, baby, I bet it sucks to be you right now

As the song comes to a close, she slowly opened her eyes and looked up to thank whatever deity is out there. She could truly say that despite all the pain, she finally forgave Harry. She does not want to hurt him or get revenge because she truly was over him. She just does not love him anymore…

(What goes around, comes back around)

(What goes around, comes back around)

I bet it sucks to be you right now

(What goes around, comes back around)

I bet it sucks to be you right now

(What goes around, comes back around) on

I bet it sucks to be you right now… on

When the song ended, she noticed that the crowd was stunned. At least I finally learned to let go of my past with Harry James Potter… This song would not be very significant to me any longer!

Harry Potter felt a stray tear fall as his eyes were glued to Hermione's beautiful yet painful performance. The lyrics to the song she was singing is like a dagger sent straight to his heart. The worst part, he could see how relaxed she was while playing beautifully. Her voice was like an angel but the words from her mouth cut like a knife. It seemed that she was reliving all the memories and realized that she is the best thing he would never have again. The peaceful look in her eyes and relaxed demeanor is so bittersweet. Of course, he was happy for her being over the pain of the past, but looking at her and hearing her sing, he knew that she was over him.

What goes around, comes back around indeed! It sucks to be me right now, he thought bitterly as he harshly wiped the tear away.

"Mate are you alright?", Ron inquired with a sad tone.

"I'm fine, Ron", he avoided eye contact.
"It's just a song, Harry. Hermione does not mean it", his friend tried to make him feel better.

"Song or not, she just made her point loud and clear", he shrugged as his heart broke.

"What do you mean?"

"She just declared to everyone around here that she is the best thing I will never have", he said sadly.

*You may be over me Hermione but I promise to fulfill all the items in your checklist. When that happens, and my time is up, then I will regretfully let you go - the best thing I know that I will never have ever again...*
Hitting Two Birds with One Stone

Chapter Notes

Featured Song is On Bended Knee by Boyz II Men

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9
Hitting Two Birds with One Stone

Hermione Granger lay awake in her bed at the guest room of the Malfoy residence feeling guilty and sad. Now that she was all alone, she could no longer hide her emotions from the stoic mask that she always wears in front of other people, including her dear friends. When Harry performed at homecoming to fulfill the fourth item on the list of challenges, she pretended to act nonchalant and unaffected. Deep inside though, she was greatly bothered. The way his eyes never strained away from her face and his voice were pleading. \textit{I should not let Harry affect me like this! We've been down this road before. I broke his trust. He broke my heart. We should just end things to avoid causing each other more pain...}

She tried to close her eyes to go sleep since she was tired and the homecoming ended late. Every time she closes her eyes though, all she could see was his pleading and sad emerald green orbs. She could see so much guilt in his eyes.

She then remembered the song that Luna made her sing in front of everyone. She was caught off-guard when her name was called. \textit{It was supposed to be Harry who is bound to sing tonight, damn it!} Due to her friends' intervention though, she was forced to sing one of her then-favorite songs when she was still bitter about Harry. But since she was all over her bitterness, she just sang from her heart as a gesture of letting go. Being a music lover, she can't just put on a bad performance. She didn't even see Harry in the many faces of the crowd since she was closing her eyes most of the time. Merlin! Harry must have felt so bad hearing me sing! And then Luna just had to make it worse by calling him in as the next performer...

"Why are my friends so vindictive?", she sighed. She could still picture what happened during Harry's performance...

"Hi! Er, I'm not a singer but ah, well, I promised someone that I will do whatever she wants me to do, so, I volunteered to sing here tonight. Also, before you think that I really can sing, I just found a spell that would magically enhance my voice. But I do play guitar so, well, I hope you like it", Harry awkwardly explained as he got on stage with a guitar on his hand. The crowd clapped in support since it was very clear that he was so nervous about doing this.

"This song is for the best thing I ever had", he addressed the crowd as his eyes roamed around looking for a particular face. When he found her, his emerald green orbs were just fixated on her face. He started strumming the guitar as music filled the room.

\textit{Darling I, I can't explain}

\textit{Where did we lose our way}

\textit{Girl, it's driving me insane}

\textit{And I know I just need one more chance}

\textit{To prove my love to you}

\textit{If you come back to me}

\textit{I'll guarantee}
That I'll never let you go
Can we go back to the days our love was strong
Can you tell me how a perfect love goes wrong
Can somebody tell me how to get things back
The way they used to be
Oh, god, give me a reason
I'm down on bended knee
I'll never walk again
Until you come back to me
I'm down on bended knee
So many nights I dream of you
Holding my pillow tight
I know that I don't need to be alone
When I open up my eyes to face reality
Every moment without you
It seems like eternity
I'm begging you
Begging you
Come back to me
Can we go back to the days our love was strong
Can you tell me how a perfect love goes wrong
Can somebody tell me how to get things back
The way they used to be
Oh, god, give me a reason
I'm down on bended knee
I'll never walk again
Until you come back to me
I'm down on bended knee

"Hermione, I'm sorry. Please forgive me for all the wrong I've done. Please come back home to me. I know you put all your trust in me. I'm sorry I let you down. Please forgive me", Harry uttered the part of the song she knew was meant to be spoken. Since she's heard this song on muggle radio before, she knew that there would be an instrumental solo while a line was spoken. She was shocked however that he altered the line by calling out her name. She could hear the pleading in his voice as well as the sincerity. She tried to avoid his eyes, but she can't look away...

I'm gonna swallow my pride

Say I'm sorry

Stop pointing fingers

The blame is on me

I want a new life

And I want it with you

If you feel the same

Don't ever let it go

You gotta believe in the spirit of love

It'll heal all things

It won't hurt anymore

No, I don't believe our love's terminal

I'm down on my knees

Begging you, please

Come home

Can we go back to the days our love was strong

Can you tell me how a perfect love goes wrong

Can somebody tell me how to get things back

The way they used to be

Oh, god, give me a reason

I'm down on bended

Down on bended knee

Wanna build a new life
Just you and me

Gonna make you my wife

Raise a family

Give me a reason

I'm down, down, down, down, down

I'll never walk again

Until you come back to me

I'm down on bended knees

When Harry finished singing, the crowd was stunned silent just like after her performance. Harry gave her one sad smile before he left the stage…

"God, when will all this pain end", she whispered as she closed her eyes tightly. Even in her dreams, Harry's pleading voice followed her…

Harry Potter apparated to the front yard of the Malfoy residence ten minutes before seven in the morning. After his performance at last night's homecoming, he immediately left Hogwarts. In the silence of his lonely penthouse suite, he decided to just speed things up in completing the checklist. Since he now understands that Hermione will never love him again, it's better to just expedite his completion of the tasks. That way, at least she could feel his sincerity in asking for forgiveness. So, with that motivation in mind, he sent a Patronus message to Fleur and Luna to meet him at the Malfoy residence tomorrow since he is now ready to complete Item 5 on the checklist.

Now here he was, knocking on the Malfoy's front door. Draco Malfoy himself opened the door and they exchanged curt nods.

"You're early, Potter", the blonde man grunted.

"Might as well get this over with. Here, take my wand as agreed", he handed over his phoenix feather wand.

"You're serious about this?", Malfoy asked.

"Of course", he said with determination.

"Longbottom and I will go easy on you. It's the women you have to be worried about", Malfoy said awkwardly.

"Go ahead. Hit me with your best shot. I don't care anymore. It doesn't matter anyway", he said sadly.

"Er, Potter, I just wanted to say that I don't hate you. It's just well, Hermione is my friend. And you did screw it up."

"I know, okay? So just hit me already!", he muttered.
"Let's go outside. The rest will be here soon", Draco Malfoy gestured for him to follow.

At exactly seven in the morning, Luna, Neville, and Fleur arrived. Astoria Malfoy escorted their guests to their back garden. When Harry saw all of Hermione's five friends, he sighed. *Might as well get this over with... Maybe it will help lessen the guilt I'm feeling as well...*

Hermione woke up feeling tired and uneasy. Something just does not feel right. She slowly got out of bed and stretched. After relieving herself and brushing her teeth, she went down the stairs to look for the elder Malfoys. She knew that Scorpius is still asleep by this time. When she got down, she glanced at the grandfather clock and saw that it was quarter to eight in the morning. Since she could hear some noise from the back garden, she headed to that direction. What she saw made her gasp!

"What the hell is going on here?!", she lividly demanded. Kneeling on the center of the grass was a beaten Harry Potter surrounded by Fleur and Luna. Draco and Astoria were sitting with Neville near the pool.

"Hermione!", Luna and Fleur exclaimed. Her healer instincts kicking in, she immediately ran to the beaten man to check on him.

"Harry! Harry! Are you alright?", she held his face in between her hands to inspect the damage and to make sure he would not lose consciousness. Harry had two black eyes, a split lip, and she could see some bruises on his arms.

"I'm sorry, Hermione", he whispered before fainting. She gently cradled him onto her lap and her wand that's concealed on the invisible holster immediately jumped to her hand. She summoned her emergency kit from the guest bedroom and after a minute, it flew towards her and she immediately caught it.

"Luna! Fleur! You have some explaining to do when I get back here! I have to heal him first! I can't believe you would do this to him!", she angrily yelled.

"Hermione, here is Potter's wand", she didn't notice Draco walk towards her since she was so busy casting diagnostic charms on Harry. She glared at the blonde man as she took the wand and placed it inside her emergency kit.

"You better have valid reasons as to why you did this to him without telling me. Or else!", she threatened all her friends before she levitated a fainted Harry from the grass. She stood up, had a firm grip on the beaten man's forearm and disapparated.

"I told you to go easy on Potter, Fleur, Luna!", Draco Malfoy glared at the two blonde women.

"I'm disappointed in you, love. How can you beat Harry like that!", Neville said sadly at his wife.

"Well since you and Draco just gave him one punch each and while Astoria here just gave him one stinging hex to the crotch, Fleur and I had to do something", Luna replied shamefully.

"But why did you have to make him suffer all those falls from the *levicorpus* spell after you canceled it? Harry could seriously get hurt!", Neville glared at his wife and Fleur.

"We had to see how Hermione will react, alright!", Luna said with exasperation, shame, and guilt.

"But why?", Astoria asked.
"We have to see if she still cares for him in some way", Fleur answered.

"But I thought you were helping Hermione secure that divorce from Lord Potter?", Astoria was confused. As she glanced at the two men, they were also as bewildered as her.

"I saw a change in Hermione's expressions when Harry sang to her last night. I had to confirm something", Luna said in a small voice.

"What do you mean?", Draco inquired.

"She may have pretended to be unaffected by Harry's song but I can tell. She feels bad about having to sing that harsh song before his performance. And based on her reactions to seeing him hurt, it is obvious. She still cares for him", Luna explained.

"You're crazy Luna. She's reacting like any healer is when there is an injured patient", Draco insisted.

"No! Luna is right. I can feel something shift in 'ermione!", Fleur backed Luna's claim.

"So, you think she's still in love with him?", Astoria asked.

"Well no. But 'ermione still clearly cares for 'arry!", Fleur exclaimed.

"Don't tell me you're trying to bring them back together?", Neville was astounded.

"If they will be happier together, then we will help them get back together", Luna stated.

"No! This has gone far enough. Potter has proven that he's willing to do anything to secure Hermione's forgiveness. I say that we all give it up and leave them be. I believe he's accomplished convincing us that he deserves to be forgiven. So that means he already completed items 7 and 5 on the list!", Draco insisted.

"I agree with Malfoy. Luna, Fleur I suggest you leave Harry and Hermione alone. Come to think of it, your meddling caused all problems in their friendship. You coerced Hermione to trick Harry into marrying her and she suffered for it. You caused Harry to lose trust in the one person he trusted among all others. I demand that you let them be! No more interventions from you two", Neville Longbottom firmly demanded from his wife and Fleur Delacour-Weasley.

"But they need our help", Luna insisted and Fleur nodded.

"I refuse to be part of any more schemes. Just leave them alone", Neville glared and the two women gulped.

"If you want to keep Hermione's friendship, Fleur, Luna, I suggest you follow Neville's advice. I believe that you have gone too far this time", Astoria said in a gentle voice.

"Fine", the two scheming blondes acquiesced.

"I hope Potter will heal soon or Hermione will come after all of us", Draco sighed.

"I mean it, Luna. Leave Harry and Hermione alone", Neville glared at his wife who meekly nodded.

"You too, Fleur", Neville reminded the other blonde woman.

"Oui, Neville", Fleur agreed.
"Let's all head inside for some breakfast or tea, whatever you prefer. We can wait for Hermione in the living room", Astoria led everyone to enter the house.

"Potter does love her, right? I mean the most powerful wizard in Britain, or maybe even the world, surrendered his wand to me, his childhood nemesis, and let two women beat him up without fighting back", Draco remarked as they were seated on the couches while sipping tea.

"That's true. He didn't even use wandless magic to fight back or even to just defend himself a little", Neville stated.

"'arry does wandless magic?", Fleur was shocked.

"Yes. He's developed excellent wandless magic ever since he defeated Voldemort", Neville informed them.

"But how do you know that?", his wife asked.

"I still am friends with Harry, but I kept it a secret from you, love. In as much as I know how much he hurt Hermione; I can see him hurting too. Losing yours and Fleur's friendship was just another icing on the cake to all the guilt and shame he's carrying ever since she left him", Neville sighed.

"We made a big mistake", Luna sniffed as a tear fell down her cheek.

"Oui! We hurt our friends because of our schemes", Fleur started to cry as well.

"Let's just hope all will work out in the end", Astoria said sadly. They continued to sip their tea in silence while wondering what could be happening to the estranged couple now...

When Hermione arrived with Harry in tow, she quickly conjured a stretcher for him to rest on. She looked around the large suite to find where his bedroom was. As soon as she found the right door, she carefully levitated the still unconscious man from the stretcher to the king-sized bed.

"Hermione, don't leave me", she heard him mutter.

"Harry, are you alright? Can you sit up?", she whispered. When no sound and movement came, she deduced that he must be delirious since he seemed to have caught a fever from all the physical pain his body endured. She healed the two black-eyes as well as the split lip. Since he was now shivering, she vanished his shirt to check if he received major bruises on his upper torso as well.

"Oh, Harry!", she whispered as she saw that he had a nasty cut on his right hip that was bandaged. He's still suffering from injuries at work but he submitted himself to fulfill Item 5 on that stupid list! Why did he have to be so stubborn?

"Hermione, I'm sorry", he muttered again and she sighed.

"I'm sorry too, Harry", she whispered as she leaned in to kiss him on the forehead. Remembering the result from the diagnostic test, she vanished his trousers and checked for other injuries. She quickly healed the bruises on his legs and thighs from the nasty falls he was subjected to by her friends. Merlin! I'm so going to hex those people when I get back. This is supposed to be my quiet day off from work but now I have to make sure Harry is all better.

She picked up some pain-relieving and pepper-up potions from her emergency kit and gently placed them on his nightstand. All the bruises are healed. I'll just have to check his bandaged wound since I'm sure it's from a different curse. The only thing left to do is to heal the series of
stinging hexes and pain inflicted on his crotch.

"This is so embarrassing", she sighed as she cast a numbing charm on his crotch. She pointed her wand to Harry and cast a nonverbal *enervate* to wake him up. As soon as the spell hit, the man slowly opened his eyes.

"Hermione?", he groaned in pain.

"Yes, Harry. It's me. I need you to sit up, please. You have potions to take", she said in her signature gentle healer's voice.

"Why am I here?", he whispered as he slowly sat up on the bed.

"I apparated you here after you passed out", she replied as she handed him the first vial of pain-relief potion.

"What is that?", he whined.

"Drink!", she demanded and he begrudgingly relented.

"Argh!", he groaned in disgust after taking the potion.

"Here's your second potion", this time she handed him a vial of pepper-up potion.

"Do I have to?", he pouted.

"Drink! It's just pepper-up", she said sternly and he obeyed.

"Thanks, Hermione", he smiled but she didn't return it.

"Harry Potter! What possessed you into agreeing to that stupid condition of getting yourself beat up when you still have a bandaged wound on your hip!", she said angrily.

"It's not that bad", he muttered.

"Not that bad? You have a fever. You collapsed awhile ago. You had two black eyes, a split lip, bruises all over your legs, thighs, and arms, and not to mention you have groin injuries that I still have to heal!", she ranted angrily. Instead of getting scared at her outburst, he just had a fond smile on his face as he sat on his bed looking at her pacing on the floor.

"You still care", he said with disbelief and joy.

"Of course, I care! I can't have another patient die on me. Besides, you were my friend and I never wanted you to get hurt", she sniffed.

"Hermione, I'm sorry", he whispered.

"No, it's not your fault. It's my friends' fault for doing that to you. Granted that I wasn't told about this, is your fault, but still! God! Why did you even let them do that to you? Are you stupid?", she wiped angry tears away.

"I said I'll do anything. And it was on the list anyway", he shrugged.

"So, if the list says you stab yourself on the gut, you'll do it?", she said sarcastically.

"Yes. If that's what it takes to earn your forgiveness, then I would", he said sincerely.
"Just forget that damned list! Just don't do anything rash that can hurt yourself!", she hissed.

"Hermione -"

"Lie back down. I still have to redress your hip wound and check your groin injuries", she insisted.

"Groin injuries?", he yelped.

"Yes! So, if you want children in your future, take your boxers off so that I can properly heal you", she glared at him.

"Er, but I don't feel anything down there", he muttered while his cheeks blushed.

"Numbing charm. But it won't hold too long. So, if you want to save your crown jewels, then just do as your told!", she insisted.

"But then I'll be naked", he muttered.

"So?", she crossed her arms in exasperation.

"I've never been with a woman for more than ten years. My body will react to you seeing me naked. It's embarrassing", he admitted.

"Fine! Do you want me to stun you when I go check?", she rolled her eyes.

"Why can't I get a male healer?", he whined.

"Alright! I'll call Draco here", she started to walk away.

"Alright! Alright! Just stun me before you go check. I'll remove my boxers under the covers and then you can stun me", he acquiesced.

"I can't understand why you're being such a baby about this! It's not like I'll jump you or something. And you're not a virgin teenager either so, argh, whatever! Just tell me when you're ready", she said with exasperation.

"Hermione?"

"Yes?"

"Er, you can stun me already", he muttered as she turned around to face him. When he nodded, she pointed her wand to his chest.

"Stupefy!", and with that Harry Potter was out. She gently lowered the covers as she inspected the damage done to his groin. *I'll hex Luna and Fleur severely for this*, she thought angrily as she examined the only piece of manhood she'd ever been acquainted with that belonged to her idiot of a husband.
Harry Potter slowly opened his eyes and he felt something cold on his slightly aching manhood. *Hermione! How embarrassing!* He remembered what happened earlier although his
memory was hazy due to the fever and pain. He lifted the covers and looked down at his crotch. He saw that his manhood was still slightly swollen and reddish from all the stinging hexes and the falls his body endured. Hermione coated it with some salve to lessen the pain.

"Do men always check their crotch every time they wake up? It's not like I cut it off or something", she chuckled. He quickly lowered the covers to preserve his modesty and blushed. She could see Hermione bringing a tray filled with warm soup.

"Er, what time is it, Hermione?", he asked as she lowered the tray in front of him.

"It's noon. Time for lunch. Finish the soup and then it's time for your second dose of pain-relief and pepper-up potions. I already redressed your hip wound. Good thing it's healing along nicely and it's not infected. You have to apply a salve on your crotch every six hours to lessen the swelling", she instructed.

"So, will I be fine by this evening?", he inquired.

"We'll have to see later. But I highly recommend that you take the day off tomorrow. Your body has taken a really good beating and you need to rest. The hip wound may be healing quite nicely but the curse that created it is still making you weak. Combine that with today's injuries, hence your body's need to properly heal", she explained formally in her stern healer voice for hard-headed patients.

"But -"

"Eat!", she glared at him and he immediately picked up a spoon to start consuming the warm soup. As he helped himself to the delicious soup she prepared, he could see her pointing her wand in complicated motions all over his body. He decided to just continue eating and to refrain from asking questions. Healer Hermione reminded him of the serious and headstrong Poppy Pomfrey of the Hogwarts hospital wing.

"Good, your fever is already gone. The potions have improved your body's overall health. The pain from the injury will slowly subside as you ingest more doses. Your crotch will be healed if you just apply the salve. Since we're able to heal you quickly, the hexes won't have an impact on your reproductive ability", she explained to him as he continued to eat.

"Thank you for taking care of me, Hermione", he said with sincerity after swallowing the food in his mouth.

"You're welcome. I must heal people after all", she smiled but it didn't reach her eyes.

"Aren't you hungry? Maybe you should eat as well", he urged her as he was half-way through finishing the soup.

"I helped myself to some cereal and milk after I healed your groin injuries. Once you're done eating and have taken your second dose of potions, then I'll let you rest again while I eat. See that alarm on your nightstand, beside the potions and the salve, it will make noise and specify which medicine to apply when it's time for you to take it. So, please do follow instructions", she said in a no-nonsense voice.

"Yes, Chief Healer Granger!", he complied.

"Are you mocking me, Harry Potter?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Of course not, Hermione! It just feels right to call you Chief Healer Granger at the moment, since..."
you're clearly in a Madame Pomfrey mode”, he chuckled.

"Right! You were always a very difficult patient of Healer Pomfrey”, she sighed.

"Hey!", he whined.

"Stop amusing me with your stories and eat up. Since your fever is now gone, and the bruises healed, you can now wear a shirt. As for trousers and underwear, don't wear them yet until the swelling on your groin gets better. Since you're staying in bed, no need for you to cover up”, she instructed him before standing up. He saw her heading towards his closet and she returned with a sleeveless black t-shirt.

"Wear it when you're done eating the soup", she pointed to the t-shirt she placed on his bed.

"Will you be staying here for the rest of the day?", he inquired.

"Yes! I have to make sure you'll get better soon. Given how stubborn you are, I don't trust you to not disobey a healer's orders."

"Merlin! I left my wand at Malfoy's", he muttered.

"Your wand is inside the top drawer of your nightstand. Draco handed it to me before I brought you here", she informed him.

"Thank you, Hermione", he grinned.

"Don't look so happy. I'm still mad at you for being such an idiot and just letting them beat you up like that! Merlin, Harry! You have to take care of yourself better!", she said with frustration.

"I'm sorry. But it's just, I was desperate! Besides, I did promise to do everything on that list", he shrugged.

"Just finish your food and then take your potions when the alarm sounds, okay? And get some rest", she gave him a sad smile before she stood up from his bed.

"Accio Resurrection Stone", he wandlessly summoned the second hallow.

"Harry! Don't strain yourself by doing magic!", she hissed.

"It's alright. It's just a summoning charm."

"But that was wandless magic! That must tire you out!"

"Er, not really. I've been good at wandless magic ever since the Horcrux in my scar is gone. And with constant practice, I got better and better", he said with humility.

"Right."

"Hermione, I want you to take this with you for today. Use it to talk to Viola Lily. Turn it three times in your hand and think of her. She will come to you. She's been wanting to talk to you for a long time", he handed out the ring which she reluctantly accepted.

"Harry, I...

"Please use it, Hermione. It will make Viola happy to be able to talk to you", he encouraged. She walked the distance between them and kissed his forehead.
"Thank you so much, Harry!", she whispered as she pulled away. He smiled at her and she nodded. She left his bedroom as he continued to eat. *At least Viola could finally talk to her mummy now...*

Hermione entered one of the many doors inside Harry's penthouse. She gasped when she entered a large room that served two purposes - an entertainment hub and a mini gym. Harry's entire apartment is the very definition of a bachelor's pad, a very rich one at that. *This room will have to do,* she thought to herself as she sat on the large leather couch. She pointed her wand to the door and cast silencing and locking charms. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and turned the resurrection stone three times in her hand.

Tears immediately rolled down her eyes as the spirit of a beautiful little girl, who looked like a twin version of her younger self except for the black curly hair and the emerald green eyes, appeared in front of her.

"Oh my! Mummy! I finally got to see you!", the spirit of Viola Lily Potter squealed in excitement.

"Baby? Is that you? You look so big now", she said in between sniffs.

"I'm so proud of all that you've done mummy!", the spirit clapped her hands.

"Really? Well, I am happy to hear that", she gave a sad smile.

"I love you so much, mummy! And I want you to know that I am very proud of you for saving all those lives", Viola Lily grinned.

"I miss you so much, baby", she extended a hand to touch the spirit's face but her heart broke when her hand could feel nothing.

"I miss you too, mummy. But I am always with you. I've been watching you and daddy all the time", the child smiled.

"I love you very much, Viola Lily. I think of you every day", she said with sadness.

"I know mummy. Spirits can feel it when people from the land of the living think about us", Viola happily told her.

"I'm so sorry that I was too weak that I wasn't able to save you, baby. I tried so hard, believe me, I did. But I guess, my best is just not good enough", she sobbed.

"Oh, mummy! Don't cry. I know you loved me with all your heart. I can still remember how you cradled me in your arms, sang me lullabies, kissed my cheeks, and I will always remember how much you cared for me. Your love is my best memory of the land of the living", Viola Lily grinned and her emerald eyes sparkled just like how a young Harry Potter used to do when he's convincing her to break the rules.

"You are the best thing that's ever happened to me too, baby", she tried her best to smile despite the tears.

"Mummy, I have something important to tell you", the child hovered on the couch with crossed legs.

"Go ahead, baby. Mummy's all ears", she smiled encouragingly as she wiped her tears away.

"Daddy loves you, very much. He's spent the entire time you were gone fixing his mistakes. I do
hope you know that”, Viola's seriousness reminded her of the audacious young Hermione.

"Would you care to share what your daddy has done?", she inquired. Hearing Viola Lily's voice was so surreal that she could listen to her sweet childish tone all day.

"Well, daddy set up a charity for me which makes a lot of orphans and poor children happy. He also changed his ways. He quit drinking alcohol. He stopped smoking. And well, Miss Rowena tells me that this is very important, he's never slept with another woman ever since I was eight months old in your womb", her daughter explained earnestly and she gasped in shock.

"Miss Rowena as in the Ravenclaw founder?", she said with disbelief.

"Mister Death says you would notice that detail first", the child chuckled.

"Viola Lily Potter, tell me all that you know right now!", she said sternly.

"Yay! I always imagined what it would be like to hear you use that tone with me, mummy. I saw memories of you and daddy's Hogwarts days, you used to do that a lot to him, didn't you, mummy? Well, daddy could be a dense idiot sometimes. Just like what happened this morning", her daughter rambled.

"While I agree that your father could be an idiot more often than not, bloody Gryffindor courage, don't change the topic young lady. Tell me all that you know", she prodded.

"So, this is what getting scolded by a mother feels like! I like it", her daughter contemplated.

"Merlin! You're as exasperating as your father sometimes”; she rolled her eyes.

"Hey! I'm not that bad!", Viola Lily pouted.

"Well true. Your father's worse but still!", she chuckled. My Viola is such a bright girl!

"You better get some food first mummy since this is going to be a long story", Viola said in a grave tone which reminded her of how Harry used to act when explaining terrible things that happened.

"I'll get some soup from the kitchen. Don't go anywhere, alright?", she relented.

"Of course! I'll stay right here mummy. Love you!", her daughter grinned.

"I love you too, Vi", she said sincerely as she left the room to quickly grab some food. This ought to be a good story, she thought as she dashed towards the kitchen.

Harry Potter woke up to a dark room feeling well-rested yet hungry. I wonder what time it is? Those potions and the salve sure tire a person out. Thank Merlin for the alarm system Hermione set up, he thought as he opened his eyes. He immediately forgot about his hunger as heard the sound of faint crying nearby. Oh, shit! Hermione!

"Mione? Are you alright?”, he called out as he rolled on the bed to the direction of the sobs. I'm an idiot! I should just turn on the light! I live in a muggle suite for Merlin's sake, he thought as pointed a finger to the switch. Immediately, his bedroom was filled with light. He saw chestnut brown curls on the end of his bed so he moved closer. There she was, sitting on the floor, her hair covering her face as she placed her arms on her folded knees as she cried. Merlin! I'm so stupid. I shouldn't have just given her the resurrection stone like that when it's been a long tiring day for her. You are an idiot, Harry Potter!
"Mione? It's okay. Don't cry", he awkwardly patted her hair from his position on the bed. *Thirty years old and I still don't know how to act around crying women! God! They should offer a class about handling crying girls. Or a general class about women would be very helpful!*

"Harry, I'm so sorry", she said in between sobs.

"Eh?", he asked dumbly. *Oh shit! Maybe she accidentally gave me the wrong potion and I'm going to die. Nah! That's not it, Hermione's not a careless idiot!*

"I'm so sorry, Harry", she cried again.

"Well, er, it's alright. It can't be that bad. If you made some mistake in healing me, then we can -", his reassurance was interrupted when she raised her head to look at him.

"Huh? Is something wrong?", she tearfully asked as her eyes scanned his body to check for any signs of illness.

"Well, er, if you made a mistake with –"

"I never make a mistake when administering care to my patients!", she insisted. *Great! At least she's not crying anymore.*

"Er, that's good then. So, why are you saying sorry?", he asked awkwardly.

"I talked to Viola. And she - she told me how much my leaving you hurt you. I'm so sorry, Harry", tears were falling down her beautiful face again.

"Viola Lily Potter! If you're listening, you are in big trouble young lady", he said with exasperation. *I wonder what my darling baby told Hermione?*

"You know, she likes it when she gets scolded", she sniffed.

"Huh? Now, I'm confused. Could you, er, sit on the bed with me, please. That way we can talk better", he said in a gentle voice.

"Okay", she sniffed and he held out a hand to help her stand up. He scooted over to give her some space. She sat beside him and hugged a pillow. *Maybe I can transfigure myself into a pillow*, he thought as he felt jealous of the fluffy pillow in her arms.

"So, er, before we talk, do you mind if I order food first. I'm really hungry", he looked at her and she nodded. He wandlessly summoned his mobile phone and it flew into his hand.

"Are you craving anything?", he asked.

"No. You pick", she mumbled still hugging the pillow. *It's official! I'm bloody jealous over some pillow! This is just so sad…*

He dialed the number of his favorite Chinese takeout store and it rang thrice before someone answered.

"Hi! Yes! This is Harry Potter. Same address. Make my usual order two of each. Put it on my tab. Thank you", he ended the call and looked at his still teary-eyed wife.

"I ordered Chinese. It should be here in thirty minutes. Why don't you, er, change clothes or freshen up?", he suggested. Her eyes glanced down to her silk rose gold spaghetti top and shorts then she blushed.
"Sorry about this. I took a shower in your guest room but it felt wrong to wear your clothes without asking permission since you were sleeping. So I just -"

"No worries, Hermione. It's alright. You can check the closet for some clothes you could use. Food should be ready when you're done", he pointed to his ensuite bathroom and then to the closet.

"Thank you", she let go of the pillow she was holding and ran to the direction of his walk-in closet. *I must be feeling better now since I already am taking notice of how cute yet sexy she looks in her nightclothes.* A few minutes later, she exited the closet and walked to his bathroom carrying his gray lounge pants and a black t-shirt. *Best leave her alone while she freshens up*, he thought as he summoned a thick robe and draped it over himself since Hermione told him to not wear pants yet.

Exactly thirty minutes from the time he called, there was a knock on the main door. He opened it and one of the building's butlers carried his order.

"Here you go, Mr. Potter", the man had a knowing grin on his face as he looked at the large quantity of his order that was good for two and his state of undress.

"I know what you're thinking Charles", he rolled his eyes as he accepted the bag of food and the carton that held their drinks. Since he'd been living in the building for a long time, he was friendly with the staff.

"Well, it's about time you brought a lady in your suite, sir!", the man teased. From the time he moved in, the staff knew that he's never brought any woman to stay over.

"Well, it's not like that. My wife's back in London", he explained.

"Good for you sir! Hopefully, you settle things with the missus", the butler gave a supportive smiled. Charles was his closest friend among the staff and the man knew about how Hermione left him years ago.

"I hope so too, Charles", he sighed.

"Won't keep you long, sir Good luck!", the man winked and he chuckled. He closed the door and settled the food on the dinner table. He opened the boxes of stir-fried noodles, dumplings, egg rolls, siomai, spare-ribs, and orange chicken. He summoned two plates and two pairs of utensils and set them on the table. He removed the two glasses of cold black pearl milk tea from its holder and set one beside each plate. He decided to wait for Hermione in the entertainment room but she already walked out of his bedroom wearing his now magically shrunk lounge pants and the black t-shirt that was too big for her petite frame.

"So, I hope you like Chinese", he gestured to the table.

"Chinese is alright. Although, you are hungry, aren't you?", she chuckled as she took a seat and saw how much food he ordered.

"Well, I only had soup for lunch and some cereal before I went to Malfoy's", he admitted as he too sat down.

"You have to take better care of yourself, Harry", she sighed.

"What did our darling Viola Lily tell you?", he rolled his eyes. His daughter was so like Hermione sometimes, a big worrywart.
"Talk later. For now, eat! Healer's orders!", she said sternly and he chuckled. They ate in silence and just enjoyed the food together.

"Merlin! That was good", Hermione remarked as she finished her last bite of orange chicken and gulped her last of the pearl milk tea.

" Doesn't Switzerland have good food? It is the land of chocolate after all", he remarked.

"Well, as a healer, I always eat healthily. So, I don't overindulge", she explained.

"That's true. So, where did you want to talk?", he inquired.

"Your bedroom would be fine. I don't want to tire you out. Besides, you still have your last dose of the pain-relief potions. Not to mention the salve that you have to apply on yourself!", with a nod of acceptance, they quietly walked to his bedroom so they can talk.

"Harry, first of all, I want to say sorry for being inconsiderate of your feelings", she started as soon as they resumed their positions on his bed.

"It's alright, Hermione! You made the right decision for leaving me, I was a bloody bastard", he said sadly.

"No, I wasn't talking about that. I was talking about the song during homecoming and well, the way I treated you when we met again", she sighed.

"It's fine. I deserve it anyway", he shrugged.

"Maybe, but I did hurt you a lot too", she said sadly.

"Yes, you did. But the way you reacted to Ginny's deceitful plans was no excuse as to how I treated you. I am truly sorry, Hermione", he said earnestly.

"Well, I broke your trust."

"And I broke your heart."

"Viola told me all you've been through in the last ten years. You should've just moved on Harry. I let you go so that you could find the happiness you deserve", she looked into his eyes as she said that.

"But how can I move on when all this guilt is building up inside me?", he whispered as he wiped a stray tear away.

"Oh, Harry!", she closed the distance between them and she hugged him tightly.

"I'm so sorry, Hermione", he cried.

"I'm sorry too", she sniffed as they shared each other's pain.

"Hermione, I know you don't love me anymore but can you help me learn to let you go?", he whispered into her ear as his arms held her tight.

"Is that what you want?", she whispered back.

"Well no. But if you want the divorce, then I'll give you what you want", he said sincerely.
"Viola Lily told me about her annoying unborn brother and sister", she chuckled as she pulled away from his embrace.

"She told you that?", he was shocked.

"Oh, she told me a lot of things. It seems I'm her favorite parent", she said smugly.

"Of course, you are", he chuckled.

"She made me promise to give you a fair chance", she whispered.

"What do you mean?"

"She says that if I do love her then I will give you a fair chance. She even defined the terms for me", she sighed.

"I can talk to her if you like", he offered.

"That feisty little girl is our weakness, Harry. You know she wouldn't budge. She's as stubborn as you", she scoffed.

"Hey! You're more stubborn than I am", he whined.

"Fine! She's as stubborn as we both are", she rolled her eyes.

"So, er, did she tell you about how Mister Death is a big fan of yours?", he inquired.

"Yes, she even told me that Death fancies me or something. She is your daughter, Harry Potter!", she teased.

"Why?"

"Duh! Master of Death", she stated the obvious.

"Did she tell you about her interesting conversations with Mister Death? About going back in time?", he asked in all seriousness.

"Of course, she did. But she says that we won't succeed in doing the impossible if I am not in love with you. So, I guess, you now understand what I'm saying?", she raised an eyebrow and gave him a familiar look, he always calls it the 'don't be an idiot, Harry' stare.

"Oh! So, er, how should we go about it?", he asked awkwardly.

"Well, I don't know! Maybe you should start by reading about flowers and their symbolism", she laughed.

"Sorry, about that. I just thought they looked pretty. And well, I remember you did like yellow and pink flowers", he said sheepishly.

"I thought it was a classic Harry Potter blunder", she teased.

"Yeah, yeah! I'm still clueless at thirty", he muttered grumpily.

"Our brilliant little girl also demanded me to live with you here. One of her definitions of giving you a fair chance", she rolled her eyes.
"Er, that's no problem. So, when are you moving here? I have three extra bedrooms, you take your pick", he said calmly but deep inside he was jumping up and down in joy. *I love you, Viola Lily! You are the most brilliant little girl ever!*

"Well, I can pick up my stuff at Malfoy's tomorrow morning. You're still on bed rest tomorrow because your groin injuries will be fully healed by Tuesday still. Unless you can go to work without trousers on", she challenged.

"Fine! Fine! I'll take a sick day off. You have to file the paperwork though", he pouted.

"What? Why?"

"Well, aurors are given very strict conditions for sick leaves. We have to get a healer's permission detailing the illness as well as a family member's note that says they'll be in charge of the sick auror. The two requirements should be filed and submitted to the head auror at least six hours before the date of leave", he explained.

"But you're the head auror", she insisted.

"Er, so the sick leave request forms should be submitted to the head of the DMLE and the minister", he added.

"Harry, don't take this the wrong way, but how did you get sick leaves before? Given that very strict condition", she asked.

"Well, since I don't have family members with me, I never took sick leaves. The only times I get them is when I'm unconscious at St. Mungo's after a nasty auror mission", he admitted.

"Get me some parchment and quill then", she sighed.

"But I'm not at St. Mungo's", he was confused.

"Hello? Chief Healer of the ICW?", she rolled her eyes.

"Right! But what about the family member clause?", he inquired.

"Well I still am your legal wife, right?", she said in a voice that sounded like her 'you're such an idiot, Harry' tone when they were Hogwarts students.

"You do know that you acknowledging you're still Lady Potter will be headline news as soon as you sign the parchment, right?"

"Yes! Yes! But since I'm giving you a 'fair chance' thanks to what our dear daughter said to me, then it doesn't matter. Besides, you do need to rest", she insisted.

"I guess you should also know now that I, er, released an official statement about our marriage to the Daily Prophet last night. And well, it will be all over the papers tomorrow", he told her sheepishly.

"Why did you do that?", she hissed.

"Item 1 on the list", he shrugged.

"Merlin! Why do you take that bloody list so seriously?", she was exasperated.

"Hey! I'm just doing as told. It was your list", he defended himself.
"Fine! Since you seem to be enjoying the bloody list, I'll update you on your status. You already accomplished Items 1,3,4,5,7, and 8", she sighed.

"Huh? Why? As far as I'm concerned, I only crossed out Items 1,4, and 5", he was confused.

"I received a note from Luna saying that she and Fleur were very sorry about beating you up. She says that Draco and Neville insisted that you already proved that you deserve to be forgiven, crossing out Item 7. As for Item 8, Neville brought me to Viola's on the day you gave me the flowers with the saddest symbolism. Of course, Item 3 is obvious since Viola told me about her not answering your call for one whole year", she explained.

"Really? Huh! Are you sure that you don't have other causes you want me to donate to?", he was surprised at the speed of his progress on the list.

"Fine! Do something for house-elves then", she rolled her eyes.

"Er, I proposed a law in the Wizengamot about house-elf rights. As Lord Potter, er, people were compelled to listen", he admitted.

"That's brilliant! So, consider that a double check on Item 8", she stated.

"Okay", he just agreed since he was astounded.

"Great! So, just summon the parchment already so that I can file your sick leave form", she reminded him. He raised a hand and the writing tools flew to his direction which he quickly gave to her. Hermione immediately dipped the quill in ink and scribbled on the parchment. After casting a drying charm on the ink, she handed the note to him.

December 2, 2010

To whom it may concern:

Head Auror Harry James Potter will be on sick leave tomorrow, the 3rd of December 2010 due to physical injury to the face, upper and lower torso, and crotch area because of a misunderstanding with my friends.

He'll be fit to work on the 4th of December.

Sincerely,

Hermione Jean Granger, the Lady Potter

Chief of the ICW Medical Research Department

"Stop grinning like an idiot and send the note! You're due for your potion in thirty minutes and the salve in two hours. The alarm shall let you know of the appropriate times. I'll show myself to a guest room. Good night!", she reminded him as she started to move from the bed. Before she could leave, he grabbed her hand and pulled her close.

"Thank you for this chance, Hermione. I love you", he kissed her on the forehead.

"You're welcome. Don't mess this up though or our daughter will haunt you", she chuckled as she pulled away.
"Good night, Lady Potter", he chuckled.

"Don't get cocky now, Lord Potter! It's just a sick leave letter", she rolled her eyes.

"You know I should thank Luna and Fleur for beating me up", he remarked.

"Don't push it! I'll deal with those two. Now get some rest and follow your potion and salve schedule!", she demanded.

"Yes, Healer Granger!"

"Now I know how Madame Pomfrey feels", she muttered as she closed the door of his bedroom.

_I have to thank Viola Lily tonight after I take my potion and apply the salve…_
The Tragic Tale of the Wizarding World's Power Couple

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

The Tragic Tale of the Wizarding World's Power Couple

Harry Potter Reveals All About His Marriage to Long-Lost Lady Potter
Sometime in 1994, this reporter has speculated about the budding tragic romance between the then unexpected Tri-Wizard Champion, fourteen-year-old, Harry Potter and his brilliant best friend, Hermione Granger. A few years later, after our hero's success against He-who-must-not-be-named, we were astounded by the scandal that is the sudden marriage of Harry Potter to Hermione Granger despite the latter being engaged to another.

Then dubbed as the 'Scarlet Woman of Britain' for having allegedly stolen Harry Potter from his original fiancée, Ginevra Weasley (now Zabini), Hermione Granger victoriously returns to our shores as the Chief of the Medical Research Department of the International Confederation of Wizards. What's shocking is that per an interview from another paper, Hermione Jean Granger is unaware that after leaving us for ten years, she is still the Lady Potter.

Of course, we have long speculated on the trials that befallen our star-crossed lovers but Harry Potter and Hermione Granger have long been silent about the issue of their troubled marriage. Only via a recent publication containing her feature upon promotion in the ICW did the rest of us get an insider view of what happened to the relationship of the Wizarding World's Power Couple.

Did Hermione Granger trick Harry Potter into marrying her? Is she the sly scarlet woman that we all know her to be? Or is she protecting our tragic hero from a sinister plan?

With the long-lost Lady Potter's return, tongues have been wagging whether or not we finally get to see a happily ever after or the sad end of the Wizarding World's Most Powerful Couple. At the recently held Hogwarts Alumni Homecoming, Hermione who is assumed to be the World's Best Healer bagged the Lifetime Achievement Award and shocked everyone with her emotional song number that screamed her grievances regarding her marriage to our tragic hero.

Sources say that Lady Potter's performance contained song lyrics such as, 'I know you want me back. It's time to face the facts that I'm the one that's got away. Thank god you blew it. What goes around, comes back around. I bet it sucks to be you right now'. The song itself tells us that our tragic hero's long-lost wife is telling everyone that she's happy to be separated from him. We can feel the angst, resentment, and viciousness. This poses the following questions, what did Harry Potter ever do for his wife to hate him so? Why did their marriage fail? Why did they get married in the first place? Finally, we all want to know why the great slayer of He-who-must-not-be-named is begging his estranged wife for one more chance when he too surprised the attendees of the recent homecoming with a song that per my reliable sources state, 'I'll never walk again until you come back to me. I'm down on bended knee'.

Dear readers, it's now time for all our questions to be answered. A few hours after the Hogwarts Alumni Homecoming, I received an owl from Harry Potter himself containing his narration of what happened all those years ago. While I am uncertain as to why our hero finally wishes to acknowledge all the unanswered questions regarding his marriage, I am delighted to grant him his request. Below is a complete and unedited explanation from the man himself...

"Rita, I believe it is time for me to finally admit what happened ten years ago regarding my marriage to Hermione Granger. Everything stated here is all fact. I would not have you alter any single word from my official statement. Or else!

Ten years ago, Hermione Granger and I were the talks of the town due to our sudden marriage that ended with her hasty departure from Britain. She has been called names, Scarlet Woman of Britain being the most prominent. Now I am finally going to debunk that hateful moniker and admit to everyone that Hermione Granger, is the most sacrificial, loving, and amazing woman that I have ever met. Due to my stupidity, influences of others, and secrets, I lost her. But before I get carried
Hermione Jean Granger is my best friend. Yes, she may not agree with me anymore, but to me, she always will be. Ten years ago, Hermione due to coercion from Luna Lovegood and Fleur Delacour-Weasley, tricked me into marrying her to save me from a vicious plot to legally steal my wealth. As you all know, I was first engaged to Ginevra Weasley but Luna and Fleur discovered that Ginny was in love with Blaise Zabini (now her husband) but she wanted me for the Potter and Black money. They discovered that Ginny planned to have me marry her, build her a large manor (which I did), and once that all happens, she make it seem like I cheated on her so that she can file divorce and legally demand my wealth as payment for the alleged cheating. Once my wealth is hers and our marriage is annulled, she would then marry Blaise Zabini who used to be rich but lost his fortune due to his father's involvement as a Death Eater. If you want proof, I can provide pensieve memories. Hermione was very much in love with me then and when she heard of the nefarious plot, despite her hesitations, she agreed to participate in her friends' plan.

The plan was Luna will tell me that one of the side-effects of Bellatrix Lestrange's tortures of Hermione at Malfoy Manor during the Voldemort War is that she is stuck with a dark curse that can only be removed via a love-based ritual between herself and a virgin lover. Since Hermione is my best friend, upon hearing Luna's story, I immediately volunteered to be the virgin lover. I didn't know that Fleur used Veela Magic to ensure that when Hermione and I make love, she would immediately get pregnant. As head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter and regent of the Ancient and Noble House of Black, I was compelled to marry her when she got pregnant. Hence, ending my engagement to Ginny and our sudden wedding.

I was devastated when the Weasleys hated Hermione and myself when she got pregnant and we had to marry. I consider the Weasleys as my family and the separation from them pushed me to start drinking. I did not blame Hermione for getting pregnant because when we did the 'ritual', I meant everything I did because I only wanted to save her. One night at the Hog's Head, Ginny taunted me about Hermione's intentions. I returned home drunk and demanded answers from Hermione as to why we suddenly got married. Hermione's only reply was that she was in love with me and she did everything she could to steal me away from Ginny. At this point, I was not aware of Ginny's gold-digging schemes, so I treated Hermione severely. I felt so hurt that Hermione, the one person I trust the most in the world, could betray me like that. With her betrayal and the hatred from the Weasleys, I resented her. Ever since that night, I treated her like shit.

I would honestly now confess all the sins I made during our marriage. I never physically hurt Hermione. But I emotionally destroyed her. I brought random women in our house, paraded them in front of her, and slept with them to spite her. I threw insults and I made sure that she would feel my scorn. When we moved into the then Potter Manor (which I originally built for Ginny since she demanded me to build her one as part of our engagement), I confiscated Hermione's wand and told her to manually clean the large house I built for the real Lady Potter. I let myself be blinded by the pain of what I perceived as Hermione's betrayal and my pride. I am very remorseful to admit that I even enjoyed taunting her and seeing her cry.

I do not want to express in great detail how much I hurt Hermione during our time spent together as husband and wife. I never treated her like a wife. I more or less treated her like a house-elf. She was resilient however and she endured everything that I threw at her. When she was eight months pregnant, she was cleaning that time and I brought a random woman with me, I spitefully stated that I hated the baby Hermione was carrying in her womb. After that, things changed. Hermione would never even look me in the eye anymore. She would still do whatever it was I asked her to do, but she did not care about what it was that I did anymore. Looking back, as soon as I saw the pain in her eyes when I stated that I hated our baby, I immediately regretted it. I made so many mistakes in our marriage but that to me was the biggest mistake I ever did. The baby was innocent.
One day, I returned home to an empty manor and I panicked since I can't find Hermione anywhere. When I counted the months, I realized that she must have given birth already. I wasn't there for her when she suffered the pain of childbirth. When I flooed to St. Mungo's, the healer told me that she gave birth to a baby girl. However, this baby was very sickly. She had very weak lungs and an underdeveloped heart. I asked the reason why. The healer said that when a pregnant woman is stressed and suffers from emotional pain, then it will have side effects on the unborn child. I am the reason my daughter was born sickly. I could not bring myself to face Hermione and our daughter. I sneaked in to check on them and my heart broke. I knew then and there that Hermione will never forgive for me this.

After three months of stressful days and nights, especially for Hermione, as she fought with all her might to save our baby's life, she died. I can still remember waking up one day to Hermione's anguished screams. Our baby died in her arms. I can never forget the dead look in Hermione's eyes. The healers had to stun her and dose her with calming draughts since she was at risk of mentally losing it. I didn't know how I operated that day our baby died. I arranged for the baby's death certificate, the burial, while I was filled with guilt for all that happened. When I went to visit Hermione, the hatred in her eyes as she yelled at me to get out of her hospital room, is something that I have never seen from her before. The best friend I grew up with, loathed me maybe even more than she ever hated Voldemort. I spent the night crying outside her hospital room as I blamed myself for being the cause of my baby's death. If Hermione never recovered from the anguish and if she lost her mind, it would have been my fault too. I killed our baby and I broke Hermione's spirit.

One week after our baby's burial, Hermione entered my chambers - the first time she ever did in the entire duration of our marriage. She handed me the divorce papers. She said that she already signed it. All I had to do was to sign it myself and have it notarized. She said that she didn't want anything from me. I begged her to stay but she refused. She left me crying and kneeling on the floor as she walked out of the manor and my life.

I drowned myself in alcohol again when one day Luna and Fleur visited me. They asked me what I did to Hermione. It was obvious Hermione never confided to anyone about the way I treated her. Then the shock of my life came. Her friends told me that she only tricked me into marrying her since they coerced her to save me from Ginny. They showed me pensieve memories. I never hated myself so badly as that day.

That is the complete history of what happened between my failed marriage to Hermione. I drove her away from Britain because she could never forgive the man who caused her daughter to die.

Witches and Wizards of Britain all called Hermione names, 'Scarlet Woman of Britain' being the worst. Hermione who is the brains behind my perceived victory from Voldemort was severely mocked by the same people she worked so hard to help save. All of us benefited from her brilliance and sacrifices but we turned our back on her. She left the country and remained in contact with only five friends, the people who never judged her and left her side.

It is truly ironic that when Hermione was still here, nobody addressed her as the Lady Potter. Hell, even I never did! I only called her Lady Potter out of spite! When she was gone, however, and I started to demand people to stop publishing bad publicity about her and to formally call her the title she so deserves, it was for naught. It was too late! For ten years I looked for her and begged Luna and Fleur for her location but I was never successful in finding her. One day, I was very stunned to see her on the cover of The Wizard Times. Hermione Granger, my best friend, the woman I broke, rose from the ashes. She ended up representing Britain (and the people who used to mock her) in the ICW as Chief of the Medical Research Department. When the news circulated, people now insist on calling her Lady Potter. A title that she frankly doesn't give a shit about!
I would only like to add that I am to blame for our failed marriage and the loss of our friendship. To the people of Britain (and the rest of the magical community), please leave Hermione alone. She doesn’t deserve your scorn or your false adulation because of her achievements. Calling Hermione as the Lady Potter will only be perceived as an insult by her. In as much as she deserves the title like no one else ever could, she doesn’t care about it anymore. So, I only request that you leave her alone because she needs the peace. She deserves it. Besides, if you want her to focus on saving the children affected by the epidemic (the only reason she is back in Britain, to be honest), then do not bother her.

Should my statement have violent reactions, approach me and not Hermione. She should not be bothered at all.

Lastly, I would only like to say that I am truly very sorry Hermione. You are right. You truly were the best thing I ever had and it sucks to be me right now.

All statements are guaranteed to be true,

Harry James Potter"

There you have it, my dear readers. Now we have a glimpse of the true history of the fallen marriage of what is supposed to be The Power Couple of the Wizarding World.

To Hermione Granger, on behalf of the people of Magical Britain, we are truly sorry for all the pain from the insults we threw at you. We can only wish you all the best and thank you profusely for all you have done for our country and its people.

The British Wizarding World is in for a rude awakening that Monday morning as the Daily Prophet was circulated the entire country.

In a weirdly structured house in Ottery St Catchpole, a wee red-haired matriarch read the front-page story of the Daily Prophet. After reading, she decided to confront the one person who is involved in all of this.

"Ginevra Molly Weasley! Explain all of this! Is it true that you planned to legally steal from Harry?", a fumingly mad Molly screamed for her daughter to appear as she stomped into the house via floo.

"Ginny! Get down here this instant!", Molly yelled. Footsteps can immediately be heard from the stairs. A sleepy red-haired woman ran down to meet her mother.

"Mum! Keep quiet! Blaise and I are tired of watching Julianna -"

"Explain this Ginny!", Molly screeched as she pushed the Daily Prophet to her daughter's chest.

"Ouch!", her daughter winced.

"Read it now!", Molly demanded. As Ginny Zabini looked at the headline, she gulped.

"Mum, I can explain!", she said meekly as her face paled.

"You tried to legally steal from Harry and break his heart. What's worse is that your actions caused the death of an innocent child!", her mother was livid.
"What? What are you talking about? I would never kill a child!", she was offended.

"Read it! Every single word!", Molly screamed. Ginny gulped and complied. It took her about ten minutes to read the article and when she reached the end, she had tears of shame and guilt in her eyes.

"Mum, I didn't know. I swear I didn't know that their baby -", she was sobbing now.

"How dare you beg Hermione to save your daughter when your selfish actions caused her to lose her very own!?", Molly hissed.

"Mum, I'm sorry. I -", she was kneeling in shame.

"I am very disappointed in you Ginny. No wonder Hermione wouldn't even look at you", Molly Weasley disapparated.

It is indeed a very surprising morning for the magical community when they discover that the woman they once called as 'The Scarlet Woman of Britain' is the innocent one. The woman they sympathized with all those years ago, is the true scarlet woman. As the entire country was stunned with this twist of events stated by their beloved hero's confession on the paper, Hermione Jean Granger was still fast asleep since she was very tired from all the drama that happened the day before.
Moving In

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

Moving In

Harry Potter woke up early on Monday since he was expecting the Daily Prophet to be delivered anytime soon. Besides, Hermione's medicine alarm woke him up for his groin salve application.
After coating himself of the cool salve to lessen the swelling, he heard a tapping sound on his window and he immediately opened it as an owl flew in. He carefully removed the paper from the owl's leg and ruffled the bird's feathers before it flew away.

*Harry Potter Reveals All About His Marriage to Long-Lost Lady Potter*

*By: Rita Skeeter*

"Sounds promising", he murmured as he sat the paper on a desk. He summoned his mobile phone as he ordered breakfast to be brought in. He ordered a variety of bacon, eggs, waffles, strawberries, apples, bananas, and cherries. He decided to go all out since he was not sure of the food Hermione likes to eat. Twenty minutes later, one of the building's staff delivered his order and he carefully set them on the table. He prepared coffee, tea, milk, and orange juice since it's best to have everything ready. Besides, he owed Hermione a delicious breakfast for taking care of him. Now here he was knocking on the guest bedroom.

Hermione Granger opened her eyes and stretched like a cat. The sun was clearly up for a fine new Monday. When she heard a knock on the door, she groggily walked up and pushed her curly wild hair away from her face.

"Yeah, Harry? You need anything?", she asked sleepily as she opened the door and leaned on the door frame. She placed a hand on her mouth to stifle a yawn.

"I, I, er, well", the raven-haired man dressed in a shirt with a long robe wrapped around his body stammered. *What's the matter with this bloke?*

"Well, what is it, Harry? Are you ill?", she said patiently.

"Breakfast is ready", he muttered as his eyes were glued on the floor.

"Is that all?", she asked with amusement despite her sleepiness. She raised her arms and arched her back. *I feel so tired! Good thing I already told the team I'll be taking the time off today.*

Harry did not say anything but only nodded, his cheeks flushed.

"Okay then!", she said cheerfully as she closed the door of the guest room and walked towards the kitchen. When she noticed that he remained rooted on the spot by the door of the guest bedroom, she glanced at him.

"Aren't you coming?", she asked before heading to the dinner table. She was hungry after all.

Harry took a deep breath and dug his fingers deep into his closed fist. He expected a fun and light breakfast with Hermione, just a quick catch-up and easy conversation. But no! His sweet innocent wife just had to open the bloody door with her brunette bushy hair all over the place dressed in nothing but his black t-shirt that was way too large on her petite frame exposing her sexy collarbones and long legs. He almost groaned out loud when the clueless temptress arched her back to stretch and the shirt pulled higher on her legs to expose more of her glorious smooth skin. *How's a bloke to survive living in the same house with this woman? Merlin!*

"Aren't you coming?", she glanced at him with a raised eyebrow. *Hermione? Why do you have to be so bloody oblivious about your charms?*

"I just might", he muttered as he followed her to the kitchen.
"Woah! Hungry much, Harry?", she chuckled as she took a seat and her eyes roamed the bountiful options on the table.

"Well, I just wanted to thank you for taking care of me. And, er, it's your first day living here, so", he shrugged.

"Okay, then! Let's eat!", she said happily before gulping the fresh milk. Harry set himself a plate of bacon and waffles as he enjoyed his food while stealing glances at the innocent beguiling woman sitting in front of him.

"Should've grabbed a hair scrunchie", she muttered as she gathered her curly locks and haphazardly set it in a bun with her wand keeping it in place. Hermione picked a strawberry and leisurely sucked on the succulent fruit.

*Stop gawking! Stop staring at her lips! Why am I such an idiot for ordering strawberries?*

"Harry?", she looked at him as she licked the juice off her pouty lips.

"Are you feeling much better?", she asked.

"Harry?", she now had a worried tone.

"Hah?"

"Are you alright?", she was now clearly bothered about his obtuse reply.

"Wh-What?", he stammered after clearing his throat.

"I asked if you're feeling much better now", she was clearly in her healer mode.

"Yes. Swelling is now lessened and, er, my body doesn't ache that much", he shrugged.

"Good", she said before biting another strawberry.

*This must be the longest breakfast I ever had,* he thought as he eats his bacon and waffles while wishing he could be the strawberry his wife was devouring.

Hermione apparated to the Malfoys' front yard after eating breakfast and taking a shower. After giving Harry strict instructions to stay put and rest, she decided it was a good idea to pack her stuff early in the morning so that she can do some research on the epidemic. Maybe she could even meet up with Rosier, Irie, Tori, and Drake before they head to St. Mungo's. She knocked on the door and to her delight, little Scorpius opened the door.

"Auntie Mione!", the boy squealed and wrapped his arms around her waist.

"Good morning, Scorp!", she kissed the boy's cheeks.

"I missed you yesterday and at breakfast Auntie Mione", the boy pouted.

"Aww! I missed you too baby. Are you busy today? Want to spend time with me?" she lifted the boy into her arms and settled him on her right hip.

"Yay! I love you Auntie Mione!", the boy kissed her right cheek and she giggled.

"Chief! Good morning!", Irie greeted as he walked down the stairs.
"Good morning, Kei! Where's Vangie?", she smiled.

"Rosier, get your arse down here, Chief's calling", Irie shouted.

"I'm coming down you bloody bas-", Rosier hissed but she interrupted their screaming match.

"Rosier, Irie, watch your language", she ordered but her tone was laced with amusement.

"Sorry, chief!", they chorused. Evangeline Rosier walked down the stairs followed by the Malfoys.

"Good morning, Mione!", Astoria greeted and they exchanged kisses on the cheeks.

"Morning, Tori, Drake", she greeted the couple.

"Hi Vangie!", she smiled at the beautiful French healer.

"So, where were you last night Mione?", Draco asked with a knowing smirk.

"Well I had to fix Harry up since a bunch of my friends beat him up", she rolled her eyes.

"Damn! I feel pissed that I missed seeing that incident", Irie sighed and Rosier smacked him on the back of the head.

"I won't be coming to St. Mungo's today; I hope it's alright. I'll still need your status reports though", she addressed her team.

"Are you unwell, Chief? Or is it Lord Potter!", Rosier inquired.

"Lord Potter is taking the day off because of the beatings. I'm taking the day off since I have to move my things to his penthouse", she explained.

"What?!", the adults exclaimed.

"We made a deal. I have to accept the terms. Hence, I have to live with him while I'm here in Britain", she gave them the shortest story.

"But why!", Astoria asked gently.

"I'll explain later", she looked into her friend's eyes so she could understand. She got a nod in return and she smiled.

"But chief! Your bastard of an ex-husband will either seduce you or try to hurt you again!", Irie argued.

"Irie, stay out of this! Lord and Lady Potter's business is their own", Draco said sternly.

"Thank you, Drake", she smiled at her childhood nemesis turned friend.

"So chief, where are we sending the reports later this evening!", Rosier asked.

"I'll have to ask Lord Potter for floo details and his specific address in case his penthouse is only reachable via apparition. I'll send either a Patronus or I'll owl the details", she replied.

"Can I spend the day with Auntie Mione, Mummy!", Scorpius pleaded as he tightened his arms around her shoulders. The little boy on her hip is such a sweetheart.

"It's alright with me Scorp but Auntie Mione is busy with packing today and she has to stay in Lord
"Potter's house", Astoria addressed her son while playfully pinching the boy's cheeks.

"Maybe you should check with Potter first Mione. Just to be sure", Draco stated.

"Alright! *Expecto Patronum!*", her otter Patronus floated around her and Scorpius giggled.

"Pretty!", the little boy squealed as he extended a hand and the floating otter nuzzled his fingers.

"Please go to Harry Potter. Ask him if I can bring Scorpius Malfoy to his home for the day. Please be careful around muggles. He lives in a non-magical area", she ordered her Patronus who flicked a tail and nodded towards her before floating away.

"Bye-bye pretty bunny!", Scorpius waved at the Patronus and the Malfoys laughed.

"Scorp, sweetie, Auntie Mione's Patronus is not a bunny. It's an otter", Astoria explained.

"We'll head to St. Mungo's first, chief. Tori and Drake can follow once you receive Lord Potter's reply", Rosier said as she dragged Irie out of the house.

"Thanks, Vangie! I'll send you the address as soon as I get it. Good luck", she called out before the two exited the house. With a wave, the two closed the door and a few seconds later, they heard the cracking sound of disapparition.

A few minutes later, a large stag Patronus with an otter on its back floated in front of Hermione. They adults gasped as Scorpius struggled to be let down. Hermione carefully placed the boy on the floor and approached the corporeal beings.

"*Sure, Mione! Scorpius Malfoy can come here. Just apparate directly into the suite. I'll see you guys soon*", Harry's baritone voice could be heard loud and clear. Scorpius played with the otter on the stag's back and squealed, Auntie Mione several times. The stag and the otter grazed little Scorpius face before the corporeal beings chased each other away. The adults were stunned. Scorpius squealed in excitement.

"Well, I'll be! I've never seen a person conjure two corporeal Patronus forms ever", Draco broke the silence.

"Wow!", Astoria was stunned.

"Damn! Potter must love you, eh, Mione?", Draco teased and she only rolled her eyes.

"Come Scorp. Kiss mummy and daddy bye-bye and you can help me pack my things. After that, we'll spend the day together!", she turned to the child.

"Bye mummy! Bye, daddy! I love you!", the child wrapped each of his parents in a warm hug. The couple kissed their son on the cheeks before they too left the house.

"Race me to my room Scorp and help me pack. If you reach my room first, I'll buy you some ice cream. How's that sound?", she said in a childish voice as the little boy clapped his hands and immediately ran towards the guest room she occupied.

"I win! I win!", the boy shouted with excitement and she shook her head in amusement.*I love that little boy! If only Viola Lily were still here*, she thought as she walked to the stairs. Scorpius was already seated on her bed when she got inside her room and she had a big grin on her face. The child may be very excitable but he was very well-behaved.
"Just stay put on the bed for a while, eh sweetie? This won't take long", she said and the boy nodded. Using her wand, she levitated her things, stored them in her chest, shrunk it, and placed it in her magical beaded purse - the same purse she used during the Horcrux hunt all those years ago. When that was all done, she smiled at Scorpius and held out a hand. The child immediately got out of her bed, held her hand tight, and they disapparated.

Harry Potter was just lounging around in the entertainment room watching an action movie on the telly. When he heard the sound of apparition, he stood up from his comfortable position on the large couch and greeted Hermione and his little guest.

"Hello Scorpius!", he said cheerfully.

"Hi Lord Potter!", the child smiled.

"Harry Potter! What are you wearing?", Hermione was in angry healer mode again.

"Well, the swelling down there is gone, just a little reddish. Though it doesn't hurt anymore", he defended himself. He was wearing gray cotton sweat pants that went low on his hips with no shirt on.

"I told you not to cover -"

"I'm not wearing underwear. Besides, the pants are loose so you know. After all, I can't walk around the house just wearing a robe around little Scorpius, now can I?", he smirked.

"Fine!", she huffed.

"Auntie Mione, why is Lord Potter not wearing a shirt?", the kid asked with innocent curiosity.

"That's a good question -"

"Well, Scorp, your Auntie Mione started a culture of wearing fewer clothes around here. She ate breakfast with just a shirt on this morning", Harry said innocently but when his eyes met Hermione's glare, he grinned cheekily.

"Humph! At least my shirt covered most of my body. Unlike some people around here", she snorted.

"Oh, by all means, do walk around the house with just a shirt on. I don't mind", he winked.

"Let's go Scorpius. Help me set my things up. Then we'll eat ice cream. Ignore that big kid over there", she looked at the little boy.

"Oh, ice cream! Can I join you?", Harry asked.

"I suppose so, Lord Potter. Though I do hope you have strawberry ice cream", Scorpius said with a cute pout.

"Sure, I'll have strawberry ice cream ready for you. Vanilla for Auntie Mione and chocolate for me", he smiled at the child.

"Yay! Come on, Auntie Mione!", Scorpius tugged at Hermione's hand.

"Harry, I'll run diagnostic charms on you to see how your body's healing. I'll just set up my stuff", she turned to look at him.
"Do you need help?", he asked.

"No. It's fine. It will be really quick. I'll just take my trunk out of the purse", she shrugged.

"Oh! Then why not have the little man stay with me for a bit then? For sure you'll be five minutes tops, right?"

"Scorp, you stay with Lord Potter for a bit, okay?", she ruffled the boy's blonde hair.

"Sure Auntie Mione!", Scorpius hugged her waist before running to Harry. Hermione went to the guest room she was occupying.

"Er, Scorp, can I call you that?", Harry asked the child who was looking at him curiously.

"Sure, Lord Potter", the child beamed.

"Why don't you call me, Harry, kid", he chuckled.

"Hmm…okay, Harry."

"Come on!", Harry held out a hand for the child to take and together they walked inside his entertainment room.

"Wow! What is all this?", the child was excited as they sat on the couch.

"It's muggle appliances", he shrugged.

"Cool!", Scorpius beamed. Harry switched the telly to a children's channel. Perfect timing since the movie *The Lion King* is just about to start. He summoned his mobile phone and ordered ice cream. The child was already enamored with the show. He decided to just lounge around and enjoy the movie. After all, he could relate to the young lion cub, *Simba*, because their life stories had a lot of similarities.

"Harry?", Scorpius asked when the movie was cut during a commercial break.

"Yes, Scorp?"

"Are you my Auntie Mione's boyfriend?", the child's gray eyes looked at him with an innocent stern.

"Well no. I'm her husband", he explained.

"But Auntie Mione's husband is the man who always makes her cry. And well, you seem nice", the child was confused.

"I am that man who made her cry, Scorp", he sighed.

"But why? Auntie Mione is the nicest lady I ever know! How can you do that?", the child sniffed as tears were starting to form.

"I was an idiot that's why", he admitted with shame.

"Well you shouldn't hurt my Auntie Mione again!", the child insisted with clenched fists.

"I promise not to hurt her again, Scorp", he said with sincerity.
"Good! Because if you hurt her again then I'll marry Auntie Mione when I get older!", the child said grumpily.

"Woah! Auntie Mione is mine. You just have to find someone else when you get older", he chuckled as he playfully ruffled the child's hair.

"If you won't break your promise, then I'll just have to find someone as beautiful and smart as Auntie Mione when I grow up", the child shrugged.

"You're alright, Scorp", he smiled.

"You're okay too, Lord Potter", the boy grinned cheekily before focusing his attention to the movie once again.

If only I was as smart as Scorpius when I was younger, I would have noticed that the most beautiful and most brilliant girl I could ever find was just there by my side supporting me all along...If I were as smart as this kid, I wouldn't have suffered all those years of separation from Hermione and Viola Lily would have been here with us... I'm an entirely new level of stupid if a kid can easily understand how special Hermione is and I was blind to that fact for so long...

Harry was startled from his reverie when he heard the doorbell. He stood from his seat on the couch and exited the entertainment room. When he headed for the main door, he was surprised since Hermione got to it first. She was standing there with her back turned, bushy hair all over the place, in a fitted black tank top and denim shorts.

"Oh! Good morning, Lady Potter!", Charles greeted.

"Er, just call me Hermione", she said awkwardly.

"Right, well -"

"Hi Charles!", he walked to the main door.

"Hello, sir! Here is your order. Hope you like them", Charles said politely but since he knew the man, he could see the old butler's eyes sparkling with mischief. He just took the bag of ice cream and silently vowed to talk to the old butler about his teasing.

"Thank you, Charles!", he replied but his eyes glared at the man.

"Enjoy, sir, miss", he could hear the teasing tone despite the formality. He closed the door and turned to Hermione.

"Don't you give tips or something?", she asked.

"It's on my tab", he shrugged.

"Okay then. So, should I get bowls?"

"Nah! I'll just summon spoons for each of us. Let's go! I love The Lion King!", he walked to the entertainment room and she followed.

They entered the room and sat on each side of an excited Scorpius. He could see that it was an exciting part of the movie, Simba and Nala's journey to the elephant graveyard. He wandlessly summoned three spoons and handed out each pints of ice cream to Hermione and Scorpius. They both thanked him without looking away from the telly. While it was his favorite animated movie,
he spent the entire time stealing glances at Hermione who was licking her spoon in an innocently sensual way as her eyes were glued on the telly.

*Hermione and specific types of food such as strawberries and ice cream are seriously dangerous for a bloke's sanity! She should come with a health hazard or something.*

When the movie was finished, Scorpius was sleepy so Hermione led the child into the guest room she was occupying. Hermione exited the room followed by a pile of large tomes along with some parchment and ink levitating behind her.

"Mione? Do you want to read the Daily Prophet's article on my statement regarding our marriage? I reckon you would want to know", he stated as she settled her tomes on the center table in the living room before sitting on the couch.

"Sure, I guess", she shrugged as her eyes were now focused on a parchment. He wandlessly summoned today's issue of the Daily Prophet and handed it to her. Hermione set aside the parchment first and her eyes were immediately glued to the front page. He took a seat beside her and watched quietly as she read. After a few minutes, she set the paper on the table and sighed.

He was amazed that she just took out her wand and proceeded to cast diagnostic charms on him. He observed her, waiting for any reaction on the article or even get a glimpse of her thoughts but she hid her emotions well.

"Well, you are so much better now. Do you still need me to dress the wound on your hip?", she was once again in her healer mode.

"No, thank you. I can do it myself", he muttered.

"Alright! Well, just relax for the day and you'll be fit to work tomorrow", she stated and he nodded.

"Thanks, Hermione."

"Of course!", she was now focusing on the parchment and then frowned. She silently summoned her reading glasses and it flew towards her. She wore the lens and focused on her work. When he remained sitting there, she raised an eyebrow at him.

"What?", he asked.

"You should rest", she said.

"But I've been sleeping since yesterday", he whined.

"Fine. Go watch a movie, read a book, or something", she insisted.

"You want to be alone, don't you?", he asked.

"Well I can't concentrate if you keep staring", she remarked but her eyes were still on the parchment.

"If I read a book, can I just sit here?", he negotiated.

"Yeah, whatever. But if you break my concentration, I'll hex you", she threatened.

"Yes, chief!", he chuckled and she lifted her eyes from the parchment and glared at him.
"I mean it Potter!", she hissed.

"Sorry", he said sheepishly as he summoned his headphones, iPod, and a copy of The Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie.

"You're in charge of lunch", she said after a few minutes of silence.

"Okay. What would you like?"

"Scorp likes fish and chips", she remarked as she grabbed a large tome and set it on her lap, her eyes drifted from the parchment to and fro a particular page on the book.

"Fish and chips it is then", he said as he glanced at her. It was such a familiar scene, Hermione in research mode as he sat beside her.

The only difference from their Hogwarts and Horcrux research days was that now, the silence between them is no longer comfortable.
Hermione Granger spent the rest of her day off studying her existing reports on the epidemic as well as thinking about the arithmancy on the toy that caused it. In balancing her time for work and
keeping little Scorpius entertained, she had a full day. Keeping herself busy has always been her
go-to defense mechanism against her emotions which is indeed a perfect alibi right now especially
after reading Harry's open letter published in the Daily Prophet. In as much as she promised Viola
that she will give her estranged husband one more chance, reading about it all just brings a certain
ache within. As a master of masking her feelings, she used her work and affection for Scorpius to
distract her with hopes that it will sustain her stoic facade for the rest of the day. She was startled
from her reverie when she heard a knock on the guest bedroom she occupied.

"Come in", she answered. To her surprise, Kei Irie entered the room and sealed the door.

"Good evening, chief!", her colleague greeted.

"Hello, Kei! Please take a seat. I take it all things were alright at St. Mungo's?", she immediately
got to business.

"I have the detailed reports here with me, Chief. But I do have to warn you that there is an
astounding number of letters addressed to you which arrived at St. Mungo's. Rosier and the rest of
us stacked the letters in your desk", Irie informed her.

"What letters? From whom?", she raised an eyebrow.

"Chief, we all read Lord Potter's statement at the paper this morning before we left the Malfoys'
house. We believe the letters are feedback from people who have read his statement. We just didn't
want to talk about it out of respect for you. Besides, we all knew that you would want all of us to
focus on work. But now that's done, I just want to ask. How are you chief?", Irie asked with
concern.

"I'm alright, Kei. Just hand in the reports", she said formally.

"No! You're not fine, chief. We may always respect you as our boss or for being the world's best
healer, but first and foremost, you are our friend. You can't lie to us. You are not alright. The
article must have opened some old wounds", the Japanese healer insisted.

"Alright! So, I'm not fine! There! Are you happy now?", she snapped.

"Let it out, chief. I am here to listen. Just like your other friends. If you keep on hiding your real
emotions, you could just explode and burn out. It's not healthy. You need to let it out. Get angry at
the Malfoys' for hitting Lord Potter! Get angry at your two friends who severely hurt him! Express
your anger at Lord Potter for all he's done! Scream at that bitch who knelt in front of you! File libel
cases for them calling you that blasted moniker! Just let it out, chief! Let it out", the man said with
emotion.

"Why did things have to be so complicated? If only I didn't come back here, then I would've been
safe", she now had tears in her eyes. Irie immediately wrapped his strong arms around her as she
sobbed. The whirlwind of emotions that she's been encountering ever since seeing Harry again
finally caught up to her.

"Shhh! Just let it out, chief! We're here for you", Irie whispered as he comforted her. His hands
rubbing gently on her back to reassure her of his and her other friends' support.

"I thought I was over it. Really! But reading about it in his own words, it still feels like being
stabbed in the chest. And I cannot avoid him because I must stay here now", she sobbed. Her tears
drenching Irie's healer robes.

"Chief, I may not know the full details but I can't understand why you have to live here with your
bastard of an ex-husband!", Irie said with venom.

"I have to do this Kei. I made a promise to Viola Lily. I must do this", she said with determination despite the tears.

"But why? I don't understand?"

"I'll tell you all once I'm ready. Just, just please understand. Please!", she pleaded and Irie nodded in understanding. Kei kissed her on the forehead when the door opened.

"Auntie Mione! Are you alright?", Scorpius ran to her and wiped her tears. She saw Harry standing by the door frame with a frown on his face. She glanced at Kei who was also glaring back.

"I'm fine Scorp. You have to go home with Uncle Kei alright? Your mum and dad must miss you already", she kissed the child's forehead.

"I love you, Auntie Mione. Don't cry alright", Scorpius hugged her tight and she chuckled.

"I love you too darling. Now say goodbye to Lord Potter", she gestured to Harry who was now locked in a glaring competition with the Japanese pathology expert.

"Goodbye Lord Harry! I had fun today! Hope I can come visit you again", the child smiled at Harry.

"I had fun too Scorp. And of course, you are welcome here", Harry broke his glares for Kei to focus his attention on the child with a big grin on his face.

"Thanks for handing the reports, Kei. I'll see you all at St. Mungo's tomorrow", Hermione smiled at her loyal colleague.

"I'll help you get back at your ex, chief", Kei whispered into her ear before kissing her temple. Hermione did not miss the deepening of Harry's frown at the gesture of affection.

"Don't toy with Harry, Kei. He's the most powerful wizard in Britain", she whispered while hugging him.

"Oh, chief, it's so good to see Mr. Hot-stuff over there seething in jealousy", Kei whispered and she chuckled while swatting him on the chest.

"Come, Scorp. Take my hand and I'll take you home", Kei addressed the child.

"Bye Lord Harry!", Scorpius ran to Harry and wrapped his arms around his waist.

"Bye Scorp", Harry ruffled the boy's blonde hair. Scorpius ran to her and gave her a tight hug before taking Kei's hand.

"Good night gorgeous!", Kei said with a playful wink and she rolled her eyes. Together with Scorpius, the two disapparated with a crack.

"You seem cozy with him", Harry said with a scowl.

"Well, what can I say, Scorpius loves me", she said with innocence.

"I'm talking about that Japanese who's all over you", he crossed his arms.

"Trust me, Kei's just friendly like that. Besides, blokes like him are never interested in girls like
me", she shrugged. *Oh, Harry! If you only know that Kei Irie would most likely fancy you over me*, she smiled with amusement.

"Blokes like him? Are you blind? He's all over you!", he gritted his teeth.

"Please! Good-looking blokes never fancy me. He's just a close friend", she insisted.

"But he -"

"If you got nothing better to say, do you mind? I want to get some sleep now", she interrupted.

"Fine! Still, don't like him though", he said grumpily.

"Well, he doesn't like you too, so the feeling's mutual. Goodnight, Harry!", she gently pushed him away from the door frame.

"Mione about the article –"

"I don't want to talk about it tonight. I'm too tired. Good night!", she closed the door and sighed.

Harry woke up due to the alarm set by Hermione. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was two o'clock in the morning. He lowered his lounge pants and turned on the lampshade. He carefully applied the salve on his crotch, the second to the last dose per the indicators on the magical alarm. After coating the last of his injuries, he gently set his pants straight. He stood up from the bed and decided to grab a glass of milk. He slowly and quietly walked towards the kitchen but the sight that greeted him halted his steps. He bit his lower lip and clenched his fists to control his urges.

The sight that greeted him was Hermione Granger bending in front of the refrigerator dressed in nothing but hot pink cotton boy shorts and a fitted black tank top. *What are you still doing here Potter? Run back to your room!*

Despite his brain telling him to run away from the temptation, his feet were rooted on the floor. He was still too stunned and aroused at the sight. Hermione righted her position and held a carton of fresh milk in her hand. She yelped and almost dropped the carton when she saw him standing there.

"Harry! What are you doing here?", she said in a breathless voice as she slowly set the carton of milk on the counter.

"I, er, milk", he stuttered.

"Oh, okay. Let me get us a glass -"

"Accio two glasses", he called out as he extended a hand. Two glasses flew in front of him which he immediately caught. He carefully set the glasses in front of her and she poured milk on each. Hermione immediately drank her glass of milk and was about to wash her emptied glass but he stopped her.

"No. I'll do it", he managed to say the words without stuttering this time.

"Okay. Good night, Harry", she was about to walk away when he called her name.

"Hermione!"

"Hmmm?", she had her back to him.
"Please do wear trousers or robes around the house", he muttered huskily. He closed his eyes to not see her standing there but he could easily picture out her beautiful form in his mind. *Merlin! Death by arousal! I could already see the Daily Prophet headline.*

"Sorry! I'm used to being alone", she muttered before running away to her room.

Hermione Granger is once again busy reviewing the documents regarding the epidemic. She is still unable to decipher what substance is concentrated on the toy that's causing pureblood children to get sick. While the team can mitigate the spread of the epidemic in the victims' bodies, she is now getting agitated because if they cannot figure out the substance, then the victims will never be fully healed. While their interim treatments are working, for now, Hermione is aware that if they can't identify the root cause of the disease, their temporary remedies are bound to fail. Since fifteen lives of children are at stake, she has to find the cure as soon as possible.

It's a stressful Tuesday morning since she is very irritated from all the murmurs and stares she has been getting because of that blasted article. After she conducted her checkups with the patients and sharing quick discussions with the parents, she locked herself in her temporary office. She has been holding on the edge of her control so she decided she should be away from the prying eyes of other people.

Since she can't think of anything related to the epidemic right now, she sighed and looked at the letters piled on her desk. There must be around hundreds of letters here from random wizards and witches who wish to comment on Harry's confession in that article. She glared at the letters because they make her angry and curious at the same time. The fact that every two hours, a St. Mungo's healer would send in another fresh pile of letters for her, is so irritating. She tried to sort out the letters into two piles. One pile is a stack from people whose names she could remember and one pile for strangers. But even that menial task takes a long time to accomplish because she's not heard from people in Britain for a decade, so she can't be certain what letter belongs to which correct pile.

Her musings were interrupted when she heard a knock on the door. She merely mutters a polite acknowledgment when a woman she does not want to see entered her office.

"Hermione, I am so -", Molly Weasley started to say but she interrupted.

"Mrs. Weasley as you know I am a very busy person so can you please leave", she said in a formal voice. She only glanced at the old woman before she feigned interest in the reports.

"Please, Hermione. Just five minutes", the Weasley matriarch insisted.

"Have a seat, madame", she pointed to a chair in front of her.

"Hermione, dear, I just want to say how sorry I am for my actions regarding you and on behalf of my family, I sincerely apologize", Mrs. Weasley started.

"If that would be all, madame, then you can go", she said dismissively and made a gesture with her hand indicating that the old woman should leave.

"Hermione, we didn't know about Ginny's plan!", the old woman defended her actions. Hermione took a deep breath to reign in her temper. She carefully placed the report on her desk and removed her reading glasses from her face.

"Mrs. Weasley whether you and your family were aware of Mrs. Zabini's plans does not justify how you tarnished my reputation. For years I have suffered under the mockery of being known as
the 'Scarlet Woman of Britain'. That is one of the most hateful comments about my person. I will never forget how you were the person who started that moniker. Don't you dare deny it, Mrs. Weasley! During my fourth year in the Tri-Wizard Tournament, you have accused me of being a scarlet woman in one of your howlers. After my blasted marriage with Harry, you destroyed my reputation on the papers calling me a scarlet woman once again. Hence, that hateful moniker I had to suffer! So how dare you show your face and explain your reasons!", she snapped.

"But, but, I treated you like my daughter!", Mrs. Weasley sputtered.

"Mrs. Weasley you have never treated me like a daughter. Harry, you have cared for as a son, but me, never. Because any mother would never call their daughter a scarlet woman. You only wanted me to marry your son, Ronald", she said with her arms crossed.

"Hermione, please -"

"Mrs. Weasley, if you have got nothing to say to me, then you may leave. I am very busy!", she said dismissively.

"Hermione, you must forgive -"

"Mrs. Weasley, you and any member of your family have lost the right to call me by my given name. You will address me as Ms. Granger or by my formal title. We are not of any friendly relation so you do not get to call me, Hermione!", she hissed.

"I, I, I'm sorry Chief Healer Granger", Mrs. Weasley said with shock. Her chubby face was all red from indignation, embarrassment, and shame.

"Good day, madame", she said formally.

"Chief Healer Granger, we have an emergency!", a male healer from St. Mungo's panted.

"What's the emergency?", she immediately stood up and summoned her emergency kit.

"Mrs. Weasley's daughter has been rushed in just a while ago since she was attacked by letters. One of them is poisoned", the healer explained.

"Ginny!", Mrs. Weasley exclaimed with worry.

"Lead the way and explain the details to me! Mrs. Weasley, please calm down. You may wait with your family by the children's epidemic ward. Or, you may follow us as you wish", she turned to the old woman before following the male healer. She was handed a parchment containing Ginny's summary diagnostics and she sighed. Mrs. Weasley was wailing behind them and she just wants to silence the old woman. Great! What a long day ahead!

Harry Potter is having a really bad day at work. People were either glaring at him or whispering about him. The married women at the ministry were giving him scornful looks. The men were looking at him with disbelief since he admitted to cheating on Hermione. While the rest, just treated him with disdain. He also received so much hate mail which is now stored in a conjured box near his desk. Since he had wards against receiving mail from random people except for a pre-determined list and official ministry communications, all other post is redirected to the auror office. He received so much hate mail that he didn't bother to read them since it was already partially scanned by auror trainees as part of their intent detection course. Surprisingly, he received a few letters offering encouragement on how to win Hermione back and one from a woman claiming that she was one of the random women he paraded in front of Hermione. He decided to
bring the non-hate mail with him so he could read them at home later. But for now, he just has to get through this very long workday.

"Boss, Mrs. Longbottom is here to see you", one of his junior aurors informed him.

"Send her in", he replied. The junior auror opened the door and Luna Lovegood-Longbottom entered. With a nod to him, his auror left and closed the door. He gestured for Luna to take a seat.

"Lord Potter -"

"Mrs. Longbottom, please call me Harry. We were friends once", he shrugged.

"Harry, I would like to say sorry for what happened last Sunday. Fleur and I went overboard. We hurt you. We could have caused severe permanent damage if Hermione did not interfere", the blonde had her head down in shame.

"It's alright. I know how much you care for Hermione", he shrugged. How could I be angry at Fleur and Luna when because of them, things are starting to look much better for Hermione and me?

"That is no excuse, Harry. We were out of line", Luna admitted with a sniff.

"Well maybe you and Fleur were too much, but it's alright", he said nonchalantly.

"But we hurt you!", Luna sniffed.

"Yes, but Hermione fixed me up", he chuckled.

"Oh!", Luna said in a prolonged tone. Clearly, she understood the real reason as to why he didn't mind getting beat up.

"So, will that be all, Luna?", he inquired.

"Well, yes, I suppose", she admitted.

"Can I ask you a question then?", he looked at the blonde dreamy-eyed woman.

"Of course!", she said in a tone laced with confusion.

"Did Neville as the head of the Ancient and Noble House of Longbottom offer you a formal courting ceremony?"

"Yes, he did. He went through the five steps before securing my hand. Not that he needed to, because I always liked him but, he wanted to give me what I was due", she said in a wistful tone.

"Are you busy, Luna? Do you have somewhere to go to this morning?", he inquired. An idea now forming on his head.

"Well I am free, I suppose", Luna stated.

"Brilliant! Have lunch with me. Tell me all that you know about the courting ceremonies", he said with excitement.

"But why?", Luna asked with an eyebrow raised.

"It just occurred to me that I married Hermione without giving her the due she deserves. I reckon
her getting pregnant made my work so much easier for me. So, I intend to court her in the way the brightest witch of the generation is supposed to be wooed", he explained.

"Oh!", she now had a knowing gleam in her eyes. I knew this scheming woman is a good source of ideas!

Hermione apparated into Harry's penthouse truly exhausted. Since the lights were off, she knew that Harry is still not back. Besides, she reckons that he is still busy with investigations. She went to the kitchen and grabbed a bowl of cereal. She ate her cereal and milk while setting up another bowl of fruit. Since the master of the house is still not back, she decided to invade the large jacuzzi in his bedroom. She needed to relax her aching muscles from the surgery she conducted on Ginny Zabini and to rest her mind from the pressure of finding the cause of the epidemic. After casting cleaning charms on the bowl, she grabbed her bowl of fruit and summoned a bathrobe and her favorite bath items. She entered Harry's bedroom and helped herself to the jacuzzi in his luxurious bath.

"Ah! This is the life!", she closed her eyes as she felt her aching muscles relax. She levitated her bowl of fruit by the jacuzzi as she enjoyed living like a queen. She needs to get the smell of Ginny's blood and pus away from her. A long luxurious bath is surely the perfect solution for that. She summoned the remote for the bath's sound system and decided on instrumental piano music. I hope Harry does not return soon... I could get used to this...

Harry Potter apparated into the master bedroom of his penthouse at half past eleven in the evening. He needed to get a quick shower before going to bed after a long day. After his enlightening lunch and talk with Luna, the aurors received important intelligence about the syndicate's scheduled shipment of smuggled wizarding goods, so he immediately gathered a team with him so that they could go investigate. They were very lucky to quickly stop the shipment but the criminals were able to escape. They were only able to capture one. Since he had to stay for the questioning, he was dead tired when he arrived home. To his surprise, he could hear music playing inside his bathroom. With a firm grip on his wand, he entered the bathroom.

"Who are -", whatever it is he was about to say was immediately forgotten when he saw his wife sleeping naked inside the jacuzzi. Her head was leaning on the marble tiles and she had a peaceful look on her face.

"Hermione!", he gently called out.

"Hermione!", he tried again.

"Hermione!", he said in a much louder voice as his hand touched her shoulder. The bubbles were no longer thick so it was clear that she's been sleeping there for a while.

"Hermione!", he shook her shoulder. She opened her eyes, gasped, and immediately grabbed her wand.

"Stupefy!", she whispered.

"Protego!", he cast wandlessly.

"What - Harry!", her eyes roamded around and focused on him.

"Yes, Hermione. It's me", he said gently.
"Merlin, Harry! You scared me!", she yelled.

"I tried waking you up but you wouldn't budge", he said but his eyes were focused on the wall.

"Oh, sorry", she said sheepishly.

"I'll leave you to finish your bath then", he said as he turned around.

"Thank you", she whispered and he closed the door. A few minutes later, he heard a startled scream and he immediately ran inside the bathroom once again.

"Great!", he said sarcastically as he saw Hermione on the floor. She must have slipped and then hit her head. He summoned her robe and transfigured it into a large comfortable blanket. He carefully wrapped it around Hermione and cradled her in his arms before using a face towel to create a portkey bound for St. Mungo's.

"Lord Potter, is that Chief Healer Granger?", a male healer immediately greeted him as soon as they landed.

"Hermione was taking a bath when she slipped from the tub. She hit her head. I brought her here", he explained.

"Come follow me, Lord Potter", the healer gestured and with Hermione in his arms, he followed the man who led them to the emergency room.

"Settle her on the bed, Lord Potter", the male healer said as they arrived in the emergency room. When the man was about to remove the blanket from Hermione, he snapped.

"What are you doing?", he growled.

"I have to -"

"Get a female healer. There's no bloody way I'm going to let you see my wife naked!", he hissed.

"Of course, Lord Potter. Please wait a minute!", the man gulped and ran away. After a few minutes, a female healer entered the emergency room.

"Please wait outside Lord Potter. I'll heal the chief in private!", the female healer stated in a commanding voice and he complied. *Please be okay, Hermione. You have to be okay!*
Harry's Warning

Harry was severely stressed out and worried for Hermione that due to nerves and slight panic, he sent a Patronus message to Neville, Fleur, and Draco about her accident. As he paced back and
forth outside the emergency room she was brought in, all he could think about was the fear that crept within him. Head injuries in bathrooms usually cause death for muggles. Granted that Hermione was a witch and magical healing works differently, but still. *What if she suffers from brain damage? Or what if her memories will be gone?* Since he was so scared about the possibility of Hermione not recovering from the incident unscathed, he didn't notice the person who called out his attention.

"Harry!", the voice said again. His pacing though still did not cease.

"Harry dear, what are you doing here?", this time the Weasley matriarch touched his forearm to attract his attention. Finally, his pacing came to a halt. He looked at the wee old woman and nearly yelped in surprise.

"Mrs. Weasley!", he gasped.

"I'm sorry for startling you dear but, I was walking along the hallway and saw you pacing", Mrs. Weasley explained.

"What are you doing here, Mrs. Weasley?", he said in a formal voice. The only Weasleys who he remained cordial with were Fred, Ron, and Bill. Arthur Weasley merely followed his wife's maneuvers so the man just ignores him. Charlie, he rarely sees so it doesn't matter. And well, Percy is still a bit stuck-up and a self-important snotty git.

"I was early here at St. Mungo's to talk to Hermione and apologize. However, after our quick talk, a healer bursts into Hermione's office saying that they need someone to operate on Ginny. She had been attacked from a poisonous letter, most likely retaliation from the article about your revelation", the old woman informed him.

"Hermione operated on Ginny?", he was surprised. No wonder Hermione had an accident. He can't imagine what it must be like for her, to cure the woman who was one of the main reasons she suffered so much a long time ago.

"Yes, Hermione spent around three hours healing Ginny", came the reply.

"Well, you must be very lucky since Hermione was here to heal her then", his voice was cold and unfeeling.

"Harry, for what it's worth, on behalf of – ", whatever apologies she was about to say was interrupted.

"Don't try to apologize, Mrs. Weasley. I don't bloody care! Hermione is in the emergency room and all I can think about is her right now!", he snapped. The stress of all that's happened is finally getting the better of him. After all, it is so damn irritating to hear that Hermione spent long hours curing Ginny only to find herself exhausted by the end of the day, which had an impact on her reflexes, hence, the accident. *Shit! The irony of it all! I am about to lose Hermione again, this time, it could be for good, if she doesn't survive this, and it's still because of Ginny bloody Weasley! I would give up on having any Weasley in my life if only I could spend the rest of my days with Hermione by my side... If only I met Hermione on the train first, maybe, things would have turned out better... And then it hit him. Mrs. Weasley had five children off at Hogwarts before Ron's first year. That would mean that she can't forget where the barrier to Platform 9 and ¾ is... Was it just setup all along?"

"But Harry, dear, we all were unaware – ", Mrs. Weasley tried again but he only shook his head.
"Mrs. Weasley, did you ever hand out Weasley sweaters to Hermione or any of your children's friends during Christmas?", he needed confirmation of his suspicions.

"Well no. I only knit sweaters for my children. And you, dear", she admitted. Her eyes were filled with confusion and surprise to his most unexpected question. With that answer, he knew. He took a deep breath to calm himself. He only had one more question left to ask.

"Tell me, Mrs. Weasley. And don't you dare lie to me! Is my meeting you and your family at Platform 9 and ¾ during my first year all a setup? And if so, why? Who ordered you? Don't lie to me. This is very important!", his voice was firm and demanding.

"I, well, Dumbledore wanted you to be close to a light family. He said you needed a friend. I reckon my Ronald would be good for you. Then, of course, Ginny used to fancy you very much at a young age, so I never expected she would – ", she was babbling now but Harry didn't care. Merlin! I am the world's biggest idiot! Of course, it was all a setup. That way, Dumbledore always keeps tabs on me, and I would be close with a family he highly approves of. And I thought the Weasleys did care about me! I always put them first. At the expense of Hermione, and everyone else. How could my life be one big lie all along?

"Thank you for your honesty, Mrs. Weasley", he managed to say.

"I don't understand Harry, dear – ", she walked closer to him and tried to touch his forearm but he roughly pulled away.

"Mrs. Weasley, ever since I met your family, I have always done my best to put all your interests first. I loved your family like my own. All this time, you have been manipulating me!", he hissed.

"No, Harry, no one else in the family knows about this. It's just an innocent favor from Dumbledore that is all", she rebutted.

"Mrs. Weasley, because of my fucking loyalty to Ron and the rest of your family, I threw away the single person who has always been the light of my life!", his magic was flaring now so he took a deep breath.

"I don't understand", she stammered.

"When Hermione was suffering from Ron's harsh comments especially during our first year, I turned a blind eye since I resolved myself to be first and foremost, loyal to him. My first friend. Did you know that the first time I laid eyes on Hermione, she immediately helped me by fixing my glasses? But I resolved myself to keep my distance from her because Ron didn't like her. Then that Halloween night came, she spent the rest of the day crying inside a bathroom due to Ron's jealousy, and the troll attacked her. During our second year, when she was petrified, I visited her every day. Sometimes, I even spend the entire night under the cloak in the hospital wing. She is very special to me, Mrs. Weasley, but time and time again, I had to pretend otherwise because I had to put Ron first. As we grew up together, I always put Ron first. Not just Ron, but all the Weasleys over her. Maybe the four older Weasley brothers and Mr. Weasley I can exclude from bad behavior towards Hermione. But you, Ron, and Ginny! You in a way, manipulated me to ignore and turn a blind eye on the best thing that's ever happened to my life! You cost me my best friend! My wife! And by Ginny's coercion, my child!", his voice was cold. Hard. Filled with self-loathing and grief.

"But Harry, I cared for Hermi – "

"Just shut up, Mrs. Weasley! You only started to care for Hermione since you wanted the Brightest Witch of the Age for Ron. Or maybe, you wanted to keep an eye on her since she is Ginny's greatest
"Harry, I'm sorry –"

"No, Mrs. Weasley. Your sorry is useless. It could never bring me back my best friend ever again. Can you even imagine the guilt I feel every time I see myself in the mirror? For what I have done to her? Can you imagine how hard it is for Hermione to come back here after all the pain? Only to be compelled to do everything in her power to heal Ginny's child? And yesterday, to heal the very woman I was supposedly claimed to have loved instead of her? The woman I claim to love very much as I insulted and ridiculed her during our marriage? Can you imagine how much hurt and pain Hermione suffered?", his voice was hollow.

"Harry, I –"

"Can you imagine how much I hate myself for being the stupidest jerk on the face of the planet for blinding myself to not see the most amazing woman who has been there all along because I was manipulated by my loyalty to your family?", he could now feel tears falling.

"Hermione will forgive you –"

"You don't see Hermione's eyes every time she looks at me, Mrs. Weasly. She doesn't hate me. But every time I see her, I can only see the pain I caused her. I can only see that the sparkle in her eyes is now gone. The sparkle I took away from her. I can only see the woman I am madly in love with, pretend to put a brave face on and interact with me, even if she wants to run for the hills. So, don't you dare say that Hermione will forgive me and everything will be alright! Because the Hermione I once knew is dead. I killed her. Now, all that's left is a shadow of the woman she once was. And it's all my fault! Because I was so damn stupid!", he sobbed.

"Harry –"

"Just go away, Mrs. Weasley and –", suddenly the door to the emergency room opens.

"Lord Potter –"

"Is Hermione okay? Can I see her? Does she need anything? She's going to live, right? She's –", he attacked the healer with a series of questions.

"Lord Potter, if you would please calm down –", the female healer said in a stern voice.

"Healer Watson, how is Hermione?" Draco Malfoy's voice interrupted. All of those present outside this corner by the emergency room turned towards Malfoy's deep voice. Draco was accompanied by Neville, Fleur, Rosier, and Irie.

"Alright! Will everyone here please settle down!", the female healer yelled and everyone quieted down. The women took a seat on the bench across the emergency room while the men remained standing - all of them anxious for any news regarding Hermione's condition.

Of course, Kei Irie saw the old woman with them so he had to comment.

"Excuse me, but aren't you the mother of that bitch that caused our chief so much pain?", Irie said with scorn. I have to keep an eye on this man. Damn obvious that he feels so much more for Hermione, Harry thought with a frown.

"While I am aware how much my daughter hurt Hermione, I do not appreciate you calling her a bitch!", Mrs. Weasley hissed.
"Just go away, Mrs. Weasley. You are not needed here", Harry intervened.

"Lastly, don't you dare address our chief by her first name. You and your family all lost that right!", Rosier snapped.

"Leave, Molly", Fleur glared at her mother-in-law.

"No! I need to know if Hermione – ", Mrs. Weasley insisted but Healer Watson snapped.

"Only family and friends of the patient are allowed to stay. If you are neither, then you have no business here", the female healer was angry now.

"Bu, but – 

"In the name of Hermione Jean Granger, who is a protectorate of the House of Malfoy here in Britain, I demand you to leave at once!", Draco Malfoy sneered which gave everyone a glimpse of the cold-hearted ferret he once was.

"The House of Potter acknowledges that the Lady of the House does not consider any of the Weasleys, except Fleur, her friends. As her liege Lord, I command you to leave my lady alone! Or else", Harry seconded.

Molly Weasley was shocked. Harry may be the Lord of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, but he's never used his title (and the political power he wields) except during Wizengamot sessions. For Harry to invoke the words of official warning against the womb of his magical house, everyone present understood how serious he is. Pureblood law no matter how patriarchal, always aims to protect the lady of the house since it is upon her womb that the future of the house is built, hence, Molly perfectly understands the message. All Weasleys should leave Hermione Gra – no, Hermione Potter alone.

"As you command, my Lord", Molly stammered and bowed, before quickly running away.

"Potter? You do know that you just issued an official warning to the Weasleys from going near your, er, well, Lady Potter, right!", Draco Malfoy asked. Harry's eyes roamed and he saw the surprise in the eyes of everyone present.

"Yes. I am perfectly aware of that fact, Malfoy", he replied.

"Harry, what if the rest of their family will see it as an insult? And they go after you?", Neville asked with worry.

"Then let them. I just want the Weasleys, except Fleur, out of Hermione's way. I know she has a lot of bad memories because of them, Molly and Ginny most especially. Besides, I know how stubborn Mrs. Weasley is. If I didn't threaten her, she would keep on pushing Hermione", he explained.

"Well, I guess you have a point", Neville agreed.

"The House of Potter gives thanks to the House of Malfoy for their help in protecting the lady of the house", Harry acknowledged and Draco nodded.

"Ahem!", Healer Watson cleared her throat. Finally, all eyes are now on her.

"Now that I finally got all of your attention, here's the diagnosis. Chief Healer Granger is fine. We're able to heal her head injury since Lord Potter brought her in immediately. However, she is
magically and physically exhausted. Most probably from the operation, she conducted yesterday and all her long hours of hard work for diagnostics and research for the epidemic. She will most likely be asleep for three days. When she wakes up, only then can you bring her home. She'll be resting at home for one more week after waking up. She is not allowed to do any magic, but, since this is Hermione Granger, we can let her do some research work. But only that!

"I volunteer to be the chief's caretaker once she wakes up", Irie declared.

"No bloody way!", Harry denied. *I would never have this Japanese rogue go anywhere near my Hermione!*

"Lord Potter, Healer Irie is the right person for the job since he is, after all, a healer!", Healer Watson agreed.

"No! We can find someone else", he insisted.

"Potter stop being a brat. Astoria and I cannot do it since we have jobs to do. My cousin Evangeline is busy now with preventive measures. Since Irie is the pathologist, and his main task is mostly done, and he's just assisting the rest, then he is the best person to stay with Hermione. Maybe they can even exchange ideas and finally crack the missing piece of the puzzle to be able to find the cure for the epidemic", Draco Malfoy explained.

"But, but, I could take care of her", he argued.

"You're an auror, Potter. Not a healer. Besides, aren't you busy with that case on finding the culprits that caused the epidemic in the first place?", Malfoy rolled his eyes.

"Fine", Harry said grumpily.

"I'll take care of chief, Healer Watson. Send me all her diagnostic test results, potion requirements, and meal plans", Irie addressed the woman.

"I'm warning you, Irie! You better take care of Hermione. Or else", he threatened. *And you better keep your filthy hands away from my wife!*

"Of course, I will! I love the Chief!", Irie hissed.

"What?", Harry exclaimed angrily but Draco and Neville restrained him. *That's it! This git is going down! How could he claim to be in love with my wife?*

"Come along, Potter. No need to get jealous", Draco and Neville dragged him away from the Japanese healer. The last thing he heard was Fleur and Healer Watson's laughter along with that annoying flirt of a prat saying, *What a jealous git!*

Meanwhile, in the land of dreams, Hermione was happy to be spending time with her cute and talkative daughter as little Viola Lily babbles on and on about 'Mister Death's plans'...
Hermione found herself all alone in a beautiful empty hall filled with what seemed to be millions of books. She knew what this place was! The Trinity College Library, her most favorite place in the
entire world as a little girl. The place reeked with so much history, art, and is a treasure trove of knowledge. It was every bookworm’s haven.

As her eyes roamed the empty library, she was confused. It looked to be a bright sunny day. But where was everyone?

How did I even get here? She was confused. Her last memory was lounging in the Jacuzzi, the delightful smells of her bath products, classical music, and the succulent strawberries. And then it hit her! Oh shit!

"Did I just fucking kill myself?", she muttered.

"Mummy! Language!", a beautiful girlish voice admonished, followed by a giggle. She turned around and gasped. Viola Lily Potter was standing in front of her, dressed in a cute periwinkle blue dress. Her daughter's bushy raven hair is sort of tamed because of her pigtails. With a shaking hand, she gently grasped her daughter's shoulder. When she could touch her little girl's body, happy tears fell. She immediately knelt and hugged her daughter with all her might.

"I'm so happy you're here to fetch me, baby! Come on, lead the way. Death with you is bloody brilliant", she said against her daughter's hair.


"I'm sorry darling", she said sheepishly. The little girl kissed her cheek and giggled.

"It's alright mummy. I'm quite upset though that you are not taking care of yourself", Viola huffed.

"But – "

"Really mum! You and daddy are so similar! You should take better care of yourselves", her little girl admonished.

"It was an accident baby", she defended herself.

"Hmmppff! You wouldn't have hit your head on the tub if you got decent sleep and ate regularly. Also, stop overworking yourself, mummy!", Viola cried.

"I'm sorry darling, but I had to help – "

"I know mummy. Granny Lily said that your healer's oath comes first and you had to heal that witch with a b", Viola grumbled.

"Witch with a b! Viola Lily Potter! I would not tolerate any child of mine using such language!", Hermione scolded.

"Well, it was Granny Lily's words mummy. Not mine", the child was sheepish.

"Oh, alright! But, darling, what am I doing here?", she took her daughter's hand as they walked around the library.

"Well, you're like in a coma but not really. Your magic is drained so your soul is wandering. I don't understand but at least, Mister Death describes it that way", Viola shrugged.

"Okay… so, how much time do we have?", she wanted to spend more time with her daughter so she needed to ask.
"Well, I can stay for a while, provided you are not yet awake mum", Viola Lily grinned.

"Great!", she said happily.

"Mum, before I forget, Mister Death has a message for you", her little girl stopped walking so she halted too.

"Yes, darling?"

"This is his message. I had to memorize it since he asked me to", she huffed.

"Okay, love", she hid her grin since her little girl is so adorable.

"The mistress of death need only offer hers and the master's allegiance to the service of the afterlife in their passing. Pledge allegiance in a ritual. Only then can your heart's desire come true", her daughter said solemnly. Her brow furrowed.

"Darling, can you repeat it one more time", she asked. Her daughter's words surprised her. She needed to be sure!

Viola Lily rolled her eyes, "The mistress of death need only offer hers and the master's allegiance to the service of the afterlife in their passing. Pledge allegiance in a ritual. Only then can your heart's desire come true."

"Okay. So, the Master of Death is Harry. The mistress would have to be me. Allegiance... Hmm... Ritual... I need to look this up...", she paced as she muttered.

"Uh, mum?"

"Yes, darling?"

"Are you alright?"

"Yes. Yes. I'm just thinking about what you said. Did Mister Death say anything else, love?"

"Well no. He just carried on with his usual crazy chatter. That's the only important thing", her daughter mused.

"Oh, okay. Well, thank you, love. That clue from Mister Death is already very helpful. Tell him thank you for me, okay?", she smiled at her little girl.

"Of course, mum!", Viola Lily grinned.

"So... I get to spend some time with you before I wake up right?", she said with excitement.

"Yep!", her daughter winked cheekily.

"What do you want to do then, Miss Potter?"

"Tag! You're it!", Viola tapped her arm before running away giggling.

Hermione shook her head in amusement and ran after her daughter.

Harry wanted to spend the rest of the day by Hermione's bedside but he got summoned by the Head of the DMLE because of a lead they received regarding the syndicate. With a sigh, he hurriedly
informed her healer to immediately contact him if ever there were any developments on her condition. When the healer agreed, he thanked her profusely before apparating back to his penthouse.

He was headed for the bathroom for a quick shower when he remembered that he had to do something very important.

He held out a hand to summon his mobile phone. As soon as the device was in his hand, he immediately dialed the number of two people who needed to know of his news…

Emma Granger had a tiring day after a gruesome root canal operation. So, she was just relaxing on her comfy chair behind her desk. Her eyes closed. She just wanted to let the traffic pass before she and her husband, Dan, would return home. Maybe she could convince her husband to order some drive-through from their favorite bistro since she was too tired to cook. Ah! There's a good idea!

Her brief relaxation was interrupted when she heard one of her mobile phones ringing. Without opening her eyes, her hand groped on the desk and grabbed the first phone she caught.

"Dr. Granger – ", she placed the phone by her ear when no sound came.

"Oops! Wrong phone!", she opened her eyes and saw that it was her private line that was ringing. She immediately grabbed the phone and looked at the Caller ID. Harry Potter.

"Hello? Harry?", she greeted with excitement. She had grown rather fond of her daughter's wayward yet contrite husband. After all, the dedicated man wore her defenses down, along with her husband's, because of his sincerity and perseverance. He kept going back to Australia despite their efforts to throw him out.

"Hi, Emma! Yes, it's me. Something happened to Hermione", Harry was direct to the point. She could hear the anguish in his voice.

"Wait! Wait! Wait! You found Hermione?", she gasped in surprise. In the many years that Harry visited them, they never betrayed their daughter's location out of respect for her wishes. Harry understood of course. She and Dan just left it all to fate if the estranged couple would ever meet again.

"Yes. But it's a long story. It doesn't matter for now. I'll tell you some other time. Listen, Emma, this is important", she could hear the man's grief and worry from the tone of his voice.

"Of course", her only reply. She was now filled with dread. What could have happened to my baby?

"Hermione had an accident last night. She slipped from the tub and hit her head. I was able to get her to the hospital quickly. She is stable now but she's unconscious. She could be in that state for three days. Magical exhaustion. She was too tired from an operation earlier and well, it affected her reflexes, hence the slip", he explained.

"Oh my baby!", she cried.

"Listen, Emma, if you want to come visit Hermione – "

"We'll be taking the first 747 – "

"Magical transportation can get you here in Britain in three hours if you want. Well the travel is
only fifteen minutes max, but, I have to make arrangements first", Harry offered.

"Of course! Of course! Thank you, Harry", she said with emotion.

"No problem, Emma. I'm sure Hermione would be happy to see you and Dan when she awakens. Anyway, just wait at your home and I'll send a representative from Gringotts to deliver a portkey for you. Is that okay?", he clarified.

"Yes, yes! Thank you, Harry! Dan! Dan! Get in here", she called to her husband.

"Emma, I got to go. See you here. Hope your first portkey travel will be okay. It could be, er, unpleasant", Harry said.

"Anything for Hermione. Goodbye, Harry."

"Bye, Emma. Tell Dan I said hi", and the line went off.

"Dan!", she yelled. She could immediately hear her husband's footsteps.

"Yes, dear?"

"I got a call from Harry. Hermione had an accident. He arranged magical transport for us so that we could be in London as soon as possible", she explained as she gathered her things so that they could leave immediately.

"Got it, darling!", that was the only thing her husband said before returning to his own office to gather his things.

As soon as his call to Emma ended, Harry immediately went for a quick shower, changed into his auror uniform, and apparated to Gringotts to meet his account manager. After making arrangements for the Grangers' travels, he then went to the ministry. He tried his best to focus on work but he was finding it hard to concentrate. His mind was on Hermione. He could only hope that she really will be okay…

The healers of St. Mungo's were all frazzled. The press had heard that Hermione Granger, Chief of the ICW's Medical Research Department, was brought in due to an unknown illness in the wee hours of the night. In between keeping the press away, calming down the worried parents of the epidemic-affected kids, and managing all their work – the healers are in for a long week.

The head healer of St. Mungo's sighed as he saw all the drama going on. When he heard that the press found out about Hermione Granger's accident, he winced. Lord Potter would seriously be pissed when he found out about this!

Sharptooth, the Potter Account Manager, was stunned when Lord Potter barged into his office with a panicked look on his face. Looking at the distraught look on the lord's face, he thought that the dark wanker, Voldemort, has cheated death once again. Instead, his client all but ordered him to send an Australian representative of Gringotts to visit Lady Potter's parents and deliver a portkey. The long-lost lady of the house recently had an accident which explains his client's worries. Every Potter man's weakness – his most beloved lady.

Of course, he immediately complied with his client's request. Lord Potter was a very decent employer after all. Not to mention all the galleons he earns under the employ of Britain's most
powerful wizard. He only hoped that the Lady Potter fully recovers from her accident.

While the rest of the wizarding world waited with bated breath for Hermione Granger to wake up, her soul is busy wandering and laughing around a library with her daughter, Viola Lily Potter…
Hermione's Awakening

It's exactly Hermione Granger's third day of being unconscious as the wizarding world waited with bated breath for news of her recovery. Her mother and father took alternate schedules as they
vigilantly sat by her bedside. The healer's report has stated that her head injury has long been fully healed. It was just her body that needed the rest. Her magic too, needed repose. She had exhausted her magic by performing extraordinary feats for the last ten years. Her accident was just the trigger that finally caused her core to be depleted. The brightest witch of the age has never truly rested ever since her entry into the world of magic. So, nature took its course and forced her to rest.

And today, with her mother sat by a chair and her father fending off the never-ending gifts from well-wishers, Hermione finally made some movement. Her dainty left hand that was resting on top of her abdomen made a minuscule movement. It would have gone unnoticed were it not for the fact that her mother, Emma, just kept on staring at her. When her fingers twitched again, her mother grinned.

"Dan! Call the healers! She moved! Go! Now!", her mother said with joy, relief, and anxiety. Her father immediately followed the command and ran out the door.

"Hermione, sweetie, can you hear me?", Emma called out gently as she caressed the hand that moved. The curly-haired brunette lying on the hospital bed groaned.

"Sweetie?", Emma prodded once more.

"Mum?", came the croaky reply. Hermione slowly opened her eyes. Feeling a hand grasping her own, she glanced at the person sitting by her bedside.

"What are you doing here, mum?", she whispered.

"Oh, sweetie! We're so worried about you", her mother cried.

"What happened?", she muttered.

"You've been unconscious for three days, sweetie. You had an accident in the bathtub", her mother explained.

"How did you find out about – "

"Oh, you don't need to concern yourself on the details sweetheart. Just focus on getting better", her mother interrupted.

"But why did you know – "

"Harry called me and arranged for our quick transportation here. A portal something", her mother explained.

"Good morning, Chief! It's good to see you finally awake", Healer Watson greeted, her father in tow.

"Dad!", Hermione beamed at her father.

"Would you mind if I conduct diagnostic spells, Chief?", the healer asked as she approached. She nodded. The healer pointed her wand all over her and magically recorded the results on her medical report.

"Your core is gradually healing but it still needs a long way to go", the healer informed her.

"My core? But, why? I had a head injury from a hit on the tub, not a spell-related incident", she replied.
"Chief, you've been magically pushing your limits for a long time. Your accident was just the last trigger. You depleted your core. While you are gradually healing, your magic and strength is not yet recovered", the healer explained. Hermione sighed.

"How long before I can get back to work?"

"You need complete rest for at least a week. No magic. As in no spells. You need to let your core heal fully. If not, it can be detrimental to you in the long run", the healer said sternly.

"Alright. Thank you, Healer Watson."

"Now is there anything else I could help you with, chief?"

"No, that would be all. Thank you so much", she politely replied.

"Okay then. I'll just inform Lord Potter that you're finally awake – "

"Why do you have to tell him? I'm fine now, well, except for the recovering core", she said with a frown. Healer Watson sighed.

"Chief, as your liege lord, Lord Potter is entitled to know about your status. Besides, it's one of his requests before he reluctantly leaves your bedside every night", the healer said patiently.

"My liege lord! How conceited and medieval – ", her angry rant is again interrupted by the healer.

"Despite your issues, Chief, Lord Potter is still your husband. He has the right to know. Now, if you'll excuse me", the healer gave her a nod before turning back. Before she could make another comment, the healer already left her room as she gently closed the door.

"How long have you been here, mum, dad?", she asked as she tried to get up but surprisingly, she seemed to lack the strength to do so. Her mother seeing her intent, stood up from her seat and helped her up. Slowly, she was able to set herself in a sitting position. Her back reclining on pillows arranged there by her mum.

"We've been here since the first night you were confined in the hospital dear. After getting the news of the healing of your head injury, Harry immediately arranged for us to be here. Your father and I have been taking turns to vigil here, by your bedside every night", her mum explained.

"I miss you mum", she opened her arms and her mother leaned in. They were wrapped in a warm embrace. When she let go of her mother, it was now her father's turn.

"I miss you too dad", she whispered to her father's ear. Her father kissed her on the forehead.

"You had us worried, darling. When Harry called your mum, we almost panicked. Thankfully, magical travel got us here in Britain very fast", her dad said after pulling away.

"Are you hungry, sweetie?", her mum asked.

"Hmm… yes, actually", she admitted.

"What do you want to eat, darling?", her dad asked.

"Chicken noodle soup", she immediately replied.

"Oh, darling, I wish we have a kitchen around here somewhere", her dad replied.
"I have an idea", her mother stood up and grabbed her purse before leaving the room.

"What's mum up to?", she asked her father with an eyebrow raised.

"Don't know", her dad shrugged and she chuckled. Emma Granger always just bursts out of a room to implement whatever idea she has without explaining things. It's a trait that Hermione adapted.

"Dad? Where are you and mum staying? And would you mind explaining as to why Harry has mum's number?", she can't help it if her curiosity wants to be satisfied.

"We're staying at Harry's for the time being, dear. And well, Harry has our number because he has been constantly visiting us since the year 2000", her father replied.

"The year 2000?!", she said incredulously.

"Yes. At first, he was there to look for you or any clue as to where you could have gone after you left. Of course, we treated him horribly. He was a right bastard to our baby after all. We gave him a really hard time, he spent two whole days kneeling outside our house just so that we'd give him a chance to speak to us. And well, in as much as we tried to hate him, he wore us down, me and your mother. Sure, he made a lot of mistakes but we could feel how sincere he was. We just didn't tell you about it since we were afraid of your reaction. He also respects that we can't betray your location. But he kept on visiting, and well, we've grown to be rather fond of each other. He sees your mum and me as parental figures of a sort, and we see him like a beloved nephew", her father explained.

"All this time, Harry's kept in touch with you?", she said with disbelief.

"Yes."

"Wow!", she was slack-jawed at the news. I guess Item Number 6 on the list is marked complete then...

"Look, darling, we don't know the current status of your relationship with Harry. And whatever you decide, your mum and I will always support your decision. But I do hope you won't mind us keeping in touch with Harry", her father looked into her eyes as he held her hand.

"Of course, dad. Whatever happens between Harry and me, it should never come between your relationship with him", she agreed despite the shocking turn of events. Suddenly, the door to her room opened and her mother walked in.

"What are you two talking about?", her mother asked.

"Well she asked about Harry", came her father's reply.

"Ah, well, he's a good kid", her mother said.

"Where did you run off to mum?"

"I just made sure that you'd have chicken noodle soup soon", her mother grinned and she rolled her eyes.

Harry was busy reading auror reports on the syndicate's profile. Despite the information they have, from the blood-red triangular tattoo on the forearm of its members to their modus operandi and business dealings, they are still missing the most important details. One, they don't even know the
name of this mystery syndicate which the ICW just calls as the 'Red Triangle'. Two, they have no idea about the crime group's headquarters. And lastly, they have no clue who is the leader behind the group. The only lead they had was that the leader was a pureblood who is involved in smuggling. There are also rumors that he is the man behind some illegal drug and human trafficking in the non-magical communities although this is still to be confirmed.

For the past three days of Hermione's unconscious state, he spent his time managing his work in the morning, catering to her parents' needs, visiting her in the evenings, and keeping the press at bay.

The most worrisome news aside from Hermione's state is that the ICW hit wizards were able to finally capture one of the members of the 'Red Triangle' but they were not able to discover anything significant. It was clear that whoever was leading the group, the man was very smart. He seemed to have cast some sort of _fidelius_ charm on the group's name, location, and leader. They had a startling discovery though. According to the hit wizards, the captured member says that their leader is very interested in Hermione and he has plans for her. Upon learning this, the ICW immediately contacted the British ministry since she was staying in the country at the moment.

The possible threat to Hermione's life and her unconscious state has been bothering him ever since. If the syndicate would make any attempts to capture her now, they could easily do it since she couldn't even defend herself. So, he stationed two aurors to inconspicuously guard outside her room while other aurors roam St. Mungo's just to be sure.

Torn between the need to be by her side all the time and investigating the clues so he could finally put an end to whoever it was that had sinister plans for her, he decided to just go after the big fish. And so, here he is. Reading all the reports and thinking about loopholes in the records that he could have missed.

And then, his mobile phone rang. He warded his office to allow electrical devices to function so that he could still enjoy parts of the muggle world while at work. Without even glancing at the screen to see who was calling, he answered…

"Hello?"

"Harry, it's Emma!", said the voice on the other line.

"Emma! What's wrong? Is Hermione alright?", he said with worry.

"She's finally awake. But, er, I called you for a favor, Harry", Emma's voice sounded sheepish.

"Of course. Anything!"

"Well, Hermione is hungry and is requesting for chicken noodle soup. I was wondering, maybe you could buy some before coming here. But if you're busy – "

"I know just where to buy some. I'll be there in thirty minutes tops", he got up from his seat and floated the reports into his briefcase.

"Thank you, Harry!", Emma replied.

"Bye, Emma", he said before cutting the line. He immediately summoned a parchment and quill then hurriedly listed last-minute instructions for his second-in-command which he left to his secretary. With everything set, he apparated to a secluded spot in Muggle London near his favorite noodle house.
Hermione was enjoying her time with her parents as they exchange stories with one another. Their conversation was halted when they heard a knock on her door.

"Come in", she faintly replied. Her strength is still not fully recovered and it was evident in the weakness in her voice. The door opened and Harry Potter walked in carrying a briefcase in one hand and takeout bag in the other.

"Oh! Thank you for buying the soup, Harry", her mother said happily.

"Mother!", Hermione admonished.

"You're welcome, Emma. Hi Dan! Hi Hermione! I'm happy you're now awake", Harry greeted them as he handed Emma the takeout bag and settled his briefcase on the visitor couch.

"Just stay put Harry and keep Hermione company. I'll just settle her food - 

"Oh! Let me help you with that", Harry offered. He conjured a bowl and a tray, then levitated it towards Emma, which she quickly used to serve Hermione's food.

"Here you go, sweetie!", Emma gently settled the tray on her daughter's lap.

"Thanks, mum! And thanks for getting this for me, Harry", she grinned before using the plastic spoon to scoop some of the warm soup.

"Well, your dad and I should go check on the healers for information on when you could be released. Come along, Daniel", Emma took her husband's hand and they left the room.

"Sorry that my mum had to bother you for the soup, Harry", Hermione said as she used the chopsticks to pick on the noodles.

"It's alright. How are you feeling?", he asked.

"Well, obviously my injury is gone. I feel weak though like my magic is unsettled or something", she sighed.

"Oh. You should take it easy then. We're all worried about you", he replied.

"Thank you for bringing me to St. Mungo's immediately", she looked into his eyes as she said that.

"Of course", he gave her a small smile. She could feel that something was bothering him so she had to ask.

"Harry? I can feel there is something wrong. What is it?", she inquired and he took a deep breath. He extended a hand and his briefcase floated towards him. Harry opened it and she saw him take out a couple of newspapers and a small velvet box.

"Hermione, could you do me a favor and read these papers when you're done eating? Also, can you wear this ring again - for me", his voice was so serious as he held out the papers to her. She gasped when he opened the velvet box and she saw the wedding ring she once wore, which she left on his bed along with the divorce papers many years ago.

"What – Harry!", she blurted out.

"Hermione, look. This is not me forcing you to acknowledge my rights as your husband. I just need you to wear this ring for your protection", he explained.
"But what are you talking about?"

"Remember the syndicate that caused the epidemic?", he started and she nodded.

"Well, whoever is heading that group, he seems to have some sinister plans for you", he continued.

"But – how – why?", she stammered.

"The ICW Hit Wizards recently captured one of their members. They weren't able to find out much except for the fact that their leader is very interested in you. They found out that whoever is leading them, he had plans for you that are surely not for your own good", he explained.

"But – why?"

"We don't know. I do have this theory that he caused the epidemic to lure you here in Britain since you will be very hard to capture in Switzerland. The ICW headquarters has the best wards after all", he stated.

"So why should I wear the ring?"

"I have a tracking charm on it. So that I will always know where you are just in case anything happens to you", he told her.

"Harry, tracking charms –"

"This is no ordinary tracking charm. I used no spell. It's intent-based magic. I just poured my magic on it so that it could never be canceled. If you wear the ring, I will lock it with parseltongue so that no one could ever remove it. Even you", he said.

"Alright", she acquiesced. She held out her left hand and he gently slipped the ring into her ring finger. Harry touched his wand's tip on the diamond and made a hissing sound. She gasped when the diamond glowed and she felt the ring vibrate with magic.

"Now I hope you don't mind but your security detail would have to be increased from now on. The ICW demands it or else they would demand you to leave Britain immediately", Harry informed her.

"What? I can't leave! Not until I find a permanent cure for all those children!", she insisted.

"I know. That is why we thought of ways to protect you better", he told her gently.

"Okay then", she sighed. And then she remembered that his ability to speak the snake language is supposedly from the Horcrux in his scar. She just had to ask!

"Er, Harry, why could you still speak parseltongue? Just curious", she shrugged and he chuckled.

"My ability to speak parseltongue is related to my animagus form", he told her.


"Well, I am a type of snake. But, it's not important for now. I'll show you when you're all better", he grinned and she frowned. She hated not knowing things.

"Fine", she said grumpily.

"Alright. I'll just sit over here and you continue eating your soup. I hope you read the papers later. I
believe you should be aware of the rumors surrounding us. Since it is impossible to retract your image they posted on the already published papers, maybe you should consider changing your hairstyle? That should help conceal you a little bit. British papers are no longer authorized to publish any picture of yours. I made sure of that – ", he was babbling adorably just like the young Harry she once knew. So, she gently took his hand and looked into his eyes.

"Thank you for doing all this, Harry", she said sincerely.

"You're welcome", he smiled.

"Chief Hea – Oh! I am so sorry!" Healer Watson entered the room and she immediately let go of Harry's hand.

"Lord Potter! Chief! Er, well, Chief, you are free to return home tomorrow provided that you take your core-replenishing potions and do not and I repeat, do not perform ANY magic at all for one whole week. Then you come back here, and we'll see if your core has fully recovered, and then you can go back to work", the healer informed them.

"Thank you, Healer Watson", she said.

"You're welcome, chief. Now Irie would be in charge of your medical care for the time being. I expect you to be taking a lot of rest. And I repeat, NO MAGIC", the healer replied.

"Yes, I promise", she sighed and Harry tried his best to hide his chuckles.

"Right, then. I'll leave you two and arrange your release documents with your parents. Chief. Lord Potter", the healer nodded to them before leaving the room.

"Is it part of healer training to be all stern and intimidating?", Harry asked.

"What? Of course not!", she snorted.

"Well, Madam Pomfrey had this strictness. And you have your no-nonsense healer mode", he shrugged and she chuckled.

"Ah, well, healers have to be strict since some patients could be rather difficult", she gave him a pointed look and he snorted.

Hermione's parents stayed for two more days before they portkeyed back to Australia. Despite her promise to not do any work, she sometimes coerces Irie, her companion to exchange ideas with her regarding the mysterious substance in the toy that caused all this trouble. He allowed her to do some research but he set a time limit of two hours per day. Of course, she never performed any magic since it would be detrimental to her recovery if she disobeyed Healer Watson's orders.

On the third day of her rest period, Harry had been called to participate in an investigation of an overseas case with the ICW. So, he reluctantly left her and Irie in his penthouse. Luna, Fleur, Neville, and the Malfoys visited her whenever they could.

When she got bored staying in the luxurious suite, she remembered Harry's suggestion of changing her appearance just to confuse whoever it was that had evil plans for her. So, with Irie and Luna (who she forgave along with Fleur after the two profusely apologized to her), they went to muggle London to enjoy a hair and spa treatment, along with some shopping. Of course, they had auror guards discreetly following them.
Hermione Granger, famous for her wild bushy brunette curls, is now sporting a pixie cut hairstyle. Her brunette locks remain the same color but it was now complimented with blonde highlights. They also decided to purchase clothing that she normally wouldn't wear. That way, people would have a more difficult time recognizing her.

She's enjoying her rest period. It gave her a chance to just relax and enjoy some time with her friends. It also opened her mind to new possibilities. She now had the idea that the unidentified substance could be non-magical, maybe a harmful chemical with a potency enhanced through a spell. Yes! That is the first thing I will be looking up as soon as I get the all-clear to do magic again.

Yes, her rest days were all well and good. Except for the fact that well, she missed Harry's presence…
Blurred Lines

Chapter Notes

A few lyrics of the song, "Blurred Lines" by Robin Thicke is mentioned in this chapter.

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9
One week after her rest period, Hermione was given the all-clear from Healer Watson. She is finally allowed to do magic again! When she first cast a Lumos spell, just to test if everything was alright, she gasped. Her magic has never felt this powerful before! It seemed that she just needed the rest to be able to recharge her core. She can't recall a time when she is this in-tuned with her magic ever since she first found her wand at Olivander's. She needed that rest after all!

Aside from her newly found stronger connection to her magic, she had another reason to be happy. When she told Irie about her theory that non-magical substances could be the cause of the epidemic, she secured his help during their daily two-hour research time. And she is right! Using the internet connection in Harry's penthouse, she now had her suspicion. Lead, Mercury, and Cadmium are the three most probable harmful elements that when injected into the body could cause severe harm to the different organs experienced by those who caught the epidemic.

Lead causes weakening as a side effect of anemia, kidney, and brain damage. Mercury, when inhaled, is harmful in the sense that it can cause neurological and behavioral disorders in the form of tremors, emotional instability, insomnia, memory loss, and headaches. Meanwhile, high exposure to Cadmium causes bone damage. These three elements and the harmful effects they cause to the human body all have tick marks on the symptoms the infected children are experiencing.

It is a great victory that they finally have a good lead as to what substance they have to counter. All they need to do now is to extract the unknown substance from the contaminated toy, chemically test the extract for a match, and if it does, then they can now generate a cure. Of course, they still have to kill the magic on that blasted toy so that it will never harm anyone again, but for now, curing the kids is their top priority.

When their research findings online matched with the symptoms, she and Irie were jumping up and down in excitement. They both have a good feeling about this! This is it! Finally! A miracle has been found.

So, her rest period has been a huge success. She's well relaxed, her magic more potent, they have established a solid lead, and managed to change her look.

Since she'll be back to work in two days, Rosier and Irie had an idea for them to celebrate her victories with a night out in muggle London. The three of them, being the younger members of the medical research department, always took the time to visit non-magical clubs for a drink or two. With a solid plan to escape her auror guards, they set out to enjoy the Saturday night.

So, here she is… Standing by the bar and sipping a cocktail drink. She laughed as she saw Kei Irie flirting with a good-looking blonde bloke. Meanwhile, Evangeline Rosier was enchanting a blue-eyed dreamboat with her sexy French accent. She is certain that like usual, she would be apparating back to Harry's penthouse alone. Her friends always find people to share hot one-night stands with. Rosier and Irie don't do love, they shag. And well, clubs like these are the best places for them to find what they're looking for. Ah well, at least the drinks are good and the music is fantastic…

Harry apparated into the main hall of his penthouse at one in the morning. He was very quiet since he knew that Hermione and her companion, that cheeky Japanese healer Irie, are most likely
asleep. It's been a very tiresome two weeks for him. From Hermione's accident, the threat to her life, and him being called by the ICW to go to Switzerland so they could plan a risky bust operation on the Red Triangle, well now, all he wanted to do is rest.

Aside from the stress from all the events that happened lately, it was hard to be away from Hermione. He missed her terribly. Adding to his negative feelings and overall tiredness, he is uneasy about the fact that he had to leave her all alone in the company of a man who cared for her. To add to his concern, the man is a good-looking and smart sort! Someone Hermione could easily fall in love with...

Yes! He is a jealous and insecure git. After all, he knew how much he hurt her in the past and seeing this Irie who is quite honestly, a better man for her, just saddens him.

He was about to enter his bedroom when he felt that something was wrong. The house oddly felt empty. He can't feel any magical aura aside from his own. He closed his eyes to concentrate. Still, none. He ran to Hermione's room and to his surprise, the door was unlocked. He cursed when he saw the well-kept bed. Her things were still there but she wasn't.

He closed his eyes once again to focus his connection on her ring. He could see so many people. Blinking colorful lights. Dancing. Drinks. Smoke.

_Shit!_ Hermione Granger is somewhere in muggle London partying at a club.

His headstrong wife escaped her auror guards with that bloody Japanese and partying the night away when she should have been fast asleep and resting.

"You are in so much trouble, Lady Potter!", his jaw clenched. He disapparated with a loud angry pop.

Harry apparated into a dark alley near the club Hermione was partying in. Quickly transfiguring his auror uniform to look 'muggle club' worthy, he immediately ran towards the front door and entered the jam-packed club. He prepared himself to spend some time looking at the many faces dancing in the crowded dance floor, so his eyes immediately scanned the room for a mass of curly brown hair.

_You're a good girl_

Can't let it get past me
You're far from plastic alright
Talk about getting blasted

_I hate these blurred lines_

I know you want it
I know you want it
But you're a good girl

_How ironic! The song just had to bloody remind me of the fact that my good girl is in this place, _he thought angrily.

The music was pumping loud. Hips were gyrating. And people were cheering.

His eyes were drawn to a beautiful feminine figure dressed in a nude-colored tight-fitted dress. Her back was bare and she had a mixture of brown and blonde hair in a pixie cut. The woman was very attractive. And very drunk. She was dancing on top of one of the bar counter-tops. Something
about her seemed very familiar. She was grinding her hips sexily and her hands sensually moved up and down her body. When she turned around, he cursed.

His wife was pissed drunk and putting on a sexy dance for the entire club to see. He gritted his teeth as he saw the disgusting leers the men gave Hermione. *If any of these bastards will lay a hand on her, I swear...It will be the last mistake they will ever make in this life.*

He was livid! His magic flared. Since she was half-way across the room, he wandlessly cast a *confundus* charm on the crowd so he could pass without difficulty. When he was right in front of her, he took a deep calming breath.

"Hermione!", he called out. Despite her drunken state, her chocolate brown eyes looked around to search for the voice who called her name. Their eyes met.

"I – hic – know – you", she said in a drunk sing-song voice as she pointed to him. She was wobbly now. *To hell with it!* He walked closer to her and wrapped his arms around her waist to pull her close. She stumbled a bit, but he immediately caught her. He wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck. He carefully cradled her straddling form without breaking eye contact.

"You are in so much trouble, Lady Potter", he growled.


"Let's go home", he said.

"Excuse me, sir? We can't let you take the lady from this place", a big man wearing a fitted black shirt blocked his way. He was certain it was one of the bouncers in the club.

"I am taking my wife home", he said with gritted teeth.

"Sir, anyone can claim this lady as their own", the man rolled his eyes.

"Fine. Ask her", he growled.

"Miss?", the man focused his eyes on Hermione.

"Yes?", at least she was able to reply.

"Do you know this man who is carrying you?"

"I'm not – hic – sure – but his eyes – hic – are so – beautiful", she swooned. *Oh, Merlin! She doesn't even remember! She must be drunker than I thought!*

"Sir, you have to put the lady down!", the man insisted.

"Look, my name is Lord Harry Potter, and this drunk woman is my wife, Lady Hermione Potter", he replied.

"Miss?", the man tried again.

"Hermione – hic – hey – that's my – hic – name!", she laughed. He had never seen Hermione so carefree. It was so adorable if only he wasn't angry at her for getting drunk and risking her safety.

*OK, now he was close*

Tried to domesticate you
But you're an animal
Baby, it's in your nature

*Just let me liberate you*
You don't need no papers
That man is not your maker
And that's why I'm gon' take a good girl

"Oh. Alright then. I'm sorry Lord Potter", the man finally stepped aside.

"Come on – hic – green eyes – hic – take me – home", Hermione whispered into his ear before she giggled again. *Merlin!*

"Hold on tight, Hermione", he said as he tightened his hold on her.

"World is spinning", she muttered.

"Don't worry, I got you", he reassured her.

"Green eyes?", she asked.

"Yes?", he said with amusement.


"Well, I am Harry, sweetheart", he shook his head.

"No – hic – Harry – is – hic – working – hic – abroad", she replied in a groggy voice. He quickened his footsteps. He needed to get her home.


"You do?", he can't believe what he just heard.

"Green eyes – hic – won't tell – hic – Harry – right?", she whispered.

"It will be our little secret", he smirked.

"Hmm 'kay – hic – sleepy", she yawned. He sighed. When he finally reached the exit, he walked to a secluded area, wandlessly cast notice-me-not charms and apparated straight into his bedroom.

"Hermione?", he called to the woman in his arms. He glanced down and he saw that she was already asleep. He carefully set her on top of his bed and untangled her limbs from his body. He was about to remove her shoes when she opened her eyes.

"Harry?", she whispered.

"It's okay, Hermione. I'm here", he replied.

"Shoes", she wiggled her left foot.

"Don't worry, I got it. Just go sleep", he told her.

"Hmmm… 'kay", she muttered. He gently removed her strapped sandals. He was about to tuck her under the covers but she moved again.
"Hot! Dress – hic – off", she said in a sleepy voice as she righted herself in a sitting position. To his surprise, with what must have been her last bout of strength and energy, she easily lifted her dress off her body and threw it haphazardly across the room. And then, she casually laid down on the mattress once again. He gulped. Hermione was now sprawled on her back on the center of his bed wearing nothing but nude-colored knickers. *This is the greatest test of self-control!*

Taking a deep calming breath to control his arousal, he was determined to tuck her in and leave the room. Just as he was about to release the covers that he successfully used to conceal her half-naked state, she suddenly raised her arms and dragged him down.

"Stay – hic – lonely", she muttered as he was now awkwardly plonked on top of her. *What did I do to deserve this torture?*

"Er, Hermione, I'm too heavy", he muttered. Her eyes opened again.

"Stay", she whispered. He nodded before sighing.

"Let me go. I'll stay. I promise", he reassured her. She gave a sleepy awkward nod and he untangled her arms around him. He slowly rolled over and he lay by her side. He was still trying to settle himself on the bed but she immediately wrapped an arm around his waist. Her left leg thrown over his own.

"Harry", she murmured sleepily.

"Hmmm?"

"Miss you", she said before settling into her slumber. Harry sighed. He forced his magic to wandlessly transfigure his uniform once again. This time into a comfy t-shirt and boxer shorts. He wanted to take a relaxing hot shower but with Hermione's body draped all over him, that is impossible. Besides, what he needed right now is a *cold* shower.

"Sweet dreams, Hermione. I love you", he whispered before he too closed his eyes. *Whatever happens, when she wakes up tomorrow, I'll just have to explain it... I could only hope that she won't think I'm taking advantage of her...*

Those were his last thoughts before he succumbed to the realm of dreams.
Harry Potter's eyes slowly opened as he felt a slight chill envelope him. It was now the start of the third week of December so the temperature has dropped at an all-time low. He was still dead tired
so he closed his eyes once again and lifted a hand to summon the heater's remote. He needed to increase the temperature in the room. His mind was still half asleep. When he felt the remote nearby, he grudgingly opened his eyes to catch it, which he did, but then he could now feel the bare thigh draped on top of his waist.

He groped the buttons on the remote until he eventually felt the room becoming less chilly. *I need to start a fire to warm the place, even more,* he thought.

He needed to go to the loo to relieve himself but the annoying limb was still all over his waist. This time, he summoned his glasses. When it flew towards him, he immediately put it on. Everything is now all clear.

Hermione Granger was lying horizontally on his bed. She was face flat on a pillow, her arms dangling off the edge of the bed, one of her legs plonked on top of his waist, the other leg awkwardly curled on top of another pillow. Her bareback partly concealed by the covers, which explained why he woke up feeling cold. She was hogging the covers and crowding the bed nearly kicking him off. *Who knew that the proper Miss Granger could be such a wild sleeper?*

"I don't know how she could sleep like that. Doesn't look too comfortable", he muttered with fondness. Since he needed to go to the loo, he tried to slowly peel her leg off his body. To his surprise, she groaned. And then she kicked him.

He bit his lip to hide the mix of pain and laughter that he felt. *Merlin! If she kicked me in the bollocks, that really ought to hurt.* Hermione Granger for all her petite daintiness packs a mean solid kick! And to think she is asleep at that.

He once again tried to remove her leg off but this time, his actions halted when he heard her mutter.

"Five more minutes", he wasn't sure if she was daydreaming or just being stubborn.

His eyes were once again drawn to the sleeping witch who remained asleep despite her weird sleeping position. He sighed. *Maybe I'll just apparate to the loo,* he thought. She looks so peaceful in an adorably awkward way – her petite frame crowding his bed like this.

He's never done this before. Apparate without doing the turning around. But well, he's done so many extraordinary feats of magic anyway. Besides, he didn't want to disturb his sleeping wife. He took a deep breath to center his magic. He closed his eyes and thought of his destination. And he disappeared without a sound…

He made a decent landing on his bathroom floor. *Not bad,* he smirked.

He quickly relieved himself and thought about things that he could do this morning. He knew that he can't go back to sleep now. Honestly, how could he do that if Hermione was dominating his bed? He shook his head in amusement.

Then it clicked! He now decided that it's best to just prepare breakfast for Hermione and look for a hangover potion he could give her. Because given her drunken state last night, she is bound to have a really bad headache when she wakes up.

He quietly walked back to his room to observe the sleeping woman and he chuckled. Now the leg draped on him just a while ago is dangling off the bed. He pointed a finger to the covers so that it's enlarged. After that, he willed the covers to fully cover her body to keep her warm. She could use a lie-in.
With a goofy smile on his face, he closed the door and headed for the kitchen.

Hermione Granger opened her eyes and gasped when she saw that she was completely covered by a thick warm blanket. Where the hell is this place, she thought. The last thing she remembered was sipping a delicious margarita as she watched Irie and Rosier get their flirt on.

"Argh", she groaned. Her head was aching as if it was struck multiple times by a bat. She lowered the covers that concealed her full body so that she could take a peek on where she was. Maybe Irie or Rosier apparated me somewhere... She had to admit though that it was highly unlikely since they usually head off on their own and shag their chosen partners for the night. But why can't I recall getting a heads up from them? Her friends always informed her if they were leaving the club to go off to a steamy one-night stand. After all, they would never leave her alone.

She was starting to get scared. What if she was so drunk that she went home with some stranger? What if she had a one-night stand with someone? Shit! Shit! Shit!

Taking a deep breath, she finally opened her eyes. She sighed with relief. She was in Harry's penthouse. She could see the familiar door towards his luxurious bathroom. Wait a sec – why am I sleeping in Harry's bed?

She gently untangled the covers and looked down. She can see her bare breasts! Oh, my fucking god! I slept with Harry...

"Aaahhhhh!", she screamed. How could I let this happen?

She was too busy admonishing herself for her stupidity when a towel-clad Harry ran into the room. His hair was still wet and water is dripping down across his broad shoulders, strong chest, tight abs, and trim waist.

"Hermione, what's wrong?", his voice was filled with worry.

"Did I sleep with you?", she asked.

"No – er – yes – but it's not –"

"God! I can't even remember!", she was frantic. She could feel herself hyperventilate. I am supposed to never share Harry's bed or I could end up pregnant again...

"Calm down, Hermione. Nothing happened. We just slept. That's it", he reassured her.

"But-but – why am I naked?", she was confused.

"Er, you're still wearing knickers", he blushed as his gaze fell on the floor. She took that as a chance to peek under the covers once again. She glanced down and indeed, she was still wearing knickers. She tightly wrapped the covers on herself so that only her head could be seen once again.

"How did I end up here?", she was a bit calmer now.

"I brought you here since you were too drunk", he replied.

"If you would take a look at the nightstand, there is some hangover potion for you along with breakfast", he pointed out. Her gaze went to the direction he gestured to. And indeed, she saw a tray that was filled with a plate of scrambled eggs, hash browns, bacon, and sausage. There was also a vial of thick purple potion beside a cup of coffee and a glass of water.

"Oh. Um… Well, thank you, Harry", she gave him a shy smile.

"Er, sure. It's alright. So, I'll just ah – well, finish my shower then", he awkwardly pointed to the bathroom door.

"Sorry about the screaming", she muttered. Her cheeks heating up.

"Nah, no worries. I was worried you slipped again – or something", he let out a nervous chuckle.

"So, I'll just, er, eat then", she gestured to the food.

"Yes of course. But, well, it's going to be lunchtime in thirty – "

"What?", she was surprised.

"Yeah. It's almost noon", he muttered.

"Oh."

"So, I'll just go", he glanced at the bathroom door.

"Harry?"

"Hmm?"

"Thanks for bringing me here. I panicked. I thought, well, I thought I did an Irie or a Rosier. Thank Merlin it was just you", she explained with a blush.

"An Irie or a Rosier? What does that mean?", he had an amused look on his face.

"You know, one-night stands. I never do that – and well, it's standard practice for them when we go for drinks. Irie finds a bloke – "", she babbled.

"Excuse me? Irie finds a bloke?", he interrupted. His face decorated with confusion.

"Yeah. Blokes", she shrugged.

"So, he is er, you know?", he said awkwardly.

"Yes", she chuckled.

"Oh."

"So, you shouldn't be jealous of him", she laughed.

"Well I never expected that", he muttered and then he too laughed.

"Yeah, he enjoys ruffling your feathers", she teased.

"I'm an idiot", he muttered.

"Ah, well, he thinks so too. Although, he did say you were cute", she was now giggling.
"Oi!", he was now pale-faced.

"So, did Irie come back this morning?", she inquired.

"No. I haven't seen him yet", he replied.

"Figures. Maybe his latest conquest wore him out", she snorted.

"I'll go shower now", he said awkwardly.

"Of course."

"Hermione?"

"Yes?"

"Your new hair. It's cute", he complimented.

"Oh. Thanks. Irie thinks it's a good disguise since I'm famous for the bushy curly hair", she shrugged.

"That is a really good idea", he agreed.

"True. They even got me a new wardrobe. Clothes I don't normally wear. Just to, you know, confuse whoever is after me", she added.

"That sort of explains the dress last night", he remarked.

"Where's the dress anyway?"

"I stored your dress and shoes in your room. You threw the dress on the floor last night", he told her.

"Merlin! This is so embarrassing!", she blushed.

"Sorry", he said sheepishly.

"Can you just go now? I need to wallow in embarrassment", she whined while throwing the covers over her head.

"I'll see you in a bit. Hope you enjoy, er, brunch", she heard him say before hearing footsteps headed for the bathroom. When the door closed, she peeked over the covers and sighed. She immediately scooted towards the nightstand and opened the vial of hangover potion. She gulped the potion and she could immediately feel her headache dissipating. I love magic!

As she felt herself perk up, her hazy memory of last night started to clear…

"I'm not – hic – sure – but his eyes – hic – are so – beautiful"

"Come on – hic – green eyes – hic – take me – home"

"I – hic – miss – hic – Harry"

"Hot! Dress – hic – off"

"Stay – hic – lonely"
"Oh, my fucking god", she groaned in shame. Her hands covering her face.

Harry spent twenty minutes in the shower just enjoying the heat of the water which helped relax his muscles. When he was finished, he expected Hermione to still be there on his bed and eating breakfast, but she was gone. The tray of food and the bed-covers are also gone. He shrugged. *Maybe she decided to eat in the dining area.*

He decided to wear a thick sweater and blue jeans to keep himself warm. After changing, he decided to lounge around the main hall and wait for Hermione. Half an hour later, the door to her bedroom opened and she was carrying the tray in one hand. She was dressed to go outside in black leggings, boots, a white wool dress under a stylish tan coat.

"Hermione? You're going somewhere?", he asked.

"Oh. Uh, well, I was hoping if you'd come with me to muggle London. I need to buy a microscope, and well, a few Chemistry books", she explained.

"Huh? Why?"

"Irie and I finally found a lead on the substance coating the toy that's causing the epidemic", she said with excitement.

"Oh! That's brilliant! Of course, I'd come with you. After all, I can't have you escaping your auror guards again", he chided gently.

"I'm sorry about that", she said contritely.

"Hmmm. I'll let that slip for now", he replied.

"So, er, I'll just set the dishes to – "

"No! I got it", he stopped her. With a gesture of his hand, the tray was levitated to the kitchen.

"Thanks."

"So, are we going now?", he inquired.

"Would you mind?"

"No. Just sit on the couch for a bit. I'll wear something warmer. Are we apparating or taking the car?", he asked as he stood up.

"You have a car?"

"Well, yeah. I mean I have to keep up pretenses, right? Can't have me living on the entire top floor of this building and not have a car", he chuckled.

"Hmm… that's true. But, won't the staff be curious about people being in your penthouse but there are no CCTV records of them entering the building?", she was curious.

"The goblins who hooked me up in finding this place, set up special wards on my floor and well,
"the entire building I guess", he explained.

"Huh. Makes sense", she nodded.

"Yeah. It's pretty cool actually. I'm living in an all muggle area. But I get the wizarding privileges. No magical person can find me here or send me owls if they are not included in my pre-approved list. More importantly, I am the only wizard or witch who could ever own property in this building. I love the privacy", he added.

"Very impressive", she said. Her mind was busy thinking about the complicated ward structure.

"So? Car or apparate?", he grinned.

"Car. I'm curious to see what car you drive", she mused out loud.

"Car it is", his eyes sparkled with mischief. *Something tells me I made the wrong choice*...

After changing into much warmer clothes, Harry held Hermione's hand as he led her towards a special elevator that's only connected to the basement. When they arrived at his designated parking area, he held her hand and led her to his space. He owned three cars and two motorcycles. Well, it made sense to him to love rides.

"Er, Harry? What are we doing here?", she looked at him.

"Well, take your pick. What should we ride in?", he grinned.

"You own all those?", she was shocked.

"Yep!", he said with pride.

"How can one bloke own five vehicles?", she muttered.

"I like rides", he said sheepishly.

"Well considering that you didn't have much time to enjoy yourself, I guess it sort of makes sense for you to indulge", she chuckled.

"So?", he prodded.

"You pick. Just no motorcycles. Or I'll smack you on the head", she glared at him.

"We're off to my baby then. Come on", he pointed to the red sports car. She shook her head in amusement as he opened the door for her. She slid inside the passenger seat and he ran to the other side so they could get going.

"I can't believe I get to ride an Alfa Romeo", she muttered and he chuckled.

"Say, 'Mione? Do you want to drive?", he wiggled his eyebrows playfully.

"Are you crazy? This thing is too fast for my taste!", she was aghast.

"Ah, well. Too bad. Fasten your seatbelt then", he said with mischief.
"Should've just apparated", she muttered to herself and he laughed. She immediately fastened her seatbelt.

"Where to miss?", he winked.

"Someplace where there are medical and academic supplies?", she replied.

"I know just the place. My baby and I will get you there in no time", he grinned as he turned the ignition on.

"May Merlin bless me", she said and he laughed as he drove.

Hermione glanced around the area as Harry parked the car. It was a shopping district that is located near a university belt. Since it's been a decade since she left Britain, she was surprised to see how this area had change. Before discovering that she was a witch, she dreamed about living her college years in this area. Harry went out of the car first and he opened the door for her. When she stepped out, she immediately heard the reactions of the crowd.

"Damn! An Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione!", she heard a male passerby mutter to his friend.

"The driver of that sports car is bloody sexy too", she heard a female college student say.

Harry merely held her hand and led her to the shops.

"Harry?", she whispered.

"Hmm?"

"Aren't you worried that bad people might steal your car or, I don't know, vandalize it or something", she remarked. She may not know a lot about car models but she knew how expensive his car was.

"Oh, I cast wards on it. No one can go near it. They will be compelled to just admire and stay away", he shrugged.

"How did you do that?"

"It's not a spell. More of intent-based magic. Like the tracking charm on your ring", he explained.

"You indeed are something special, Harry Potter", she shook her head in amusement.

"Er, well, I just got a better and better grasp on my magic as I age, I guess", he said with humility.

"Hmmm…"

"When the Horcrux on my head died, my magic started to shift. But it was only after I got some help with my PTSD that, er, it settled…", he admitted.

"You sought treatments for PTSD?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Yeah. I mean, well, Andromeda won't allow me to go near Teddy if I don't pull my head out of my
arse. When Viola died and you left me, I was, well, let's just say that depression is a very light term for it. So, Andy referred me to a healer friend of hers who was an expert in mind magics, he told her. Since he was looking away, she could tell that he was embarrassed about this.

"I'm happy that you got professional help", she remarked. She doesn't know what to say to that.

"Yeah", he said with a sad smile. She just squeezed his hand in a gesture of comfort and understanding. Sure, he hurt her a lot, and she is certain that she hurt him too, but they were friends first and foremost.

"Maybe I can buy the microscope first and then we can go grab lunch? I mean I just had breakfast but I reckon you are hungry now", she changed the topic as they walked by the various shops.

"Yeah that's a great idea", he agreed.

Harry was sitting beside Hermione as they lounged on the couch helping themselves to the takeaway fish and chips they bought for dinner. Her eyes were glued on the telly as they watched a documentary about how cancer spreads throughout the body. Okay, so she was watching the telly and well, he, on the other hand, was watching her.

There is something so beautiful about the way Hermione focuses herself on an academic endeavor. When they were flipping through channels, she asked him if he would mind if they watched this documentary on cancer. Given that he understood this would be something she is highly interested in, he relented. Of course, it would be a rather boring show for him but well, something about the way her eyes would sparkle as she learned something new and the nuances on her face as her mind ran through the information she receives, is such a sight to behold. He cannot imagine how it must be like to be that smart. He was so amazed at the sheer brilliance of her mind. While Hermione would never match him for magical power, she had him easily beat with her genius.

As he immersed himself in the glory that was Hermione Granger focused on learning something new, he remembered what happened this afternoon…

They enjoyed a long fun day buying the supplies she needed. She told him about her solid lead on the cause of the epidemic when they stopped at a steakhouse for lunch.

When she asked about his trip to the ICW headquarters, he told her that they were whipping up a highly classified bust operation on the Red Triangle. She understood that he can't tell her details so they started reminiscing about their happier times at Hogwarts. It was an easy topic – memories of the fun times they had shared in their youth...

He was just basking in being in her company. He missed her so much for the last decade. He missed his best friend. In as much as he was in love with her, nothing just beats the knowledge that she was there – with him.

As he thought about his meetings with the ICW on why they believe Hermione was a target of the syndicate, he frowned. No one will ever harm her again... I'll do anything to keep her safe.

"Well that certainly was interesting", her voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Huh?"
"Sorry, Harry. That must have been too boring for you", she chuckled.

"It's alright. Who knows, whatever you learned might be useful in your work", he shrugged.

"I've been meaning to ask you this ever since I woke up and you mentioned something about your animagus form", she said with excitement. *I can't believe she wants to bring this up right now*, he thought fondly. *Trust Hermione to always be curious about magic...*

"Are you sure you want this now? My form is rather, er, scary", he was uncertain.

"Try me", she challenged. *Oh well. She asked for it!*

He closed his eyes and transformed.

Coiled on top of the couch was a six-foot basilisk. Its scales are dark green with raven spots lining on the middle. It had eerie green eyes, the same color as in his human form, but the pupils are slit. The large snake was rooted in place...

"Ahhhh!", Hermione yelled and jumped off the couch. The king of the serpents immediately shape-shifted into an embarrassed Harry Potter.

"I'm so sorry, Hermione. I didn't mean to scare you", his voice was laced with guilt.

"You – oh my god! Harry! Your animagus form is a basilisk!", she had a hand to her chest. Her voice unsteady.

"Yes", he admitted with shame.

"Sorry about the yelling. Er, it's just, the last time I saw a basilisk's eye, I got petrified", her voice was now calmer.

"Yeah. That's why I didn't want to show you", he muttered.

"It's uh – well, it's amazing that you have such a powerful form", she tried to lift his spirits.

"Bloody brilliant actually. I'm a symbol of dark wizards", he said sarcastically. His voice filled with shame.

"It's not that bad", she tried to reassure him. He only grunted. To his surprise, Hermione ended up laughing which confused the hell out of him.

"What's funny?"

"It's just – well, you killed a basilisk and you are one", she laughed harder. When she put it that way, it is rather funny.

"I suppose so", he begrudgingly agreed.

"Can you petrify with your eyes? Is your venom as potent as a real basilisk? Is your form registered?"

"Yes. Yes. And Yes", he admitted.

"Amazing!", she said with awe and amusement.

"Yeah. When I took the animagus potion and transformed into a basilisk, I almost did not continue..."
with mastering the transformation. Professor McGonagall encouraged me though. She says it may come in handy in the future”, he told her.

"She has a point", she nodded.

"An unspeakable in the DOM has this theory that I have this stupid form most probably because of the venom from second year. Why can't I have been a phoenix instead?", he whined.

"Who knows? Maybe there is another dark wizard with Horcruxes, you can just bite the items", she joked. He threw one of the couch pillows at her.

"Please keep this a secret Hermione", he begged.

"Of course, Harry", she promised.

"What about you? Did you try being an animagus?", he was curious.

"Er, well, yes", she shyly admitted.

"Well what are you?", he was excited to know.

"Nothing special", she shrugged.

"Come on, 'Mione. I showed you mine. You show me yours", he pouted. That kinda sounds wrong.

"Fine", she relented. She closed her eyes and she shape-shifted into a fluffy white bunny with brown spots. She had a bushy fur that reminded him of her hair.

He immediately extended a hand to gently pat the rabbit's fur. It was so smooth. Just like Hermione's skin. Why can't I have such a cute form? Something that people likes seeing. Not a monster.

"Aren't you the cutest little thing", he cooed at the bunny who seemed angry. Its little nose hitting his finger. The rabbit transformed back into Hermione who now had a frown on her face.

"I can't believe you just treated me like a pet", she said grumpily.

"What? Your form is the cutest thing I ever saw", he chuckled.

"Well don't you ever change into your form when I'm a bunny! I don't fancy being snake food", she huffed.

"Too true. The bushy fur seems rather tasty", he teased.

"Merlin! You are such a prat!", this time she threw a pillow at him which he simply caught.

"It's rather funny. I'm a big predator. You're the little prey", he smirked.

"Yeah, yeah. Not all of us are as magically powerful as you", she snorted.

"Well at least you are cute", he chuckled.

"It's not a very useful form. I guess it's useful for a rabbit out of a hat trick", she huffed.

"It's a useful escape form though. Like Pettigrew", he tried to make her feel better.

"I can't believe you just compared me to that rat!", she frowned.
"No, of course not. It's just you know, how he used it to escape. And well, he was an ugly thing. And you are very cute, fluffy, and well, cuddly", he tried to be serious but he ended up chuckling.

"Don't tell anyone about this. It's my secret as well. Although I am registered", she sheepishly admitted.

"But why?"

"People expect me to be, I don't know, something magnificent. But well, a bunny is nothing special", she shrugged.

"Please! Not everyone can be an animagus. The fact you are one is a sign of how magically gifted you are. Besides, it's indeed a very cute form", he insisted.

"We agree to keep the knowledge of each other's forms as a secret then?", she asked.

"Deal", he extended a hand which she took. They shook hands once and burst out laughing at their silliness.

Hermione lay in bed in her room staring at the ceiling as she reviewed everything that happened today. She had fun with Harry. It was like they were still the best of friends roaming around Hogwarts. Maybe she could start making more effort into rebuilding their relationship.

"The mistress of death need only offer hers and the master's allegiance to the service of the afterlife in their passing. Pledge allegiance in a ritual. Only then can your heart's desire come true"

The words from her daughter's cryptic message from 'Mister Death' ran through her mind. *Maybe it's time to talk to Harry about that soon...*
Chapter Notes

Some parts of the story quote lyrics from the song "Moving Closer" by Never The Strangers.

Look it up on Youtube or Spotify as mood music.
Hermione Granger entered her temporary office at St. Mungo's with great determination, focus, and excitement. The lead that she and Irie have thought about during her rest period will finally be tested today. The rest of the healers and employees in the wizarding hospital were both surprised and genuinely happy to see her. Of course, since she had a new haircut, some people would give her a second look just to confirm if it was indeed her. She received a lot of compliments for her new hair though which is quite flattering, even if she only did it as a means of self-preservation.

She left the penthouse early since she was too excited to start testing. Hopefully, they could find a way to fully heal the children by the end of the week. It is moving closer and closer to Christmas soon. No child ever deserves to spend the season of giving and the most wonderful time of the year stuck in the hospital because of illness. It would be the greatest Christmas gift she and the rest of the healers could ever give to the children – for them to be well again before Christmas Eve.

As she entered her office, she carefully cleared her desk and placed the box which contained her newly purchased microscope at the center. Afterward, she summoned the Chemistry books from her trusty beaded purse. She summoned a couple of thin flasks that will be used in storing the extract that they will be testing.

Since she was one hour and thirty minutes early for daily rounds, she decided to just spend some time reading how to process extraction and to understand the molecular structures of the combination of certain elements, especially the volatile ones. *I do hope the team will be able to understand the dynamics of whatever it is I plan to do. While chemistry shares some similarities with potions and alchemy, there are still very significant differences...*

After thirty minutes of reading has passed, and her parchment now filled with notes, her concentration was broken by a knock on the door.

"Yes? Who is it?", she called out. Her eyes are still glued on the book.

"Chief Healer Granger, this is Auror Thomas. May I come in?", a baritone voice called out.

"Sure, Auror Thomas", she replied. The door opened and a tall dark man in auror robes entered her office.

"Good morning, Hermione. It's good to see you well", Dean greeted.

"Thank you, Dean. I assume you've been assigned to be part of the security team for this week?", she said with a smile.

"Yes. Auror Potter assigned me to lead your security task force today", Dean replied.

"Taskforce? And just how many are there?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"I am afraid that it is confidential information Hermione", it was said with a sigh.

"I see", she said with a nod.
"Here. Auror Potter asked me to give these to you. He says that you should eat all this”, she was handed a takeout bag from a famous restaurant and one bag filled with Honeyduke's finest chocolate.

"Thank you for handing these over, Dean. I don't know why you allow Harry to bully you into running errands though”, she snorted.

"Oh no. Harry bought them. He just asked me to hand them to you. He is so paranoid about the threat to you that he bought the food himself. We're also tasked to check everything being sent to you, especially the gifts and letters from well-wishers when you were hospitalized", the man confided.

"Hmmm… I see. Well thank you so much for all your help, Dean", she said with a smile. He gave her a nod before he gently closed the door.

Hermione inspected the food that Harry had sent over. He even bought coffee. There was a note attached so she picked it up.

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_Hermione,_

_I know you’re excited to work on your theory today. Quite obvious really since you left earlier than usual. But remember to take it easy. Eat the food and have some chocolate. We can't have you exhausting yourself too much._

_See you later,_

_H_

_P.S. Can I pick you up after work? I need some help. You see, Teddy's coming back from his first term at Hogwarts soon. And well, I need help in looking for his perfect muggle present. I always get him two gifts – one magical and one non-magical. Is that okay? I'll treat you to dinner for your trouble. Your choice. You can even order the whole menu. But if your busy, it's alright. I understand. Could you let me know your reply though so that I can finalize the schedule? Maybe a Patronus? Er, an owl is fine too. Whatever works. Right! So, I'll see you at home or in St. Mungo's. Have a great day ahead. I am confident you and your team can heal these kids. Sorry that the P.S. is longer than the actual note._

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She shook her head in amusement after she read the note. She could imagine how he must have fussed over what to write. Even in his 30s, Harry Potter is still super awkward when it comes to women.

"Expecto Patronum", she whispered and a corporeal otter bounced all around.

"Go to Harry Potter and tell him he can pick me up at six-thirty in the evening", she told her Patronus who playfully nudged her fingers before floating away.
Hermione decided to help herself with the delicious food that Harry bought for her. He was right. She was still newly recovered from her magical exhaustion. Besides, she promised her dear Viola Lily that she would take better care of herself from now on.

As she was enjoying her meal, the door to her office opened once again. Kei Irie and Evangeline Rosier walked in and she gestured for them to take a seat.

"Woah! What's with the large bag of breakfast and chocolates, Chief?", Irie asked.

"Harry sent them over", she shrugged before taking another bite of the strawberry waffles.

"Ooh! I see you and Lord Hotstuff are getting on splendidly then", Irie wiggled his eyebrows suggestively.

"Shut it! I'm still mad at you both for bloody leaving me at the club", she scoffed.

"We didn't leave you. Lord Potter was there and you went with him. I may enjoy ruffling his hotness' feathers but seriously! I would never go against the slayer of Voldemort", Irie explained and Rosier nodded in agreement.

"Fine", she huffed.

"Anyway did you get a taste of his hotness again? Do tell!", Irie squealed and Rosier giggled.

"Excuse me! I am not that kind of woman!", she glared at them.

"I take that as a no then", Irie said sadly.

"Well before you all get nosy with my love life, I take it that you two had fun", she snorted.

"Abso-fucking-lutely!", Irie said dreamily.

"I'm still a bit sore", Rosier giggled like a schoolgirl. Hermione could only roll her eyes at her friends' antics.

"Er, chief, since Lord Hotness seems to be you know, making an effort… What if you try marriage counseling? You know, just to clear your issues in a systematically organized manner. Whether it helps you end the relationship amicably or helps resolve it, at least you will have the chance to properly sort out your issues", Irie said gently.

"Hmmm…and where may I ask, did you get that idea from?", she said with genuine curiosity.

"Oh! The man I fucked this weekend works as a shrink with expertise in marriage counseling. You could always find a magical counselor", Irie shrugged.

"Yeah, that does sound like a good idea. I'll try to bring it up to Harry", she agreed.

"Anyway… Chief, Irie tells me of this theory that you guys thought of together", Rosier said.

"Yes. I'm sure he already gave you the details. I already brought the microscope and some books that we will be needing for the extraction. After we go for today's rounds, we will be working our arses off with the extraction of the substance, testing, and analyzing our results", Hermione said with conviction.

"Of course, chief!", they chorused.
Harry Potter was pacing around his empty office to prevent himself from lashing out in anger or worse – shape-shifting into his animagus form. The entire ministry would be in an uproar if they find a monstrous predator inside the Office of the Head Auror. It's been five minutes since he last read the letter from Switzerland. What he read made him lose his mind in anger. He could feel his magic ripple inside of him just waiting for something or more specifically, someone, to lash out on. He was so angry that he bloody memorizes the damn letter word for word! He has faced so many horrors in his life. Voldemort, who terrorized the entire European Wizarding Community, being the worst. But even the Dark Wanker never made him this angry! The leader of that bloody syndicate should pray that it's the ICW who will be capturing him... I'll tear him apart from limb to limb and then infuse basilisk venom on him before that stupid shit of a wizard whoever dared to even plan something against MY Hermione, dies in the most horrible and painful of deaths...

As he took a deep breath and closed his eyes to center himself, the words of the letter are once again plaguing his mind...

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December 13, 2010

Lord Potter,

Our hit wizards captured three members of the 'Red Triangle'. We're lucky that one of those captured is a high-ranking member of the group. They were found by chance loitering around a shady pub in muggle Germany. Our gut-feeling was right! They are involved in the non-magical world through the production of cocaine and other illegal drugs. We were able to find the location of their drug base. Updates will be given once we've taken them out. This will have to be a joint operation with the German non-magical community with the help of the German Chancellor for Magic.

We're also able to find out that they have been involved in human trafficking in the muggle world as well. Some obscure prostitution den in Asia that we still cannot decipher where.

The most important news for you is that as we crushed the mind shields of the high-ranking member, we discovered their plans for Hermione Granger. The leader of the group wants to capture her so that she can be involved in either a healing operation or a ritual. Details are not complete but one thing is for sure, they want your lady alive for capture. I trust that you will do your best to prevent that from happening.

I wrote to you so that you will be made aware.

Sincerely,

Babajide Akingbade

Supreme Mugwump

International Confederation of Wizards
"I'll kill that arsehole with my bare hands! Nobody hurts Hermione again!", he seethed.

The trio of ICW Medical Researchers was locked inside a heavily warded laboratory in the basement of St. Mungo's. They were here to conduct the test on the substance and to discuss the next steps.

Hermione watched as Evangeline Rosier, the potions expert among their small team, perform a spell that extracts the substance infused on the cursed toy that's been causing all this trouble on the poor children. She observed as Rosier poured the sample to one of the flasks. When the extract was safely stored inside, all three of them took turns to observe the substance through the glass. Since they weren't sure if the substance had harmful effects when inhaled, all three of them had thick masks on.

Kei Irie, the pathologist of the team, started to conduct diagnostic spells to confirm and match magical signatures. After a ten-minute thorough investigation, he sighed.

"Our initial findings are confirmed. The first victim is Freddie Weasley. Here, I've written down the order of contamination. Also, we have to find a cure and fast. But first, we have to destroy whatever substance this is. The dark magic-infused will make its potency even more dangerous as time passes by. Infection is tactile for now, but with time, who knows", Irie said with worry.

"Rosier, what have you found out?", Hermione asked.

"You are right, chief. The substance infused is non-magical. But the dark magic laced on it is making the effect worse. We have to know what the substance is. Being the only one among us here, who has the best understanding of the non-magical community, Chief, it's your turn to run the test. Magical tests will not work on this one. I am certain of it", Rosier explained.

"Alright. In the meantime, why don't you sit over there and read through some of the Chemistry books I bought. It might prove useful not only for this case but in our future research as well", she gestured to the stools by another desk. They nodded and immediately started on the books. Meanwhile, she summoned a dropper from her beaded purse. It was now time to test her theory!

As she made sure that her mask was properly in place, she carefully removed the cork that sealed the flask. She tilted the glass a little before she used the dropper to get a sample she could use for the testing. When enough of the substance was sucked in by the dropper, she resealed the flask again.

She gently dropped the sample specimen on a rectangular thin glass.

After covering the glass slip, she inserted the glass on the microscope’s stage. She adjusted the stage clips to steady the specimen. And then, Hermione Granger got to work…

Thirty minutes had passed, and she was able to record her findings on a parchment. They were right! The substance was indeed a magically enhanced compound of Lead, Mercury, and
Cadmium. She was surprised that the atoms on the substance are not erratic. There were no mutations or any sort of molecular change that could be observed. The dark magic that was infused, seem to stabilize all three elements. She also discovered that the complex metalloid compound that resulted from the combination of the three was laced in water. She hypothesized it was some sort of plasma at first, given the thick viscous nature of the substance. *Whoever formulated this substance is a sick twisted evil genius!* She sighed. *Why do some people use their talents for evil?*

She cleared her throat so that she can call the attention of the two healers who were now so focused on the books they were reading. When they looked up and saw the serious look on her face, they closed their books. Both were now anxious to hear what she discovered.

"Our theories were right. It is a complex non-magical substance. It is a mixture of Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury that was laced in water. Both of you have already read the harmful effects of each element to the human body, I am sure. The problem though is that the dark magic infused in it stabilizes the elements. We need a very strong substance to kill the dark magic and the potency of the compound", she informed the team.

"What about basilisk venom?", Rosier suggested.

"I believe that is a good idea. But I think we need very fresh venom for it to work. I have read the arithmancy of the spells, it is very dark magic. Besides, how do we control a basilisk to bite something? Hell! How do we even tame one when we are not parslemouths! Lastly, basilisks are very rare", Irie explained the facts.

"Do you think fresh basilisk venom would work?", Hermione wanted confirmation.

"Yes, it will. But, Chief! Are you out of your mind? Basilisks are dangerous!", Irie insisted.

"I know where to find a tame basilisk. Well, I'm sure that I'm the only one who can tame it", she muttered.

"What are you talking about, Chief?", Irie gave her an incredulous look. Rosier too seemed uncertain.

"Don't worry about it. You guys can stay here to carry on reading. Or you can brief Abim at headquarters so that we can start further discussions regarding the treatment we have to develop. I believe we need a combination of potion and spell healing", she told them.

"Where are you going?", Rosier asked.

"I have to, er, get the basilisk here", she admitted.

"What? That's dangerous!", Rosier was aghast.

"Just go back up to my office. And carry on with what you want to do. Hopefully, before the day ends, the blasted cause of this epidemic will be finished", she insisted.

"But chief – ", they chorused but immediately stopped when she glared at them.

"Trust me, I know what I'm doing. I'll call for you once the venom infusion on the cursed item is done", she said firmly and they gave a reluctant nod.

"Do you want us to tell the others that you'll still need the laboratory?", Rosier inquired.
"Yes. Tell them I'll be back", she replied before leaving the room.

Harry was much calmer now but he is still absolutely livid. He was angry and scared at the possible threat to Hermione's life. If she gets captured, Merlin forbids, and when her purpose is served, he is very certain that they will end her life. So here he is, sitting behind his desk, reading auror reports from the various cases his team was handling. He wanted to blow off some steam. Maybe participate in a dueling session with the auror trainees, but he knew how dangerous it could be. With his emotions at an all-time high, his spells will be at its most powerful. In as much as he wanted to train the young aurors to face the harsh reality of their job, he didn't want to scare them. He understands how potent his spells could be especially now when he is trying his best to rein in the basilisk.

His thoughts were interrupted when he heard a knock. He hissed. Who in the hell would come knocking? I bloody told them to not disturb me if it's not an emergency!

He grumpily stood up from his seat. He opened the door, preparing himself to yell at whoever disobeyed his orders when he was greeted by a vision he did not expect to see. Hermione Granger was standing in front of him with a confused yet determined look on her face. They remained rooted in their place as they locked their eyes on one another. Hers was filled with anxiety, perplexity, and confusion. He was filled with surprise, joy, and worry. He cleared his throat before speaking to her.

"Er, hi! What can I do for you?", one of his hands rubbed the back of his neck. He was nervous and excited that she visited him.

"I'm so sorry to intrude. Your secretary says that you asked not to be disturbed but I – "

"No! No. It's alright. You're welcome here, anytime", he immediately reassured her. Seriously! Any wizard who gets a visit from the brightest witch of the age is bloody lucky. Even now, as his eyes quickly glanced around the auror department, he could see the appreciative and curious looks the male aurors were discreetly throwing at Hermione. Who could blame them? Hermione, who is dressed in a white long-sleeved shirt tucked under a black pencil skirt, and the low-heeled shoes that emphasize her long stocking-clad legs is a vision! She looked like a perfect sexy librarian fantasy, minus the eyeglasses. And then he remembered the times when he saw her wear reading glasses as she gives out orders to her team and the rest of the healers… Seriously! There is something wrong with how sexually deprived I am…

"Oh, thanks", she replied. When he noticed that some of his male aurors and the lesbian ones were standing up from their seats to get a better chance to ogle Hermione, he sighed. Hell! Even the straight female aurors are looking at her.

"Why don't you come inside? I can't have you distracting the aurors", he muttered thoughtlessly.

"Excuse me!", she frowned.

"Never mind. Just please come inside", he tried to convince her to let it go but he could only see her frown deepening. She now had her arms crossed.

"Not until you tell me why I prove to be a distraction to the aurors", she demanded to know.
"Look, some of the aurors are randy blokes. You get the picture", he begrudgingly admitted.

"I'm coming inside your office but you have to explain this nonsense", she said grumpily as she entered his private office. The heels of her shoes clanking on the wooden floors. He smirked as his eyes followed the graceful sway of her hips as she walked. He closed the door and walked towards his seat behind the large oak desk.

"Explain", she said. She sat on the chair across from him.

"Explain what?", he said innocently.

"The statement about your aurors being randy blokes. It's not like I'm wearing something indecent!", she huffed. Her eyes inspected the buttons of her shirt to see if anything was amiss.

"Ah, well, you see Chief Healer Granger. A bloke's hormones get the better of him sometimes especially when faced with a vision of beauty before him", his voice tried to imitate her know-it-all voice at Hogwarts.

"I still don't understand! You better not be making fun of me Potter or I'll hex you in your sleep", she glared at him. How I miss this! Annoying Hermione…

"Of course not, Miss Granger. What I'm saying is that you shouldn't walk in here looking like a sexy librarian fantasy straight from the pages of Playwizard. Your presence is too distracting. Aurors are trained to feel magical auras. When you entered the room, your magic sizzles. You can hardly blame my poor aurors. If Dark Witches look half as good as you, they'll be ruling the world by now", he chuckled.

"Sexy librarian fantasy. Oh", she muttered to herself and then blushed. This woman is so adorable.

"So, thank you for not having dreams of being a Dark Witch. I mean, even I would succumb to be your follower", he winked.

"Will you stop it!", she blushed some more which made him chuckle.

"Anyway, what can I do for you this fine afternoon?", his tone was playful. All the anger he felt ever since reading the letter, dissipated. Her presence always did calm him down.

"I need your help. Well, the basilisk's help", she replied. Her voice was now filled with determination. All traces of her bashfulness from his rather crass compliments on her looks were gone.

"Hmmm… why?"

"Well, our theory was proven right. Rosier believes that to kill the effect of the substance, as well as the dark magic that surrounds the infected item, we need something very potent. So, she suggested basilisk venom. And Irie agreed but added that only fresh basilisk venom could do the trick. Of course, the venom idea is more of a hunch for now but I wanted to try it out. Please, Harry", he could hear the pleading and desperation in her voice.

"Okay. I haven't tested the potency of my venom and other basilisk traits, so this will be a good way to test it. So far, the only thing I know is that I can control my eyes. If I lower the protective layer, the worst I have done is to petrify a rat. So I guess, it all depends on my magic and emotion as well. Maybe if I was angry enough, my uncovered basilisk's eyes could kill", he told her.

"Thank you so much, Harry! Thank you for doing this", he could hear the relief and joy in her
"I need to ask a favor too, though", he said.

"Of course. How can I return the favor?"

"I want to test the limit of my animal instinct. If you shapeshift into your bunny form, I want to see if I can resist the predator within. I want to know how dangerous I could be", he said.

"Wow! You drive a hard bargain", she muttered.

"I promise, if I can't control it, I'll immediately change back. You know I'll never physically hurt you", he added.

"Alright. I'll do it. If I feel scared though, I'll hex you", she reluctantly agreed.

"Deal."

"So, er, can you come with me to St. Mungo's now?", she asked.

"Of course", he grinned as he took out a parchment to write some instructions and to inform people of his whereabouts.

"Oh, and Harry?"

"Hmmm?"

"Thank you for the food this morning. And the chocolates", she smiled.

"You're very welcome", he glanced up from the parchment to look into her eyes.

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Hermione led Harry who was hiding underneath his invisibility cloak towards the basement. They agreed to keep this a secret amongst themselves including Irie and Rosier. The British healers need not know about Harry's involvement in all this. He was still quite uncomfortable in telling others the truth about his animagus form. Given how prejudiced the British Magical Community was, they decided it was best to keep it a secret from the local healers.

As they entered the lab, Hermione closed the door and Harry shed the cloak off himself.

"So, maybe we can test your form's animal instincts first before we attempt to breaking the curse on the item?", she said.

"Okay. You should shift first. And then I will follow. Remember, if you feel any sign of aggression, change back", he told her and she nodded.

She closed her eyes and she shape-shifted into a fluffy white bunny with brown spots and a bushy fur. The bunny started to hop until it settled itself on a stool.

"Still the cutest thing I ever saw", Harry chuckled. The bunny raised its little nose, similar to the way Hermione huffs.
"Alright, Hermione. Here I go", he said. With a deep breath, he shape-shifted. In his place, a large basilisk was coiled on the ground.

The slit eyes of the basilisk were immediately drawn to the delicious smell of his prey. He slithered on the ground and stopped in front of a stool where a little fluffy bunny calmly sat.

*Mate. Not food,* the basilisk thought. So, his slit eyes remained focused on the bunny in front of him. Slowly moving closer, the basilisk's head rubbed on the bunny's fur. To anyone who would have seen this exchange, it would seem odd. A cold-blooded predator and a warm-blooded little prey seemed to be locked in a tender embrace. Well, as tender as animals could seem to be.

*Mate smells good,* the basilisk thought. His long tongue lowered to slowly touch the bunny's fur…

The bunny raised one of its tiny feet to rub on the predator's scales. *Snake not be bad. Snake won't hurt me,* the bunny thought.

The basilisk slowly moved away from the fluffy bunny and turned back into Harry. The bunny too changed back into Hermione. Their eyes met and they smiled at one another.

"Well, I was right. Your bushy fur does taste good. But I could never eat you", he said with a blush.

"Oh. Well, that's a relief. So, did you have full control of your animal side?", she grinned.

"The basilisk thinks of the bunny as its mate. No matter how bizarre that sounds. So, I guess I have very good control of my snake instincts while in my form. I could never bring myself to physically hurt you", he admitted.

"Oh. Well, that's good. For me, all the bunny could think of was that the snake is not bad and will never hurt her", she said.

"So, you've fulfilled your end of the deal. It's my turn to help", he said with a smile.

"Okay so since I don't know how to safely extract basilisk venom, I'm afraid I'll just have you bite the toy that's causing all this trouble", she told him.

"Er, okay. What shape is this toy?", he dreaded to find out but he had to help her save all those kids. If he could help prevent this epidemic in attacking more kids, then he will do it.

"The toy is a cube about the size of a basketball. It's made of some sort of magical rubber. Each side changes colors and it bounces. The rubber was laced in the substance but I do believe that at the center, lies the dark magic-infused since the substance never runs out. We tried all sorts of spells but it won't work. So, I need you to bite the cube in half so we can open the damned thing. And then, inject your venom right at its core to end the dark enchantment forever. After that, I'll call in Irie and Rosier so we can conduct tests if the dark magic is still there. If the venom works, then we can burn the toy. Pensieve memories could be used as evidence should we need to present some sort of proof once the culpable people are sent to trial at the ICW", she said.

"This is rather embarrassing. But, fine", he laughed.

"I'll levitate the toy cube on a stool and you go do your thing", she told him. When he nodded, the toy was carefully levitated on a stool.

Everything happened so fast. Harry had shape-shifted into his basilisk form again. The basilisk attacked the toy cube with its long sharp fang. Hermione saw dark smoke float from the cube at the
direct contact from the predator's sharp fang. The darkness dissipated. All that was left was an angry basilisk, licking the center of the split in-half cube, coating the toy with more venom. The basilisk gave a curious look at the two pieces of the toy he destroyed as if to inspect if he was able to coat everything with venom. Satisfied, the king of the serpents coiled its large body…

Harry Potter stood in front of Hermione looking angry and disgusted.

"Are you alright?", she asked with concern.

"Yes. I'm fine! Whatever that thing was, it is bloody disgusting. Reminded me of the Horcrux. But I know it's not a Horcrux. Anyway, one thing is for sure, that was some nasty dark magic in there. Eww! It feels like even a one-hour tooth brushing session can't remove that awful taste. It still lingers on my tongue", he made a disgusted face.

She pointed her wand to whatever remained of the toy that the basilisk split in half. When the magical detection charm no longer emits any magical signature, she squealed in delight. Because of the joy and relief that she felt, she threw her arms around Harry. She hugged him tight, gave him a chaste peck on the lips and left the laboratory to find Irie and Rosier.

"That nasty toy is well worth that kiss", Harry grinned as he heard Hermione's footsteps rushing up the stairs to look for her fellow healers. I think she doesn't even know that she kissed me… She just seemed so relieved… Ah well, at least the basilisk could come in handy.

He had a goofy smile on his face. He was so happy just to see Hermione that relieved!

As he waited for her to come back to the laboratory with the rest of her team, he recalled a song that reminded him of this moment they shared today. He could feel them getting closer again. Little by little, he knows that he is slowly breaking down the walls that she built around herself.

When you smile, everything's in place
I've waited so long, can make no mistake
All I am reaching out to you
I can't be scared, got to make a move

Inch by inch, we're moving closer
Feels like a fairytale ending
Take my heart, this is the moment
I'm moving closer to you

Who'd have thought that I'd breathe the air
Spinning 'round your atmosphere

I'll hold my breath, falling into you
Break my fall and don't let go
"I'm moving closer to you, 'Mione", he said out loud as the lyrics of the song lingered at the forefront of his mind…

Meanwhile, watching all the events from the afterlife, Viola Lily Potter squealed and jumped up and down.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!", the happy spirit did a celebratory victory dance as she looked at her father grinning like an idiot while her mother ran away to find her friends.

"You go, daddy! I gotta tell Mister Salazar!", she happily ran to look for the Slytherin founder, the most cunning spirit she knew. After all, it was Salazar Slytherin's idea to make that request from her mummy to stay at her daddy's house...
Hermione hurriedly ran as fast as she possibly could in her two-inch heels. She is beyond excited. Finally! Their case in Britain is getting closer and closer to everyone's desired result – to
fully heal the children and to end the root cause of the virus forever. So, she is very tickled pink with having the second item on the checklist marked as complete. *Thank Merlin for Harry's extraordinary magical abilities…*

As she reached the second floor, she brisk-walked to her temporary office hoping that her teammates were inside. She needs to gather the finest medical minds she could tap into since they are now so close to finding the cure. Taking a deep breath, since she exerted a lot of energy from her mad dash to look for Irie and Rosier, she opened the door. She grinned as she saw both of them deeply engrossed in the books they were reading and in writing notes.

"I have excellent news! The toy is destroyed. The dark magic is gone. Now we only have to figure out how to cure the victims and to brew a vaccine for all the children who came in contact with the toy regardless of blood status.", she bursts into the room with excitement.

Evangeline Rosier and Kei Irie both looked up from the books they were reading and gave her a dumbstruck look. She could sympathize with them. After all, it was just merely an hour ago when they were conducting the tests. Since her teammates were incredulous about her access to a 'tame basilisk', she understands their disbelief. If she were in their shoes, she would most likely act the same. Both of them had never witnessed the 'Harry Potter Factor' before. In the years she's known Harry during their Hogwarts years, the Horcrux hunt, and the Final Battle, he had always shown very extraordinary feats of magic. Sometimes it was just overcoming the odds – like surviving the killing curse twice. Weird things have always happened to Harry. But right now, she is just so thankful for Harry's weird animagus form. Because if not for him, they would still be stuck.

"But how?", Rosier was the first to recover from the shock.

"You two come with me. Bring your parchments. We'll need to contact Abim for ideas on how to create the healing potion", she told them.

"Yes, Chief!", they chorused. After gathering parchments, Irie and Rosier accompanied her as they headed back to the laboratory.

When they entered, Harry was standing at a corner looking at a poster that contained a summary of healing potions and their corresponding ingredients. Rosier and Irie's eyes roamed around. They didn't give his presence much thought since they were looking for a basilisk. The King of the Serpents is very hard to miss. Upon realizing that there is no large snake or even a cage, their faces were once again laced with confusion.

Hermione cleared her throat to get everyone's attention. Harry turned around to face her with a smile which she returned. Rosier and Irie looked at one another looking very anxious and confused.

"Er, Chief? Where's the basilisk?", Irie asked.

"Or maybe you found some obscure spell to end the substance along with the dark magic?", Rosier voiced out.

"Well, why don't you examine what remains of the cursed item first", Hermione offered and both of them nodded. She gestured to the two split pieces of the cube and they immediately got to work. Harry glanced at her teammates, seeing them preoccupied, he approached her.

"Hermione, do I have to transform in front of them?", he leaned in to whisper in her ear.

"You won't have to if they don't ask. But if they want proof, you might have to. I'm so sorry about
"It's alright", he shrugged.

"Oh, my fucking Merlin!", Rosier exclaimed.

"How did this bloody happen?", Irie yelped. It's obvious that both have finished conducting the tests and they too got the same results as hers a while ago.

"I don't understand. I can detect basilisk venom but I see no snake here", Rosier said as she approached.

"Lord Potter, do you own a basilisk?", Irie asked Harry.

"No", Harry replied.

"But then why do we detect basilisk – "

"Morgana's tits! You! You are the basilisk!", Rosier pointed at Harry.

"That's crazy Vangie. People can't be a basilisk animagus", Irie snorted.

"Chief? Lord Potter is the basilisk, right?", Rosier addressed her. She glanced at Harry who only rolled his eyes and then he shapeshifted.

Evangeline Rosier and Kei Irie squealed in fear and managed to climb on top of the large work tables. The basilisk moved its head from side to side, obviously amused at the antics of the two now screaming on the table. After looking at Rosier and Irie, it slowly slithered towards her. The large snake coiled its body around her legs and thighs. Its head resting on her abdomen. It was hissing something and she huffed.

"You just had to go and show off, don't you?", she scoffed. The basilisk hissed again and this time, it licked her fingers.

"Harry! You change back right now! You're scaring those two", she scolded the mischievous snake. Rosier and Irie were now hugging each other for dear life on top of the tables in fear.

"You're spoiling my fun", Harry pouted as soon as he changed back into his human self.

"Rosier, Irie, calm down! Go down right now. The tables may not be able to hold on to your weight. And stop yelling. Please", she addressed the scared out of their wits pair.

Irie was the first one to go down from the table. He was reluctantly followed by Rosier. To Hermione's surprise, Irie hid behind Rosier. The blonde witch tried to budge but the Japanese wizard just won't let go.

"Er, Lord Potter, just wanted to say sorry for all the rude comments and for making you think I fancy the Chief. I'm just joking! Honest! I like men so the Chief and I are just friends, promise. I'll even swear on my magic – ", Irie's ramblings were interrupted when Harry bursts into laughter.

"Seriously, Kei!", she said with disbelief.

"What? You can't blame me. He's a bloody basilisk. I don't want him to go after me or something", Irie muttered.

"You are such a wimp, Kei!", Rosier scoffed.
Harry was now squatting on the floor clutching his stomach. He had tears in his eyes and his face was red from all the laughing. Hermione looked at the wizard on the floor and rolled her eyes. *He might be Britain's Most Powerful Wizard but he's still just a simple-minded idiot sometimes*, she thought with fond exasperation.

"I'm sorry, Lord Potter. I won't even hug the Chief if you want", Irie offered.


"Oi!", Harry stopped laughing as he rubbed his arm to soothe the punch.

"Get up! And stop laughing. Seriously! What would people think if they saw Lord Potter, Head Auror of Britain, rolling on the floor in laughter?", she said with a glare as she held out a hand to help him up. When he was finally back on his feet, Harry cleared his throat to control himself.

"Sorry. I just didn't expect that", Harry said in a more dignified manner but she could tell he was still trying hard not to laugh.

"Honestly!", she scoffed.

"Irie, don't worry about it. Hermione loves her hugs, so you shouldn't stop. Besides, she already told me about your er, preferences. And of course, I won't hurt you", Harry addressed Irie who was still hiding behind Rosier.

"Merlin! Irie, he won't hurt you. Sure, he could be a prat but he would never harm anyone who's not a threat", she told Irie in a firm voice. Finally, the scared Japanese stepped away from Rosier's back.

"And you! Really? Scaring people like that!", she scolded Harry who grinned sheepishly.

"Sorry. I just thought it was funny to see their reactions. Never thought they'd be so scared. And when Irie started blabbering, I can't help it", he chuckled.

"Rosier, Irie, I do hope that you can keep Harry's animagus form a secret. Especially here in Britain. People here are too prejudiced about such things", she addressed her team.

"Of course, Chief. We'll keep Lord Potter's form a secret", Rosier said and Irie nodded.

"Okay. So, could you please set up a call with headquarters in five minutes. I'll just have to talk to Harry for a sec", she said and they nodded. Irie took out the communication mirror from her beaded purse.

"Harry, let's go outside", she whispered and he nodded. They both left the laboratory room and stopped along the corridors.

"Thank you so much for helping out. We'll be meeting HQ in a while and we'll be informing them of our progress. Of course, the knowledge of your form shall only be revealed to the medical research team", she assured him.

"Okay", he grinned.

"You seem cheerful!", she asked with a brow raised.
"Well, what happened in there was funny. I was stunned by Irie's blabbering. I never expected that", he was chuckling again.

"Harry, thank you so much", she smiled.

"You're welcome."

"I got to go. Have to talk about potions and stuff", she shrugged.

"Yeah, me too. It's four o'clock. Have to get back at the ministry", he said after checking the time on his wristwatch.

"Bye, Harry."

"I'll pick you up at six-thirty", he said.

"I'll be at my office", she told him.

"See you later, Hermione", to her surprise, he leaned forward and kissed her on the forehead before leaving. She could feel that her cheeks were still flushed as she entered the laboratory once again.

"So is the mirror call set up?", she asked.

"We already contacted the Deputy. He's rounding up the rest of the department. He says to give them thirty minutes max. They'll be calling us", Irie replied.

"Oh. Okay", she shrugged as she sat on one of the tools beside Rosier.

"So… Harry Potter is a basilisk", Irie said in an innocent voice.

"Well given how loud you were screaming awhile ago, I reckon you remember", she snorted. She grabbed one of the Chemistry books and flipped to the page that talks about the properties of the elements.

"His basilisk seems to be cozy around you, Chief", Irie said too innocently and Rosier giggled.

"So?", she said with an eyebrow raised.

"Is he a basilisk too in his human form?", Irie wiggled his eyebrows playfully. This time, Rosier's laughter is getting louder.

"Basilisk in the human form?", she muttered. Her eyes were still trained on the book.

"Oh, come on, chief! You know what I'm talking about!", Irie said.

"Hmmm?"

"Is his basilisk as scary as the basilisk?", he tried again.

"What?"

"I said, is the basilisk in his pants as scary as his animagus form?" She finally understood what he was talking about.

"I can't believe you are asking me that!", she glared at the horny duo.

"What? We're curious. Harry Potter is a god damn fine-looking wizard", Irie said in a dreamy
"You know, I'll tell him you're making rude comments about him", she threatened.

"I guess you know how to tame his basilisk eh, chief?", Irie said smartly.

"I'm so telling on you", she huffed.

"You know, Chief, he does love you. I can tell", Rosier said.

"Yeah, me too. I now support Lord Potter in his quest to charm your prudish knickers off", Irie agreed.

"Let's just focus on work please", she whined and they laughed. Honestly! They were screaming in fear just minutes ago for Merlin's sake. Now they're shipping me and Harry... And talking about his basilisk. Why must I bear the burden of working with the horny duo?

Despite the letter from the Supreme Mugwump, which contained details about the reason as to why Hermione is being targeted by the syndicate, Harry's day turned out to be pretty great. One, she brightened his day with her surprise visit. Two, she helped him test how strong his control on his animal instincts while in his basilisk form. Three, he was able to contribute a little help for the resolution of the epidemic. Four, he had his good laugh at Irie who used to annoy him so much. And the most important reason, Hermione kissed him. Now here he is, standing outside her office door since she agreed to accompany him while shopping for Teddy's non-magical gift.

He knocked three times and she said he may enter. When he opened the door, he remained standing by the doorframe just admiring the very familiar view. Hermione Granger in research mode. It was so endearing and nostalgic. It took him back to their time at Hogwarts, when their friendship was not yet marred by any pain.

Sensing his presence, she looked up.

"Hi, Harry! Come on in. I'll just fix my things and then we can go", she greeted with a smile before standing up to gather her piles of parchment and arrange her books.

"It's alright. Take your time", he said as he took a seat.

"We're apparating there, right?", she stored some of the parchments in her beaded purse. While some are stored in the desk drawers.

"Yes. Er, do you need help?", he asked.

"Can you please place the microscope that's on my desk inside its box over there. And then just place it inside the equipment cabinet by the left", she said and he nodded. When he was done storing the microscope as ordered, he looked at her and she was waving her wand all over her clothes.

"What is that charm?", he was curious.

"Sterilizing charms. It's like a scourgify but the cleaning is very thorough. Imagine being immersed in ethyl alcohol for the non-magical context", she replied.
"Cool."

"I'm ready when you are", she said. She was carrying a black leather bag.

"Let's check out one of the shopping districts in muggle London. So that we can have lots of options. I'm not sure if I'm getting Teddy a book, a game system, or a musical instrument... So, the more options the better", he said as he closed the door to her office.

"Good idea. After all, I need to buy some presents too. But since you're shopping for Teddy, maybe I can find something for VJ as well", she said as they were walking along.

"VJ?"

"Viktor Jr. That's Viktor Krum's son", she said.

"You're still in touch with Viktor?"

"Yeah. His son is my godchild. I met his wife sometime in Switzerland. She was a Chaser for the Swiss team. Viktor and I remained friends so I became close with Elina as well. I even assisted in VJ's birth. Sad to say, Elina died of an accident four years ago", she said sadly.

"Oh. That's so sad."

"Yeah. The worst part is VJ looks so much like his mum. It is such a big heartbreak for Viktor. But he does love VJ very much. They visit me whenever they can or when Viktor has a game in Switzerland. VJ wants me to be his new mum but Viktor and I just laugh it off. Viktor Krum will never love anyone like the way he feels for Elina. Besides, Viktor and I - that's just so fourth year", she laughed.

"How old is VJ?"

"He'll be turning six soon."

"Do you know what to get him?"

"I plan to get him some new books. Kid loves to hear my voice when I read to him", she chuckled.

"Take my hand, Hermione. I'll side-apparate you", he held out a hand to her. They were so busy talking that they didn't notice they were already at the end of St. Mungo's apparition wards. When she grabbed hold of his hand, he concentrated, and then they found themselves standing on a hidden corner in Oxford Street.

Harry took Hermione's hand as he led her to the busy shopping district. When they passed by a store that sells musical instruments, they decided to give it a try. He immediately went to visit the area with the guitars. Teddy had expressed interest to learn how to play guitar just like him. Maybe it could be their godfather – godson thing. Just like Hermione and VJ's reading sessions.

"I'll go look around", Hermione told him and he nodded. One of the shopkeepers, immediately talked to him as he asked about different guitar brands and types. He finally decided on a blue acoustic guitar for Teddy. The kid always liked blue and the shopkeeper explained that it was a good choice for beginners.

He was headed for the counter to pay for his purchase when his eyes caught Hermione who was sitting in front of a grand piano. She started to play a simple tune when a boy who looked to be around seven years old with dark brown hair, approached her.
"Hello", the child greeted.

"Hi", Hermione smiled. She does love children very much!

"Can you play Tomorrow on the piano?", the child asked.

"As in, the sun will come out tomorrow, bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow?", Hermione said in a sing-song voice and the child giggled.

"Yes, that one!", he said happily.

"Yep!", she grinned.

"Can you play for me? And I'll sing", the child pleaded.

"Of course", she smiled and started to play a new tune. Hermione's eyes were trained on the child but her fingers expertly pressed on the keys and she nodded as if giving a cue…

To Harry's surprise, along with the rest of the people in the music shop, the child had a beautiful clear innocent voice.

Towards the end of the song, Harry heard the child mutter to Hermione to sing with him.

The sun will come out, tomorrow

So you gotta hang on 'til tomorrow

Come what may…

Tomorrow, tomorrow

I love ya tomorrow

You're always a day away

Hermione's voice was still as crystal clear as the last time he heard her sing this song… It was one of her favorite lullabies for Viola Lily. He would listen outside her bedroom as she rocks the baby to sleep…

He wiped a stray tear off his cheek and he saw the child clap happily. The little crowd they gathered clapped their hands as well. He eagerly joined in the clapping.

"What's your name, miss?", the little boy asked.

"Hermione. And you are?", Hermione smiled brightly but he could see she was holding back the tears. The song reminded her of Viola Lily as well.

"Charles", the boy grinned bashfully.

"Nice to meet you, Charles", Hermione extended out a hand to shake which the boy took in earnest.

"I'm gonna marry you someday Miss Miney!", the boy declared before running to his mother who watched with amusement.

Hermione stood up from the piano bench so he approached her.
"Oh. You settled on the gift. Good", she said.

"Yes and you have another proposal of marriage", he chuckled.

"Huh?", she was confused.

"Scorpius Malfoy. Then Charles", he grinned.

"Oh, right. I've been getting marriage declarations from little boys since my healer training", she laughed.

"Well, I better get you out of here. We wouldn't want to break the little guy's heart", he teased and she rolled her eyes.

"Hurry up so that I can go buy VJ's present. I'm starting to get hungry", she said and he followed her towards the payment counter.

After finding a set of books for VJ, Hermione lead Harry to a Japanese restaurant since his note said that she is allowed to pick the venue for dinner. Aside from loving Japanese cuisine, she selected the place because it offered private booths. She needed to talk to Harry about something serious…

After they ordered, Harry went with a bento and she got some ramen noodles. Thinking that it's for the best to just be outright and tell him, she decided to cut to the chase.

"Hermione, there's something I need to tell – "

"Harry, you should know – "

They spoke at the same time. Their eyes met and then, they started laughing.

"You go – "

"Ladies first – "

Again, they laughed.

"This is ridiculous. I'll just go first", she said as the laughter died down.

"Go ahead", he grinned.

"Thank you. So, we had a meeting via the mirrors. It was a meeting among the entire ICW medical research department. We discussed all our findings and what you've done to help us out. Abim, the deputy whom you met in HQ, is our best potions expert. He says that to fully create the potion to cure the victims, basilisk venom should be infused. To counter the harmful effect though, since we need to cure the kids, and not kill them, we need some sort of limiting reagent. The limiting reagent will prevent the venom to kill the kids, only the substance within the bodies. Therefore, curing them. As you know, phoenix tears will be used to counter the venom", she explained. Harry remained silent. She could tell that he was thinking.

"Yes, I do understand. I know there are more details, so please carry on", he gave her an
understanding smile and she nodded.

"Well, I told them that you had a basilisk and phoenix encounter at the Chamber of Secrets and how it possibly explains your unique animagus form. Anyway, Abim believes that since you will most likely be providing the venom, if you agree of course, then I have to conduct some tests on your blood. Most likely it will be used on the potion as well", she added.

"Alright. What else", he nodded thoughtfully.

"Harry, do you know your EMI score?", she gently asked. It's not polite to confront someone about how powerful they are.

"I don't even know what that is", he said sheepishly.

"It's used to measure the maximum possible magical power a wizard or witch can use when casting a particular spell. The highest known record is 1000, Merlin. Hence, it means Emrys Magical Index", she informed him.

"Never heard of it but I am willing to take the test or whatever is needed to be done", he said.

"There are fifteen victims, right? And some non-purebloods carry the virus although they are unharmed. Given that there are around fifty people affected by all this, we need a large amount of phoenix tears."

"But Hermione, phoenix tears are super rare. The last phoenix I've ever seen was Fawkes. And ever since Dumbledore's burial, I haven't seen one since", Harry said in earnest.

"We have one phoenix in the ICW. But a phoenix only produces very little magical tears with healing abilities. To be able to dose that many, we need around a half-liter of tears", she said.

"Then how – "

"One of the members of the medical research team, an expert on magical cores and power enhancement, believes that you must be magus level. As in, near Merlin level. With that, he has this theory that you can magically increase the quantity of phoenix tears", she interrupted.

"Do you think I'm that powerful? Hermione, I'm not as smart as you", he argued.

"Harry the last wizard or witch to have been recorded to have a magical creature for an animagus form is Merlin himself. He can turn into a Hebridean Black, a species of dragon. And then, there is you. A wizard who can turn himself into the King of the Serpents."

"Okay. We'll do the test later. I want to do anything to help. I want to end this epidemic too. If I need to take a test, donate blood, produce venom, magically increase the quantity of phoenix tears, then so be it. Just tell me what I need to prepare though", he chuckled nervously.

"I'm sorry about this, Harry. I know we are asking too much from you", she sincerely told him.

"It's alright. This epidemic was brought to Britain to lure you back here so that they can capture you. I received a letter from the Supreme Mugwump this morning. The leader of the syndicate wants you captured either for a ritual or a healing operation. I'll help you find the cure so that you can safely be back in Switzerland. I need you to be safe", the determination in his eyes and the firmness of his voice startled her.

"I don't know what to say. Except, thank you. Thank you so much", she was looking straight into
his eyes so that he could see how much she appreciated all of his help.

The seriousness of their conversation immediately stopped when they heard a knock. A waitress dressed in a kimono walked in to serve their orders.

"Arigato gozaimashita", Hermione thanked the waitress who gave her an odd look.

"Er, sorry, miss?", the waitress asked.

"Oh, I just said thank you, is all", she said sheepishly.

"Oh. Er, you're welcome", the waitress bowed before leaving their private space.

"That was awkward", Harry chuckled.

"Shut it!", she huffed but ended up chuckling as well.

"I didn't know you speak Japanese", he remarked.

"Irie taught us a few words. Rosier and I went with him to Japan a couple of years ago", she said.

"That's nice. What else do you know?"

"Itadakimasu!", she had a huge grin on her face as she inhaled the delicious smell of the broth from her ramen noodles.

"What does that mean?"

"Let's eat or you are really happy since food is here", he laughed when she said that.

They ate their meal in silence because the food is really good. When they were now munching on dessert, a slice of matcha flavored cake, Harry cleared his throat.

"Hermione?"

"Yes?"

"Since I promise to do all that I can to help with the cure, can you promise me something in return?", she could hear the seriousness in his voice.

"Alright, what do you want me to promise in return?"

"If the syndicate is not apprehended yet and everyone affected is cured, I want you to return to Switzerland immediately. But, er, well, promise me that you'll let me visit?", he looked away and she could see his cheeks were flushed.

"I promise Harry", she meant every word of that.

"Thank you", he said with a shy smile.

"Harry, how do you feel about marriage counseling?"

"What?"

"I mean it could help us sort out our problems together", she shrugged. She just wanted to get his reaction if he was averse or supportive of the idea.
"Hmmm… I guess that's fine", his face looked thoughtful.

"You know something? The way our conversations have been going on recently, I could feel that we both have matured significantly. It makes me feel old", she joked.

"I guess here's to maturity then", he raised his glass of cold tea.

"To maturity and rebuilding friendship", she too raised her glass.

"Cheers!", they said together as they clicked glasses.

Yes, it was a very long day for both of them but overall, it was a really good day…
When Harry heard about the ICW Medical Research Department's plans during his dinner with Hermione, he tried to keep a calm and collected demeanor. Deep inside, he was very nervous. He
was afraid that he was not powerful enough, to support whatever it was they needed, to be able to lift the curse. Aside from wanting to do all he possibly can, to help find the cure for the children, he is doing all this for Hermione. He understands that it is her life purpose to not have another patient die on her again. So, should he prove to be not powerful enough, Hermione might end up losing fifteen patients – all of them children. He cannot allow that to happen. Because he is certain that it will only break her fragile heart even more. He owed it to her to offer all his help, no matter what it takes.

Now here he is, anxiously waiting in his bedroom. When Hermione returns, with the necessary equipment for all the testing she will conduct on him, he would know just how much power he possesses. They will know if the tasks her teammates seem to believe he is capable of is possible or not.

Hermione told him that he could come to visit her at St. Mungo's tomorrow morning or during the afternoons, depending on his availability. They decided to conduct the tests tonight since he told her he was busy the next day. He had some work to do with the aurors. New plans on how to go about Hermione's security. Also, he would be in touch with the ICW Hit Wizards for any updates on their espionage. They need to nail the 'Red Triangle' syndicate as soon as possible.

According to Hermione, the premier potions expert of their team, Deputy Abimbola Omenuko, will come to Britain on Thursday so all tests on himself must be completed by then. To be honest, it feels kind of irritating to be harvested for what essentially is going to be used as potions ingredients – they are planning to use his blood for Merlin's sake. But if it will help cure all those kids, then so be it.

Hermione is knocking on his door, so with a wave of a hand, he opened it for her. She entered his room dressed in a tank top and comfy striped pajama pants. Parchment, quill, ink, a book, two flasks were levitating in front of her. She was holding her wand in one hand and her emergency kit in the other.

"Hello, Harry. I do hope you're ready", she greeted him.

"Well as ready as I'll ever be", he sighed.

"Alright, so I am conducting two tests on you. One the EMI for your magical power. Two, I'll be extracting some blood so we can run some analysis on it. Third, well, it's more of a personal theory that I want to test out", she said the last one a little sheepishly.

"What theory?", he was curious.

"Remember that I was in some sort of magical coma after the accident?" He only nodded in reply. How could he ever forget that incident? He was so worried that she won't ever wake up.

"I met Viola Lily during the coma. And well, she told me something interesting", she began.

"I see. Where did you meet her in that dream state?" he wanted to know since he too had a bout of near-death after Voldemort cast the killing curse on him at the Final Battle. During that crazy experience, he found himself talking with Dumbledore in a replica of King's Cross Station.

"I met her in the Trinity College Library. Which sort of makes sense since it was my most favorite place as a little girl. And it remained to have been my favorite until I visited the Bibliotheca Alexandrina", she chuckled.

"Okay. So what did our dear darling daughter say?", he was amused. Viola Lily Potter always talks
about the most interesting things about her experiences and the people she meets in the afterlife.

"She told me that 'Mister Death' wanted her to memorize a particular message for me. This message is related to you being the bearer of the Deathly Hallows", she added.

"Alright. What's the message?", he knew that whatever she is going to say will be something very important.

"The mistress of death need only offer hers and the master's allegiance to the service of the afterlife in their passing. Pledge allegiance in a ritual. Only then can your heart's desire come true", Hermione stated in a voice that was loud and clear.

"I see. Well, I think you have some sort of interpretation about this", that was his only reply.

"It just reminds me about Osiris and Isis", she thoughtfully muttered.

"The Egyptian gods?", he was surprised.

"Yes. You see, the ICW has these secret archives of magical text. Think Department of Mysteries but bigger. Anyone who works in any type of research gets access to these archives. Anyway, as a muggleborn, I've always loved mythology. One day, I discovered a tome there that talked about Osiris and Isis, as well as the other Egyptian gods. It turns out, they were a bloodline of very strong witches and wizards. The reason why history thinks of them as gods are because their subjects were non-magical. Seeing their rulers who can perform extraordinary feats of magic, they were deified to be gods and goddesses. Anyway, Osiris is the god of death and his wife and sister Isis is the divine mother of all things magic. The magical tome says that the Egyptian gods, Osiris, and his ancestors were the first to be entrusted with the responsibility of being the Master of Death. When their descendants prove to be abusive, ancient Egypt suffered many trials. After that, the hallows seemed to fall into the hands of the Greek gods, Hades in particular. Anyway, the point is, along the way, an unknown wizard met the Peverell brothers who gave them each of the hallows", she narrated.

"Okay, so how does this relate to the message from Viola?", he may be so much more powerful than her, but he's never going to be as smart as her. So he was still missing the point.

"You are the Master of Death. As your wife, making me the so-called mistress. We both want a second chance to save our daughter. So, to turn back time, we have to perform a ritual of some sort. A ritual that will have you and me pledge our allegiance to the incumbent 'Mister Death' that you and I will take over from when it is our time to die. You see, the book sort of implies that the power to protect the spirits in the afterlife, belongs to a magically gifted and divinely blessed family – with the matriarch and patriarch being the master and mistress just like Osiris and Isis. They were the first to do this, and the only pair to have maintained the role successfully since their descendants enjoyed some time of abundance in their mortal lives until they abused the gift. The Greek gods never were successful in taking over the role because Hades and Persephone were not compatible as a couple. Also, Zeus overshadowed Hades since he was described by the book to be more charming, making the latter jealous. Hence, the whole chaos among them. Anyway, the point is - if we perform the ritual, we get a second chance for Viola Lily", she explained.

"Wow! This is a lot to take in. I don't suppose you have an idea as to who the current 'Mister Death' is?", he had a feeling that she somehow knew. Hermione never brought things up when she is uncertain or clueless about a particular topic.

"I believe the current 'Mister Death' is Merlin himself. He is the one who gave the hallows to each brother separately. Merlin never married so he can't pass the responsibility to his descendants like
Osiris and Isis. Merlin never got together with who was presumed to be his perfect complement in magic”, she answered.

"Who?"

"Morgana Le Fay. She was his magical apprentice and at some point, they were lovers. But she was chaos and eventually turned dark. Merlin could never accept her because of that. He did not compromise. Osiris and Isis worked well together because Osiris was dark and Isis light. The caretakers of the afterlife should complement each other for legend says that one manages the entrance to eternal bliss – heaven. While the other, regulates eternal damnation – hell”, she told him.

"Okay. So, er, is there anything else?”, he was astounded by all that he learned.

"The master of death is always more powerful than the mistress. The EMI while popularly named after Emrys Myrrdin or Merlin, is actually of Egyptian origin. The spell is Arabic. It is believed or as the book I read says, that whoever is the Master of Death should be as powerful as Osiris and Merlin", she informed.

"Bloody hell! So that means I have to score 1000 on this test! Great. No pressure at all", he said sarcastically. Hermione chuckled.

"Hey, it doesn't have to be like that. It's just what the book says. Besides, we still have to find what rituals to use. And it could be nasty. Either a sex ritual or a blood sacrifice ritual. That's usually the case for some sort of magical communion”, she tried to placate him.

"Hermione? If all these things are in some book in the ICW's archives, then I don't understand something. Why then, did Dumbledore, who was Supreme Mugwump at some point in his life, never knew about all this?”, he asked.

"I'm sure he must have read the books. Maybe he just doesn't agree that it should be a couple like Osiris and Isis. Or maybe it's another greater good thing for him you know. Or it could be that he just doesn't believe what the book is saying. I mean if you ask me, it seems rather far-fetched. When I read it before, I thought it was just some sort of magical fairytale with a little bit of truth in it. Hearing Viola's message though, it makes me believe in it. Even just a little", she admitted.

"Do you want to try being Mistress of Death, Hermione?”, he wanted her to be sure.

"I'll do anything for our daughter, Harry."

"Okay. Let's try calling Merlin's spirit. Maybe he'll come to us. You know just to ask”, he said as he looked at her with intensity. He needed to know if she was sure about this. When she gave him a firm nod, he summoned the resurrection stone. Turning it three times, he thought about Emrys Myrrdin…

Five minutes passed and nothing seemed to happen. He was about to give up, when a tall blue-eyed spirit with long dark brown hair, wearing some kind of medieval tunic, trousers and boots floated in front of him. Oddly though, the spirit was focused on Hermione.

"It is my immense pleasure to meet the brightest witch alive”, the spirit bowed to Hermione in a very gentlemanly manner. Harry couldn't help but snort at that. If this is 'Mister Death', Viola seems to be right! He does fancy Hermione, he thought with amusement.

"Emrys Myrrdin?", Hermione stammered.
"Yes, it is. Emrys Myrrdin. Current protector of the gates of the afterlife. At least until this blind idiot over here takes my place in his death", Merlin pointed to Harry.

"I'm right here you know", Harry huffed.

"Oh, I am so sorry to have offended the last descendant of Gryffindor", Merlin said sarcastically and Hermione laughed.

"Viola's right! You are annoying", Harry rolled his eyes.

"Ah well, the little dear is amusing in her own right. Loves her mother a great deal. Which I can perfectly understand", Merlin winked at Hermione which made her blush.

"You know if you tone down the flirting, you'd be of good use to us", Harry complained.

"First off, Hermione's theories are right. I always knew you were brilliant. Just like your many times' great aunt who likes to claim you as a granddaughter, so yeah. Brightest witch since Rowena Ravenclaw indeed. Anyway, what do you like to know?", Merlin asked Harry.

"Well, I don't know. I'm just – wow! This is weird", Harry was astounded.

"Mr. Merlin?", Hermione asked.

"Just call me Merlin dear."

"Right. So, er, if we do the ritual, how long is the service tenure as protectors of the gate of the afterlife?", she inquired.

"Hmmm… I'm not sure. Osiris and Isis held the title for thousands of years. I'm at my seven hundredth year. I plan to retire soon. Too difficult to manage both heaven and hell on my own. If only Morgana and I worked out. Now, it pains me to see her punished for all eternity when she could have been happy with me", Merlin said with pain and sadness.

"Oh, I am so sorry to hear that", she apologized.

"Sir?", Harry asked.

"Yes?"

"If the Master and Mistress of Death serve the afterlife when they pass on, what are the Deathly Hallows doing in the land of the living?", he wanted to know. After all, should everything turn out alright, he wouldn't want to burden his descendants with three highly coveted mystical items.

"It's seen as some sort of physical symbol of the family being blessed. The Creator who made all things blessed Osiris to find the Deathly Hallows. When he and his wife offered their service, their descendants were anointed. Blessed by the Creator to prosper in their lives. When the descendants abused their blessings, the Creator took the hallows and it called to another. Should you decide to fulfill your calling, your descendants will be greatly blessed in life for your faithful service upon your death", Merlin replied.

"Thank you, sir", he respectfully said.

"I see. That makes sense", Hermione remarked.

"Now I know that you two still have some issues to resolve on your own. I do hope you make the right choice. I believe you will make a fine Master and Mistress of Death just like Osiris and Isis"
those were the last words of Emrys Myrrdin before he disappeared.

"Well that was helpful", Harry remarked. Hermione sighed.

"Do you think we should do it?", her voice was small and uncertain.

"I will do it for our daughter", he said with sincerity.

"Me too", she said with determination.

"Alright then. That's settled. We'll find the right ritual. Turn back time and this time around set things right. But first, you need to run those tests", he tried to keep a semblance of normality despite the very bizarre things they've seen tonight.

"Here you go", she handed him a note.

"What's this?", he asked when his eyes read some sort of spell.

"The spell for the EMI. It's Arabic. Must have originated from the times of Osiris and Isis' rule. Read the spell and master the correct pronunciation. It's all there. There is no wand movement. Just hold your wand, cast the spell, and the score will appear. I know that the spell is hard to say so please take your time. I'll extract some blood sample in the meantime", she replied.

"Okay. Kushif Quat Quti", he muttered.

"Roll your sleeves up and sit on the bed", she instructed and he immediately complied.

Hermione summoned an injection needle from her emergency kit. He was busy mastering the pronunciation of the EMI spell but she could feel her hands sterilizing the part she'll be drawing blood from. When that was done, she extracted the sample and stored it in one of the flasks. She then cast a healing charm on the tiny incision the needle punctured.

"Harry, have you tried using all the Deathly Hallows at once?", she asked.

"No", he looked up from the parchment.

"Why don't you try it right now? I just want to check something", she encouraged.

"But the Elder Wand is in Dumbledore's tomb", he told her.

"Just try", she insisted.

"Fine", he raised a hand and the cloak of invisibility came to him. The resurrection stone which he placed on his nightstand before sitting on the bed, he simply inserted into his ring finger. He closed his eyes and concentrated. When he opened them, the Elder Wand is now in his right hand.

"Okay why don't you try wearing the Cloak, holding the Elder Wand, while the stone is on your finger", she told him.

"Sure", he shrugged. He wrapped the cloak around his shoulders, held the wand, and she was right! His magic felt so much more potent when he was wearing all three of the hallows. Considering how connected he was to his magic, the potency he feels now is something indeed.

"Oh my!", she gasped.

"What?", he asked.
"Your eyes! They're glowing!"
"Really?"
"Yes. And I can feel your magic radiating."
"This is rather creepy", Harry gave a nervous chuckle. He shrugged off the cloak. He saw Hermione summon a parchment and quill as she scribbled some notes.
"Er, what are you doing?", he asked.
"Writing down my observations. This could help in – "
"Now I feel like a guinea pig", he sighed.
"Oh. I'm sorry Harry, it's just – "
"It's alright. I understand Hermione. I just wish I could be normal you know", he dropped down on his bed and rehearsed the spell.
"I'm sorry for making you feel like a test subject", she sat beside him and gently held his left hand.
"Kushif Quat Quti did I say that right?", he wanted to make sure.
"Yes. Are you ready now?"
"Ready as I'll ever be", he slowly stood up. Taking a deep breath, the Elder Wand in hand, "Kushif Quat Quti."

His bedroom was immersed in bright white light. A number floated. 1000.
"I guess that confirms my theory then", Hermione muttered.
"You know Hermione, I wish you could be wrong this time. But well, at least we get our chance to be with Viola again", he said in a resigned voice.
"We have to hide all these facts though. I'll think of something to cover up the secret of you being the Master of Death", she reassured him.
"Thank you for being with me in all this", he said with sincerity. To his surprise, Hermione ran towards him and wrapped her arms around him in a tight embrace.
"Don't worry Harry. We'll get through this. For Viola Lily", she whispered.
"For Viola Lily", he muttered as he kissed the top of her head. And for you, so that I get my second chance to correct all my mistakes...
What Does Love Feel Like?

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

What Does Love Feel Like?

It seemed ironic that despite Abim's arrival in Britain the next day, Hermione's afternoon is not busy. Not at all. Everyone would expect her to be running about, but all the test she needs to do on
Harry’s blood was finished in the morning. The test was just a mere confirmation of the potency of his magical ability. His blood had some essence of basilisk venom and phoenix tears, that she was already able to confirm from the results of the blood sample analysis she conducted this morning. This makes Harry, the only living human to be immune to any sort of snake venom. Furthermore, the healing properties in the phoenix tears makes Harry immune to many forms of poisons. It's like his magic and the mixture of the essence of the two creatures in his blood, made him super dosed with some sort of elixir of health against harmful things he could swallow, may it be food, liquids, and potions. His bloodstream is filled with a magically recharging personal vitamin.

Now here she is again, sitting by her desk and reading progress reports of each patient from Rosier and Irie. There is an obvious pattern. Patient A, Freddie Weasley, had the worst condition, and the severity of the infection coincides with Irie’s report on who's who on his list of the order of victims. Once the cure is set, Freddie will have to be treated first and so on until the last pureblood patient. After that, a vaccine formula will be created and distributed to the non-purebloods. And then, case closed. She and the rest of the team will be heading back to Switzerland.

When she leaves this place, she will be safe from all the prying eyes of the British magical community. She will be away from the intrigue, the rumor mill, and the Weasleys. She would be away from Ginny and the rest of the ginger-haired family. Lastly, she'll be away from Harry again.

But do I want to stay away from Harry?

That was the million-dollar question. Because in all honesty, she is so confused.

On one hand, she feels really bad for being super reliant on Harry for his help in finding the cure for this blasted epidemic. She knew that one of the reasons why he is so eager to be a test subject and a supplier for potions ingredients (the basilisk venom and his blood), is because of his guilt and love for her. This makes her feel bad because she did not want to take advantage of him.

On the other hand, even though she had forgiven him a long time ago, the knowledge that he slept with other women and paraded them in front of her still bothers her. What makes her even more confused is Viola’s statement when they talked, that he’s never been with anyone after that night he made that rash comment about hating the baby. She needed validation. She just wants to know if she can trust him again.

To make it even more confusing, Harry seems to be very determined to accomplish every item on that bloody checklist. The only items he is missing are numbers 2, 9, and 10. Item 2 is having all his fuck buddies ask for her forgiveness. Item 9 having him kneel outside the Malfoy home, which she would personally hex him for if he does. And lastly, Item 10 which states that he grants her the divorce after failing to secure her affections. In a short period, he's made very good progress on the list and there was Viola's confession. Not to mention the whole business of being the potential Master and Mistress of Death if they go ahead with whatever ritual necessary for the life-altering commitment they plan to risk just to get a second chance with Viola Lily. So many things have happened that she's just unsure of what to do and how to feel anymore. To add to all her problems, there was a very real threat to her life.

And yet, despite all that has happened, she had never felt so alive. She has never felt so human and so in tune with her feelings not since Viola Lily died. She was used to her robot-like self. All work, no emotions. But being back in Britain, being with Harry again, it's like the walls she built around herself are slowly crumbling down.

Her thoughts were interrupted when there was a knock on her door. I swear, if it's another Weasley, I'm going to snap! Or file a restraining order! Or go all Lady Potter on them!
"Come in", she said. When Astoria Malfoy entered, she had a big smile on her face.

"Woah! You seem too happy to see me, 'Mione. Why?", Astoria chuckled as she placed a bag of food on her desk.

"I'm just happy it's you. I thought it was another Weasley", she said with exasperation.

"I see. Annoying lot they could be eh, demanding too", her friend agreed.

"You have no idea", she said sarcastically.

"Lord Potter handed this bag of food to me, to give to you. He says he's busy so he just wants you to get this", Astoria glanced at the takeout bag.

"Oh. How nice of him", she muttered. She was trying hard not to blush at the knowing smirk on her friend's face.

"Very nice of him indeed", Astoria teased.

"Tori, are you busy right now?"

"Not really, 'Mione. Why?"

"Can you stay with me for a while? We can share the food. Knowing Harry, he'd be sending over a lot. Besides, I need someone to talk to", she believes that this is her chance to help sort out all the polarizing thoughts in her head.

"Of course, I'll stay. And thanks for the offer but I already had lunch before coming here. I was on my way to see you if you needed any help in preparation for Deputy Omenuko's arrival and I ran into Lord Potter and well – here I am", her friend was like her. She tends to blabber sometimes. She's always found a soul sister in Astoria.

"That makes sense. Thanks for the offer but I finished the test and analysis for one of the potions ingredients. But I do hope you and Draco could extend your hospitality for Abim? Seeing as I am currently staying at Harry's. Of course, Abim can stay at Harry's but – ", now it was her turn to blabber.

"It will be an honor to have Deputy Omenuko stay at our home. For sure Draco will be so happy since he enjoys potion making very much. Maybe I have to rein in his excitement upon seeing the world's best medicinal potions maker", Astoria said.

Their eyes met and they shared a laugh over Draco's possible reaction to meeting one of his heroes. When Hermione got the invitation to be part of the ICW Medical Research Department, Draco was so excited for her since she would get to meet and work with the great Abimbola Omenuko.

Hermione's eyes went to the takeout bag Astoria brought to her office. She didn't even realize that she was too lost in analyzing her thoughts and emotions that it was already half past one in the afternoon. Amazing how Harry seems to have an instinctual knowledge of whether or not I already ate…

"Do you mind if I eat while we talk?", she said sheepishly.

"Oh no. Go ahead", Astoria grinned. She opened the takeout bag. To her surprise, there was a single white rose with its stem cut short just so it could fit inside. The rose had a red ribbon attached to the stem so that a tiny roll of parchment could be attached. She carefully took out the
rose from the bag and settled it on top of the reports she read. When she saw the food he bought – a vegan burger, some fries, and strawberry milkshake – her mouth watered. It was clear that he remembered her comment at breakfast about cutting on the calories in preparation for Christmas. Harry even added charms to preserve the crispiness of the fries and to prevent the milkshake from melting.

She sat the food to one side of the desk. Away from the reports. She decided to read the note first. Untying the red ribbon, she unrolled the tiny piece of parchment.

*Hope I got the flower choice right this time.*

*Enjoy the food.*

*See you at home,*

*H*

She was unaware of the silly grin that graced her face upon reading the note. It was short but it oddly seems so sweet. Before she could stop herself, she picked up the rose and drew it close to her nostrils. She sighed. Harry Potter's moves keep getting better and better the more time she spent with him.

As she recalled the symbolism for a single white rose, her heart fluttered. It was a gesture of strong emotion and devotion. It indicates great esteem for the receiver and is a declaration of love and hope. The white rose means spiritual love, charm, and humility. In short, Harry Potter nailed his flower choice this time around!

"Well if you want to giggle like a schoolgirl, I won't tell on you Mione", her thoughts were interrupted by Astoria's teasing voice. She blushed. *This is like being a teenager again! Harry Potter, what are you doing to me?*

"Shut it", she huffed but it was a hard sell. She could feel her cheeks flush like a tomato. Astoria giggled and she joined in.

"Oh my gosh, Mione! You are still in love with him!", Astoria squealed in excitement.

"I am not… sure actually. I mean he's trying hard and all. And I admit that I am deeply touched by the change I've seen in him. And I know he's not just acting out. He's been consistent in the changes he made in himself ever since I left. I know that. I've seen too many proofs of that already… And I would not lie to you, I must admit that even if I try not to, he makes my heart flutter and – ", she was beginning to get frantic.

"Breathe, girl. Breathe. It's okay. No need to speak a mile a minute. Let's process everything together. So, spill. But one step at a time. I can stay and talk", Astoria reached out and took her hand, giving it an understanding squeeze.

"Thanks, Tori. I need someone to vent to", she grinned sheepishly.

"Okay, so tell me how do you feel", Astoria said gently.

"Well, to be honest, I am scared. What if it is all happening so fast? I mean he's so sincere in his guilt. Not that I want him to feel bad, but it's so amazing to see him working so hard to fix his mistakes. You know what I mean right?", she admitted.

"Yes, I understand. Draco was in a bad place too, remember? And his desire to better himself drew
me to him", she could hear the understanding in her friend's voice. In a way, they are in a similar situation.

"And then he does these little things. Subtly taking care of me. Making sure that my needs are being met. Always going out of his way and his comfort zone to be of help. It's like, he's like – oh, I don't know! It's just like he's the Harry I fell in love with. You know, my best friend", her hands were making wild gestures. After weeks of being exposed to Harry James Potter, this is the first time that she ever took a moment to process all that has happened.

"Well that's great, isn't it? I mean it is very good that he is so sincere and all", Astoria smiled.

"Yes, it is. But I still have some uncertainties", she said in a small voice.

"What uncertainties?"

"He cheated on me. I want to know why. I have so many questions but I don't know how to ask them. He's doing so much but, I – I don't know. Do you think we need marriage counseling? I mean you studied psychology aside from obstetrics and childcare, so what is your professional opinion?", she didn't care if she sounded so needy and whiny. Astoria Malfoy nee Greengrass will never judge her.

"I don't think you need a full counseling session. What if you just get a moderated session for you to ask your questions. So that you can finally get your answers. I am sure he has some for you as well", Astoria started rubbing and pressing her right hand to help ease her tensed nerves.

"What do you suggest?"

"Why not ask him to talk, just both of you. But you each take a dose of veritaserum. Ten questions each and that is it. I can moderate if you want", her friend offered.

"I'll ask Harry if he agrees. Ten questions seem a lot but maybe, if we both take the time to prepare for the session, we walk in knowing what to ask", she said.

"Yes. You both come in with a list of ten questions in hand. As soon as all ten are answered, I would give the flushing potion. Then it's the other party's turn to get dosed and be asked. That way, there is a semblance of control. I can leave during the questioning session. Just call for me when each set of ten questions is asked", her friend added.

"Thank you, Tori. You don't know how much this means to me. You and Draco have been there for me ever since I made that choice to leave Harry", this time, it was her who reached out for Astoria's hand.

"You are welcome, Hermione. It is I who should be thanking you. When you took that chance to listen to Draco's offer of help, you have helped him lessen the guilt he's been feeling. You helped me and my husband in that matter. More importantly, the friendship we share with you is very dear to both of us", Astoria said with sincerity.

"Love you, Tori."

"Love you too, Mione."

"Since you'll be our moderator when Harry agrees, maybe you should know that I kissed him. I'm not sure if that has an impact on your –"

"Get out of here! Did you kiss him? When? Oh, my Merlin!"
"Shush! Your voice is too loud. The auror guards might hear", she admonished.

"Sorry", Astoria blushed.

"It just happened. He did something miraculous that ended the curse on the item that caused the epidemic. I was so happy. I ran into his arms and hugged the stuffing out of him. I pecked him on the lips and ran away to look for Irie and Rosier. It did not even sink into me that I kissed him. I only realized that I did, when all three of us were walking back to the laboratory. Since I was distracted, I did not even notice if there was a difference in Harry's behavior after the kiss", she explained.

"Oh, so Lord Potter did something that ended the curse. It figures. He's rumored to be one of the most powerful wizards in Britain", Astoria stated.

*Oh Tori, not just in Britain. He's the most powerful wizard alive. If you only knew that Harry Potter is more or less, the successor of Merlin as the Master of Death. He is Merlin's equal in magic.*

"Yes. Even when we were at Hogwarts, he always did crazy and extraordinary feats of magic", she remarked.

"Well, that makes you suitably matched then. Most Powerful Wizard in Britain. Brightest Witch of the Age. Just like Merlin and Morgana, although hopefully with a happier ending", her friend stated with a dreamy look on her face.

*Oh shit. Tori is getting closer and closer to hitting the mark. Must think of a diversion.*

"Tori, what does love feel like? I mean what does loving Draco feel like? It's been so long since I felt love for a man that I am confused about how I feel about Harry", she decided that it's best to distract Tori by talking about Draco. Her friends were madly in love like that. She used to be jealous of the love they shared back when she was bitter. But as time passed, she learned to admire the love shared by her friends. They complemented each other very well. Their love is a beautiful sight to behold.

"Well, I did not like him at first. I am younger than you and I saw how mean he was at Hogwarts. So, I hated him in a little. But after the war, he looks so devastated and lost. I pitied him and started talking to him. Maybe he was desperate for anyone to just listen to him and be there for him, but he opened up to me. The more I learned about his horrors; I saw a different side to him. Lo and behold, I fell in love with him. I asked him out which shocked him but he said yes", Astoria had a fond smile on her face as she talked about her husband.

"Wow, I never knew that", she said. She always thought that Draco and Astoria started as some sort of pureblood marriage contract that had a happy ending.

"I guess all I can say is, for me, love is absolute acceptance. I accept Draco's past and I hold an optimistic belief in the man I know he could be. In return, he learns to accept my trust in him. He sees it as a responsibility he has to keep and nurture because very few people are willing to give him a chance because of his past. Our relationship works because it is not about a fiery passion but more of unconditional acceptance. We've seen the worst in each other but we make the conscious effort each day to make the relationship work. He is my confidante, and I am his. We are partners not just in our work, but in building our lives. He says I make him a better man. And to me, he helps me broaden my reality of the world. By sharing his dark past, I learn to appreciate how lucky I was that my parents never pressured me like his father does", to her surprise, Tori now had tears in her eyes.
"That is so beautiful Astoria", she sighed dreamily.

"Yes. I guess to me, love is friendship on fire", her friend had a big smile on her face as she elegantly wiped the tears from her face.

"Love is friendship on fire. That makes sense. It's so – well, it is very Draco and Astoria Malfoy", she had a big smile on her face.

"Oh, it is on fire indeed! Sex with Draco is brilliant", the blonde woman swooned. She playfully threw a parchment on her friend that she easily swatted away.

"Tori!"

"So prudish, Chief Healer Granger", her friend teased.

"You are breaking our deep girl bonding sesh here because of that sex comment", she huffed.

"Oh, I am just warming you up, Mione. After all, you're bound to make love with Lord Potter again, after all these years. Besides, you can't deny that the bloke is too good-looking. He must have your knees shaking with that smoldering gaze of his, eh?", the blonde woman wiggled her eyebrows playfully.

"I'm not even sure that I'm in love with him", she denied. *And I will never admit to anyone that I still find Harry Potter as the most attractive man I have ever seen. Even at wandpoint, I will never admit that. Never.*

"Remember dear, love is friendship on fire. You and Lord Potter seem to have the friendship spot on. I'm just preparing you for the fire", Astoria stood up from her seat and left her sitting slack-jawed in her office.

She was sipping her milkshake and eating the burger and fries but Astoria's definition of love is still on her mind...
My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

Plans and Potions

While still a bit confused about all the mind-boggling questions and the heart-fluttering feelings Harry's renewed presence in her life brings to her, she took Astoria's definition of love in all
seriousness. Love is friendship on fire. That statement greatly resonates with her. It shall now be
the basis of how she will process her relationship with her estranged husband. A man who despite
all the walls she built around her fragile heart, little by little, is winning her over once again. She
just wants to make certain that this time around, he will treasure her. Because she wants what her
friends have. She wants a love forged in friendship made exciting because of a passionate fire.

If she will commit to being Harry's partner as the Mistress of Death in the afterlife, she wants to do
it wholeheartedly. Of course, saving Viola Lily will always be her top priority, but she won't be
entering into another relationship only to be heartbroken. She needs to be confident that she can
trust Harry once and for all.

And she had a plan. Which she will start to execute now. She will give him a final test. Should
Harry pass with flying colors, then she will give him what he's been working so hard to regain for
the last ten years. If not, then she would just have to accept that she will have to wait a while to be
with her daughter again.

So, here she is. Walking with a determined stride to the Auror Office. She will talk to Harry about
two things - her plans and the potions.

"Hi! Could you – ", she greeted Harry's secretary.

"Lady P- Hermione, I mean – ", the woman was surprised to see her.

"Ms. Granger's fine", she said.

"What can I do for you, Ms. Granger?"

"Er, I need you to tell Harry that a woman is here to see him", she tried to act bashful but if only the
secretary looked closely, there is a glint of slyness in her eyes.

"Of course, I'll tell him you – "

"No. Please don't say it's me. Just say a beautiful woman is here to see him."

"Okay…", the secretary gave her an odd look but complied. She stood from her seat and knocked
on Harry's private door. She feigned nonchalance but she was eager to hear his reaction.

"What is it?", Harry's voice seemed stressed. Boy, I feel like a bitch for doing this, but I just had to
be sure…

"Er, there is a beautiful woman here who wants to see you sir", the secretary said while glancing at
her. She sounded unsure especially since Harry seemed to not be in a very good mood.

"I fucking don't care how beautiful this woman is! Merlin! I have so much shit to do since I will be
busy when the ICW's potion expert comes. I will need a lot of strength for that. And I have to plan
a bloody entrapment for the syndicate's operation next week. Don't disturb me!", Harry yelled.

Hmm… that's a good sign. He's not easily lured by false promises of seeing beautiful women.
Plus, he already added Abim's arrival in his schedule despite how busy he is. I didn't even tell him
specific details yet. Good. Very good.

"Sorry, sir", squeaked the secretary. The shaken woman walked back to her desk.

"Er, he doesn't want to see you Ms. Granger", she said.
"It's alright. I'll handle it. Thank you so much for your help. Sorry, he yelled at you", she fidgeted.

This time, she was the one who came knocking on his door.

"What the hell! I said – ", Harry's voice is now much angrier.

"Harry, it's Hermione", she said.

"Oh. Come in", she bit her bottom lip to stop herself from chuckling. The shift in his voice was immediate. He was angry but when he learned it was her at the door, his mood shifted.

She opened the door to his office and she gasped when she saw the pile of reports. There was a large map on a board with markings on it. There were pictures of wanted people who she could only assume are members of the syndicate.

"Hi, Hermione. What can I do for you?", he said with a little smile.

"Your staff must have it hard huh?", she teased.

"I don't understand", he had the same adorably confused look from their Hogwarts days.

"You were yelling awhile ago about being not to be disturbed. But when you knew it was me, you let me in", she chuckled. His face flushed and he looked away. He rubbed the back of his neck, his signature gesture to indicate his nervousness.

"Yeah, er, well… You're important, I mean, whatever you say is important", his flush deepened and her heart fluttered at his slip. Huh? So I am important to you, eh Harry? This is getting better and better...

"What are your plans for Christmas?", she decided to try a full-on blunt attack.

"I – I – Christmas?" She knew she had him now – hook, line, and sinker.


"I visit Teddy and the beneficiaries of the foundation", he managed to give a sensible answer after clearing his throat.

"Can you set aside some time to spend it with me? I'd love to meet Teddy and the foundation kids", she said.

"You want to spend Christmas with me?", he was shocked, she could tell. The look of joy in his eyes though made her feel that he might pass this test of hers. If she were honest with herself, she wants him to pass this test. Because despite all her denial, she wanted him back in her life.

"Ahuh", she said with a nod.

"You're sure?", his gobsmacked look was so funny. Forward girls always made Harry, the best friend she knew at Hogwarts, very awkward. The complete opposite of the drunk husband she remembered. This test will be so easy to do, she thought.

"Yes. Why would I ask if I'm unsure?", she huffed just like her know-it-all days at Hogwarts. He seemed to relax after that.

"Okay! Great! Brilliant!", he said excitedly. He cleared his throat; he must have sensed his over-
eagerness. "I mean I would love to", he added.

"Will you be free tomorrow for the potion making?", she changed the topic.

"I can clear my schedule if it's needed", he offered.

"No. It's alright. I told them that I'll extract your blood at home. So, we can do it at night. As for magically increasing the volume of phoenix tears, you need to be magically rested for that. At least 6 hours of sleep before you perform the task of increasing it. I'll bring the vial of phoenix tears at home as well. So, maybe you could take a half-day off?", she said.

"That sounds fine", he said.

"Thanks, Harry, for the food earlier and for agreeing to do all this", she leaned over to kiss him on the cheek – her lips lingering a little longer than necessary – before walking away without turning back.

Harry Potter remained seated in his armchair looking confused and stunned.

"Did that just happen?", he muttered. Hermione seemed well, flirty. He was so used to her cold and fierce demeanor that her sudden subtle coquettish ways made him feel so flustered. He doesn't mind he should count it as a huge miracle, a sign that he was getting through her walls. But something about the way she is acting makes him wary at the same time. It was like she was testing him. Evaluating his reactions. Assessing something that he was unaware of.

Whatever it is, he should stand firm. If Hermione is determined to seduce him and test his control, then he must resist with all his might. Something tells him that if he gives in to her innocently beguiling ways, he would fail this test she is giving him. And he must not fail because he waited for ten years. He needed her back in his life. Master of Death or not, Harry Potter would always need Hermione Granger. So whatever test she must be playing at, he was determined to pass with flying colors.

After a brief courtesy call with the Minister for Magic, Abimbola Omenuko immediately went to St. Mungo's to meet with the rest of the medical research team. When he arrived via the fireplace, Evangeline Rosier and Kei Irie were already there waiting for him by the floo area.

"Welcome to Britain, Deputy Omenuko!", Irie greeted.

"Thanks, Irie. No need to be formal. I hardly think spending time with the Brits would tone you and Rosier down", he chuckled.

"Abim, you wound us", Rosier fluttered her eyes and all three of them shared a laugh. The ICW Medical Research team was like one big family of nerds who dedicate their lives in finding ways to find all sorts of cures for obscure diseases.
"Where is the Chief?", he asked.

"In the laboratory. Setting things up. We're tasked to wait for you here so that we can immediately bring you to her", Irie said.

"Come on, Abim", Rosier gestured for him to follow. He was escorted to a hidden set of stairs that led to a basement.

"Why did the chief set up the lab? Rosier is the potions expert among you three", he asked.

"The Chief is crazy famous here Abim. She hates the adulation and the whispers", Rosier explained.

"Ah I see", he muttered.

"Yeah the press had been publishing speculations about her ever since Lord Potter's open letter", Irie added.

"I heard about an accident", he said.

"Yeah. The Chief got a head injury but it was the core drain that took her out for three days", Rosier admitted.

"No wonder the Chief stayed away from Britain for so long", he chuckled.

"Yeah. Hermione Granger or as she's called the Lady Potter here is crazy famous. Lord Potter had to threaten the press to stop publishing articles about her especially those with pictures", Irie told him.

"So, do you think Lord Potter wants the Chief back? The ICW's been itching for news on that", he chuckled.

"Want her back? Please! That's such an understatement. He's like literally on his knees begging the chief for one more chance", Rosier whispered conspiratorially.

"Oh? Sounds exciting", he replied.

"You have no idea. But we'll gossip later. We're here", Irie said before opening the door to the laboratory.

"Abim! Welcome to Britain", Hermione greeted with a big smile.

"It's nice to see the most desired woman in Britain", he teased.

"Most desired woman in Britain?", she scoffed.

"Well isn't Lord Potter the most sought-after wizard here? My sources say that he's been following you around like a lost puppy, Hence…", he wiggled his eyebrows.

"I can't believe that the most brilliant minds in magical medicine indulge themselves in petty gossip", she huffed.

"Come on, Chief. We're just curious. You know we're like one big happy nerdy family. And well, we just want to see you happy", he said with a smile. He was very fond of Hermione Granger. She was like the younger sister he never had.
"Well, let's just say he's on a trial period. That's all I'm saying for now", she replied.

"Trial period?", Rosier and Irie chorused.

"Yeah. It means I'm giving him a conditional second chance. Until he passes the final test that is", she said.

"Does this final test include his shagging technique?", Rosier fluttered her eyelashes flirtatiously and Irie leaned in with a leer. Hermione rolled her eyes.

"Merlin! Why does everything have to be all about shagging for you two?", she huffed.

"Ah, chief. We kinda pity your sexless life. Sad really when you could have his hotness on your bed", Irie said with feigned sadness.

Seeing that Hermione is nearing her breaking point, he decided to intervene.

"Enough teasing the chief. Remember, she signs our payroll documents. Let's start potion-making", he announced.

When he looked around the lab, there was a large empty cauldron. The chief, along with the rest of the team, had already prepared the initial ingredients he told them to set aside before his arrival. Since they have been exchanging constant communication, he already had initial ideas on the cure, but they just had to end the source of the virus and identify the key substance that was causing all the harmful effects. Because of Lord Potter's animagus form, he was confident that they will be solving this case soon.

"We all reviewed the list of ingredients you sent. Rosier and Irie conducted initial tests on scraped skin samples from the victims. They found out that the potion cannot be ingested. Instead, it has to be directly applied into the infected area where the virus has been attacking the bone and flesh of each victim", Hermione said as he was inspecting the ingredients.

"There are four healers here with surgical expertise. The chief is the fifth and the best. So, we will operate on the children per order of infection. The chief will demo on Patient A, and then the other four surgical healers can help work on the rest under her strict supervision. This will be a highly complex and dangerous operation. Here are the teams and corresponding patient list we have set up", Irie handed everyone a copy of the list.

"Alright. Good. Chief, is Lord Potter ready?", he asked.

"Yes. He will be taking the afternoon off to prepare himself for a large amount of magic he will be exerting later for the phoenix tears", she replied.

"Here is the vial of phoenix tears", he carefully removed a vial from his emergency kit and handed it to Hermione.

"Thank you. I'll be working on the tears and extracting his blood later at night. As soon as I get the extracts, I'll bring them back here to the lab", she said.

"Excellent!", he clapped his hands in excitement.

"Rosier stay here to assist Abim. Irie you are coming with me to brief the healers who will be part of the surgical operations", Hermione announced.

"The potion will be ready in forty-eight hours after all the ingredients are added in", he told the
"Brilliant job everyone", the chief grinned. All four of them focused on their tasks immediately.

Hermione Granger apparated back to Harry's penthouse at seven in the evening. She had a full day ahead after briefing the surgical healers and the members of each team who will be operating on the fifteen children. Before leaving St. Mungo's, she checked on Rosier and Abim's progress on the potion. Once everything was all set, she left the hospital to extract the last potion ingredient and to magically increase another vital component – the phoenix tears.

"Harry?", she called out into the main hall.

"I'm in the kitchen, Hermione", he replied. She carefully dropped her emergency kit on the center table before she walked into the kitchen. To her surprise, Harry Potter was busy preparing dinner. He was barefoot, dressed only in lounge pants. His bareback looked so sexy with his muscles flexing as he cooked. It was an adorable sight. A scenario that could be straight out of a romance novel since here was a drop-dead gorgeous man in an apron cooking dinner for her.

"Harry, I told you not to tire yourself out", she gently admonished.

"Hey, Hermione", he flashed her a grin before focusing back on whatever dish he was preparing.

"What's cooking?"

"Just a pasta dish. Nothing fancy", he shrugged.

"Okay. I'll just take a quick shower then. Thank you for cooking dinner", she said with a smile before leaving the kitchen to head for her bedroom.

After dinner, Hermione followed Harry as they headed for his bedroom. They decided to just conduct the blood extraction and the spell that will magically increase the volume of phoenix tears in the one part of the house that had the least amount of electrical devices. Harry's room only had lights and an air condition system there. The rest of his house was filled with appliances. To prevent a magical backlash, his room was the perfect place for their plans.

They also agreed during dinner that they would have him perform magic first since the blood extraction may wear him out.

The room was filled with a nervous and tense silence. They both understand how crucial this is. The impact of all this effort could save so many lives. So, everything must turn out alright.

"Here you go, Harry", Hermione handed him the small vial of phoenix tears. He accepted it with slightly shaking hands.

"Relax Harry. Everything will turn out fine. I believe in you", she gave him a big smile, hoping her confidence in him will help in some way.
"Yes. I can do this. We can do this", he muttered.

"Nowhere is an empty cauldron. I need you to drop the tears inside it and then you perform the magical increase", she reminded him.

"Yes. Yes. Okay", he nodded nervously. He was about to turn her back on her so that he could perform the task, but she held on to his arm.

"Did I forget something?", he stammered and she shook her head.

"For luck", that was the only thing she said before she leaned in and kissed him. This time around it was not just a peck. It was a real kiss that conveyed all her gratitude and her lingering attraction for him. When she pulled away, he had a dazed look on his face which made her giggle.

"Wow", he muttered with a shit-eating grin on his face.

"Shouldn't have kissed you then. You need to focus and not be all dopey", she laughed.

"Sorry", he said sheepishly.

"Just get on with it, Potter", she huffed playfully.

"Yes ma'am", he gave her a mock salute and she rolled her eyes.

Harry squat down on the floor. He set the small cauldron beside him. Holding the elder wand, he closed his eyes to center his magic. Once he could feel his magic pulsating around him, he carefully opened the vial and dropped the small quantity of phoenix tears inside the cauldron.

Hermione gasped as she observed the sight. It was such a beautiful thing to watch. She saw Harry close his eyes again and when he opened it, his emerald green orbs were glowing. He mentioned no spell. He just pointed the elder wand on the cauldron and she could feel the air change because of his magic.

"I did it!", Harry said with joy. He successfully increased the amount of phoenix tears. Just like she thought he would.

_The kids will be cured before Christmas now. Harry has done his part. All I need to do is lead a successful surgical operation… He and I always made a great team. Maybe Merlin was right. We would make a great Master and Mistress of Death…_

"Hermione, look!", he called her over and she smiled as she walked towards him.

"I always knew you could do it, Harry", she said as she peeked down on the cauldron.

"Go on then, extract the blood on me. Do your thing", he encouraged.

"Aren't you a bit tired?", she asked.

"No. Not really", he mused.

"Okay. Why don't you go sit on the bed and I'll set up what I need to extract your blood? I'll be needing one bag Harry, that's quite a lot", she told him.

"Whatever you need, just do it", he said as he sat on the bed.

"Harry, thank you. You don't know how much this means to me", she said with tears in her eyes.
"Hey... don't cry. It's alright. Besides, no need to thank me. I'm happy to help. Really", he said.

*Why do you make it so easy to fall in love with you again Harry?*
Big Wins and Acts of Contrition

My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

Big Wins and Acts of Contrition

This is it. The time has finally come.
After staying in Britain for more than a month, they are finally solving this mysterious epidemic. All the hard work they have put in together as a team has reached its pinnacle. This is the now or never moment. Twenty-fours left and the potion will be ready. And then, she will be leading a surgical operation on fifteen children. As the minutes pass, she feels more and more confident that this will be another success for the ICW Medical Research Department.

Last night, after giving Harry some pepper up potion and two doses of the blood-replenishing potion, she apparated to St. Mungo's and sprinted to the laboratory with her heart pounding in her chest because of adrenalin. Upon handing the small cauldron filled with phoenix tears and one bag of Harry's blood, Abim grinned. Of course, to be sure, he conducted some tests on the last two ingredients. When it got his approval, he carefully added the two ingredients into the brewing antidote.

Only the last ingredient for the cure remains to be extracted – fresh basilisk venom.

As an act of gratitude – and a hint of her affections – Hermione Granger woke up very early in the morning to prepare a delicious breakfast for Harry. After all the trouble the poor man had been through, with the blood samples and the phoenix tears, not to mention all his little efforts in winning her back, he deserves a little something special. Well, as special as her nearly nonexistent cooking skills could deliver.

While a very good potion maker, Hermione cannot cook. At all. Hence, she decided to wake up early to make up for her highly inadequate culinary talent. And just in case it all goes bad, which is highly probable, she would still have some time to buy takeout.

"Ouch!", she hissed. She then stuck her slightly burnt finger in her mouth, a reflex reaction. She was cooking some bacon but well, the olive oil seemed to hate her. And the eggs. And the potatoes. Merlin! I am hopeless. I'll just apparate to a diner and buy takeout.

She carefully washed her hands and ran to her bedroom to apply some salve on her finger. After that, she changed her clothes and apparated in a muggle London area she remembers visiting with Harry. Thirty minutes passed and she's back in his luxurious penthouse, her breakfast purchases in one bag. She ran to the kitchen and set the food on a large plate. She hurriedly prepared coffee – at least she could do that well. Once everything is all set, she transfigured an old piece of parchment into a single white tulip. It is a flower that means rebirth. A desire to resume your relationship with someone with a clean slate. Just a little hint for Harry if he did his flowers and their meanings research... 

She placed the white tulip beside the utensils on the tray. With everything ready, she walked towards the master bedroom with the tray levitating in front of her. She knocked three times before the door automatically opened.

She bit her bottom lip to stop herself from squealing or whatever silly girlish thing excitable women do when faced with a gorgeous half-naked man. Harry James Potter was walking around his bedroom dressed in nothing but tight-fitted black trousers as part of his auror uniform. He had a towel in one hand that he was using to dry his messy raven hair. His biceps and triceps flexing as he moves the towel over his head. And here I am thinking that I plan to test his resolve by seducing him… But no! The bloke has his plans...

"You know Harry, you could always cast a drying charm on your hair. That will save you more time", she said as her eyes were discreetly eyeing his perfectly sculpted chest down to his washboard abs that have a light dusting of raven hair which forms his happy trail. As a healer, she's seen her fair share of male and female bodies before. But, Merlin! Harry Potter may just be the most perfect masculine specimen she had ever seen. He reminded her of her favorite piece of
sculpture, Donatello's David.

"Er, right! Accio wand", he muttered. His cheeks were flushed.

"Harry, you don't need a wand for many spells. And a drying charm is just an easy one", she chuckled.

"Right. I'm just nervous, okay?", he was blushing. He draped the towel around his shoulders.

"Why?", she was looking into his eyes since she would not want him to think that she was ogling him. Which she is most definitely doing!

"What if I botched up with the phoenix tears? Or something's wrong with the – ", she could tell he was starting to get panicky so she raised a hand as a gesture for him to stop, which he obeyed.

"Sit down on the bed and eat. I'll set the rest of your uniform on the bed", she said in her stern healer voice. Left with no choice, he complied. She carefully dropped the breakfast tray beside Harry who was leaning heavily on the headboard.

"Eat", she said once again.

"Thanks for cooking for me, Mione", she blushed because she didn't cook it.

"Er, I bought it. Can't cook", she muttered.

"Sorry, what?", his emerald green orbs peered to look up at her.

"I said I can't cook so I just bought food. Sorry about the ingredients I wasted when I tried cooking. I'll change them, I promise", she confessed with her eyes locked on the carpeted floor.

"Nah, it's alright. It's the thought that counts", he said with a chuckle.

"Okay, so eat and I'll set your clothes up for you", she was about to turn around to escape, but his left hand stopped her with a gentle grip on her arm.

"Stay. Eat with me. There's so much food here. You don't want me to get fat, do you?", he gave her the same puppy dog eyes and the childish pout that always weakens her resolve during their Hogwarts days.

"Fine", she said with a huff as she sat beside him.

"So, what did your potions expert say about you know, the ingredients from last night?", Harry asked as he conjured another plate and handed her half of the bountiful breakfast she purchased.

"Everything is all well with the potion. Progress is brilliant. Just one last ingredient. Abim will be extracting the venom from your animagus form in the laboratory later. For the surgery, we need to directly place the venom on the infected area as soon as we cut open the skin. And then, there is a twenty-minute window wherein we have to carefully apply the potion. The patient can last this long because of a stasis charm. After that, we will seal the wound and coat it with a salve. That's the simplest explanation for the healing process and the entire surgical operation. Of course, we could only hope that there are no allergic reactions. If all goes perfectly well, as we hope it to be, all children will be cured and discharged by the 18th of December", she informed him.

"That sounds brilliant, Hermione", he said with a grin.

"Yes, it does. I do hope all goes well", she muttered. He gently took hold of one of her hands and
gave it a comforting squeeze. She wholeheartedly returned the gesture. In as much as she's never lost a patient since Viola Lily, the fact that it was the lives of children at stake, she cannot help but feel nervous and a little worried.

"I guess we better eat then. I need to provide the venom before going to the ministry. And you need your energy to power that large brain of yours", he said in a teasing manner and she only rolled her eyes. They ate together in comfortable silence, drawing a quiet comfort from one another. Both of them knew how important the next forty-eight hours are going to be. Harry's part may officially end as soon as he provides basilisk venom, but should she fail to deliver a successful operation, then all his sacrifices will be for naught.

On the day of the operation, Harry Potter himself was assigned to be the main Auror guard for the ICW's medical researchers. If the syndicate could choose a perfect day to attack, today would be the most ideal. So, here he is... standing outside Hermione's temporary office. The healers who will be taking part in the surgeries have one last briefing with the Chief before the operation commences.

There are ten auror guards on duty around St. Mungo's for today. Two of them, himself and Dean Thomas are to follow the ICW researchers all around as much as they possibly can. Which means, they will be stationed outside the room that houses the infected children.

Suddenly, the door opened. Hermione walks out first, her face filled with determination and calm confidence. She was dressed in a smock, her hair covered by a weird looking hat that had the same texture as the medical gown. The rest of the healers were dressed the same. All of them even share the same determination and calm confidence. It was such a sight to see.

"Good luck, Chief", he whispered as she passed him by.

"Thank you", she whispered back.

He and Dean followed the line of healers towards the children's epidemiology ward. Although their task is to just provide security, even the both of them could feel the tension in the air.

When they reached the hall of the epidemiology ward, the anxious family members of the children started yelling and crying at the same time.

He heard Hermione take a deep calming breath. She pointed her wand to her throat and cast a nonverbal *sonorous* charm.

"Silence!", Hermione said in a commanding voice. All the wailing parents and family members immediately complied.

"There are fifteen patients and only five healers who are surgical experts. The fifth being myself. I will be conducting the first operation while the other four observe closely. My first patient will be the first victim. After that, I'll take a fifteen-minute recess, and shall supervise four operations. Each patient will be taken cared of by order of infection, from the first to the last. After each batch of operations, the healers will be taking thirty-minute breaks. In the meantime, I will be available for your questions during those breaks. Only those who are related to the already operated-on patients may address me for questions, otherwise, wait your turn. We hope you will pray for the success of all the surgeries and that no allergic reaction will take place from the antidote potion to
be applied. We all want the best for these children", Hermione formally addressed everyone.

"Yes, Chief", to his surprise, the anxious family members chorused.

"Irie, please prepare Patient A. Move him to – ", Hermione's orders were interrupted.

"Chief Healer Granger, could you please not close the windows during the operation? We want to see. I need to see", George Weasley addressed Hermione.

"Are you sure Mr. Weasley? This would be rather uncomfortable because this will be a bloody and messy operation", she replied in a formal voice.

"Please Hermione. I need to see", George pleaded. Hermione's eyes all turned to the rest of the families.

"Do all of you share the same sentiments?", she said.

"Yes, Chief Healer Granger!", they chorused once again.

"Very well. Irie, as I said please prepare Patient A. Abim, you'll be second-in-command. I want you to be ready to hand me the necessary instruments at all times. Surgeons, observe during the first operation. Once you do your own, should you have any questions for me, do not hesitate to ask immediately. Is that understood?", this time she turned to the healers.

"Yes, Chief!", the healers said with full conviction.

"Alright, Irie, Abim, Rosier, and Surgeons, follow me. The rest of the healers, please observe", with that Hermione entered the room and the rest of those she called out followed.

"Is it just me, or is Hermione so damn hot, when she does that whole commanding voice going on?", Dean whispered into his ear. He nudged his teammate on the side which made him wince.

"Stop fantasizing about my wife", he said with mocked stern. The smirk on his face though gave him away. Because despite the seriousness of the entire situation, Dean is so damn right. Hermione Granger in Chief Healer Mode is one big turn on! Really... She gives a whole new meaning to the phrase – intelligence is the ultimate aphrodisiac.

"Your wife, eh?", Dean teased.

"Shut it", he huffed.

It is one of the longest hours of his life. The waiting game is like excruciating torture filled with worries. He knew how much this means to Hermione. He understands the anguish the family members must be feeling right now. He could not imagine the sort of pressure Hermione must be feeling what with all these people watching from the glass pane.

He was standing there beside Dean watching the Weasley family and the rest focus all their attention on Hermione and the rest of the healers inside the operating room. Some of the audience already excused themselves to go puke. It is a bloody and disgusting operation.

He was amazed at the pure nerve of Hermione's guts to endure all that blood, flesh, and pus.
Her eyes seem to never lose focus on the child as she first made the necessary incisions to the skin. After that, it was a bloody sight. At the first drop of basilisk venom, it's like all hell broke loose. The child was frantic – shaking in agony despite the anesthesia. And then, Hermione had to carefully drop the antidote potion, developed by her deputy, to each part that was infected by the epidemic. It was so painful to watch. Despite the numbing potions and the stasis charms, the child still writhed in pain, that they had to restrain him.

Finally – after all that blood – he saw Hermione start to close the wound. Since it was so deep, she had to manually stitch it. Lastly, she applied some sort of salve. Then he watches her point her wand in circles as she is conducting a series of diagnostic spells. Everyone waited with bated breaths. And then, little Freddie Weasley opened his eyes...

The Weasley family who was waiting along with him cheered the loudest. Everyone clapped and sighed in relief.

Hermione Granger once again saves the day!

Hermione was now holding out both of her gloved hands. He saw Irie remove her bloody gloves carefully. Irie was just an observer after he was tasked to inject some sort of anesthesia. They were exchanging a few words that they couldn't hear because the glass panes muffle the sound.

And then, Hermione started walking away from the scene of the operation…

The door opened, and she exited the door. Her smock was drenched in blood. Her face is all sweaty. But to him, he could not remember a time that he found her even more beautiful. The Hermione he now sees is almost at par with the first time he saw her nursing their baby… It is such a beautiful sight to behold.

She does not need fancy dresses, expensive makeup, or perfect hairdos. This smock-clad Hermione who was tired and sweaty while smelling of blood and pus is his second most favorite look on her. Second only to when he saw her nursing Viola Lily. The Hermione he now sees may no longer be the best friend he once knew, but it was a version of her that has fully achieved her ultimate potential. Watching her work is such an awe-inspiring and amazing sight. This woman who had dedicated her entire adult life in service to the sick is his wife. Estranged wife, true, but still. This brilliant woman is his wife! Merlin! I am a lucky bastard...

"Hermione!", George Weasley and his wife Angelina approached.

"Your son is alright. The operation is a success. Please excuse me. I need fifteen minutes to rest. You will be able to see Freddie in thirty minutes. The other healers will transfer him into a private room. If I may take my leave", Hermione said in a formal voice.

"Thank you He- Hermione. Thank you", was the stammered reply. He gasped in surprise.

George Weasley is now kneeling in front of Hermione and is crying tears of relief.

"Please get up, Mr. Weasley", Hermione said in a formal tone. But George remained rooted in his kneeling position. His wife Angelina followed. And with that, all the Weasleys dropped to their knees.

"Hermione, thank you so much", Mrs. Weasley sobbed.

"It's just Freddie that is healed. Julianna will be in the next batch. You don't need to thank me. It's my job", Hermione said. She raised her chin and did not even cast a single glance at any of the Weasleys. He could tell that she was fighting back the tears.
"You don't know how much this means to us, Hermione", this time it was Ginny who spoke while tears were falling down her face. Blaise, her husband, had an arm wrapped around her. He too was kneeling. Even Fleur, who is Hermione's friend, is on her knees along with her husband Bill. Fleur's children may not be purebloods, but they are carriers of the epidemic who will be taking the vaccine potion in two weeks. That is the last part of the cure that Hermione's team is still perfecting.

"I know how much this means to you. For I lost a daughter once", Hermione said. This time, there was a single tear that fell from her eyes. He too wiped a stray tear. He understands how much this hurts her. It was a victory, yes, but it was such a pain too. It is a huge pain for her to see the same people who tormented her many years ago.

"Hermione, thank you", this time it was Ron. He may not be sobbing but his head was bowed down in shame.

"Please all stand. Calm yourselves. Should you need calming draughts, approach any of the healers. I am not a queen. You don't have to kneel. Please excuse me. I need a smock change", with that Hermione Granger ran as fast as she could to escape the hallway.

He was quick on his feet to follow her. He knew that at this vulnerable time, she should never be alone.

His feet were busy taking large strides to keep running after Hermione. His eyes roamed all over the halls to search for the place she could have disappeared into.

And then he found her, she was squatting on the ground. She had her back to a wall near a staircase. Her face is being covered by both of her hands as she finally let all her emotions go. He immediately sat beside her and wrapped an arm around her lithe body to draw her closer to him.

"I'm so proud of you, Hermione. Viola too. I'm sure she's jumping up and down right now", he whispered into her ear.

"I shouldn't let the Weasleys affect me like this but I – ", she tried to speak between her muffled sobs.

"It's okay, Hermione. Let it out", he said as he rubbed her back.

"Oh, Harry! Why does it hurt so much?", she sniffed. She moved so fast that his chest ached a little at the impact of her body hitting his own. She was now squatting in between his spread legs, her arms wrapped around his neck. Her face was buried on his shoulders as her tears drenched his auror uniform. He just let her cry. His arms wrapped around her waist. She needed this. After all that she's been through, she needs to let it all out.

From what he could infer from the short amount of time they had spent together; Hermione has been hiding her emotions for the past ten years as she buries all her hurts as she uses work as an escape. Being back in Britain is like opening her heart to feel all the pain that she's been hiding and running away from for so long.

In a way, he had it easier. Because he underwent PTSD treatments, he built the foundation, and most of all, he can talk to Viola Lily using the resurrection stone. But Hermione, she built a stoic
mask on herself. And that mask is just starting to fall apart – little by little.

"You were brilliant, Hermione. I am so proud of you", he whispered.

"Thanks", she muttered. She slowly pulled away and he raised one hand to wipe away her tears.

It was breaking his heart to see her like this but he cannot do anything. All he could do is be with her in this time of need. Although it pains him so much to know that he is one of the reasons for all her tears.

"What you do is amazing, Mione. I am so so so proud of you", he said with feeling. His emerald green orbs shining with pride and love for her. He slowly leaned down and pressed his lips on her forehead. As his lips touched her skin, he saw her eyes close.

"Thank you for all your help in this", she whispered. He laced their foreheads together. He too closed his eyes. He just wants to savor this moment with her.

"I know I don't deserve you. But I do love you, Hermione Granger", he said.

"Chief! There you – oh! Sorry", Rosier found them by the staircase.

"Is it time for the second batch?", Hermione turned to her colleague.

"Yes, chief. Sorry to disturb –"

"I'll be there in five minutes", Hermione replied and Rosier left them alone.

"Thank you", Hermione whispered before giving him a chaste kiss on the lips.

"You're welcome", he muttered. He was still breathless from the gentle way her soft lips were pressed on his very own just mere seconds ago.

"Come on, I have work to do", she said with an awkward chuckle as she wiped her tears. They got up from their comfortable position on the floor.

"Hermione, didn't you say you need a new smock?", he reminded her.

"Shit! I forgot about that", she stomped her left foot in exasperation. He took out his phoenix feather wand and cast a cleaning charm on her smock. The blood and the pus vanished.

"Hey, why didn't I think of that?", she muttered.

"Weasley Drama", he joked.

"Right. Arghh! I still smell like blood and pus though", she winced after bringing her nostrils closer to the smock.

"Cast that sterilization cleaning charm thing", he shrugged.

"Merlin! Why am I so stupid?", her voice reminded him of the young Hermione he once knew.

"As I said Weasley Drama", he chuckled. Hermione summoned her wand from its holster and cast the charm. She gave her smock a sniff.

"There. All better. Come on Head Auror Potter, we have work to do", she held out a hand for him to take which he accepted. Together, they ran back to the children's epidemiology wing. She had
people to save and he had to keep watch so he can keep her safe.

Before entering the operating room once again, she gave him a bright smile before closing the door. He bit the inside of his cheek to stop himself from grinning like an idiot.

"Did I just see you and Lady Potter come running back here while holding hands?", Dean whispered conspiratorially.

"Shut up, Thomas", he glared at his friend but he ended up chuckling.

"Ah… young love", Dean fake swooned but he nudged the man's ribs with his elbow.
My Cheating Heart
By: tweety-src-clt9

The Mastermind

ICW Medical Research Team Solves Mystery Epidemic on British Pureblood Children
By: Rita Skeeter
December 20, 2010 – This morning, the members of the ICW Medical Research Team, accompanied by the Head Healer of St. Mungo's, Head of the Auror Corps, and the Minister for Magic answer the questions regarding the mysterious epidemic that started to plague fifteen of our British pureblood children since September of this year, in a press conference attended by fifty journalists from all over the world.

The mystery epidemic has gotten worldwide attention because this is the first major case to be solved by the wizarding world's premier medical research facility under the leadership of their youngest ever chief, Hermione Jean Granger (31).

Aside from the victorious resolution of the case, a lot of gossips has been spreading upon the Chief’s return to our shores, primarily because of her complicated past with Britain's resident hero, Lord Harry James Potter (30) who also happens to be the Head of the Auror Corps. Ever since the Prophet's exclusive on Lord Potter's open letter containing details of their rocky marriage, the world is anxious to know of two things – will Hermione Granger lead another victory over death by saving her patients; and, will the estranged Power Couple ever get back together.

Gossip magazines have been banned by Lord Potter to publish any articles regarding his long-lost lady since her accident a few weeks prior – he ordered a specific ban on publishing any pictures of his lady that us journalists are forced to comply; after all, no one is stupid enough to incur the wrath of the House of Potter.

So now, upon the resolution of this sensational malady, the press along with the rest of the wizarding world, is on the edge of their seats to hear about the truths straight from the mouths of the key players in this case.

Because of the ban, there will still be no pictures of the Lady Potter (along with the rest present with her for this press conference) to be published. But despite that, the Daily Prophet reassures its dear readers of the validity of this report.

Present during the press conference held at the auditorium of the British Ministry of Magic were the following (by order of their seats from left to right):

- Albert Trifflewood = Head Healer, St. Mungo's
- Evangeline Rosier = ICW Medical Researcher, Expert on Potions and Skeletal Diseases
- Kei Irie = ICW Medical Researcher, Expert on Genetic Mutations and Pathology
- Abimbola Omenuko = Deputy Chief of the ICW Medical Research Department, Expert on Diseases from Magical Creatures and the World's Best Medicinal Potions Maker
- Hermione Potter nee Granger = Chief of the ICW Medical Research Department, Expert on Surgery and Diseases from the Dark Arts
- Kingsley Shacklebolt = British Minister for Magic
- Harry Potter = Head of the British Auror Corps

This is a verbatim record of the entire press conference attended by yours truly.

Press: Chief, how do you feel about this case? This is your first major case upon assuming the
Hermione Granger: I feel relieved, to be honest. I am just happy that all of us involved in this case can help cure all the children affected by the epidemic. We are perfecting the vaccine for the non-pureblood kids who are carriers of the disease. Abim and Rosier will have it ready soon. When that happens, I can declare this case officially closed.

Press: Could you explain to us the whole process of the cure you developed?

Hermione Granger: The team will be publishing a paper on this soon. It will contain details of the case and the cure. To sum it up, first, we had to identify the severity of the effects on the victims. Then, Irie investigated how the disease was spread. Rosier, Irie, and I worked together with the local healers to give interim aid just to lessen the victims' pain. When I got into an accident that was the trigger for me to drain my magical core, Irie and I thought about the unknown substance that is causing the disease. After rigorous research, we discovered that it was a complicated mixture of extremely hazardous non-magical substance with its effects magnified because of a dark spell. And then a miracle happened. We were able to kill whatever darkness that was in the cursed item. Using that same logic, the ICW medical research team worked together to think of the cure. Abim shall explain the potion he developed as an antidote.

Abimbola Omenuko: Yes. Because of a miracle, we were able to develop the antidote using a substance more hazardous than the ones placed in the cursed item. With that logic, I developed a mixture of a limiting reagent to a dark substance. I will only say that the antidote's main component is phoenix tears. It is used to counter the venom used during the surgeries.

Press: Venom? What sort?

Abimbola Omenuko: The most potent venom of all. Basilisk Venom.

Press: But where would you get basilisk venom?

Abimbola Omenuko: That is something that we could not disclose. Let's just call it a miracle. This information for the venom's source is strictly classified information.

Press: During the surgeries, how did you manage it? There are fifteen victims recorded.

Hermione Granger: Irie could explain that.

Kei Irie: After a series of clinical tests, I was able to identify who Patient A is or the first victim. That person is the most severe. With the last infected one to be the least severe. With that logic, I proposed surgical teams given that St. Mungo's has four surgeons. The Chief led the operation on Patient A, whose name shall remain undisclosed. With the Chief, was me as an anesthesiologist, Abim as second-in-command, and Rosier was our last member. The four surgeons were in the operating room with us to observe. After an hour, the gruesome operation on Patient A was an astounding success. Frankly, I expected that. The Chief is the best surgeon I have ever met.

Press: Are the rumors true that the family members waiting outside could see what's happening during the surgery?

Hermione Granger: Yes, that is true. We did not cover the glass panes with the curtains. Patient A's parent made the request. The rest of the family members for all other patients agreed. So, I had to suffer performing in the theater with a little audience of nervous parents and family members. I pity those who had to watch the entire operation. It is a bloody and rather disgusting process.

Press: Is it true that Lord Potter was present during the surgery?
Harry Potter: I was there on duty. Ten aurors were stationed all around St. Mungo’s as a security measure. This epidemic along with the entire healing process is a very high-profile case. So, maximum protection for the healers, the patients, and their families is a must. My task along with my second-in-command, Auror Thomas, is to follow the ICW Medical Researchers all over the place. I had to stay along with the anxious families watching the entire operation through the glass panes.

Press: What is your opinion of the Chief’s performance during the surgery, Lord Potter?

Harry Potter: I cannot believe she has guts of steel. The whole thing looked disgusting with all the blood, pus, and flesh. All I can say is, I am so proud of Hermione's performance. She saved so many lives. I agree with Irie. I expected her to succeed. Hermione Granger is the brightest witch of the age. She's always been brilliant in whatever she does, well except flying, ever since I met her at Hogwarts all those years ago.

Press: You seem to be very fond of the Chief, Lord Potter. Do we hear a reconciliation between the wizarding world's Power Couple?

Harry Potter: (gives a nervous chuckle) No comment. My relationship with Hermione is not pertinent to this interview.

Press: But the world wants to know. The status of your relationship will be affecting all of us. Should you get back together, the Chief could retire from her position to stay in Britain with you. Minister, won't you agree that having the chief back in British soil is such a great boon to your nation?

Kingsley Shacklebolt: Hermione Granger is an asset to whatever organization and endeavor she pursues. Do I want her back to Britain? Yes, of course. But whatever she decides, it is not up to anyone. It's her choice. And I agree with Lord Potter. Their private life is none of our business.

Press: What about you Healer Triflewood? What is your opinion on the Chief?

Albert Triflewood: Hermione Granger is the best healer I have ever met. To me, the moniker World’s Best Healer is something that she deserves. My surgeons and healers who worked with her learned a lot. I would proudly step down from my post if she decides to stay in Britain and she could have my position. At the end of the day, the Chief is the only person who has a final say in this whether she stays or leaves.

Press: Healer Rosier, you are cousins with the Malfoys, are you not?

Evangeline Rosier: Yes, I am.

Press: Can you describe the Chief’s friendship with them? It has been said that the members of your team lived with the Malfoys until the Chief left to stay at Lord Potter's house.

Evangeline Rosier: The Chief is close friends with my cousin Draco and his wife, Astoria. And yes, she stayed at my cousins’ home until she decided to stay with Lord Potter.

Press: Do you know why?

Evangeline Rosier: It is not my habit to disclose the private affairs of an Ancient and Noble House. You would do well to remember that.

Press: The Weasley Family, known to have hurt you severely in the past, is one of the aggrieved parties because of the epidemic. What can you say about them, Chief?
Hermione Granger: I have two Weasley patients. I did my duty to them just like any other healer would. As for the rest of the members, no comment.

Press: There is a rumor that it was you who cured Ginevra Zabini nee Weasley after she got cursed from angry letters because of Lord Potter's revelations. Is that true? What kind of curse hit her?

Hermione Granger: I shall not disclose my dealings with my patients.

Press: Do you still harbor resentment for the Weasley family, Chief?

Harry Potter: Alright! That's enough. Hermione doesn't have to answer this.

Kingsley Shacklebolt: Please refrain from asking personal questions.

Press: Will you stay in Britain, Chief?

Hermione Granger: I will stay until the vaccines are administered. I already have holiday plans here as well.

Press: Will you still go back to Switzerland? After all of this?

Hermione Granger: I have pledged my magic in faithful service to the ICW. All employees and officials there, are bound by that pledge. I shall do my very best to uphold my promise.

Press: What about Lord Potter?

Harry Potter: That's enough!

Hermione Granger: No, Harry. It's fine. They won't stop until I answer this. Once and for all, my relationship with Harry is none of your business.

Press: But the world wants to know if the Power Couple will get back together.

Hermione Granger: Lord Potter and I are sorting out our issues. I will only tell you this. I am giving him a second chance. As to the logistics of the relationship moving forward, it is none of your concern.

Kingsley Shacklebolt: That concludes the press conference. We will answer no more questions.

There you have it, my dear readers. The complete and unabridged version of the press conference.

To summarize a few things, we now have a very little idea about what happened during their investigation to find the cure. There is a promise for a paper to be published on the entire healing process, it will be very helpful to those interested in healing and potions. And lastly, for all gossip lovers, Lord, and Lady Potter are giving their relationship a second shot. If you could only see and feel the sexual tension between those two... Too bad we are not allowed to take any pictures due to security reasons.

On behalf of the witches and wizards of Britain, I would like to give a huge thanks to Hermione Granger and the rest of her team for saving our nation's children.

And to Lord Potter, we wish you all the best in regaining the affections of your wife once again. Hopefully, this time around, you will never let her go.
As the rest of the wizarding world reads about varying versions of what occurred during the press conference, a man with a red triangle tattoo on his back grins at the information he was able to gather from the reports.

His plan in drawing Hermione Granger away from the highly secured wards of the ICW Headquarters is a huge success. His test on her magical capabilities and intelligence has proven to be highly effective as well. By setting up the whole epidemic in Britain, he was able to see the extent of her abilities. And by planting the cursed item on the Weasley children, he was able to test the strength of her character and the firmness of her heart to fulfill her obligations.

He finally found his perfect Isis. For not only was the original Isis the cleverest woman of her time, she was also pure of heart with a very strong character.

After gathering intelligence on the Brightest Witch of the Age for more than ten years, he is now certain.

Hermione Granger is the one that he needs for the mating ritual and spiritual communion that he plans to do.

She is the only suitable candidate as his mate when he reclaims the throne of Osiris, his birthright from his forefather that had long been dormant ever since the downfall of his family's blessing from the Creator.

Only one thing left to do. Figure out the perfect time to capture his future queen…

*Harry Potter will never stand a chance between me and what's mine…*

*Hermione Granger shall be my Isis and then I can finally reclaim my family's birthright...*

His family has waited for thousands of years to reclaim what they had lost. But they have never been lucky enough to find what they had all been looking for.

Generations after generation have searched far and wide to find a suitable candidate, but all of them failed.

Finally, after all this time, he is the lucky one.

He is lucky to have found the perfect candidate for the ritual. No one else but Hermione Granger would do.
A/N: For me, this is the best chapter I have written in this story. You'll find out why later as you read along the way.

Yesterday marks the second monthsary for My Cheating Heart. This story is really a piece of work to write. So far, this is the most complex story I have ever written. I first posted this on FFN before I added it here to A03.

At the start, it got some hate. Which I really do not mind but the personal attack I was getting almost made me want to stop writing this. And now, I am finally over the 100K word count. I am so happy that I did not listen to the trolls.

I would like to thank all of you readers who kept their faith in this story.

Anyway, enough drama. Hope you guys enjoy this second monthsary special.

I am soooo looking forward to your feedback on this chapter.
"Harry?", Hermione asked as they were sipping wine after dinner at his penthouse. It was the evening after the press conference. The entire week had gone by so swiftly. From the moment Abim arrived, everyone was kept on their toes. All of them anxiously excited for the case to be finally solved. And now, all the surgeries were completed. All the children have been released from St. Mungo's. Rosier and Abim will have the vaccine formula ready on the 26th of December. Her return to Britain has been a whirlwind of surprises from the very moment her portkey first
landed in the ministry. And now, her trip is coming to a close...

"Yes, Hermione?"

"I was wondering…", she said with hesitance.

"Yes?", he prodded.

"If you're not busy that is", she was nervously twiddling her thumbs now.

"Yes?"

"Do you want to spend the entire day with me tomorrow?", she muttered. Her eyes focused on her fingers.

"Like the whole day?", his voice betrayed the shock he is feeling.

"It's alright if you don't want to", she shrugged.

"No. It's not that I don't want to. I'm just surprised 'is all", he reassured her quickly.

"Oh. So, well, do you want to?", she sneaked a glance at him before looking away.

"I guess I can have Dean fill-in for me. My schedule tomorrow is just a few meetings and last-minute security checks. The latest attempt at entrapment for the syndicate is a huge failure. And as much as I am angry about that, I really can't do anything about it. So might as well take the day off tomorrow", he said with a shy grin.

"Really?"

"Yes. I would love to spend the day with you", this time around, his smile is on full blast.

"I do hope you know what you're getting into since I have a long day planned", she chuckled.

"Praytell?", he said playfully.

"I need you to come shopping with me. And then we can just explore all around London. And then we can watch a show in the West End at night, I miss that. And we could – I just want to have fun. I've been so stressed lately; we all have been. I don't know, it's just I need to take it easy, I guess. And I do miss London and I got nothing to do at St. Mungo's now except – ", she was talking too fast because of excitement.

"Okay, okay. I get it. You're bored and you miss London", he chuckled.

"You sure you want to come with me?", she asked one more time, giving him the chance to back out.

"Hermione, I'm trying to win you back, aren't I? I may not be as smart as you but I sure as hell ain't stupid enough to let this opportunity pass", he said in a teasing manner and she laughed.

"You know you might eat your words tomorrow", she smirked.

"And why is that?", his voice is now laced with a little apprehension.

"Two words. Shopping trip", she said dramatically.
"Oh", he muttered.

"Still think you're up for it, Potter?", she challenged.

"Ah, the things I do for love", he played along and they laughed.

"Good night, Harry. See you tomorrow", she kissed him on the cheek before standing up from the couch.

Harry Potter lay awake in the middle of his large bed as he contemplates about his dilemma.

He is very happy about the positive change in his relationship with Hermione but at the same time, he is scared. If she is not confined within the strongest wards of the ICW headquarters, then she is still at great risk to the unknown threat just lurking around and waiting for the right time to attack her.

He had a gut feeling that whoever is leading the Red Triangle syndicate, he is just bidding his time. Someone who organizes the operations of the largest syndicate in the European Wizarding Community is bound to never give up on his goal of capturing Hermione.

He remembered the entrapment operation he and the British aurors planted on the supposed local hideout of the mysterious syndicate three days ago. By working closely with the ICW, they were given intelligence on another scheduled smuggling shipment. The plan was perfect. There is only one problem, the members of the syndicate seem to have been aware of their plan.

They even left a note. A note that sends a chill of fear in his very bones.

_We know who you are. But you don't know us. We've existed for more than five hundred years. We shall continue to exist. No one will bring us down. Not the ICW. And most especially not Harry Potter._

That was the only note left inside the hideout that they found. All the goods they expected to retrieve were no longer there. All that's left is a note written on the walls. A note written in blood. There was no signature. Only a red triangle.

Now he is torn between keeping Hermione safely confined within the ICW Headquarters' wards and having her stay in Britain with him.

He so wanted to hide her and keep her safe. That's what his mind is telling him. But his heart is screaming the exact opposite. Ever since her recovery from the accident, he could feel Hermione opening up to him. Inch by inch. Every single day. Hence, he can't possibly let her leave now. Not when he is this close…

He knew he is so close to making her fall in love with him again.

He shifted to his side and glanced at the single white tulip that he carefully placed on his nightstand. That single white flower made him feel hopeful about their relationship. Because if he could read this sign based on the symbolism of flowers, she was subtly telling him that she is willing to start over. Besides, the kisses she initiates must mean something…right?
So, he cannot send her away. Not now… He had waited so long for this one chance.

Yes, it might be selfish of him to have her staying in Britain, but if she is with him, he knew that he could keep her safe.

He will do anything just to keep her safe...

The next day, his peaceful slumber was bothered by a knock on his door. He covered his face with a pillow to muffle the sound but the knocking just became more insistent. With a groan, he waved his hand all over to wandlessly open the door. Hermione was already up and about, clearly ready for the day.

"Wake up sleepyhead!", she said cheerfully while tugging on his hand.

"Five more minutes", he muttered.

"Fine. If you won't get up, I'm leaving without you", she huffed. He suddenly got up from the bed and ran to his bathroom. As he was taking a hot shower, he could hear Hermione's laughter echoing from his bedroom. This woman could just be plain evil sometimes...

After ten minutes, he got out of the shower and wrapped a towel around his waist. He hurriedly found clothes that would easily blend in with the rest of muggle London. Once he is ready, he closed the door to his bedroom.

Hermione was sitting comfortably on a couch and flipping through a magazine.

"That was quick", she said with a grin.

"Well, I can't have you leave me here. I'm on guard duty and shopping bag duty today", he said grumpily.

"You could always sleep in you know. I can take care of myself", she said.

"Oh no! You're not going around London all alone", he huffed.

"Well let's go then, Lord Potter. I have some shopping to do. Don't worry, I'll treat you to breakfast, and lunch, and dinner", she cajoled.

"You're lucky I love you", he muttered.

"Sorry, I didn't catch that", she said.

"So, do we drive or apparate?", he inquired.

"Can we drive? Although I want to eat breakfast at Viola's. You don't mind, do you?", she said as she got off the couch.

"Hey… how could you be paying for breakfast if we eat there for free? We own the place", he argued playfully.

"You're so stingy", she rolled her eyes.
"Let's go Lady Potter. You can spend the rest of the day bossing me around", he held out a hand for her which she eagerly accepted.

Hand-in-hand, they headed towards the lifts that led to the basement parking.

"Can we ride the black car this time around?", she said as they stood in front of his beloved rides.

"Sure", he said with a grin. The 2005 Lamborghini Urus is his second car. It's also his second favorite after the Alfa Romeo. He opened the door for her before he slid on to the driver's seat.

"Your taste in cars is very similar to your taste in brooms", she chuckled.

"Oh?"

"They're all fast vehicles", she replied.

"Well yeah", he grinned sheepishly before turning on the ignition.

"What's this car called?"

"It's a Lambo", he said as he drove away from the parking lot.

"A Lambo?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"A Lamborghini", he replied.

"Who would have thought I'd get to ride one of these", she mused.

"You know about cars then?", he inquired but his eyes were focused on the road.

"A little. My dad likes cars. Well, most blokes do I suppose", she said with a chuckle.

Hmmm…maybe I can get her parents a car for my Declaration of Intent, he thought to himself as he remembers his talk with Luna about the formal courting procedures. The Declaration of Intent is the first in a series of five protocols. Since the protocol is an archaic procedure, the pursuer makes his intentions known by formally speaking with the lady's head of house, in Hermione's case, her father. Along with the verbal intention, a gift will be given as some sort of dowry. This will be a bad idea if Hermione would see this as me buying her affections… Maybe I should ask her first…

"Mione?"

"Hmmm?"

"What will you say if I bought your parents a car?"

"Huh? Why?"

"Well, it's part of the – "

"If you're talking about the whole pureblood courtship protocol, then you can forget it", she huffed.

"Oh", he muttered. Thank Merlin that I asked!
"Harry, you don't need to do that. If you do that, I'll hex you myself. And if you do that whole kneeling in front of the Malfoys' home as part of the bloody list, I would hex you for that too", she said.

"Oh. Okay", he said with a nod.

"Harry?"

"Yes?"

"Could you help me find some gifts for your aurors?"

"Why?"

"I want to give them thank you gifts for guarding us here", she turned to him with a bright smile.

"Of course."

"Do you have something you want to do today?", she asked.

"Well, you could help me with my own Christmas shopping as well. Especially for the kids in the foundation", he said. His eyes still focused on the road.

"I would love that", he could hear the excitement in her voice.

"Do you want to watch a show at the West End later?", he inquired. He remembered her blabbering about it last night.

"That would be brilliant. But, well, we're not dressed for a show", she mused.

"Hermione Granger, are you a witch or not?", he glanced at her with a smirk.

"If you're not driving, I would so smack you on the back of the head", she said grumpily and he chuckled.

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Harry parked the car on a hidden corner that is just a walking distance away from the secret entrance to Diagon Alley. After opening the door for Hermione, he cast notice-me-not charms on the car before he ushered her towards the Leaky Cauldron.

As soon as they entered, all eyes were immediately drawn to them but he chose to ignore it. Hermione too is now an expert in dealing with the murmurs and stares from other witches and wizards. He waved to Hannah Abbot – Finnigan, who bought the Leaky from Tom six years ago along with her husband, Seamus.

They were almost at the door that will lead to the brick barrier, but a little boy ran in front of them.

"Hello", Hermione greeted with a friendly smile.

"Hi Lady Potter", the little boy grinned.

"What's your name?", she asked.
"Ralph."

"Nice to meet you, Ralph", Hermione held out a hand for the child to shake. The child shook it eagerly.

"You are so pretty", the boy said with a blush. Harry chuckled. Hermione charms little boys wherever she goes.

"Thank you Ralph", she giggled.

"You will make a great wife for my daddy", the boy said as he shuffled his feet.

"Well I'm sure your daddy is as good-looking as you but I can't have two husbands", Hermione replied with a kind smile.

"Oh", the child said sadly.

"I'm so sorry buddy. Your daddy just needs to find another lady", he smiled to the child.

"Can I hug you at least Lady Potter?", the child bashfully muttered.

"Of course, sweetie", Hermione crouched down as she opened her arms and the child went to embrace her willingly. He smiled at the sight. Hermione is so good with children.

"Happy Christmas Lady Potter", the child said after he pulled away.

"Happy Christmas too, Ralph", Hermione said with a cheery wave. He too waved at the child who gave them a big smile.

"You know Lady Potter, it's scary how many blokes are drawn to you", he teased as he tapped the bricks with his wand.

"Jealous?", she smirked.

"Nah. If it were straight blokes who looked like Irie, then definitely. Little boys, no. Besides, it's adorable to see you with children", he winked.

They hurriedly made their way to Viola's since they were attracting too much attention. When they entered the restaurant, the head waiter bowed.

"Welcome to Viola's Lord and Lady Potter", Laurence respectfully greeted.

"Come now, mate. It's just Harry", he rolled his eyes.

"Hello", Hermione smiled.

"Please follow me. I'll escort you to a private booth so that you can avoid the curious stares", Laurence led the way and they followed.

"Thanks, mate", he said as they were seated.

"What shall I get you, sir? Shall I recommend the breakfast special?", Laurence inquired.

"What do you think Hermione?"

"I'll eat whatever. I'm starved and we have a lot of shopping to do", she grinned.
"Two specials then Laurence. Thank you", he informed the head waiter.

"Right away sir", Laurence gave a slight bow before leaving the private booth.

"He seems nice", Hermione remarked.

"Yeah. He just gets all Lord Potter and stuff because of his roots. He is muggleborn and well, he knows I hold a title in the House of Lords as well", he explained.

"How did that happen by the way?", she asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Two years after you left, the muggle police found out about Walden Macnair, a death eater. Well, that vile man is responsible for the kidnapping and torture of fifty muggle children. Long story short, there is a squib police officer who recognized the dark man on the cartographic sketch given by one of the witnesses. He told his peers that the man responsible for the crime is a member of a terrorist group. That story escalated to the ears of influential people. Finally, when the Queen found out that Macnair is dead, she wanted to reward the person who ended all of that vile man's terrors. So, she had her people investigate, and then the whole Voldemort thing was made known. She gave me an honorary seat at the House of Lords. Of course, due to the statute of secrecy, we had to keep the real reason for my title a secret. Her majesty just said that I was a long-lost distant relation or something", he explained.

"You must have women throwing themselves at you then. I mean you must be the only member of the House of Lords who is young", she chuckled.

"The House of Lords knows I'm married", he replied.

"Then how would you explain going to all those fancy events all alone and without a lady on your arm?", she challenged.

"I told them my wife left me because of my stupidity", he admitted.

"And?"

"Well, the Queen, along with the other peers of the realm, offered to help in looking for you, but I politely declined. I knew that you were hiding somewhere in the magical world. I just don't know where", he said with sadness.

"Why did you never stop looking for me?"

"I need you back in my life Hermione. But more importantly, I want to tell you how sorry I am", he confessed.

"Why did you cheat on me, Harry? Why did you parade all those women in front of me?", he could see the tears she is fighting to hold back.

"The first time I brought a woman to the manor after you said that you did everything you could to steal me away from Ginny, I just wanted to hurt you. Make you regret your decision. I was under the influence of alcohol then and I was listening to Ron, Molly, and Ginny's words. So, I met this witch at the Hog's Head, I brought her home with me. She was very eager to bed the chosen one, so she performed oral sex on me, and after I you know, I couldn't get it back up, and I just passed out exhausted. The next day I threw her out of the house and I saw the reaction on your face. I saw how seeing that woman leave the manor hurt you. So, I decided to use that as a petty revenge scheme on you", he admitted with shame.
"Did you ever sleep with any of them?", she said as she wiped away the tears.

He was about to answer but there was a knock on the door. Laurence came in with a tray containing their orders. After he left, his eyes fell on Hermione again as he continued his explanation.

"Well, they slept beside me on the bed. Some of them performed handjobs and stuff. I was too drunk to care. But I never went all the way with them. After that first woman, and seeing how much I hurt you by parading them around the house, I decided to just abandon witches and go to muggle prostitution houses. I pay them to act like I was fucking them like crazy", he continued.

"Why did you do that Harry?", she sniffed.

"I thought that if I hurt you enough you would suddenly fight back. But you never did. So, I assumed you were guilty. I just, I never thought my Hermione, my best friend, could ever betray me like that, you know?", this time it was his turn to wipe away the tears.

"So, you never went all the way with someone? During our one year of marriage?", her chocolate brown orbs were staring intently into his eyes to test the validity of his words.

He flicked his wrist to summon his phoenix feather wand from its holster.

"I, Harry James Potter, swear on my life and magic, that I have never had vaginal intercourse with another woman except for my wife. So mote it be. Lumos", he stated in a clear voice. As his wand glowed with a blindingly bright light, he proved to her that his words were the absolute truth.

"Stop the Lumos. Merlin! It's so bright", she protested as she shielded her eyes.

"Nox. Sorry about the brightness", he said awkwardly.

"Alright. Fine. So, you technically didn't cheat on me…", Hermione said. He could tell she was processing what he told her. She's processing this information logically from the look on her face.

"Technically yes. But I did hurt you. And that is no excuse", his head bowed down in shame.

"Quiet! Let me think", she admonished. He sneaked a glance at her. Hermione had a faraway look in her eyes. Her brows furrowed. Her lips pursed. He could tell that she was thinking about the things he said.

Ten minutes passed and she was still sitting there. Quiet. Her face was serious. He was nervous and hungry and scared but he remained seated. Deep inside, his heart pounded like crazy. He was scared if he had bollocked it up again. Please don't hex me…that was the mantra running through his mind.

"Harry", Hermione's calm voice betrayed no emotion. He cannot tell if he should run for the hills to save his hide or grovel on his knees for forgiveness.

He gulped.

"Yes, Hermione?", he nervously answered.

"Stand up please", she ordered. I guess Daddy will be seeing you soon again, Viola Lily, he thought as he prepared himself for the impending doom of Hermione Granger's wrath. He slowly stood up and walked closer to her side of the table. When he was a foot in front of her, he was prepared to face his maker.
May the Creator or whoever is out there have mercy on my idiotic soul...

Hermione stood up from her seat, took a deep breath and punched him on the face.

He fell on the floor with a thud. *Now I know how Malfoy must have felt in our third year.* Hermione Granger packs a mean right hook!

"Ow", he muttered as he rubbed his injured jaw.

"Now stand up you idiot", she huffed. To his surprise, she held out a hand for him to take.

He gave her an odd look but she only raised an eyebrow. Her hand still stretched out. He carefully held on to her hand and she slowly pulled him up.

"Are you gonna hit me again?", he muttered. She flicked her wrist and she was now holding her wand.

"If you're gonna kill –"

"Quiet! I'm going to heal your bruised face. You're lucky I didn't kick you in the bollocks", she said. She pointed her wand on him and he closed his eyes. After a few seconds, he could no longer feel the ache in his jaw. *Did she just heal me so that she could hurt me again?*

"Er, Hermione, I don't understand –"

"Listen to me, Harry Potter. And you listen well! You are the most exasperating, annoying, and stupid wizard I have ever met. Merlin!"

"Sorry but –"

"Stop interrupting me!"

"So-"

"Look, you passed the test. So, we –"

"I don't –"

"Why did I have to fall in love with such an idiot!?", she stomped her foot in agitation. *Did she just say that she's in love with me?*

"Huh?", he was very confused now. Everything seems like a crazy satirical dream.

"Oh, come here", she raised her index finger and made a gesture that signaled for him to move closer. Despite his confusion, he followed her command.

"Hermione I'm con –"

She rolled her eyes in exasperation and roughly pulled him closer to her. His eyes widened in shock when she wrapped her arms around his neck before kissing him passionately. *Now, this is just too good to be true*, he thought. But if this is just a weird dream, he gave everything he got into the kiss. *Might as well savor the moment...*

When she pulled away for air, she laced their foreheads together.
"I love you, Harry Potter, even if you are one big idiot", she whispered.

"Someone must hate me for this cruel dream", he muttered.

"You're not dreaming", she giggled.

"Hah?"

"I said I love you Harry Potter", she whispered before pecking him on the lips.

"I love you too dream Hermione Granger", he said stupidly.

"Ow!", he yelped in pain when she stomped on his foot.

"There! Now you know it's not a dream", she huffed.

"What did you do that for?", he whined.

"So that it would sink into your thick head that this is most definitely not a dream. Merlin! Why should I be cursed by the fates to be in love with someone so stupid?", she said.

"So, you love me then?", he asked with disbelief. In as much as he wants to believe her, he still thinks it's too good to be true. He waited ten years for this so he can't imagine all his dreams turning into a reality.

"Yes", she huffed. She now had her arms crossed below her chest.

Oh my god! She loves me. She loves me.

When it finally sunk into his thick head, he had a shit-eating grin on his face as he wrapped his arms around her.

"I love you Hermione", he whispered to her ear.

"Took you long enough to understand the message, you stupid idiot", she chuckled.

"I'm gonna ignore that comment because I'm just so happy you love me", he laughed.

"You're lucky I have high tolerance to idiocy and that I am the forgiving sort", she said.

"I know I don't deserve you. But I love you Hermione Granger", he said as he squeezed her tightly in his arms.

"Maybe we can get used to calling me Hermione Potter now", she replied as she pulled away from his embrace.

"This is the best day of my life", he said.

"Well then let's eat breakfast. I don't want you to spend the rest of the best day of your life in St. Mungo's due to hunger", she chuckled. He slowly went back to his seat and he could still feel the shit-eating grin on his face.

As they started eating, he would sneak glances at her and he could feel himself smiling again.

Hermione could not take it any longer and she bursts into laughter. She had tears in her eyes as she laughed and laughed.
"What's so funny?", he asked.

"You are. I can't believe you thought you were dreaming", she burst into laughter again.

"Well, you can't blame me. It's like a whirlwind of emotions out here", he said.

"I'm sure Viola is laughing so hard right now. She'll probably be so thankful that she inherited my brains", she teased.

"You're sure about this?", he asked one more time.

"If you keep asking me that, I can take it back", she huffed.

"I just, I can't believe it you know", he said sheepishly.

"Believe it's true Harry. I love you. I wouldn't lie about this. I tried so hard to fight you, but you tear down the walls I built around my heart", she said with a smile.

"So, er, I love you. And well, you love me. What does this mean?", he asked shyly and she rolled her eyes.

"Well for starters, we're in love. Second, we're still married. We could give that a try", she shrugged.

"Okay… so, what do I do?", he said sheepishly.

"You love me with all of your heart and don't do anything stupid again", she said sternly.

"The first one I promise to keep. The second one, well, stupidity is in my DNA. But know that I will do my best to never intentionally hurt you again", he said with conviction.

"Fair enough", she grinned.

"What are your other terms for this relationship, Lady Potter?"

"Well, I could try sleeping with you", she mused.

"Excuse me?", he choked on the pumpkin juice he was drinking.

"Mind out of the gutter, Harry. I meant to sleep. Just sleep", she said.

"Oh. Of course. Sleep is good", he said with a nod.

"We also have to work out logistics when I go back to Switzerland", she muttered.

"Whatever you want, love", he grinned and she giggled.

It is very fitting that they acknowledged their love for one another in Viola's, the restaurant he built to honor the memory of their daughter. He would never have won Hermione's heart once again if not for their wonderful little girl. He cannot wait for them to talk to Viola Lily later tonight.

For now, he is just so happy to spend one whole day with Hermione.

He is the luckiest bastard alive since this wonderful woman, his wife, forgave him for all the shit he once put her through.
As Harry and Hermione Potter bask in the joy of spending the day together, as they celebrate their love for one another, the little boy named Ralph portkeyed to his master to proudly report on his success.

When he arrived at an underground lair of the *Atbae 'Ilah Al-mawt*, the master gave him an odd look.

"Who are you?", their leader asked.

"Master it's me. Ralph. I'm using Polyjuice. You know how Hermione Granger loves kids"; the little boy smirked.

"Did you get her hair sample?", the master replied.

"Yes master", he carefully removed the vial containing three strands of curly brown hair from his pocket.

"Excellent work, Ralph. Now we can track my Isis wherever she goes", the master smirked.

"Yes, master. Your Isis shall be yours soon", he replied.

"Gather the five for a meeting at midnight. I now have the perfect plan to capture my Isis", the master said.

"Yes master", he said with a bow.

Karim Hajjar, the last living descendant of Osiris, smirked as he continued to stare at the vial containing hairs of his Isis. *You will be mine soon, Hermione Granger...*
Hermione woke up early in the morning with a pair of strong arms wrapped around her waist. Her back leaning against a lean muscular chest. She could feel a chill run down her spine as she felt steady breaths hitting her nape. Her bum pressed against something hard.

This is something that she is most definitely not used to. She is used to waking up all alone, and in odd sorts of positions, since she moves around a lot as she sleeps. Now as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes, she bit her bottom lip to stop herself from giggling. She could feel Harry's normal morning reaction pressed against her. Feeling the need to go to the restroom, she tried to gently move his arms away from her body.
"Don't... comfy", her snuggle partner muttered against her ear. His lips lightly caressing the skin on her nape.

"Harry, I got to pee", she tried again.

"No", he moaned in his sleep. His arms tightening around her. He even placed one leg over her thighs.

She slowly turned around to check if he was asleep. Because if he was just acting out, she'll nudge him hard on the chest. Instead, the sight that she saw, melted her heart. Harry Potter is fast asleep indeed. His raven hair is messier than they've ever been. He seemed so relaxed and well, happy...

"Harry", she whispered. Still no reaction.

"Harry", she said a little louder this time.

"Hmmm", came the muffled reply. *Merlin! I have to go pee. I am a mere seconds from bursting.*

She raised her left hand and pinched his cheek. Hopefully, it will be enough for his arms to move away.

"Ow", his voice is now clear.

"I'm sorry Harry but I got to pee", she said.

"Fine... come back to bed after", he released his hold on her and turned to his other side. She dashed for his en-suite bathroom.

After relieving herself and washing her face, she went back to Harry's bedroom. He was now sleeping on his stomach. His face turned towards her side of the bed. She glanced at the clock on one side of the wall, it was six in the morning.

She quietly made her way back towards his bed. She carefully moved the covers so she could climb on. As she lay on her side, facing the sleeping Harry, she started playing with his messy hair.

"Hmmm", he protested.

"Harry it's six a.m.", she whispered as she moved closer to his sleeping form. She gasped when his strong arms pulled her even closer to his body that she was nearly pressed on top of him.

"Just sleep", he murmured.

"We have work to do", she replied. Her face heating up as she could now feel his crotch pressed on her thigh. He groaned and then he slowly opened his eyes.

"Can't we just skip again?", he whined. His voice is still sleepy.

"You, Lord Potter, have responsibilities. And so do I. We can't sleep in bed all day", she chuckled.

"We could lie in until eight. My first meeting is at eleven", he negotiated with a pout.

"Harry, it's the twenty-second already. Isn't Teddy coming back from Hogwarts today?", she reminded him.

"Shit!", he groaned.
"Now come on. Wake up. You have to cook breakfast. I'm hungry", she joked bossily and he laughed.

"God, I love you", he whispered as he kissed the top of her head. His arms tightening around her.

"I'm sure god loves you too", she retorted.

"If I cook, will you shower with me?", his eyes glittering with mischief.

"Let's progress into making love first before we do that", she huffed.

"Fine", he pouted.

"Now get up. I'm hungry", she playfully hit his chest.

"Alright, alright, I'm up", he groggily sat up on the bed.

"There. Now that's not so hard is it, if you'll only do as I say", she teased.

"So, we slept together last night... When then, in your terms and schedule of our relationship, are we making love and taking a shower together?", he grinned mischievously. She was blushing so hard that she could only grab a pillow and hit him on the face which he didn't even evade since he was already laughing.

"Just go shower already", she glared at him. Her cheeks still flushed at his heated question.

"You know I'm just joking right? I will wait until you're ready", he said after he was able to contain his laughter.

"You know, if only you would stop making jokes, I would have said that our first schedule of lovemaking will be tonight. But oh well, I'll move it up to next year", she sighed before getting up from the bed.

She glanced at Harry who was now gobsmacked on his bed.

It was now her turn to laugh. *Lady Potter = 1. Lord Potter = 0.*

Harry Potter sat in his office with a big grin on his face. During his pre-yule briefing with the auror department, all of his teammates were giving him an odd look. He usually is very stern and formal during meetings, but during this one, it was obvious that he is in a really good mood.

When he heard a knock on the door, he wandlessly gestured with a hand and opened the door for whoever is standing outside. His second-in-command, Dean Thomas walked inside his office with his mouth hanging open.

"What's gotten into you mate? You seem to be on a cloud nine. And, you opened the door to your office despite not knowing who the person is. Hell! You don't even open the door for others you just say come in", Dean remarked as he took one of the seats across from him.

"Can't a bloke just be happy that Christmas is coming soon", he snorted. He knew that his eyes will betray the joy he felt inside. He felt giddy, but he would never admit to that.
"Oh… I've seen that look. You got some last night", Dean smirked.

"So crude", he rolled his eyes.

"You did, didn't you? You lucky dog!", Dean smacked the top of his desk.

"I will not dignify that comment with an answer", he retorted.

"Lucky bastard. Lady Potter is one damn fine woman", Dean ended the comment with a wolf-whistle. This time, he glared.

"I would appreciate it if you keep your rude comments about my lady's fineness to yourself, thank you very much", he said in a stern voice.

"Okay, okay. Sorry mate. But whatever it is that is making you this happy, I am glad. You deserve to feel this joyful after suffering for so long", Dean said.

"She does. She makes me so happy, that I – well, I feel so light", he confessed with a slight flush on his cheeks.

"Well, I am happy for you mate. You better not mess up this time around though", Dean remarked. After long hours of gruesome auror training and being on missions together, he and Dean had become really good friends. Because of the amount of time they spent together, he talked to Dean about all that has happened between him and Hermione before she left Britain ten years ago.

"I know mate, I know", he agreed.

"Hey, this would mean that you will finally get a date to that annual pre-yule charity auction thing that you go to with the rest of the peers of the realm", Dean who is muggleborn, commented. Only those who have a good understanding of the non-magical world comprehend the importance of being inducted as a Peer of the Realm.

"Oh, shit! I forgot about that", he groaned. Every year since he was inducted as an honorary peer, he is forced to attend an annual auction on the 23rd of December. After everything that happened, he honestly forgot about the whole thing.

"Well, you better ask your Lady to come with you, mate. This will be the very first time that you would have a date for this thing", Dean added.

"Mate, cover for me for the rest of the day, will you? I have to ask my Lady to grace me with her company for this auction. That among other things", he said as he got up from his seat.

"Sure mate", Dean saluted. With a wave of his hand, his briefcase flew towards him and he sprinted off to the floo. He needed to ask Hermione to come with him, buy clothes for her and himself, and last but not the least, he has to find something to donate as a contribution to the auction. Great. Just great. Good thing Dean remembered.

"Kei, you will be going back to Switzerland for the holidays, right?", Hermione asked Irie as the both of them were just lounging around in her temporary office. Evangeline and Abim are still hard at work as they create the vaccine potion which will be ready soon. One of her remaining task for
this case is that before they administer the vaccine, she has to conduct final tests and give her seal of approval. Since Irie's part is already done, and there are only a few patients in St. Mungo's on this day, the local healers do not need their help. Hence, it was a pretty easy workday for both of them.

"Yes. I'll be taking a portkey for Switzerland tomorrow evening. My family will be arriving there on the 24th. We'll be spending a few days in Lucerne, then maybe check out Grindelwald for a few days", Irie said with excitement.

"That's brilliant!", she said with a big smile on her face. The ICW Medical Research Department all work so hard for the entire year. So, any vacation and rest their team members get is great news.

"What about you Chief? Staying here with your gorgeous Lord, eh?", Irie wiggled his eyebrows suggestively and she rolled her eyes.

"My parents will be coming to Britain on the 24th. They'll be staying in Harry's penthouse. Harry's godson along with his grandmother will be spending Christmas with us as well. So, yes, I'll be staying here with my family", she confessed.

"Did you just say family?", Irie was stunned. When she nodded, he squealed.

"Oh, my fucking Merlin! You are so getting laid after ten years! I am so happy for you. Best have Rosier prepare stamina potions. I'm sure Lord Potter is such a horny beast", Irie swooned while clapping his hands.

"Quiet down! Shhh! Or the auror guards will hear", she admonished.

"Sorry, chief", Irie mumbled.

"I would appreciate it if you won't talk about my sex life out loud when others could hear us thank you very much", she glared at her colleague. Irie only laughed.

"Ah, well. As long as he makes you happy, chief. Then I am happy for you too. If he hurts you again, I'm kicking his sorry arse. No matter how fine a species of man he is", Irie said with conviction and she chuckled. Despite Irie and Rosier's crass language, they are very loyal friends of hers.

"Will you be visiting headquarters at all during the holidays?", she inquired.

"Yes. I have to file in my report to the Supreme Mugwump. But that's about it", Irie said with a shrug.

"Can I ask you for a favor, Kei?", she said.

"Sure, chief. What is it?"

"I need you to go to the private archives in HQ and look for books that discuss magical communion rituals. If you find information on Osiris and Isis, especially about the story about them pledging their service as protectors of the gates to the afterlife, I hope you could send me what you learn in a letter. Since, well, the books and scrolls could not be taken outside of HQ", she stated.

"How about I'll call you on the mirrors if I find anything special? We could briefly discuss it and then I could send you my notes. How's that sound?", Irie offered.

"Sounds brilliant. Thank you, Kei", she grinned.
"I better get a good Christmas gift since you're asking me to do personal research for you during the holidays", Irie joked.

"I'll bring your gift tomorrow morning so that you could take it with you to Switzerland. And don't you worry dear, I always give excellent gifts", she winked.

"If I only were straight, I'd be head over heels in love with you Chief", Irie said dramatically and they shared a laugh.

Their laughter dissipated as they heard a knock on her door.

"Come in", she said cheerfully. Her smile widened when she saw Harry enter her office.

"Hi lo -, er, Hermione. Hey Irie", she stopped herself from chuckling as Harry caught himself.

"Hi, Harry. It's okay, Irie knows", she said.

"Oh", he mumbled.

"Well, I best leave you two lovebirds alone. See ya tomorrow, Chief! You better have my gift ready", Irie stood up from his seat.

"Bye, Lord Potter", Irie winked at Harry. She bit her bottom lip as Harry's face paled.

"Get out of here Kei. Stop flirting with my husband!", she playfully glared at her friend who only chuckled. With a wave of goodbye, she and Harry are now the only two people in her office.

"You know, I kind of miss the days when I thought he was into you. Loads better than having him flirt with me", Harry muttered making her laugh.

"Oh, he's just messing with you", she reassured him.

"I know…It's just so… weird", he mused.

"So, what can I do for you Lord Potter?", she said playfully as she crossed her arms.

"I have some business to address with my Lady Potter", he replied smartly.

"Oh really?", she challenged with an eyebrow raised.

"Hermione, will you grant me the great honor of gracing me with your company for tomorrow night's charity auction?", he said as he handed her a bouquet of red roses.

"I'm so proud of you, Harry. Your flower game has significantly improved", she teased him as she accepted the beautiful bouquet.

"Well, will you come with me? Please, love. I can't go alone. I don't want to be the loser who had a wife that left him", he begged with an exaggerated pout.

"Ah well, fine. But I need details", she agreed with a smile.

"It's an annual thing. Peers and their wives host it. Each one donates something valuable. All proceeds will then go to a charity the peers' support", he explained.

"You really can't go alone?", she asked.
"Well I could but I want you to come with me. I'm tired of the sympathizing looks I get for being the only peer with no date. Besides, I'll show 'em why it is so damn worth it to wait for you for ten years. I'll be the only peer with the youngest, and frankly, the hottest wife out there", he had a smug look on his face and she rolled her eyes.

"So, you just want to prove to all of them that you have a hot and young wife, is that it?", she glared at him and he gulped.

"Er, well, no. It's just – ", his panicky explanation made her laugh. He is so adorable.

"I'm just joking, Harry. Of course, I'll come with you", she said.

"Thank you. At least I won't have to fend off all those peers who keep on introducing me to their nieces and daughters", he sighed.

"Oh, Merlin! I don't have anything appropriate to wear!", she exclaimed.

"Are you busy this afternoon?", Harry asked and she shook her head.

"Well then, let's go love. I'll take you out to lunch. After that, you and I could shop for what to wear for tomorrow", he stood up and extended a hand to her.

"Sounds like a plan, my lord", she smiled as she accepted the hand he offered.

Harry Potter was sitting on the couch waiting for his wife. It was exactly one hour and thirty minutes before the start of the charity auction. He was wearing a four-piece Armani suit of black trousers, a white dress shirt and vest combo, along with a white bow tie, and a black jacket. He even had a black top hat to complete the ensemble.

To be honest, this is the first time that he is going all out for the auction or any other event for that matter. He usually just attends the formal events as a peer of the realm and counts the long hours until they are finished and he could leave. This time, however, with his beautiful Lady Potter on his arm, he is looking forward to the rest of the night.

Hermione suggested that they both wear a black ensemble to keep it classy and simple, which he immediately agreed to. Seeing her fit her black gown, when they went shopping yesterday afternoon, made him so excited. He cannot wait to show his lady around. Now his fellow peers, along with those pushy women, will finally see why he waited ten long years for Hermione Jean Potter nee Granger. *If she looks so gorgeous when she was trying out the gown, I cannot wait to see her tonight!*

He was tapping the velvet box on top of his lap. He will be giving these to Hermione tonight to complete her look. Since he already knew what her gown is going to be, he visited his family vault this morning to look for the perfect jewelry piece. There, he found a simple yet stunning, diamond stud earrings and a diamond bracelet. Since her gown had a flattering design for her upper torso, she needed no necklace to complement it.

His gaze kept going to her former bedroom and then at the clock. Evangeline Rosier was there to help her get ready for the night. The two women have been in there for three hours. He cannot understand what could be taking so long. Since Hermione had a pixie cut now, she no longer has to
stress about her hair. *I'll never understand women and getting ready. She'd look gorgeous with just the dress on and with no makeup…*

And then finally, the door opened.

She looked resplendent, ethereal, beautiful. No words will ever be enough.

"Sorry for making you wait long", she said with a blush.

"It's alright love. The wait is worth it", he said. He gently held her hand, bowed down and kissed the back of her hand making her blush.

"My lady, you look breath-taking tonight", he whispered. His eyes were trained on her face as his lips slowly pulled away from her skin.

"Thank you. You clean up rather well too my lord", she said with a smile.

"Now before we go, I must insist that you wear this for me", he opened the velvet box he was holding and she gasped.

"I – Harry… this is too much. You already paid for the dress and everything", she argued.

"Tsk tsk. You follow Lord Potter's advice, chief. Those diamonds will compliment your entire look", Rosier said as she joined them in the living room.

"See, love. You should listen to your stylist", he said with a chuckle. He carefully removed the diamond bracelet and lovingly placed it around her right wrist. With shaking hands, Hermione reached out to the stud earrings and placed one on each of her earlobes.

"Brilliant! You two will be the stars at this auction. Cheerio, lovebirds", Rosier said with a wave before disapparating. Now they were left alone once again.

"You ready to go, Hermione?"

"Yes", she said with a nervous smile. He held out his arm to her which she accepted despite her obvious nervousness.

"Don't be nervous, Hermione. You look beautiful. And I will always be by your side", he reassured her.

"Okay. Thank you", she replied with a more confident tone.

"Before I forget, I would like to thank you for the wonderful evening ahead", he said with a bright smile before they headed towards the lifts that led to the basement.

Hermione took a deep calming breath as she entered the ballroom of *The Beaumont Hotel* on Harry's arm. They were standing in line, waiting for their turn to be presented. They were the third couple in the cue. Harry flashed her a reassuring smile which she returned. He looks so handsome tonight. She could hardly blame all those women who throw themselves at him when he's dressed like this. Tonight, Harry James Potter could make any woman's knees shake with nerves and desire in his full blast Lord Potter persona.
Finally, it is their turn to be announced.

"Presenting, Lord Harry Potter, the Earl of Gryffindor and Lady Hermione Potter, the Countess of Gryffindor", the man said in a loud and clear voice.

Everyone's eyes were immediately glued to her. And once again, murmurs could be heard. She could feel most of the women sizing her up. Most of the older women sent her envious looks. While some of the women who were closer to her age shot her looks of disdain. *Great! Even in the muggle world, I still get the feeling that people are judging my worth and if I deserve to be with Harry..."

Harry led her towards an old couple. Even from afar, she could tell how much the couple adored each other. It looks so sweet and adorable.

"Lord Charlington, Lady Charlington, it is my great honor to introduce to you my wife, Lady Hermione Potter", Harry said with a bow and she curtsied.

"Now now, Lord Potter. I could now finally understand why you've waited for so long for this beautiful wife of yours. She is a sight for sore eyes", Lord Charlington said with a friendly chuckle.

"Forgive him, dear, this old man still thinks he could charm the stockings off the younger ladies", Lady Charlington teased her husband.

"You flatter me too much, my lord and lady", she said respectfully.

"Stop with those lord and lady nonsense. Just call me Michael, dear. And you can call my wife, Isabelle", Lord Charlington insisted.

"Thank you, Michael, Isabelle", she said with a smile.

"Come along you two, you should both sit with us. You know how the wolves will hound around your wife, Harry", Lady Charlington said.

"Oh, I know. I could now feel the other blokes eyeing her up", Harry gave a put-out sigh.

"Harry!", she admonished as she lightly nudged his elbow.

"Oh, leave your husband be, dear. Old Lord Charlington over here used to be like that. All jealous about the attention I keep on getting. And you being a young pretty thing, must give that poor husband of yours a headache", the lady said.

"I told you that you won't need to be nervous, Hermione. Some people here like the Charlingtons are nice", Harry said with a grin.

"Lord Potter, I would like to thank you for your very generous donation to this event", the lady said.

"You are most welcome, my lady", Harry replied as they both took seats on a round table beside the older couple.

"What about you dear? Do you like to help out in charitable institutions as well?", Lord Charlington asked.

"I do a lot of volunteer work by curing the less fortunate sir", she replied. It is an absolute truth that she sometimes visits less privileged countries and do volunteer work. It's part of the medical
research team's mission.

"Oh? So, you are a doctor then?", the lady asked.

"Yes, ma'am. A surgeon specifically", she replied.

"You must be very smart dear, and brave too. All that blood", the lady shivered.

"Oh no, ma'am. I just work hard", she said modestly.

"She's just being modest Isabelle. She's the head medical researcher for one of the top-secret branches of the United Nations. When we were in school, all our professors call her the smartest student they have ever met in many years", Harry said with pride. She nudged him on the elbow which made the older couple laugh.

After that, she relaxed. The Charlingtons were delightful company. They are a sweet and kind couple. Hopefully, when they are old and gray, she and Harry would be just as sweet. And just as happy as they shared a simple life with their children.

The events of the night started with dinner and she was introduced all around to meet the other peers and their wives. Everyone was excited to meet her. Some were rather borderline rude and intrusive, but Harry and the Charlingtons never left her side.

After dinner, the Master of Ceremonies announced a ten-minute break before the charity auction can officially start. She excused herself as she looked for the restroom so she could freshen up.

Harry wanted to accompany her but she reassured him that she can manage on her own. He reluctantly let her go and he continued talking to one of the peers he and Lord Charlington liked.

With all the security and ushers, it was very easy for her to find the restroom. After relieving herself, she washed her hands and did a quick retouch on her makeup. Just a little pat of powder and a coat of lip balm. Satisfied with her touch up, she walked back towards the ballroom.

When she was near the entrance, she bumped into a tall man with black hair and deep black eyes. He looked to be of Arabian descent. He was wearing a light brown tuxedo. He had a roguish appeal to him. Overall, she could say that he is a good-looking man but something about his presence scares her.

"I am so sorry, sir. I didn't see you", she quickly apologized.

"No apology needed from the beautiful lady", the man's voice was husky. His stare is intense. She felt naked under his gaze so she just wants to be away from this man's presence.

"Well, if you'd excuse me, sir", she said with a polite nod. She was about to walk away, but he had a firm grip on her arm.

"Be careful my lady. The world is full of dangerous men just waiting on innocent beautiful women such as yourself. If you were mine, I would make sure you'd always be close to me", he warned. The look in his eyes made her shiver with fear. She was about to retort but he already let go of her arm and walked away.

She walked back to the ballroom quite shaken because of that brief encounter. Whoever that man is, he is very dangerous...
When Hermione returned from the restroom, he could immediately tell that something is not right. Since the auction is not yet starting, he leaned closer to her ear so that he could talk to her privately.

"Love, are you alright? Is something the matter?", his tone laced with worry. If any of those jealous women said anything to offend her, I'd seriously get so pissed and will wandlessly hex those women with incurable pimples.

"I'm fine, it's just I ran into someone awhile ago. I don't know him but something about him doesn't feel right", she whispered back. He placed his arm at the back of her chair. He scooted his chair to move closer to hers.

"We can go home now if you're not comfortable anymore", he gently held one of her hands. He could feel the slight trembling of the hand he held in his own. Whatever happened, it frightened her.

"No. Let's stay. You have an obligation here. I'll tell you all about it at home", she reassuringly said.

"Alright. But if you feel that you can no longer stay here, just say the word, and we'll go", his eyes searched her face for any clue on what could have happened to her but all he could see is fear and relief.

The auction passed by in a blur. He donated a diamond necklace which got a fairly high bid. He, in turn, won the bid for a first edition copy of Jane Austen's Persuasion. He knew he had to win it as soon as he heard the gasp Hermione made during the announcement. The look in her eyes made him determined to purchase the book for her. After the closing ceremonies, they quickly said goodbye to the Charlingtons before asking a valet to bring his car to the driveway.

As soon as they entered the penthouse, he was surprised when Hermione wrapped her arms around him and sniffed. His jaw clenched in anger. Whoever did this to her is going to pay!

"Oh, love. I am so sorry. If I only knew you'd be this upset, we shouldn't have gone to the auction", he whispered as he gently rubbed her back in a comforting gesture.

"Make love to me, Harry. I need to feel safe", she whispered.

"Hermione, you're not feeling well", he tried to gently dissuade her from the request she made.

"I want to feel you. I need to feel safe, Harry… Please", she sniffed once again.

"Are you sure, love?", he wanted to make sure that she is aware of what she is doing.

"Yes, make love to me please", she said. He could hear the certainty in her voice despite the tears in her eyes.

"It would be my great honor, my lady", he whispered to her ear before he maneuvered her in his
arms into a bridal carry. Tonight, he would do anything to reassure her that she is safe in his arms. He needs to show her how much he loves her. He has to make her feel that his every touch means that she is alive and well. He will make her feel his solemn promise that he will do absolutely anything to keep her safe...Always. If making love to her is what she needs, then he would happily spend the rest of the night showing his love for her through his actions...
A/N: Smut ahead. Just skip if it's not your thing.

My Cheating Heart
By: tweety-src-clt9
Despite the fear seeping through her bones because of the mysterious man she bumped into at the auction, Hermione couldn't help but feel anxious and excited about what is to come…

After all these years, she will be making love to Harry once again.

The first time they made love, it was all because of lies and deceit. A cunning plan to trick him into marrying her just so she could save him from Ginny Weasley's nefarious plot.

This time around, they will be making love because it is a culmination of their newly established relationship as husband and wife.

This time around, there will be no lies. Instead, it will all be about passion, caring, desire, and love. It may have taken them a decade to understand that they always did belong to one another, but tonight, there will be no holding back...

As she plans to share her body with him, so too will she swear to share her life with him.

Tonight, they will consummate their marriage for the very first time. She will be Harry Potter’s wife in every sense of the word. And after that, there will be no turning back. It is the ultimate surrender of her fragile heart. As she makes love to him tonight, she is making a promise to fully place her trust in him once again.

And yes, after tonight, she will no longer be Hermione Granger…

Because from this night onwards, she chooses to be forevermore, the Lady Potter.

As Harry opened the door to the master bedroom, she bit her bottom lip in anticipation. When he closed the door by giving it a light kick, she sighed.

"Are you sure about this, Hermione?", Harry asked one more time.

"Yes, Harry. I want you to make love to me… I need you to chase away my fears", she said in a breathless voice. He gently set her on top of the bed and their eyes met. She could feel the nervous tension in the air.

"So…"

"Er – ", they chorused. Both of them gave a nervous chuckle.

"It's not like we're virgins", she huffed.

"Technically, we only did it once", he shrugged.

"Maybe… we should take our clothes off or something", she suggested.

"No! Don't!", his hand made a stopping gesture.

"You want to do this with clothes on?", she said with an eyebrow raised.

"Er no. What I meant was, I'd rather, er, you know, take your clothes off myself", he bashfully muttered. Taking a deep breath to control her nerves, she slowly stood up from the bed with her back turned to him.

"Carry on then", she whispered. She could feel Harry standing close behind her, just mere inches
separating them. She could feel a shiver run up her spine as his shaking hand slowly lowered the zipper of her gown. As the zipper is fully lowered, his fingers caressed the exposed skin on her back in a slow teasing motion.

"You are so… beautiful", his voice was husky as his breath tickled her ear. She bit her bottom lip to stop herself from moaning when his calloused hands slowly lowered her gown until it pooled at her feet. Since the design of the gown required her to go braless, she is now standing with her back turned, in nothing but a pair of black strappy sandals and lace knickers. His left hand wrapped around her waist to pull her closer to his body. She gasped. His erection is now standing proudly as it pressed against her bum.

"Turn around", he whispered as he gently bit her earlobe. When she obeyed his command, the first thing she saw is his piercing emerald orbs blazing with lust and desire… The sensual promise in his mesmerizing eyes made her shiver with arousal.

Before she could react, Harry lifted her. On impulse, she wrapped her legs around his waist as her arms slid around his shoulders. He closed the distance between their lips in a hot steamy kiss. His tongue gently coaxing her mouth to welcome him, which she immediately allowed. She could feel herself being lowered to the mattress as she felt herself getting lost in Harry's passionate kisses. They pulled apart for air. Their eyes locked and their chests heaving.

"I love you Hermione Granger", he was breathless. His cheeks flushed.

"I love you Harry", she whispered back as her fingers played with his messy hair.

"Your heels are digging on my back", he said with a chuckle.

"Oh my! I am so sorry", she tried to unwrap her legs around him but he shook his head.

"No. It's alright. It's kinda hot", he wiggled his eyebrows and she rolled her eyes.

"You know, hardly seems fair that you're still wearing way too many clothes", she mused.

"There. Happy?", he only closed his eyes for a second and all of his clothes disappeared.

"Show off", she huffed.

"Oh…wait a sec", he looked up at the ceiling and only pointed a finger to conjure a large mirror. She blushed as she saw their reflection. Harry was hovering naked on top of her, his back muscles and his firm buttocks exposed in all its fine uncovered glory. Her heels were digging against his waist. It was the hottest thing she had ever seen! Since the room was bright, she could see everything.

"I didn't know you can wandlessly conjure objects", she muttered and he laughed.

"Only you, my love could contemplate things like that while naked", he chuckled.

"How long will the mirror last?", she cannot help but be curious.

"Four hours tops", he shrugged.

"What is the mirror for?", she was looking into his emerald green eyes as she said that.

"You'll see", he winked before kissing her lips once again. Their tongues tangled and battled for dominance. She lost the fight when one of his hands started playing with her nipples while the
"Harry", she moaned. When their lips parted, Harry started giving her neck open-mouthed kisses. She bit her bottom lip to stop herself from being too loud. As Harry's lips are now venturing on the valley of her breast, she closed her eyes.

"Let it go, love. Tonight is all about you", he whispered huskily before suckling on her left breast before moving to the other.

"Oh my god!", she groaned. When she opened her eyes, she could see all that Harry was doing to her from the mirror. His mouth's assault on her nipples, accompanied by his fingers grazing her knickers and the sensual sight made her even more aroused. She could feel how drenched her knickers are at this particular moment, and she flushed due to embarrassment.

"Woah!", she yelped when she was dragged down to the edge of the bed. She was surprised to see Harry now kneeling on the floor. She glanced at the ceiling and she flushed even further. Her legs were spread apart, her heels digging deep on the mattress, and Harry was kneeling in between them.

"Remember this?", Harry said with a smirk.

"Remember what?", she whispered.

"This", he murmured before his mouth lowered on the center of her femininity. She was looking at what Harry was doing to her from the mirror and it made her feel feverish with desire. Her mind drifted to the first time they made love. Back when she tricked Harry into sleeping with her in the guise of a love ritual. While clueless about pleasuring women, he did his best to make her first time special by going down on her...he was a natural at that many years ago. Frankly, his technique is much better now. *Must be the parseltongue...*

"Harry!", she yelled admonishingly when she felt her knickers being ripped apart. The torn lace was haphazardly tossed across the room.

"I'll buy you a new one", he muttered before he started licking her once again. He used one hand to rub her folds as his tongue brought her higher and higher to the heavens... She trembled as her first wave of orgasm hit.

"Harry…stop… can't take…more", she muttered between deep breaths. Her right hand tugged at his messy hair to pull him away from her hyper-sensitized core.

"Did you enjoy that?", he said as he rejoined her on the bed.

"Yes", she groaned. She was still heavily panting because of his pleasurable assault.

"Good. Happy to be of service", he said with a smirk before pecking her on the lips.

"Harry, just make love to me already", she rolled her eyes.

"Eager are we?", he teased. She bit her bottom lip as she felt his fingers tweaking her nipples.

"Please…", she moaned.

"With great pleasure, my lady", Harry said gallantly as he positioned himself in between her legs. As she felt the tip of his manhood slowly parting her lower lips, she took a deep breath. She remembered how much it hurt the first time due to her inexperience and his, well, very
"Please be gentle", she whispered. She felt her abdomen grow warm and it glowed for a few seconds. It was a contraceptive charm, once again cast by Harry wandlessly. *Being married to the world's most powerful wizard has its perks*...

"Always", his eyes were penetrating her own as he slowly eased inside her. He wrapped her legs around his waist, her heels digging on his firm buttocks. He clasped their hands together as he sensually thrust in and out of her.

Glancing at the mirror, with Harry's strong muscular back, his firm bum moving in time with his thrusts, she screamed his name as she orgasmed for the second time.

"Harder...Harry", she moaned. He lowered his mouth to passionately kiss her as he started pounding into her relentlessly as requested. As their bodies were drenched in sweat, their hips meeting each other thrust for thrust, their eyes connected... and together they screamed each other's name in ecstasy.

They were panting hard. Their eyes locked as the heat of their passion overwhelmed them.

"I love you", they whispered at the same time. Harry gave her one last kiss before he slowly pulled out of her body. She gasped when she felt her sandals vanish.

"Don't worry, I stored your shoes in the walk-in closet", he murmured into her ear as he drew her close with an embrace.

"Thank you", she smiled before closing her eyes.

"Sleep, my love. I'll keep you safe", that was the last thing she remembered before she lost herself to the land of dreams.

---

Harry Potter lay awake watching Hermione sleep.

He was enjoying how the moonlight and the shadows highlight the contours of her nose and her cheeks. He was basking in the moment of just being together with her. He lay there immersing himself in the afterglow of their love.

The steady and even movements of her breathing a comforting sound to him.

After all that has happened, he cannot believe that she was now sleeping soundly beside him. On their bed. In their bedroom. In their home.

It still seems like a dream to him.

For the last ten years, he imagined every scenario that could happen should they cross paths once again. Only in his wildest fantasies did he ever imagine that he would earn her forgiveness.

And now, she was here. Sleeping peacefully beside him. Her left arm wrapped around his waist. Her face pressed against his chest.

God how he loved this woman! This beautiful wonderful woman, who after everything he put her
through, is just so generous and forgiving to accept him back into her life.

Aside from earning her forgiveness, she blessed him by giving her heart to him once again. After all the stupid things he did, she still loved him back.

"I love you Hermione Potter", he whispered as he tightened his hold around her.

They did not talk about what scared her so much at the auction last night. Maybe they could talk about it in the morning. But for now, he would forget about the threat that is lurking out there. The darkness that is threatening to take her away from him.

*I will never allow that to happen... No one else is taking you away from me, Hermione. I will keep you safe, always...*

That was his solemn promise before he allowed himself to succumb to the lull of sleep.

---

It was the second time that Hermione woke up laying next to a warm solid body wrapped around her. She had a big smile on her face as she looked up at her husband's adorable sleeping face. There is just something so cute about a sleeping Harry Potter.

She slowly raised herself and placed a gentle kiss on Harry's forehead. In as much as she understands that they both could use a lie in, the circumstances simply cannot allow them to. Today is the 24th of December! They have guests to welcome soon so they best prepare early.

"Harry", she whispered.

"Hmmm", he groaned.

"Wake up, Harry. We have guests to entertain soon", she said as her finger traced the contour of his lips.

"Five more minutes", he whined.

"If you wake up now, we could shower together", she cajoled playfully. With that, his eyes opened immediately.

"You sure?", he asked as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. She rolled her eyes. *Blokes and their hormones...*

"Yes. So, get up now. We have to get ready. My parents will be arriving at Heathrow at ten in the morning. And you told me Teddy and Andromeda will arrive here at three in the afternoon", she reminded him.

"Okay, okay. I'm up", he slowly sat up on the bed.

"Good morning, Lord Potter", she kissed him on the cheek.

"Good morning to you too, Lady Potter", he said as he wrapped an arm around her waist to pull her close. They remained quiet as they shared a warm embrace. She felt his lips kiss the top of her head.
"Now let's go shower, time is ticking", she said with a chuckle.

"Way to kill the romantic mood, love", he snorted.

"I thought you had your fill of romance last night", she huffed.

"Not quite", he smirked as he poked her on the side making her laugh. It was one of her ticklish spots.

"Don't – do that", she huffed.

"Consider that as petty revenge for waking me up early. I didn't get much sleep last night", he pouted.

"Ah well, best get used to it. One of the downsides about marrying me I suppose", she retorted.

"I'll live. I won't trade you for anything else in this world", he winked and she rolled her eyes.

"Come on, let's shower already. I'm hungry. You still have to cook", she tugged at his hand to pull him away from the bed.

"I still don't understand how an excellent potion maker such as yourself can't cook", he chuckled as he followed her to the en-suite bathroom.

"Another downside for marrying me then", she huffed.

"Well then, it's a good thing you have more upsides than downsides, don't you agree?", Harry said as he wrapped an arm around her shoulders as he led her towards the jacuzzi.

"Harry! I said shower not hot tub", she protested.

"Come on, love. It's still so early", he pouted.

"Fine! But just thirty minutes and we get out of the water", she relented. She could no longer disagree since he already wandlessly set up the jacuzzi. *Might as well give in to his whims since it's Christmas Eve...*

"Don't worry we won't be late. I'll set a timer. Thirty minutes, I promise", Harry said as he stepped into the tub. When he got settled, he extended a hand to help her get in. Carefully climbing in, she leaned her back against Harry's chest as his arms wrapped around her waist.

"Ooohh...Touchy", she teased.

"I just missed you so much", he pouted before kissing her shoulder which made her giggle.

"We're so sweet it's disgusting", she chuckled.

"I know right?", he said with a laugh.

"Harry?"

"Yes, love?"

"Thank you for last night...for making me feel safe", she whispered as her fingers played with his hands.
"Anytime love", he whispered back before pressing another kiss on her shoulder.

"You made me feel so loved... as if he could never go near me if I am with you. Because I am safe with you", she confessed.

"Will you tell me what happened?", he asked.

"Do you know *legilimency*?", she thought it was best to show him the memory.

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"I'd rather show you the memory", she muttered. He slowly turned her around to face him. As their eyes met, he uttered the spell, *legilimens*. After seeing the memory, his arms tightened around her.

"Oh, Hermione", he said before comforting her with a kiss that is filled with so much care and love. She knew he was doing it to reassure her that he was there for her. He would always keep her safe...

They could consider it a strong testament to their self-control that they finished taking a bath in just thirty minutes as planned. After that, Harry went into the kitchen to cook breakfast while she cast cleaning charms around the penthouse. At exactly nine in the morning, they rode Harry's Lamborghini as they headed towards Heathrow Airport to fetch her parents.

"Look, love! I can already see your parents. Over there", Harry pointed to the Grangers. He could see them first because he was taller than Hermione. When she turned to the direction he pointed to, his heart swelled as he saw the joy on her face.

"Mum! Dad! Over here!", she said with a cheerful wave which made him chuckle.

"You're so cute", he whispered as he kissed the top of her head.

"Darling!", Emma Granger ran towards them and wrapped Hermione in a warm embrace which was earnestly returned.

"Hello, Harry!", this time it was his turn to be wrapped around Emma's embrace.

"Daddy!", Hermione hugged her father tightly.

"I miss you too, sweetie", her father returned the hug just as tenderly.

"Harry, Happy Christmas!", Dan Granger gave him a manly hug with a pat on the back.

"Happy Christmas, Dan", he grinned.

"Let's go! Best to avoid traffic", Hermione said bossily and he shared an amused chuckle with the Grangers. He helped Dan with their luggage and Hermione led the way to where the Lamborghini is parked. When Dan saw the car, he wolf-whistled.

"Want to drive, Dan?", he wiggled his eyebrows.

"No way!", Emma and Hermione chorused.
"Womenfolk could be so mean, right Harry?", Dan pouted. He was about to agree but Hermione glared at him.

"Er, no comment, sir", he said with a chuckle.

"Good answer, mate", Dan laughed.

"Why don't you take the front seat, Dad? Mum and I will ride on the backseat. That way, you menfolk could talk about cars", Hermione said with an eye roll. He exchanged grins with Dan as all four of them entered the appropriate car doors after storing the luggage in the back.

"So how long have you had this sweet ride, Harry?", Dan said.

"I got it way back in 2005", he said as he turned the ignition on.

"Sweet! Is this your only car or you have others?"

"I have a sports car, an Alfa Romeo. I also have a Porsche, it's my first car. And I have two motorcycles", he said with a grin as he drove away from the parking lot.

"Well mum, since the men are busy being men, why don't you tell me about what's up with you and daddy in Brisbane?", he heard Hermione turn to her mother. Dan chuckled at his daughter's comment.

"I told you that I should have gotten your parents a car, Mione", he caught his wife's eye on the rearview mirror.

"In as much as car talk is interesting… what we would like to know is how you two got back together?", Emma said with excitement. He saw the horrified look on Hermione's face and he chuckled.

"Your story, love. I'm busy driving", he said with a wink making Hermione huff.

"Nice to know I got your back, Potter", Hermione said sarcastically.

"Do women get meaner when they get older?", he playfully asked Dan who tried his best to stop chuckling.

"It's a part of life, mate", Dan said.

"Just for calling me old, you're sleeping on the couch, Potter", Hermione scoffed.

"You are so mean to me, Mrs. Potter. After all the cooking I do for you", he said dramatically and the Grangers laughed.

"Thank the heavens you got yourself a man who cooks, darling! Lord knows you can't cook anything except soup", Emma laughed.

"It's annoying how my parents seem to like you more than me", Hermione crossed her arms and pouted.

"See, love? I always got your back. By amusing your parents with my stories, they forgot about your call to tell them how we got back together", he teased.

"Just shut up and drive Harry", she playfully glared at him.
"You know, we don't even want to know. We're just happy you were able to sort out your issues. Besides, you both are so sweet, it's disgustingly adorable", Emma said with a giggle. He locked eyes with Hermione on the rearview mirror and he gave her a wink. He could see her biting her bottom lip to stop herself from laughing. They had a similar conversation about being disgustingly sweet while lounging in the tub mere hours ago.

While Harry and her mother were busy preparing lunch, Hermione and her father were lounging around the entertainment room watching Christmas movies. It is a Granger family tradition to watch feel-good family movies during Christmas Eve.

"Love?", she heard Harry call out.

"Yes?", she turned her head towards his voice.

"Your beaded purse is glowing so I brought it here for you", Harry said as he lightly shook the purse in his hand.

"Excuse me for a sec, will you dad?", she addressed her father who only nodded.

"It must be Viktor and VJ on the mirrors. Come, Harry. I want you to meet VJ", she held Harry's hand as she led the way towards the master bedroom. When they were comfortably seated on the bed, with her back leaning on Harry's chest, she opened her purse and took out the communication mirror. Indeed, it was vibrating and glowing.

"Activate. Hello VJ! Hi Viktor! Happy Christmas", she happily greeted with a wave.

"Auntie My-own! Happy Christmas!", VJ said with a big grin.

"Happy Christmas, Her-my-own-ninny", Viktor said and she could feel Harry's chest rumble in laughter. He nudged him lightly on the rib with her elbow.

"Auntie My-own? Who's that man behind you?", VJ said with curiosity.

"VJ, meet Harry Potter, my husband. Harry, meet my handsome godson, VJ", Hermione introduced.

"Husband? So that means you won't marry my daddy anymore", VJ said with a pout.

"Son, you know that your Auntie My-own and I are just friends", Viktor gently admonished the boy.

"Hello, VJ! Happy Christmas! You too, Viktor. Long-time no see", Harry greeted the Krums with a friendly smile.

"Happy Christmas, Harry Potter. You better treat Her-my-own-ninny right this time, because if not, VJ will come after you", Viktor said with a chuckle.

"I promise Viktor. If I mess up again, I permit you to hex me", Harry replied and Viktor nodded.

"Wait… You're Harry Potter!", VJ said with excitement.
"Hey, VJ", Harry said with a wave.

"Did you save the world?", the boy asked.

"Er, I kind of did. With your Auntie My-own's help", Harry said with a bashful smile.

"Auntie My-own! You didn't tell me you know Harry Potter", VJ said with a pout.

"Well, er, why don't you and I hang out with your daddy and Auntie My-own when you come to visit? How's that sound?", Harry intervened. She was so thankful for his quick response since she doesn't know how to answer VJ's question.

"Really?", VJ said happily.

"Yes. Really", Harry grinned at the child.

"Well…okay. I guess it's fine that you're my Auntie My-own's husband", VJ said thoughtfully and the three adults laughed.

"I love you VJ", Hermione blew a kiss at the child.

"I love you too Auntie My-own! I can't wait to have you read my new books with me. Thank you for the gift. I hope you liked my card too, I made them myself", VJ said with a grin.

"Ooohhh… I am so excited to get them, sweetie. Maybe they'll be here by tomorrow", Hermione said with a smile.

"Daddy and I sent you a gift too but it's a surprise", VJ said and once again, the adults chuckled.

"I'm sure I'll love them sweetie", Hermione replied.

"Come now, VJ. Say goodbye to Auntie My-own and Harry Potter", Viktor said.

"Bye Auntie My-own! Nice meeting you Harry Potter!", VJ said with a wave.

"Bye Viktors", Hermione grinned and Harry waved before the connection ended.

"Nice save there, Harry", she remarked.

"Well, I had to think of something. I know VJ and Viktor are close to you… So, I have to make VJ like me", he said with a chuckle.

"I love you, Harry Potter", she whispered.

"I love you too, Mrs. Potter", he said as he kissed her nape.

"We should go. Wouldn't look good on your reputation if my parents would think we're shagging in here", she said with a chuckle.

"True", he said.

"Besides, you have more cooking to do", she teased and he rolled his eyes.

"You know it would seem you only took me back for my cooking abilities", he huffed.

"Well it's one of the abilities that I like most about you", she winked.
"One of? And pray, tell me what are the others?", he said curiously. She turned around and then whispered something in his ear which made him blush.

"Let's go, love. We have guests to entertain", she said as she stood up from the bed.

"You're such a little minx", he crossed his arms in exasperation and she giggled. With an arm around each other's waist, they left the master bedroom before they parted ways to go to the kitchen and the entertainment room.

At exactly three in the afternoon, Andromeda Tonks and Teddy Lupin apparated into the living room of Harry's penthouse. The Grangers were taking a nap in the guest bedroom that Hermione used to occupy, but they were lounging on the couch eager to greet their last two guests. As soon as grandmother and grandson got their bearings, the eleven-year-old boy immediately ran into his godfather's waiting arms.

"Uncle Harry! I missed you!", Teddy said as he hugged his godfather.

"I miss you too, buddy", Harry replied as he ruffled the boy's blue hair.

"Hello, Andy", Harry smiled at the last of the Black sisters.

"Happy Christmas, Harry", Andromeda wrapped him in a hug.

"Teddy, I would like you to meet someone special", Harry said after pulling away from Andy's embrace.

"Teddy, I'd like you to meet – "

"Hermione Granger!", Teddy said excitedly.

"Hello, Teddy! My! You are so grown up. The last time I saw you, you were just a baby", Hermione said with a bright smile.

"Hello, Hermione! Welcome back!", Andy wrapped Hermione in a hug which she eagerly returned.

"Uncle Harry, is it true that you and Hermione Granger are married?", Teddy asked with genuine curiosity.

"Yes, buddy. Hermione and I got married many years ago", he answered his godson.

"Wow! I can't believe it! Hermione Granger is my godmother!", Teddy's hair was changing colors because he was so excited. Hermione chuckled when the boy wrapped his arms around her which she happily returned.

"Well, at least you like each other", Harry said with a chuckle.

"Are you kidding? My classmates will be so jealous! Hermione Granger is such an icon", Teddy said.

"An icon, huh?", Hermione giggled.
"Well, yes. I mean – you're so pretty and – ", Teddy babbled, his cheeks flushed.

"Boy, here we go", Harry said with exasperation. Hermione has boys wrapped around her dainty fingers.

"Are you my Uncle Harry's wife, Ms. Granger?", Teddy was so excited that he was nearly bouncing up and down.

"Yes, I am, Teddy", she grinned.

"Someday, I'm gonna be just like you Uncle Harry", Teddy mused.

"Why would you want to be like me, buddy?", he asked.

"I will marry the smartest and the prettiest witch in Hogwarts too", Teddy said with a giggle.

"Hermione Potter! We really should discuss how you should control your charms around gullible little boys", he feigned annoyance which made the women laughed.

"Uncle Harry don't be mean. What if Ms. Granger will leave you?", Teddy admonished.

"Come along, Teddy. You could tell me all about school", Hermione held out a hand which the kid immediately accepted. They happily walked towards the entertainment room leaving Harry and Andromeda behind.

"How are you, Harry?", Andromeda asked with a kind smile. She became the mother figure in his life ever since Hermione left him many years ago.

"I am so happy, Andy. I – well, I still think it's a dream. You know, Hermione accepting me again", he admitted.

"She is a very special woman. Not just for her brains and her beauty, but her forgiving heart too", Andy said with a smile.

"Yes, she is. I am afraid you know. That one day she'll realize how unworthy I am of her. Because frankly, she deserves so much better", he confessed.

"Oh, Harry! She loves you. I can see it in her eyes. She'll never go away. Just don't mess up again, because really, Hermione Granger is quite the catch", Andy said with a chuckle.

"I'm worried about the threat against her life. I mean, I know how stupid I could be sometimes, but I am confident that I would never mess up in epic proportions again, just like what I did ten years ago… but, I'm scared, Andy. There is an unknown syndicate out there, with sinister plans for Hermione…What if they take her away from me? I just got her back in my life. I can't lose her… What if I'm not strong enough to save her? What if I can't keep her safe?", he finally admitted his fears out loud. Andromeda became a confidante of sorts because she never judged him. She also helped him get his life back on track especially when he was wallowing himself in guilt and alcohol after Viola's death and Hermione's departure.

Andromeda knows all about his dark past. She was aware that one of his recurring nightmares in the past (which frankly still haunts him on some days) is all about Hermione's pains…Her petrification, her nasty hit from Dolohov at the Department of Mysteries, Bellatrix Lestrange's horrible tortures at Malfoy Manor, and the worst nightmare of all, heranguished screams on the day Viola Lily drew her last breath.
Most of his PTSD treatments were centralized on his guilt for all the pain Hermione suffered during their marriage, and all the times she was with him as he faced the many trials in his life. No one else but Andromeda Tonks understands how big of a deal it was for him to have Hermione back in his life. Because his wife's forgiveness was his main motivation in turning his life around all those years ago. He promised himself that he would be a better man for her. He would be the man who deserved Hermione Granger. Back then, he promised that even if she won't forgive him, he would dedicate his life to being a man she could be proud of at the very least. Because he owed Hermione a lot.

So, now that his wildest dream came true, she not only forgave him but she loved him again, he was just overwhelmed with joy. And the threats against her made him so frightened. It was a kind of fear that he's never known before…Not even facing Voldemort scared him like this. Because he was so scared for Hermione. He was so scared of losing her. He is so afraid of seeing her get hurt again...

"While I could not alleviate your fears by saying that everything will turn out fine, I am confident that your love will stand the test of time. You and Hermione have already faced so much together. And yes, there may be a threat out there, but just remember, both of you could face anything because you are stronger together. Things out of our control happen, Harry. Just savor every moment you have with Hermione. Don't let fear rule your life. Besides, I am certain that you have added extra security measures just for her. So, don't live in fear and uncertainty. Seize the day", Andy said with a smile before she walked towards the entertainment room.

Seize the day...Maybe Andy's right. I should not let fear rule over my life. Besides, it's Christmas. I should celebrate and be happy, he thought as he too followed them to the entertainment room.

Harry had a fond smile as he watched Hermione and Teddy singing songs from the Karaoke Channel. Hermione even set up the microphone…How I wish things will always be like this. Hermione is here with me, she's safe and happy...

"Uncle Harry, come and join us!", Teddy gestured for him to sit on the couch. With a big smile, he decided to just let go of his fears and seize the day. He had his wife back and he had a family now. Tomorrow will take care of itself.

When the Grangers woke up from their nap, all of them had a wonderful time together. They sang songs, watched movies, ate good food, and just basked in the joy of being together as a family. The dinner prepared by Harry, Emma, and Andromeda is sensational. The elders talked and played cards while Harry and Hermione bonded with Teddy.

All six of them are so excited for Christmas Day tomorrow. With Teddy's eyes drifting longingly towards the Christmas Tree now and then, all the adults understood that first thing tomorrow, they would all be unwrapping presents.

Tomorrow, on the 25th of December, they all agreed to visit the beneficiaries of the Viola Lily Potter Foundation. Teddy is so excited to meet the friends he had from the orphanage. Hermione and the Grangers are also so eager to spend time with the children. Meanwhile, Harry is just so glad to share his newfound happiness with the less privileged kids. He was confident that the children would love Hermione. Because really, she just has a way with children. They are drawn to her gentle spirit, friendly smile, and caring heart… This Christmas is undoubtedly the best one
ever!

One of Harry's surprise for the family is tickets to see a theatrical production of *Wicked* on the West End on the 27th of December. It would be a perfect bonding time for all of them. He really cannot wait! This is indeed the best holiday ever... because, with Hermione back in his life, any day is just absolutely perfect. *Yeah, they are disgustingly sweet.*

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As Christmas Celebrations are held all over the world, the largest syndicate in the European Wizarding Community is busy making plans...

In an underground hideout somewhere in Yugoslavia, the five key members of the 'Atbae 'Ililah Al-mawt are gathered in a circle. They were all anxious and excited to hear their master's plans for the capture of their future queen. Finally! After all these years, Master Karim could now be with his Isis and reclaim the throne of Osiris.

"The time is drawing near... On the first of January, my Isis and I should be joined together and the legacy of Osiris will finally be mine. Today is already the 24th of December. We must bring my Isis here at once... Whoever brings her to me will get a huge reward. Is that understood?", Karim Hajjar said in a voice that was loud and clear.

"Yes Master!", the five chorused.

Karim Hajjar distributed reports about his Isis, Hermione Granger, all over the round table. The reports contained her interests, places she likes to visit, her strengths and weaknesses. He knew that his minions will be so eager to follow his command. The reward for whoever brings his Isis to him is just too difficult to resist... *Soon my Isis... We will be together...*

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In Switzerland, Kei Irie is busy reading tomes about the origin of Osiris and Isis' gifts as the Master and Mistress of Death. He may not know why the Chief is asking him to research on this, but he didn't care. His boss and friend, Hermione Granger, would never ask him to do something unimportant. His mind was blown at the things he had discovered... He cannot wait to tell the Chief about what he learned...
Kei Irie, after having found all the hidden tomes containing details on how Osiris and Isis became the Master and Mistress of Death, decided that it was time to record all his findings in a letter that
he will be sending to the Chief via owl post. He knew that they initially agreed to talk via their communication mirrors regarding any information he could find, but since it's Christmas season, he reckons that sending a letter would be best.

Besides, the Chief must be so busy right now… He could vividly imagine his prim and proper boss getting shagged to her heart's content by her drop-dead gorgeous Lord surrounded by satin sheets in a large king-sized bed. Hermione Granger, you are one lucky witch!

He had a fond smile on his face as he thought about his dear friend. If anyone deserved a good round of shagging, it would be Hermione Granger. After all, she deserves to be happy. For all the excellent work she contributes to healing the sick, he could not think of one person who deserves to be happier. Seriously, despite Harry Potter's major screw-ups in the past, it is very obvious that the handsome Lord is head over heels in love with his boss. So, if he makes her happy, then he is thrilled for them!

Harry and Hermione Potter are the perfect power couple. Who else but the Most Powerful Wizard in Britain could ever deserve the Brightest Witch of the Age? Hmmm… Should they decide to have another wedding ceremony, Vangie and I will tag team as wedding planners!

He summoned a blank parchment as he dipped his quill in ink. This letter will surely make the Chief happy…

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December 25, 2010

Dear Chief,

Happy Christmas!

I totes love your Christmas present, and so, I decided to go all out for your research request, as promised. I do hope you and your gorgeous Lord enjoyed my present though. HAHA. I’m sure the extra vibrations add something special to happy times, eh?

I know we agreed to talk on the mirrors but I know you and Lord Potter must be busy (wink wink). You have ten years of worth of kinky shagging to make up for...sigh.

Anyway, after submitting my reports to the Supreme Mugwump, I visited the Hall of Archives yesterday afternoon. I just summoned all documents and books that contained information on Osiris and Isis, thankfully, there were only three. Since I have to rush home because my parents and I have plans, I created password protected duplicates of the three references. I’ve been up all night reading about the first Master and Mistress of Death.

Below is a summary of my most important findings:

1.) There are no documented details on what sort of magical communion ritual is used by Osiris and Isis in the past. I reviewed some hieroglyphs and the only clue talked about was the merging of blood, flesh, and magic. (We can look into ancient marriage rituals when we are both back at HQ.)

2.) Osiris was a powerful wizard who once served as a warrior to protect Ancient Egypt. One day his sister, Isis, was kidnapped by enemy warlords who wanted to take over Egypt. It’s rather hazy but it was clear that Isis was sexually assaulted. Anyway, she was never the same after Osiris was
able to rescue her from her captors. Sometime later, while boat riding along the River Nile, Osiris fell off-board. Due to his brute strength and his magical abilities, he survived. Buried on the riverbed, he found some sort of treasure chest (it has a complicated name in the tome, so whatever). That chest contained what is now known as the Deathly Hallows: The Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Cloak of Invisibility. Upon docking his boat safely, he found a cave and he tried putting the cloak and the ring on, as he held the wand. There, it was stated that he talked to the Creator. He was offered to be the Protector of the Gates of the Afterlife upon his death. He accepted the great task but he asked for a huge favor in return. He wanted to be made the ruler of Egypt so that he could protect his sister. He also requested for her memories of her tortures to be removed so that she could be well again. When his wishes were granted, he married Isis because she could no longer trust any other man, except for her brother. Osiris and Isis ruled Egypt during its peak of prosperity. Their non-magical subjects presumed they were gods because of their magic. The Deathly Hallows was handed over to their descendants when they passed on. It was stated that the last Pharaoh from the bloodline of Osiris was punished for abusing his gifts. Hence, Egypt was faced with the Ten Plagues (yes, the story of Moses from the Bible). The line of Osiris was defeated by the Ptolemaic Dynasty which is founded by one of Alexander the Great's generals. The line of Osiris was made to serve the Ptolemy dynasty, they became the priests, priestess, and magicians for the conquerors of their nation. With the last known descendant serving the last Pharaoh of Egypt, Cleopatra the VII (the one who dated Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius). No one knows what happened to the line of Osiris after that.

3.) The Deathly Hallows come and go from anointed family to anointed family. If the descendants, who hold the hallows as symbols of being blessed, destroy the Creator's trust, then it will be found by another deemed to be worthy. Although it has been said that finding the Hallows come with a great challenge. It's like a test of some sort to prove your worth and magical abilities.

4.) Oh, the last thing I discovered about Osiris and Isis is that their magical communion, per the hieroglyph's inscription, happened on the first new moon of the first lunar cycle (not certain about the specific time frame since they followed a different calendar system, but basically it indicates the first day of the first month of a new year).

That's all I've uncovered so far, Chief. I hope it helps.

Cheerio,

Kei Irie

Kei Irie gave his letter one last run-through before he was satisfied with the information he listed down.

"Kei-kun, yushoku no junbi!", his father called from the kitchen. When Tadashi Irie calls you for dinner, you better respond immediately. His father makes the best katsu ever!

"Hai Otou-san!", he ran to the kitchen as he forgot to prioritize looking for an owl to send the letter...
"Daddy…you didn't save mummy! How could you let her die! I hate you daddy", Viola Lily sobbed. Her emerald green orbs seething in hate and anger.

"Harry why did you not save me", those were Hermione's last words before she succumbed to death. Blood was oozing from her chest. She had bruises all over her body. She could barely be recognized.

"You are weak Harry Potter! You don't deserve Hermione Granger", Voldemort said with a cruel laugh...

"Ahhhh! No! Hermione! No!", Harry Potter was drenched in sweat. He was writhing in agony because of his nightmares.

"Hermione! I'm sorry!", he was still asleep but he now had tears in his eyes.

Hermione woke up from her peaceful slumber to the sound of Harry's anguished screams. Oh, Harry… She gently shook his shoulder to wake him up. When his eyes opened, her heart broke at the grief and horror reflected in his emerald green orbs.

"Oh, Harry! It's just a nightmare", she said comfortingly as she kissed his forehead.

"Hermione…you're here….and alive", he whispered.

"I'm safe Harry… And so are you", she pecked him on the lips this time.

Harry slowly sat up on the bed which she immediately followed. She was nestled between his legs as she wrapped her arms around him in a loving embrace.

"Hermione, what if… I can't keep you safe!", he whispered.

"You always will Harry… Just like you always do. Besides, I can take care of myself. You need not worry too much", she tried to reassure him.

"But we still don't know who is after you", he was still very worried about the sinister plot against her from an unknown enemy.

"We can't live in fear, love…We'll be fine…I promise", she was confident in that statement.

"But how could you say that?", he muttered.

"I'm Hermione Granger, I'm always right", she huffed which got her desired result. It made him chuckle.

"Tomorrow, I'm meeting the aurors in the morning. I'll be sharing the memory you showed me. Of that creepy man from the hotel. It might just be a coincidence, but we have to be sure", his voice is now filled with determination.

"Alright love. But promise me you won't obsess about this, okay?", she was staring intently into his eyes.
"But I have to –"

"No! Promise me. You can't be obsessed with that one incident. Besides, I'll be back in Switzerland in the second week of January. I'll be safe, love", she reassured him.

"Fine. I promise. I won't obsess about that man. But I will have my aurors look him up", he insisted.

"Okay. That sounds fine to me", she rolled her eyes at his over-protectiveness.

"What are your plans for tomorrow morning?", he asked. Tomorrow, it will already be December 26th.

"Well, I will just give one final check on the vaccine formula. After that, when I give my approval, then it could be distributed to the non-pureblood kids who came in contact with that toy. Abim and Rosier will be handling that. So, my afternoon will be free", she informed him.

"My afternoon is free too. Do you want us to go somewhere with the rest of the family?", he asked.

"Hmmm…well, we spent Christmas with the foundation kids which I greatly enjoyed. On the 27th, you said you have a surprise for all of us… Why don't we just spend the rest of the afternoon here at home? Just bask in the glory of being together. Besides, we can do so many things here…"

"You have a good point…Maybe, I can spend some time with Teddy as I give him tips on how to play guitar…Yeah, we can do so many things here", he agreed.

"Now that we have that settled, let's sleep. We need to rest because we had too much fun today", she said with a grin. They had a lot of fun at the orphanage today. It makes her so happy to know that Harry had been helping all those children ever since he started the foundation.

"You know, I'm not sleepy now. We could try Irie's gift. It seems interesting", he said with a naughty grin. When they were opening Christmas presents in the morning, she blushed when she opened one of Irie's gifts. Her horny friend dared to give her a vibrator; it even came with a racy note.

"We can do that next time. I'm tired", she yawned.

"Good night, love. You need to rest", he kissed her forehead. They settled themselves on the bed once again. His arms wrapped around her. The steady beating of his heart is such a comforting lullaby to her ears.

There may be unknown threats out there, but Harry will always be there for her. He defeated a troll for her at eleven, slain the basilisk that petrified her at twelve, taught students how to defend themselves at fifteen, and killed a dark lord at seventeen.

Whatever it is, Harry Potter will defy the odds in his favor. His love for people he held deep within his heart had always been his greatest strength. And given how overwhelming his love is for her, she really could not ask for a better protector…

So yes, she is very confident that he would always keep her safe.

*If only he didn't obsess about it too much. He should believe in himself. Because I have faith in him… I always have. And I always will.*

"I love you Harry", she whispered before closing her eyes.
"I love you, Hermione", he whispered back.

Harry Potter walked the familiar halls toward Hermione's temporary office at St. Mungo's. He now felt more secure about his fears for his wife's safety. He already shared the memory of her encounter with that mysterious man to the rest of the aurors. Sure, it could be a false lead, but he just wants to be certain if that incident is somehow connected to the mysterious leader of the Red Triangle. Or maybe that creepy bastard is just a randy bloke. Or he could be part of the syndicate, although he wishes that is not the case.

Aside from the threat to Hermione, this Christmas season seems to be a quiet one as far as security issues in magical Britain are concerned. Everything is all peaceful and happy. Even the ICW has no updates regarding the syndicate. Despite the jovial mood, his gut feeling is telling him that something will turn out wrong… After all, his nightmares are rarely mistaken.

He decided to just barge into her office as a surprise. When he opened the door, his mouth formed the perfect shape of an O.

It was a sight that is unbelievable.

Hermione is talking to Ginny Zabini. Okay, so Hermione is focused on young Julianna… But still. This is the first time that Hermione is openly interacting with Ginny.

"Harry! What are you doing here?", Hermione gasped in surprise as she looked up.

"My meetings are done. So, I decided to fetch you", he shrugged.

"Oh, well, I'm done as well. Julianna and her mum just decided to visit me", she said.

"Hello, Harry", Ginny greeted him.

"Hi, Lord Potter", Julianna said with a grin. Even if he despised the mother, he still smiled at the little girl.

"Hello, Julianna. Mrs. Zabini", he said politely. It was more for the child's benefit than anything else.

"Juli, could you leave the room for a few minutes, please. I just want to speak to Lord Potter and Chief Healer Granger for a minute", Ginny addressed her daughter who nodded.

"Thank you once again for saving my life, Miss Mione! Someday I'm gonna be like you", the child said cheerfully as she wrapped her arms around Hermione's waist.

"You're welcome, sweetie. Maybe someday you'll be the Chief Medical Researcher of the ICW too, eh?", Hermione winked at the little girl making her giggle.

"Maybe… Although that would require me to be super smart. My mummy and Uncle Ron say that you are the smartest person they have ever met", Julianna said thoughtfully.

"Sweetie, you wanna know a secret?", Hermione said conspiratorially.

"Ahuh", Julianna giggled as she leaned in closer to her hero.
'The secret to my success at being smart is hard work. If you study your lessons in advance, then you will get smart. Talent can only get you so far. It's determination and dedication that will take you to places. That is my secret", Hermione said with a grin. The child smiled and gave a firm nod before leaving her office.

"Chief Healer Granger – ", Ginny started.

"Look, Ginny, if you're gonna apologize again... Just save it. If you're gonna thank me, you don't have to. I'm just doing my job", Hermione interrupted.

"Chief Healer – 

"You may call her Lady Potter", he said.

"Lady Potter, I –"

"Ginny whatever you have to say, I don't want to hear it. I like your daughter. She's sweet and nice. I only tolerated you for her sake. I've done my duty. So, the only thing I ask of you is to leave me alone. I forgive you. You and your entire family. I just don't want to be friends with any Weasley ever again. Except for the Weasley kids and Fleur", Hermione said sternly.

"As you say, La - Lady Potter", Ginny stammered.

"Now Mrs. Zabini, could you please leave? My Lady and I have some shopping to do", he was bored with all this drama already.

"Harry I – 

"Hardly seems fair if you call me Lady Potter but you call my husband by his first name, don't you think?", Hermione mused.

"Lord Potter I – 

"Just go, Mrs. Zabini. I don't want your apology for plotting to legally steal from me. But know this, I will never forgive you for driving a wedge between the Lady Potter and myself many years ago. Because of your insinuations and my stupidity for actually believing you over my best friend, I lost ten years with Hermione. And we lost our daughter. By bringing doubt in my head, you destroyed us. And I will never forgive you for that. The Lady Potter may be nice and forgiving but I am not", he said sternly.

"For what it's worth, I am very sorry. To the both of you. Especially you, Hermione", Ginny gave them a respectful nod before she hurriedly exited Hermione's office.

"My my Lord Potter… Quite a temper you have there", Hermione said with a chuckle.

"What? She's disturbing my time with you. We could have been snogging by now", he huffed playfully which earned him a smack on the chest.

"Is everything about sex and snogging to you?", she rolled her eyes.

"I would call it making love, not sex. And no, the physical side of our relationship is just icing on the cake. I rather find your wit and dry humor more stimulating", he smirked.

"But really, Harry! Excellent timing! In as much as I enjoyed spending time with little Julianna, I find being with Ginny just too awkward. So, thank you for rescuing me, love", Hermione said
before kissing him on the cheek.

"You mean that though? About forgiving the Weasleys?", he inquired.

"Yes. I just don't want to see them again. I can forgive them. But I will never forget what they did to me", he could hear the seriousness in her declaration.

"You're clearly a better person than I, love", he mused.

"Of course, I am", she scoffed which made the both of them laugh.

"Come on, Lady Potter! We have to go home", he wrapped an arm around her waist as he led her to the door.

Hermione had a big smile on her face as the curtains closed to indicate the end of the first act. Harry surprised all of them when he announced that he bought tickets to see a production of *Wicked* at the West End. Since she loved theater, his surprise made her so happy.

It was also Andromeda and Teddy's first time to watch a show at the West End and it's rather funny to see their reactions to how the non-magical community portrays witches. Even if they found the depiction of witches as odd, it was very obvious that they loved the song numbers though.

Andromeda and Teddy's mouth gaped as Elphaba Thropp belted out her signature song, *Defying Gravity*. They were used to tunes by Celestina Warbeck and The Weird Sisters. Magic may be amazing, but in terms of music, the non-magical community is way ahead.

"Love, I'm just gonna go to the restroom, okay? I'll be back before the start of the second act", she turned to Harry who was seated on her right.

"Do you want me to come with you? I don't want you to bump into a scary stranger again", he insisted.

"I'll be fine. I promise", she reassured him with a kiss on the cheek. He relented with a sigh and she smiled at him before standing up from her seat.

She was walking towards the restroom when she spotted a woman who was crying in a corner. No one seemed to bother to help out so she decided to approach her. Besides, the queue is rather long. She could spot the line from where she stood. *Maybe it's best to line up ten minutes before the second act starts…*

"Excuse me, miss? Are you alright?", she said in a gentle voice as she approached the sobbing woman. They appear to be around the same age.

"Help me. My daughter, she's missing. I just – ", the distraught woman sobbed.

"Oh dear, I am so sorry. Let's go find security", she suggested.

"Here. Hold my purse for a second. I'll call my husband on the phone", the woman said in between tears. She nodded. She can't imagine the anguish she must be feeling!

The woman rummaged her purse for her mobile phone before handing her the large black leather
clutch. She just accepted it without question.

"Activate", she was shocked when the sobbing woman said that. The last thing she saw was the evil smirk on the woman's face before she felt a tug from what could only be a portkey...
Harry Potter glanced at his watch. There is only one minute left before the start of the second act and still no sign of Hermione. He craned his neck to get a better view of the entrance to the upper
box. But all that effort is just a waste. He can't see his beautiful wife anywhere.

The curtains opened and the second act begins…

The actors on stage are singing about how thankful they are for Glinda, the Good Witch. But he didn't care... For his eyes are still glued to the passage that led to the upper box.

There must be something that's keeping Hermione from returning to her seat. Whatever that something is, he had a gut feeling that it cannot be good.

"Emma?", he turned to his right.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Has Hermione ever seen this musical before?"

"Yes. A few times as a little girl. It's her favorite", Emma Granger said without sparing him a glance for her eyes were glued on the stage.

"I'll go check on Hermione. She's still not back", he tried to rein in the worry in his voice but Emma could see right through him.

"Maybe the line at the restroom is just long", she tried to reassure him.

"The break is twenty minutes, Emma. That's just too long", he retorted.

"You're right. Okay, we need a plan... You can't just stand because it will be considered as rude theater etiquette. Maybe you could cast a spell that will make you unnoticeable from the rest of the audience? Also, I'll have my phone on vibrate. Text me when you find her. If not, then text SOS. I'll take care of Dan, Andy, and Teddy", she said in a calm voice. Now he knew where Hermione got her stern healer voice from.

"Here's the keys to the Lambo and the penthouse, in case all goes wrong", he handed her the keys which she immediately accepted.

He wandlessly cast a notice-me-not charm on all five of them to not bother the rest of the audience. Since he had a very bad feeling about Hermione's delayed return, it's best to prevent the family's reactions from being discovered by using a concealment charm. He cast a silencing charm on himself and then, he disapparated.

He is now standing by the entrance that led to the upper box. Since he is under the notice-me-not-charm, he knew that his sudden appearance will be overlooked. He ran to the female restroom. When he passed by a corner, he stilled. His heart pounded in his chest. He could feel magic lurking in the now-empty corner. Just then, he knew… His Hermione had been taken.

Taking a deep breath to control his anger along with his flaring magic, he sent a quick text to Emma.

SOS. Leave after the show immediately. I will send Auror Dean Thomas. He'll bring you to the penthouse. Don't trust anyone. When you see Dean, ask him what his Patronus is. If he says, Arctic Fox, he's not lying. Don't panic but Hermione has been taken.
He apparated to the front yard on the house of Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt. There is absolutely no time to waste.

This is a state of national calamity. A diplomat of the ICW has been taken to Merlin knows where, while staying in British soil for official business. More importantly, someone dared to take his Hermione away from him…

He will make sure that whoever took her, it will be the last mistake they will ever make in this life.

No one hurts his lady and gets away with it.


If he conquered those terrors for his Hermione in his youth, then this bloody leader of the Red Triangle will be facing his worst nightmare…soon.

Nobody messes with my Hermione and gets away it.

He knocked firmly on the main door and a house-elf answered his call.

"What could Blinky do for Harry Potter sir?"

"I need to speak to Minister Kingsley immediately. It's a matter of national emergency", he said as he entered the house.

"Of course, Harry Potter sir. Wait by the couch please", Blinky said with a bow before popping away. A few minutes later, the minister entered the living room dressed only in pajamas and a robe.

"Harry, what can I do for you?", Kingsley Shacklebolt greeted him.

"Hermione has been taken. Less than an hour ago. We were watching a play together. During a twenty-minute break, she went to the loo. The second act started and she didn't return. So, I investigated. I felt a trace of magic in a corner that led to the restroom. I can detect a luring charm of some sort for magicals, but muggles are repelled against it. She's taken via a portkey. I could only assume whoever took her, they are counting on her helpful nature and set a trap. I need you to contact the Supreme Mugwump. We need to get her back. You know how the leader of the Red Triangle syndicate wants her. We must act now or it will be too late", he narrated.

"Do you have any leads on possible locations as to where she could be taken?"

"I have a very unique tracking charm on her wedding ring. I just need to concentrate on my magic to be able to trace a specific location. No one can ever remove the ring on her finger, including her, so it will certainly lead us to her. But we need backup. Lots of them. We are going to bring down the largest syndicate that has been plaguing the European Wizarding Community, maybe even the largest syndicate in the world given their operations in the illegal drug cartel in the muggle world and human trafficking in Asia per ICW reports", he explained.
"Blinky, bring me my special communication mirror", Kingsley ordered.

"Right away Master", the elf said. Less than a minute later, Blinky handed a mirror to the minister.

"Babijide Akingbade. State of International Emergency", Kingsley said to the mirror.

"Kingsley, what is this international emergency?", Babajide Akingbade's voice is filled with worry.

"Hermione Granger, the Lady Potter, has been kidnapped just under an hour ago. Harry Potter just informed me of the details. He has a way to accurately track her location, but if we are bringing down the largest syndicate in Europe, we need backup. Lots of back-ups", Kingsley summarized.

"Come to the ICW HQ with Lord Potter via portkey. We need to save Hermione Granger", the Supreme Mugwump said before the line was cut off.

"What are your next plans, Harry? I know how badly this must be affecting you", Kingsley said sympathetically.

"I have to brief Dean to safely escort the Grangers, Andy, and Teddy back to my penthouse. They're still there at the theater. Only Emma Granger knows Hermione has been taken", he said with a solemn voice.

"Do what you must. Then we portkey to Switzerland in thirty minutes", Kingsley said before he ran back to his bedroom.

Harry took a deep calming breath. He needs to call Dean to secure the rest of his family. He needs a clear head if he wants to save Hermione. Once he finds her though, he's going to make sure that the one who is behind all this, will be making their last mistake...and he will make their deaths a very painful one.

Babijide Akingbade took a deep calming breath as he took the head seat at the large table of the Office of the Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. He knew that this meeting will be a tedious one. Hermione Granger, the Lady Potter is the first high-ranking official of the ICW to be kidnapped in the last one hundred years.

As Go Hye-sun, the Chief Hit Wizard activates the projection mirror on the wall, the Supreme Mugwump signaled a distress call to all the magical heads of government who are regulated by the ICW.

Ten minutes passed, and his distress call is joined in by fifty heads of magical governments. Not a bad number, considering that there are only seventy-five registered international magical communities the world over.

"Witches, Wizards, sometime this evening, in London, the Chief Medical Researcher of the ICW, Hermione Granger, has been taken. She was abducted in a muggle location which will be undisclosed for now due to safety reasons", he addressed the people gathered around the desk as well as those who joined the meeting via mirror-patch.

The communication mirrors became a great help in connecting with world leaders when Hermione, then junior researcher, suggested the idea to the head of magical innovations. The ICW and the rest
of the leaders in various magical communities had never been this closely connected. The magical world owes Hermione Granger so much, therefore, they must work together to save her. Because if she dies, it will be a big loss indeed. Not to mention, Lord Potter might go crazy...And we couldn't have that... Not at all. Who knows what could happen? Maybe we'll have a new Dark Lord in our midst should Hermione die and Harry Potter loses his mind...

"What?!", the world leaders on the mirror chorused.

"Calm down. We have a definite way to track her. But we all need to work together to save her. The unidentified syndicate that we only know as the Red Triangle, is the prime suspect for her abduction. A couple of weeks ago, because of a chance encounter with some of our hit wizards and members of this crime group in Germany, we were able to apprehend and capture a member of the inner circle. The unknown leader of this group is very interested in Hermione Granger for some obscure plan. It's been discovered that it's either a healing process or some ritual. We are not certain of the details on what they want from her, but one thing is for sure. If we cannot rescue her in seventy-two hours, I am afraid that it may be too late", he said in a grave voice.

"How will you track Chief Healer Granger?", Akihiro Moto, of Japan, inquired.

"The Lord Potter, Hermione Granger's husband, is here with us to explain the details", he glanced at the solemn-faced gentleman sitting across from him.

Harry Potter seems calm and unaffected but his aura reminded him of a coiled snake just waiting for the right time to strike. He could now see why this handsome lord defeated the evilest wizard since Gellert Grindelwald. People should never be fooled by Harry Potter's charm. As everyone physically present in the meeting could feel his magical aura rippling on his skin, he now understands that Harry Potter is indeed a very dangerous wizard. The many times he's met the man, he always came across as the friendly and humble sort. This time around, the Harry Potter sitting across from him is the person who slayed Voldemort at seventeen. If rumors were indeed true, this man also killed a basilisk when he was twelve; the same basilisk who petrified the young Hermione Granger...

He almost pitied the leader of the Red Triangle for kidnapping Harry Potter's wife. Almost. Because really, an angry Harry Potter is not to be messed with.

"The Lady Potter wears a ring with an untraceable and irremovable tracking charm. I only need to focus my magic and I could see where she is. But if we are to take down an entire syndicate, we need lots of back-ups", Harry Potter said in a cold voice. It sent shivers up the spines of those present in the room.

"How could you guarantee a tracking charm to be irremovable and untraceable?", Liezl Schmidt, the German Chancellor for Magic challenged.

"It's not a spell. It's intent-based magic locked with a parseltongue password", Babajide Akingbade gulped as he watched Harry Potter clench and unclench his knuckles. Chancellor Schmidt is such an idiot for questioning this man's magical abilities...

"But you are no longer a parselmouth because your connection to Voldemort has been severed", the German continued to argue.

He saw Harry Potter grit his teeth in anger and everyone gasped. He shape-shifted into a six-foot basilisk that slithered to the center of the table. The basilisk moved its head to stare at every single person in the room, along with those projected on the mirrors. Its slit eyes were looking all of them down as if challenging them to argue. When everyone was frozen in fear, the basilisk slithered
back to Harry Potter’s seat before shifting to his human form.

"There. Does that prove my point?", Harry Potter said sternly. His emerald green eyes were glowing in anger.

"But…but…that's impossible", Chancellor Schmidt was aghast.

"The last animagus to have a magical creature for a form is Emrys Myrddin himself. It is very rare, yes, but it is not impossible", he intervened before the German will anger Lord Potter even more.

"But… Merlin…is well, Merlin", Feliciano Marquez, the Minister of Brazil said.

"I will be revealing a secret that only Hermione knows. But I demand an oath of secrecy from each and everyone here. Including those in the mirrors", Harry Potter said.

"The Supreme Mugwump demands everyone present, including those joining via the mirrors, to swear on their life and magic that they shall not disclose any secrets of Lord Potter and whatever they discover, they won't be using it against him or his, so ordered", Babajide Akingbade said in a commanding voice.

"I'll start. I, Kingsley Shacklebolt, swear on my life and magic, that I will keep all secrets disclosed by Harry James Potter in this meeting. I swear to never use what I learn against him or his. I will not use the information to cause him or his any harm. So, mote it be. Lumos!", Kingsley Shacklebolt who portkeyed from Britain with Harry uttered his oath in a voice that is loud and clear.

One by one, each person at the meeting made their oath. When everyone is done, it was his turn. After all the oaths were made, he nodded to Lord Potter.

"Thank you for your oaths. Here is my secret. Kushif Quat Quiti", Harry Potter held his wand and there was a bright light. A number floated from his wand. 1000.

"Bloody hell, Harry!", Kinsley Shacklebolt exclaimed.

Everyone in the meeting is stunned into silence. They were all looking at Harry Potter with their mouths hanging open. They are all literally in the presence of the Most Powerful Wizard Alive.

As the presider of the meeting, he cleared his throat to focus the attention of everyone on the matter at hand.

"Look, yes I am a basilisk animagus. And yes, my EMI score is 1000. Obviously, I am a rather powerful wizard. But I need your help. I have a plan. With the unknown numbers we will be taking down, just to get to my Hermione, I need back up. If I go there alone, my magic might be too uncontrollable in my anger. I'm afraid I may end up hurting my lady. So, I need others to help me take down this bastard's minions. But the leader is mine. No one harms my Hermione and gets away with it. So, can I count on you all for your help?", the Most Powerful Wizard Alive gave everyone a penetrating stare.

"Germany will be sending our top ten security force in service to Hermione Granger. She helped ailing witches from our country to finally get cured three years ago", Liezel Schmidt announced.

"Japan too will help"

"So will Brazil"
"Count the US in"

As world leaders volunteer their help, Babajide Akingbade smiled despite the situation. Hermione Granger is something special! For a single witch to raise this much support and concern is astounding. Of course, given her powerful husband's stare down, no one will have the nerve to refuse offering help.

*If only I could recruit Lord Potter to work in the ICW as well...Harry and Hermione Potter sure make an excellent team. They are indeed the Wizarding World's Power Couple!*

The first phase of Harry's plan began to circulate all over the world. Within twenty-four hours, all of the fifty world leaders who pledged their support will be sending in their best security force along with special weapons to the ICW headquarters...

And now, the second phase begins...Hit Wizards are being sent to bring all people who have been in contact with Hermione for the last ten years. All of them will be interrogated. They need all the intelligence they could get. Harry already showed them the memory of the mystery man who bumped into Hermione at *The Beaumont Hotel*. Maybe, if that person is connected to all of this, one of her friends could identify if they had ever encountered this man at all.

Kei Irie woke up from his peaceful slumber because his ICW Communication Mirror is sounding the emergency alarm. Not even bothering to change clothes, he grabbed the mirror and made haste to activate the emergency portkey feature. Before uttering the activation trigger, he summoned the parchment containing his research notes for the Chief as requested. At least he could now give it to her in person...

Evangeline Rosier was awakened by Astoria with a strong tug on her arm. Since she is a heavy sleeper, she is not bothered by the emergency siren in her mirror.

"Vangie, wake up! ICW Hit Wizards just arrived at our home. We all must go to Switzerland immediately. Hermione has been kidnapped. We are all required to be submitted into questioning and to identify a potential suspect", Astoria hurriedly explained. Her voice laced with worry and agitation. She even had tears in her eyes.

"What?!", she exclaimed. All haze of sleep gone.
"Hurry! We must go to Switzerland immediately! Hermione needs us!", Astoria beckoned.

"I'll be downstairs in five minutes", she ran to the bathroom to make ready.

Viktor Krum gently shook his little boy's arm. When his son opened his eyes, he tried to break the news as gently as possible…

"VJ, son, wake up. Auntie My-own needs our help", he started.

"Why? Who hurt Auntie My-own?", VJ said sleepily.

"ICW Hit Wizards are waiting in our living room. Auntie My-own was kidnapped. Harry Potter and the ICW need our help by answering a few questions and identifying someone, the potential suspect", he explained.

"Let's go!", VJ stood up from his bed. Despite their attire, they ran back to the living room eager to immediately portkey to the ICW Headquarters.

Molly Weasley woke up due to a loud knocking she could hear from the main entrance to the Burrow. Since she knew that her husband, Arthur, was a very deep sleeper, she might as well be the one to answer the door. She hurriedly wrapped a robe around herself and ran downstairs.

When she opened the door, she gasped. ICW Hit Wizards are standing outside! Their faces filled with stern determination.

"We need to invite all the members of your family to the ICW for interrogation. Hermione Granger has been kidnapped. We need you to identify if you had seen the potential suspect before", the Hit Wizard said without preamble.

"Oh my! Hermione! Poor dear! Wait here! I'll wake everyone up", she ran up the stairs to wake Arthur. They have to inform all their children about this grave news. Hermione Granger saved Julianna and Freddie, so if by answering a few questions, they could be of little help, then all the Weasleys will do so… The Weasley Family owe Hermione Granger a lot!

"Mr. And Mrs. Granger, Teddy, Mrs. Tonks, members of the ICW Hit Wizards are here to see you!", Dean Thomas said to the distraught family. When he got Harry's orders, he immediately went to the venue of the kidnapping to ensure that the rest of his friend's family is safe.

He had to give the Granger parents credit. They maintained a strong and calm façade despite the fear and worry that was visible in their eyes. Now he understands where Hermione Granger got her strength and resolve from.
"Is Hermione alright?", Mrs. Granger asked. This is the first time that she has ever shown her fear.

"Ma'am, all of you need to come to Switzerland. Both for your safety and to answer questions about Hermione. We have a potential suspect in place, but we need people to identify him. Also, I have been told that Harry has a sure-fire way to track her. Hermione will be safe, Mrs. Granger. Harry will do anything to ensure that", he tried to ease the woman's fears as much as he could.

"Of course, he would. Harry defeated a troll once for my little girl when he was eleven. He saved her then, and all the more now", Mrs. Granger nodded before the rest of the family ran to their rooms for a quick change.

Harry Potter took a calming breath as he entered the room where all of the people close to Hermione, or those who had come in contact with her in the last ten years, were gathered.

They tried to bring as much people, who played significant parts in Hermione's life, as possible. The Grangers, the ICW Healers, Hermione's friends from the Instituto de Medicina Magica, the Malfoys, the Krum's, the Longbottoms, and even the Weasleys.

In his years of auror work, he had come to understand how a criminal's mind works. If the bloody leader of the Red Triangle syndicate went to all that trouble of bringing an epidemic to Britain just to lure Hermione away from the wards of the ICW Headquarters, then clearly, he has made a thorough research on his wife's life. So, he gathered everyone he could think of that could give him any clue… He needed to assess what he was up against.

"Hello. Thank you for coming. Please be silent. I will be playing Hermione's memory which I was able to access when she granted her permission for me to cast legilimency on her. On the 23rd of December, at the Peers of the Realm's Annual Charity Auction, Hermione bumped into a stranger who freaked her out… I have a feeling that this man is related to the same group whose leader has been plotting to capture her. Yes, the epidemic was caused by a syndicate that we only name as the Red Triangle, because of the tattoos on the members' arms. Anyway, the epidemic is brought to Britain to lure Hermione away from the safety of the ICW wards. After I show you the memory, I want you to remember if you have ever seen this man before. After this, all of you will be subjected into individual questioning. No need to be scared. This is just a security protocol. Thank you for your quick response. The House of Potter owes you a great deal for your cooperation in our time of need", Harry explained in a formal voice.

He activated the projection mirror and everyone watched the scene with a very determined focus…

_Hermione bumped into a tall man with black hair and deep black eyes. He looked to be of Arabian descent. He was wearing a light brown tuxedo._

_"I am so sorry, sir. I didn't see you", she quickly apologized._

_"No apology needed from the beautiful lady", the man's voice was husky. His stare is intense._
"Well, if you'd excuse me, sir", she said with a polite nod. She was about to walk away, but he had a firm grip on her arm.

"Be careful my lady. The world is full of dangerous men just waiting on innocent beautiful women such as yourself. If you were mine, I would make sure you'd always be close to me", he warned. The look in his eyes made her shiver with fear. She was about to retort but he already let go of her arm and walked away.

She walked back to the ballroom quite shaken with that brief encounter.

"That man watch my Quidditch game!", Viktor Krum said after the memory is played.

"That man visits the WWW shop!", George Weasley exclaimed.

"I am sure I have seen that man before… Yes! He visited our dental clinic!", Daniel Granger confirmed.

"I remember too… I bumped into him in a shop that sells unique magical plants", Neville Longbottom added.

"We've seen that man. Draco and I. We saw him in one of the art galleries we love to visit in Paris", Astoria said.

"Thank you for your confirmation. To those who have memories of seeing this person, please approach a hit wizard. They will help you sort out your memories. Maybe they've been tampered with. At least now we know how this person has been gaining intelligence on Hermione", Harry announced.

"Lord Potter, I am supposed to give this to the Chief but well, here… Maybe it helps or is connected to whatever happened to the Chief", Irie approached him and handed him a roll of parchment. He quickly opened it and skimmed the letter. Upon seeing the names Osiris and Isis, he gasped.

"Why did you look into this?", he inquired.

"The Chief wanted me to research it. So, I did", Irie said with a shrug.

"Irie come with me!", he ordered and the healer meekly obeyed.

"Please take a seat", Harry said as they entered a private office. Irie immediately took the seat across from him.

"Lord Potter what did I do wrong?", Irie said worriedly.

"Please keep quiet for a while. I will read your notes", he glanced at the man before focusing his attention on the parchment.

After five minutes, he settled the parchment on the table. He could see Irie fidgeting with worry.

"Tell me, Irie. Is everything here accurate?", he asked.
"Yes, Lord Potter."

"And are you certain about the significance of the first new moon of the first day of the year?", his heart pounded in his chest. He had a feeling that if he cannot rescue Hermione by the thirty first of December, then he will lose her forever…

"Yes, sir", Irie said with a nod.

"Thank you, Irie. You may now return to where the others are. Thank you for all your research. You are a true friend of Hermione's. I am forever grateful and indebted to you for your care and support of my wife", he nodded to the healer who hurriedly ran to the door.

When he was left alone in the office, he cast privacy wards so that no one can disturb him.

He squatted at the middle of the office and closed his eyes.

He beckoned the Cloak of Invisibility, the Resurrection Stone, and the Elder Wand to him.

His magic rippling in waves...

The air in the room started to become colder...

When he opened his eyes, he was now draped in the cloak, the ring on his finger, and the Deathstick on his right hand.

He meditated…

He needed to find Hermione…

As his magic is pulling on its connection to Hermione's ring, he could see a large opulent room. It had gold panels and the floor was wooden. He could see Hermione sleeping on a four-poster bed. She was now dressed in clothes that reminded him of the Ancient Egyptian Queens.

He concentrated more and the vision broadened…

Now he could see an underground lair of some sort…

There were lots of henchmen guarding the place. All of them with red triangle tattoos on their arms.

He could feel himself sweat. He was exerting too much magic now, but he didn't care. He needs to know the exact location… He could tell that Hermione is in another country because the strain on his magic is more potent than when he first used it to find her in that muggle club.

The entrance to the cave he could now see…

The cave is man-made since it looked out of sorts in that area that it was located in…

The cave that hid an underground lair…

The cave is lurking with very strong wards...
Stronger than the ones he felt every time he was at Hogwarts...

The cave is situated between a dangerous-looking forest. With tall wild trees covering the area…

His heart pounded in his chest from the extreme magical exertion. He was now drenched in sweat, but he pushed through. He must find a specific identifier so he could tell where his Hermione had been taken.

And then, he could see beyond the forest… There was a road.

A truck passed by…

_Premiere Wooden Furnitures. Yugoslavia._

He strengthened his occlumency shields so that he could commit every single detail to his memory.

When he opened his eyes, he felt tired but it was all worth it.

Now he knows. His lady had been taken to Yugoslavia. She was sleeping in a beautiful room of an underground lair that is strategically hidden by a man-made cave in a creepy forest.

He cast a drying charm on himself and he ran to the Office of the Supreme Mugwump. They now have to finalize the details of their rescue operation…

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Meanwhile, in Yugoslavia, Hermione slowly opened her eyes.

She screamed when she saw the mysterious dangerous man she bumped into at _The Beaumont Hotel_ staring at her.

"Did you sleep well, my Isis?", his husky voice sent chills of fear into her spine. But she cannot show him that she is so scared. Any sign of weakness could be used against her.

"What do you want from me?", she raised the bedsheets higher to cover her body.

"You will be my queen. My Isis. Together, we will reclaim the throne of Osiris, my birthright", the man said as he slowly walked towards her.

"I don't even know you", she said in a brave voice.

"You don't have to. You will share my memories. You will know my thoughts. You will learn all about me and my family's long history. And then, on the night of the first day of the new year, we shall be one", the man declared. He is so delusional that he believed in whatever he was sputtering.

"No! Harry will save me! He always does! And I will never, ever, belong to you!", she hissed.

"Ah… yes. Harry Potter… Don't worry my Isis, I will alter your memories. You will never even remember him. The only man you will ever know is me. Because I am the only one you will ever need… And together, we will reclaim the throne of Osiris and restore Egypt to its former glory", he said gallantly but it only sounded crazy and scary to her.

"I will never sleep with you, you bastard!", she slapped the man as hard as she could. The man
only laughed. It was an evil hollow laugh that reminded her of Voldemort.

"When I'm done altering your memories, you will only submit to me and no one else. You will know no other man but me... You will come to me on your own... Because you will belong to me", the man declared in a cold confident voice.

"I'd rather kill myself than be raped by you!", she yelled.

"Don't worry my Isis. I won't touch you. Not until we complete the binding ritual on the night of the new year... By then, your memories will be changed. And all you will see is me... You will willing come to me, my queen", that was the last thing she could remember since the man brought out a needle and injected into her bloodstream an unknown substance.

She could feel the world spin...

It's like an out-of-body experience...

It felt like floating in deliriousness...

It felt like a state of euphoria but she could also feel herself tiring out...

She was losing focus and her mind is starting to enter into a blank state.

She strengthened her occlumency shields to resist as much as she possibly could.

In a strong surge of accidental magic, Hermione Granger used all of her magical reserves to ward herself through the use of a magically induced coma. She shut her entire body so that no one could ever touch her... But her brain is now haunted by memories of the dark bastard who captured her.
A/N: This is a short chapter. The history of the syndicate is linked to Ancient Egyptian History. Fun fact, the historical details on Osiris and his descendants is as accurate as can be. Also, Ptolemy I Soter, is really the founder of the House of Ptolemy which ended when Cleopatra VII lost Egypt to Augustus Caesar (the first Roman Emperor).

I changed the official name of the syndicate because one friend of mine gave me a better Arabic translation. So, if you check the previous chapters, the real name of the crime group is updated as well. (Added this, just in case you notice that particular detail)

I am looking forward to your reactions to this chapter.

Your reviews, faves, and follows are highly appreciated.

P.S. Yes, I love Ancient Egyptian History and folklore.

Translations:

'Aabee = Father

'Um = Mother

Old World = Europe

Marhabaan = Hello
The Throne of Osiris

As Hermione's magic protects her body from any physical harm, her mind is bombarded by memories of the darkness that has been dwelling in the long history of the descendants of Osiris and Isis, the first Master and Mistress of Death...
An old and weary Osiris is on his deathbed laying beside his wife, an equally frail Isis. The time has come for the Master and Mistress of Death to pass on from the land of the living and to accept their duties in the afterlife. Osiris called for his three sons, Horus, Min, and Anubis...

"‘Aabee", his sons chorused as all of them knelt by their father’s bedside. It is painful for the three sons to see their father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, to be slowly fading away towards his death.

"My sons… your ‘um and I are passing soon. I give you these. Symbols of our family's blessing from the Creator. The wand for Horus, the stone for Min, and the cloak for Anubis...Use it well", the frail Osiris slowly levitated each hallow to his sons.

As the sons of Osiris accepted their gifts, the Master and Mistress of Death passed on to start their new adventure.

Horus, Min, and Anubis ruled Egypt as equals by dividing the provinces in unity and prosperity. They protected their realm and cared for their people. When they passed on, they passed the hallows to their children…and the family tradition continued so on and so on…

As the hallows pass on from generation to generation, the darker and greedier the rulers have become… Slavery, cruel punishments, burying people alive, the descendants of Osiris have abused the blessings bestowed upon them by the Creator who entrusted their forefather with very special gifts.

When a descendant of Osiris created the first Horcrux, that became the final straw for the Creator. The hallows magically disappeared from Egypt and all three were lost to an unknown location… Never to be seen again by any member of the House of Osiris, the one who unified all of Egypt.

Egypt started to encounter economic and political problems. The eviler the ruler, the harsher the punishment. During the time of Moses, the Creator finally intervened and sent the Ten Plagues which resulted in the freeing of the Hebrew slaves.

When Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander the Great's generals conquered Egypt, the throne of Osiris fell. The descendants of Osiris were forced to serve the new non-magical rulers. When Cleopatra VII fell at the hands of Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of Rome, the descendants fled Egypt to save themselves from their land’s latest conqueror.

The descendants of the House of Osiris stayed in what is now known to be as Saudi Arabia with a promise to reclaim what they believe is rightfully theirs.

Sometime in the nineteenth century, there is a prophecy that a woman who bears the same characteristics as Isis shall restore the rightful legacy of the House of Osiris. This woman shall be of the Old World…

So, from the confines of Saudi Arabia, the remaining descendants moved to India. There, they started to amass wealth by forming the 'Atbae 'Iilah Al-mawt (The God of Death's Followers). The original operations of the criminal empire started as a prostitution den in one of the busiest provinces, Mumbai.

The members of the 'Iilah will lure innocent women with promises of fake jobs but in the end, they will be distributed to various brothels managed by the syndicate. Since most of the inner circle are wizards, they find it easy to kidnap non-magical women to be included in their prostitution business…
After that, they expanded into smuggling and eventually moved their operations to Europe, hoping to find the woman described in the prophecy. As descendants waited and waited, the headship of the 'Iilah has been passed on... Along with the turning over of power in managing their criminal empire, the desire to restore the legacy of Osiris remains stronger than ever as each generation passes.

Karim Hajjar was born to Ahmos Hajjar and one of the prostitutes he molested. Ahmos groomed his son to be the perfect crime lord. At age five, Karim shot his first man. He was trained in various martial arts and weapons handling.

Karim tortured the few women in his prostitution den that he keeps as personal sources of entertainment. The man is brutal and evil...

All the horrors that Karim has ever done in his life, remains to be one of the vilest things she had ever seen...

The man is so cruel and heartless. He enjoys killing his enemies for sport in the obscenest ways.

The man only cared about two things – money and power.

He destroyed the lives of thousands of people. Women he ordered to be kidnapped or lured into prostitution... The people who became addicted to the illegal drugs manufactured and distributed by his followers.

Karim Hajjar had been stalking her for years and learning all he could about her life by following her friends and reading their memories of her. After that, he obviates them by injecting a mystery substance into their bloodstream...

She could see his dark plans for her as he molds her to be his perfect queen...

She could see the dark ritual that he has been planning to do with her ever since he read the news that she is finally able to heal all those children from the epidemic in Britain.

Karim will destroy Hermione Granger by altering her mind forever...

In doing so, she will be his perfect partner as he reclaims the lost throne of Osiris.

Despite being in a magically induced coma, tears fell from Hermione's eyes...

Harry Potter had already thoroughly discussed with the Supreme Mugwump about the very tight timeline they have to save Hermione. Since he had a bad feeling about the New Year, due to Irie's research findings, it's been agreed that they will commence their rescue operations on the evening of the 29th of December.

As world leaders continue to pour out their support by sending troops and weaponry, the current bearer of the Deathly Hallows paced around his temporary lodging. He is once again thinking about the details of Irie's research. Deciding to just go with his gut feeling, he turned the resurrection stone three times and thought of Osiris...

A few minutes later, a tall, dark-skinned man with a strong lean build floated in front of him. The
spirit is wearing a half-pleated kilt wound around his body, with the pleated section drawn to the front. He was wearing some sort of pauldron made of leopard skin across his shoulders. The thick golden belt on his waist is decorated by a lion's tail hanging from it. On his head, a headdress of white cloth decorated by a thin golden crown with a snake poised at the center. His wrists both have an elegant golden band on them. He was barefoot but he could tell that this style of clothing must have been the epitome of wealth and regality in his time.

"Osiris?", he asked.

"It is my great honor to stand in the presence of my future successor. Marhabaan, Harry Potter", Osiris greeted by placing his closed fist across his chest and a quick head bow.

"Hello, sir", he returned the respectful gesture.

"Why have you summoned me, Harry Potter?", Osiris' voice was deep, strong, and dare he say, mystic. The spirit of Emrys Myrddin is joyful and well, flirtatious. But Osiris projects elegance, strength, and power. Just like how he imagined Pharaohs would be.

"Should I call you Pharaoh, sir?", he said awkwardly. It's a good thing Osiris speaks English or I would not be able to talk to him at all... The dead must have too much time on their hands to learn new things.

Osiris laughed. It reverberated all over the small room.

"No, Harry Potter. Osiris would do. My Isis and I were never big on titles", the spirit replied. His deep brown eyes sparkling with what must have been mischief if only he weren't so regal.

"Er, right. You can call me Harry, sir", he muttered.

"So, Harry, why have you summoned me?", the spirit extended a hand in a gesture that indicates he should just say whatever it is he wants to.

"Sir, I was wondering, how did you and your Isis bind yourselves in service as the Master and Mistress of Death in the afterlife?", he finally got one of his important questions out in the open.

"Oh. That is an excellent question. But before I answer that, why do you want to be Merlin's successor?", Osiris said with an eyebrow raised.

"I want to fix my mistakes, sir. I want a second chance. With Viola Lily and Hermione. I don't know what is happening to her right now, but I'm sure that Hermione is suffering right now. And sad to say, it's my fault. I should've been more careful. I should have followed her... If only I – ", he was unable to continue with his monologue since tears were already flowing down his cheeks. He angrily wiped them away. This is bloody embarrassing! I'm crying in front of Osiris!

"I see... It seems we have the same motivation as before. I wasn't able to save my sister Isis, and so, when I found the hallows, I bargained for a second chance just so I can protect her and the rest of Egypt better", Osiris remarked thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir. So, what must I do?", he internally winced at the desperation that was so apparent in his voice.

"Well son, the first thing you have to do is to finally defeat my disgusting excuse for a blood descendant", Osiris scoffed at the word descendant.

"So Irie's research and my theories are right, sir?"
"Yes, yes… My last living blood relation, Karim Hajjar, the current leader of the 'Atbae 'Ilah Al-mawt, I hate that my vile relations named their crime group after me, is the one who captured your Hermione", he could hear the anger in Osiris.

"Do you know of his plans, sir?"

"There was a prophecy many years ago about your Hermione. It's about a woman who is the perfect resemblance of my Isis' character. She is destined to be the one who will cause the rightful restoration of the legacy of the House of Osiris. My crazy and evil descendants interpreted it wrongly though. They think that they can retake Egypt! Which is wrong!", Osiris' eyebrows furrowed in anger and disdain for his blood relations.

"Why is it, wrong sir?"

"Your Hermione shall be the reason why the House of Osiris shall finally atone for the sins they have committed ever since my sons Horus, Min, and Anubis passed on. I hate how as every generation passes; my descendants get crueler and crueler... Anyway, you Harry Potter! You and your Hermione shall cause the House of Osiris to pay for their sins. I need you to end Karim Hajjar and defeat him forever… You need to free all the people he has victimized… The women he lured into prostitution. Those people whose lives were destroyed because of using illegal drugs… I need you Harry Potter to defeat my last living descendant and restore the honor of my great house", Osiris pleaded.

"So, you believe sir that the prophecy states that Hermione is the woman who shall cause the restoration of your legacy since I will end your last descendant in my attempt to save her? Is that it?", Harry confirmed.

"Yes, that is correct. You will save your Hermione, will you not?", Osiris challenged.

"Of course, I will! I will do anything for her!", he exclaimed with determination.

"I know you will, son. You have always kept your Hermione safe, didn't you?", Osiris said teasingly. Harry felt his cheeks heating up.

"Well, I try my best to sir", he muttered.

"You know son, for a lad to actually fight a troll at eleven to save a lady, and then kill a basilisk that petrified the same lady at twelve… surely that must have been gigantic clues for you to be able to determine the depths of your feelings for your Hermione? That's not even counting the time you shielded her from a werewolf", this time Osiris' eyes shone with mischief.

"Yeah, I know… I am a clueless idiot", he sheepishly admitted. There is no use in hiding the blush in his cheeks now.

"You know son, in my day, when a man saves a lady, it's the greatest declaration of intent… Time sure has changed a lot of things. It seems relationships get more complicated as people become more, well, civilized", Osiris added with a chuckle.

"Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up", he huffed.

"Anyway, do you want me to tell you of the ritual now or after you save your queen?", Osiris inquired.

"Is there a way to exclude Hermione in all of this? Like Merlin? I want to not let her be burdened by all of this sir. Besides, we could always be together, but only I will carry the burden of the
"Oh, son! Before you make hasty choices, you should talk about it with your queen first. Nasty business when making decisions without consulting your woman", Osiris paled towards the end of his statement. *Isis must have been a real scary witch*, he thought.

"Hmmm…that's true. Is the ritual difficult though? Like do I have to learn a spell or something?", he prodded.

"No. Not really. First of all, you have to concentrate on all that you've got as you prepare yourselves to accept the legacy of being the Master and Mistress of Death. And then, you just have to wear the Hallows, hold hands with your lady, and then each of you will have to cut your skin and pour your blood in the same cup. After that, you both drink the blood. That shall signify the merging of blood. For merging of magic, both of you hold the Elder Wand at the same time and cast any spell that shall declare your intent. Once that is done, the merging of the flesh is conducted in a separate ritual. It's like a magical marriage of sorts which concludes in the physical consummation of love. You will know if your sacrifice is deemed worthy by the current Master of Death, and the Creator, if a physical mark shall appear on your skin and that of your lady", Osiris thoroughly discussed.

"I see… But sir, what about Merlin? He's alone in the burden of being the protector of the gates", he inquired.

"That's true… I'm not sure what ritual he did. Because I am no longer the incumbent Master of Death when he performed the ritual of attestation on sincerity, so I think it was Hades who contemplated if he was ready for the task or not", Osiris mused.

"How many, er, Masters of Death have served in the afterlife, sir?", he fished for more information.

"Nice try, son. You will only know how many, once you are deemed worthy", Osiris winked conspiratorially which made him chuckle.

"Alright…Well, do you have any other tips for me, sir? In beating your descendant?"

"Don't attack without a plan. Karim Hajjar is cunning and wickedly smart, that's his greatest weapon… But in sheer power, you're a hundred times better", Osiris told him.

"A hundred times better?", he said with disbelief.

"Well you are a strong candidate to take on the role of being the next Master of Death, so obviously a hundred times better in power", Osiris smirked.

"I suppose so", he modestly remarked.

"No need to be so modest, son. If you remain that way, you would have to be the most modest Master of Death in history. All of us seem to be the roguish self-assured sorts", Osiris laughed.

"Oh."

"Come now, Harry Potter! Own it. You are the most powerful wizard alive! You are mine and Merlin's equal in magic. Be confident. Besides, women find confidence an aphrodisia", that was Osiris last advice before the spirit disappeared.

Harry Potter was slack-jawed as he replayed all the things that Osiris told him. It seems that he is
not the only person of his acquaintance that has a prophecy revolving around them. Hermione is destined to be the cause of the downfall of a royal bloodline. A bloodline that has violated the trust of the Creator. A bloodline that is founded by a great and honorable man, but whose descendants failed to maintain their proud legacy…

*If I accept the responsibility of being the Master of Death, should I do it alone? Like Merlin? So that Hermione could live freely in the afterlife… Or, will I ask her to share this burden with me?*

He was filled with conflicting thoughts as he contemplated about Osiris' words. And then, he thought about the warning from Osiris…

Karim Hajjar is a cunning and smart man. That is his enemy's strongest weapon against him. So, the rescue operation that they will be executing should be as flawless as possible. Hermione's life is on the line. Everything should fall into plan.

He took a deep breath. He always thought that when Voldemort dies, all will be well in his life. But now, he has a bigger task to do. He must save his queen and put an end to the throne of Osiris forever…

*I will do anything for you, Hermione… I will die trying just so that I can save you…*

He walked to his bed and closed his eyes. He needs to be well-rested. For tomorrow night, he will challenge the last living member of the House of Osiris for the safety of his queen… For Hermione Potter is his queen, she had always been…ever since he jumped on a mountain troll's back just to save her.
A battalion of four hundred disillusioned warriors divided into six companies portkeyed around the area of the creepy Yugoslavian forest. Tonight is the night to finally rescue Hermione Potter nee Granger, the Chief of the Medical Research Department of the International Confederation of Wizards.
There are three hundred seventy wizards and witches involved in this rescue operation. While the remaining thirty are warrior goblins. The world leaders who have pledged their support during the emergency meeting with the Supreme Mugwump pushed through and delivered their promises.

Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea all sent in weapons that make use of technomancy, a combination of muggle technology and magic. Along with the weaponry, they sent in experts that will operate the special magical technology and give instructions to others on how to use them.

The rest sent in their best ward breakers, security experts, and special forces. While the others donated funds that will serve as a budget for the entire rescue operation. With a total force of four hundred rescuers, they need all the money they could get to provide food and immediate medical care for all the members of their lot.

The goblins, upon learning about Hermione's kidnapping, volunteered to send in thirty of their own as a sign of gratitude to Hermione. Years ago, goblins were being slain in the Southern Americas so that their blood and other body parts could be used for potions ingredients. This was severely mitigated when Hermione became the prime author of a medical paper that negates the potency of using goblin blood and parts for the potion. Instead, she suggested a more potent alternative ingredient that does not cause any harm to a sentient being. With her actions, Hermione unknowingly gave a boon to the goblin nation. And so, they decided to repay the favor at her time of need.

Harry Potter was leading Company A which is composed of fifty members. Thirty of which are goblins sent in to help by the horde, while the rest are the best curse breakers they could find. He will be leading the team since they have to break through the ward scheme. Once that happens, they must secure the area and lock everyone in the lair. That way, no criminal can escape using apparition and portkey travel.

The disillusioned goblins and curse breakers are scattered around the man-made cave. They will surround the cave with ward stones that will trap everyone inside. When the signal was given that the ward stones are in place, all the witches and wizards pointed their wands towards the magical dome surrounding the cave which was now visible to them.

Harry Potter took a deep calming breath to strengthen his magic. *It's time to save my queen*…

With as much raw power that he could muster, he pointed the Elder Wand to help break the wards. After two minutes of combined spell effort and the weakening effect of the newly placed ward stones, the *fidelius* charm along with the rest of the protections around the cave finally broke.

"Charge!", Go Hye-sun, the Chief Hit Wizard and overall commander of *Operation Isis*, yelled as the wards broke down. With that, the six companies immediately took their respective positions.

Everyone wore their protective goggles since they were all briefed about one of the special bombs created by the Japanese magical inventors.

Company B, the team that controls the magical weapons dropped their first surprise to the syndicate. With a blast of power from a long metallic tube, the cave exploded and the ground shook.

As they could hear footsteps running towards the entrance of the cave, a series of small blindness crackers exploded. The South Koreans invented a new magical firecracker that instead of creating an explosion, it will cause temporary blindness to the people around a specific area for ten minutes. Only those with the special goggles could see in the darkness.
One by one, they could all see their enemies nearly stomp on each other as they grope and fumble around in the darkness. Their Lumos charms and fire-creation spells are not an effective way to see amidst the haze from the blindness crackers.

It was an easy win for the first part of the invasion. The first twenty members of the syndicate who tried to apprehend the invaders, but instead could only see darkness, immediately fell at the combo of harmful spells and technomancy.

Harry Potter transformed into his basilisk form. Everyone agreed that he was their best shot at getting to Hermione first. Besides, he had a personal score to settle against the vile man who dared to take his Hermione away from him.

During their planning sessions, they all agreed that he best move around as a basilisk. It was the easiest way to find his queen in the myriad of criminals, rescuers, spells, and weapons exchange. If he gets the chance to randomly inject his venom on members of the enemy along the way, then well and good.

Every member of the blasted syndicate deserves a most painful way to die. And well, basilisk venom hurts like a bitch.

Karim Hajjar woke up from his deep slumber when he felt the wards around the cave fall. He immediately signaled a distress call to his followers to protect his domain. He hurriedly ran into his Isis' bedroom so that he could whisk her away to safety.

He could only think of one person behind this attack... Harry Potter.

*The so-called Most Powerful Wizard in Britain is finally here to challenge me for my Isis' hand... Bring it on Harry Potter! Bring it on... Hermione Granger is mine. She will never be yours...*

When he entered his Isis' chambers, she was still there...

Sleeping on the gold satin sheets, Hermione Granger remains to be lying still on the bed. Ever since he injected a magically enhanced mixture of cocaine and his memories on her bloodstream, his Isis must have performed some extraordinary feat of defense magic. No one can physically touch any part of her body. It's like she cast a shield charm on herself. He'd been spending long hours looking for ways to weaken her self-imposed shield but all his efforts were wasted. He's already consulted with his most brilliant followers who possessed unique skills in healing and ward breaking but all of them could not find a way to break the protection she cast on herself. His Isis is indeed a very formidable witch in her own right!

He could hear the frantic footsteps and the yells of his followers as they all prepare to defend his domain. It's now time for him to bring his Isis to another hideout.

He pointed his wand on his Isis' clothes, converting them into a portkey. To his surprise, her special protection charm just bounced off his spell. So, he decided to use her entire bed instead. When the spell was successfully cast, he had an evil grin on his face.

As he uttered the activation word, he gasped. Nothing happened. Hermione Granger is still there. She did not disappear.
What is wrong? I must escape with my Isis and bring her to another location... My family has waited for a very very long time for this moment. I cannot let all our years of planning and longing to reclaim the lost throne of Osiris go to waste.

He created a portkey for himself and then activated it. Still, he did not disappear...

Then it clicked! They must have cast anti-portkey wards. Allaena!

He tried to apparate to any other part of the lair just to conduct a test. Still, his apparition failed. They also warded the entire lair against apparition.

Karim Hajjar, for the first time in his life, finally felt scared.

Ever since the 'Atbae 'Ilah Al-mawt was established by his forefathers, no one has ever discovered the chosen headquarters of the group's incumbent leader. This would have to be the very first time. Now that his family is coming closer and closer to reclaiming what is rightfully theirs, the enemy is also getting more and more formidable.

No! I will stay here and defend my birthright and my Isis. Whoever shall try and take Hermione Granger away from me, shall perish by my knives, gun, or wand...

As he could hear the busy activity of his followers outside his Isis' chambers, he decided to stay inside her room. He will stay and protect his property. No one will take her away. No one will take the key to his family's reclaiming of their long-lost throne away...

He warded the room of his Isis with all his might. He will not surrender Hermione Granger without a god damned fight!

Since the battalion under Go Hye-sun had orders to take only a few prisoners as possible, their strategy for Operation Isis is rather harsh. Their orders are shoot to kill. Regardless if it's from a wand, a weapon, or brute strength, upon facing the enemy, aim to hurt with all your might. Even the three Unforgivable Curses are allowed for this special rescue mission.

Because it is easily observable that the number of criminals protecting the lair was double in number compared to their total rescue force, they decided to push through with Strategy One. Upon seeing that most of the ordinary henchmen were carriers of muggle weapons, then it will be hard to engage them in spell combat.

Strategy One which means, cast blindness crackers to impair the enemy's forces, and hit them with strong deadly curses. Those who were not dead but only severely injured, they are immediately dropped prison portkeys that will lead them straight into the ICW's special correctional facility for the most brutal criminals. The ward stone they set up around the dome will only allow portkeys commissioned by the ICW so that no one from the enemy camp could ever escape. These stupid bastards who decided to follow some crazy megalomaniac who dreams of retaking an entire country by sacrificing the Brightest Witch of the Age for his sick cause, only deserve a two-fold fate. Either a painful death from a deadly spell or to suffer life imprisonment in the ICW's most severe correctional facility.

As more and more of these idiot's followers run up the stairs to meet their attackers, the cycle of Strategy One keeps on repeating and repeating with astounding success. The minions have never
faced any threat inside their secret headquarters before. Hence, the overconfidence and the shock when the wards suddenly crashed and the entrance to the cave was bombed.

As a six-foot basilisk angrily slithered on the ground while occasionally biting any of the criminals that hinder its path to the one woman they all came to rescue, the commander of the entire operation could only shake his head.

Lord Harry James Potter is not a wizard you would want as an enemy. The leader of this crime group is a stupidly brave man to have the balls to kidnap the most beloved wife of the Most Powerful Wizard Alive who could turn himself into a bloody basilisk.

When the majority of the team has reached the very center of the lair under the depths of the cave, Go Hye-sun signaled for a quick halt.

"Ceasefire! This is your commander speaking!", he announced. At once, all the blindness crackers and the spells stopped.

"Search all the rooms. Look for innocent victims. Gather all necessary documents and information you could see. We are nailing down all the hidden lairs and underground criminal businesses of this group once and for all. Clear?", his voice loud and determined.

"Clear!", chorused his subordinates.

"Open Fire!", he ordered and immediately, Strategy One recommenced. While the bloodshed on the enemy continues to spill as his troops power their deadly spells to the best of their ability, the rest were now starting to explore every nook and cranny of this hidden lair of the most notorious syndicate in Europe.

"Lord Potter?", he called out to the basilisk.

The King of the Serpents turned its scaly head towards his voice.

"Go find your lady. When you find her, call for backup with the signal. We'll round up the minions for you. Good luck", he said with a quick bow. The basilisk moved its head up and down which he interpreted as a sign of agreement before it continued to slither away…

With a very firm determination to follow the scent of its mate, the basilisk moved with agility it has never showcased before, in the very few times it has been in its current form. As it crawls amidst the burgeoning battle between the enemy and the rescuers, it continues to attack those unfortunate members of the syndicate who stand in its way.

After what seemed like hours, the basilisk finally found the door that concealed its mate inside. It could finally smell the unique sweet scent of its mate at its most potent. Finally…

The King of the Serpents shapeshifted into a livid Harry James Potter. His emerald green eyes glowing with the combination of raw power and anger. There is a slight tremor raking through his body due to his flaring magic. His heart pounding in his chest because of adrenalin.

Taking a deep breath, Harry Potter summoned the Elder Wand and blasted the wards so that he could enter the door.
The innate magic from the *DeathStick* coupled with the potency of his intent pulverized the door along with the walls of his Hermione's secret chamber.

The first thing he saw as the walls and the door crumbled is his Hermione… She was lying unconscious on a beautiful large bed. Her body was still. He could not see any movement at all. His heart gripped with fear. Surely she cannot be dead. Not now.

*No! Hermione, you can't leave me… Not now! When I only just got you back...*

Maybe it's accidental magic or maybe it's because he is the most powerful wizard in the world, but as soon as he saw his queen laying motionless on the bed, the stupid bastard who dared to take Hermione away from him is magically compelled to stay rooted in his place.

With a death glare to the crazy man who had the bloody balls to attempt to separate his Hermione from him, he could see his enemy go pale-faced in fear. The man was holding a wand in one hand and a gun in the other, but he cannot move at all...

"What did you do to my Hermione?", his voice cold and angry. Magically amplified by an unintentionally cast *sonorous* charm.

When the bloody dark bastard only remained rooted on the spot where he stood, writhing and struggling against the pull of Harry's magic, his eyes widening in fear and his body drenched in sweat...

Karim Hajjar was exhausting himself just to get away from the pull of the invisible restraints subconsciously cast by the wizard who is the equal of Merlin and Osiris in magical ability. Since only his eyeballs could move, his heart pounded in fear as he saw the Elder Wand being pointed at him. The tip of the unbeatable wand glowing green, just like the eyes of the man who held it. He had never met an enemy as powerful as Harry Potter before!

Harry glanced back at his queen, fearing for her life and her safety. Who knows what this vicious wannabe pharaoh did to his Lady Potter?

As he let himself be overwhelmed by his anger, he transformed into the dangerous monster hiding inside his very magical core…

The basilisk moved like lightning. It angrily coiled its large scaly body around the enemy's shivering one.

Karim Hajjar knew that the time has come for him to finally die. Kidnapping Hermione Granger, no, Hermione Potter - the wife of the Most Powerful Wizard In The World - is the biggest mistake he had ever made. Sad to say, it's also his last one. As he felt the pain coursing through his body from the death grip of the wizard who can turn himself into a basilisk, he mentally cursed himself for underestimating Harry James Potter…

As the basilisk successfully wrapped its large body around its enemy, it opened the protective layer around its eyes to stare at the hated face of the man who tried to harm its mate. He wanted to stare at the man before biting him on the neck.

But as the frightened man's eyes met that of the angry basilisk...

The last thing Karim Hajjar saw before passing on to his next great adventure - an eternity of suffering in hell - is the angry slitted eyes of the basilisk.

The King of the Serpents slowly loosened its grip on the now dead man. It once again shifted into
a confused Harry Potter.

"Don't fucking tell me I bloody killed the bastard with the basilisk's stare?", he gritted his teeth.

He poked the man who is still magically held upright by his magic. When no movement came, he sighed. Great! I killed the dark wanker without interrogating him... And I thought I was going to prolong his suffering... Might as well call him back using the Resurrection Stone later on for interrogation...

"To all the members of the Red Triangle syndicate or whatever in the bloody hell is the real name of your stupid crime group, your master, Karim Hajjar is dead. Surrender to the ICW or face death", he announced. His voice reverberated throughout the cave.

Harry Potter could hear cheers of victory from his comrades and wails of surrender by the enemy's minions but he didn't care. He immediately ran to his queen's bedside eager to touch her.

When he tried to hold her hand, he was magically stopped by some sort of shield. What the bloody hell?

"I found Hermione Granger. Send for a healer immediately. I repeat, I found Hermione Granger send for a healer immediately!", he announced once again.

He tried once again to touch Hermione, this time, on the shoulder. But, the same result happened. He is still unable to touch her.

When he heard footsteps nearby, his entire focus then shifted towards the sound. He should never let his guard down despite ending the dark wanker. Who knows how much of a die-hard fanatic of the now dead man his minions are?

Upon seeing that the footsteps just belonged to three war healers, he lowered the Elder Wand.

"I can't touch Hermione anywhere. It's like there is some sort of shield on her. When I crashed the walls of this room, I already found her unconscious on the bed", he reported.

"Allow us a few minutes to conduct diagnostics on the Chief, Lord Potter", one of the war healers said and he nodded.

His focus was on the three healers and his queen as they tried to figure out why nobody can touch her. After a few minutes, he could hear the war healers whispering amongst themselves. Finally, their elected spokesperson approached him.

"Lord Potter?"

"Please tell me Hermione is alright", his voice cracked with worry.

"Sir, the Chief must have exhausted all her magical reserves to shield herself from any physical touch. She is in a magical coma. Nothing is wrong with her except for the fact that there is an unknown substance being injected into her bloodstream. And the thing we're worried about the most is the damage that's been caused to her mind. She seems to be in disequilibrium. Maybe the substance induces her mind with nightmares. We'll bring her to the ICW HQ at once", the war healer explained.

"Yes, please. Go! Bring her there now. She needs to be healed. I can't lose her. I just can't", this time he wiped a stray tear away.
"We'll use the entire bed as a portkey sir. It will take her straight to HQ", the war healer said with a nod.

"Go. I'll follow as soon as possible", he agreed.

When the war healers cast *portus* on the bed, all three of them held on tight to a poster before activating the portkey. Within minutes, they disappeared with an unconscious Hermione in tow.

He looked at the dead man who remained standing in the center of the room because of his magic. As he recalled Osiris' last reminder during their second meeting, just a few hours before the rescue operation started, he approached the dead man.

He cast a *sectumsempra* on the man's wrist and he conjured a chalice so that he could catch droplets of the bastard's blood.

Pointing the Elder Wand on the blood, he said…

"I, Harry James Potter, on behalf of my lady, Hermione Jean Granger - Potter, claim the blood of Karim Hajjar, the last descendant of the House of Osiris, in reparation for his crimes against the lady of my house. By claiming his blood, so too shall all his wealth, assets, and property be claimed by the House of Potter forever. So mote it be", he took a very tiny sip of the blood and forced himself to swallow it. And then, the magic is sealed.

The Throne of Osiris is now gone forever. The prophecy focusing on Hermione is now fulfilled…

All the wealth amassed by the evil descendants of the House of Osiris now belongs to his Hermione. A just price for the crime Karim Hajjar did to his wife. But should his queen not recover from this abduction, he will probe the very gates of hell just to avenge Hermione.
The End of the Red Triangle

Chapter Notes

A/N: This marks the end of Book 1 for My Cheating Heart. The first 36 parts of the story are focused on Harry and Hermione's past and what it takes to be the Master of Death.

Book 2 will be shorter, maybe 20 to 25 chapters that will focus on their acceptance of the responsibility.

Book 2 will still be posted in this page and the restricted scenes will still be added in the companion piece to this tale.

So, you could consider this as a partial end to the story, since this is the conclusion for the first-half of My Cheating Heart.

I am looking forward to your reviews, follows, and faves.

P.S. Since Book 1 has finally ended, please indulge me. Why do you love or hate this story?
My Cheating Heart

By: tweety-src-clt9

The End of the Red Triangle

The Wizard Times Volume 180 – Year 2011

January Issue
Harry Potter and ICW Ends 'Red Triangle Syndicate' After Saving Hermione Granger

By: Phyllis Robertson

On December 27, 2010, at a non-magical theater in London, Hermione Jean Potter nee Granger, the recently appointed Chief of the International Confederation of Wizards Medical Research Department, was kidnapped due to a carefully set trap that appealed to her kind and caring nature. The first diplomat of the ICW to have been abducted in a hundred years, the mysterious case of the Lady Potter's kidnapping led to the downfall of the largest syndicate in Europe, the 'Atbae 'Ilah Al-mawt (which means "The God of Death's Followers"), more commonly known as the 'Red Triangle Syndicate' since all their members sport a red triangle tattoo on their forearm.

In an exclusive interview with Lord Harry James Potter, Go Hye-sun (the Chief Hit Wizard of the ICW), and Supreme Mugwump Babajide Akingbade, we have uncovered the details and long-kept secrets of the syndicate that's destroyed so many innocent lives (both magical and non-magical) for many years.

There are two very scary details about the kidnapping. One, the leader of the syndicate had been stalking Hermione Granger for more than ten years. Two, the history of the syndicate goes back to the ancient times, with all its leaders (ever since its foundation) having descended from Osiris, the Pharaoh of Egypt.

So, dear readers, I am very pleased to share the full verbatim of my interview straight from the horses' mouths...

Phyllis Robertson: Thank you for the opportunity and the time you have granted me for this interview, Lord Potter, Mr. Go, and Supreme Mugwump Akingbade.

(The three wizards nodded)

Phyllis Robertson: Alright, so the first question, is Chief Healer Granger alright as we speak?

Harry Potter: When I first found her in the place she had been taken into, Hermione was unconscious. As we speak, the healers are still attempting to drain the harmful substance into her bloodstream. She was injected a large dose of cocaine, an illegal and harmful muggle drug. Once that is cleared from her system, only then can the healers start fixing her mind. It seems that the bastard who kidnapped her fed her mind with very dark memories. We can only hope that she will be able to recover from this.

Phyllis Robertson: That sounds so sad... I hope the Chief is fine. Next question, were you able to identify the motive for the kidnapping?

Harry Potter: The leader of the syndicate, Karim Hajjar, wanted Hermione to take part in a dark ritual. The ritual is unknown but the end goal is that he will be able to reclaim the lost throne of Osiris by using her. With that, we speculate that her kidnapper has been feeding her with his memories so that she could be some sort of a reincarnated form of Isis.

Go Hye-sun: I agree with Lord Potter. When we found the secret chamber of the leader, he had a crazy collection of pictures, articles, and reports about Hermione Granger. He even had a tracking device on her which made use of her hair strands. Karim Hajjar had been obsessing about her for more than ten years.
Phyllis Robertson: But why Hermione Granger? What makes her so special to the leader of the syndicate?

Harry Potter: There has been a prophecy made sometime in the nineteenth century about a European woman who shall be the cause of the restoration of the legacy of the House of Osiris. It says that the woman shall share the characteristics of Isis. Karim Hajjar believes that Hermione is that woman since after stalking her for the last decade, she ticks the marks for the prophecy's requirement.

Phyllis Robertson: It seems that this all ties up to the epidemic in Britain that plagued young pureblood witches and wizards. The same epidemic that the Chief finally ended just a few weeks ago. Are the two incidences related?

Harry Potter: Yes. The two incidences are related. The syndicate planted the cursed toy that caused the epidemic to lure Hermione away from the secure wards of the ICW headquarters. Also, the epidemic was some sort of test for her intelligence and strength of character.

Phyllis Robertson: Could you please expound?

Harry Potter: It is not a secret, Hermione’s past issue with select members of the Weasley family. The leader of the syndicate believes that if Hermione gets passed her issue with the Weasleys, and still helps them, then she is indeed an equal of Isis, not only in terms of intelligence but more importantly, in kindness and goodness of heart. Hence, the toy was planted somewhere Freddie Weasley could easily access it.

Phyllis Robertson: I see... So, how was the Chief taken in the first place?

Harry Potter: It was on the evening of the 27th of December. Hermione and I were watching a muggle theatrical show called Wicked with the rest of our family. During the break-in between the first and second act, she told me that she’ll be going to the loo. I volunteered to go with her but she says that she'll be fine. Anyway, after that break, she never returned to her seat. When the second act started, I got so worried and anxious, so I decided to investigate. In a corner by the restroom, I felt a trace of magic. Some sort of luring charm for magicals and warded against muggles. We could only assume that they set the trap by appealing to her kind nature. She was taken by a portkey which brought her to the syndicate's lair in a creepy forest in Yugoslavia. The lair was under a man-made cave.

Phyllis Robertson: What do you mean an appeal to her kind nature?

Harry Potter: Hermione loves to help people who need her. Most especially children. Since the leader of the syndicate has studied her behavior for more than a decade by gathering information on her by reading her friends' memories, Karim Hajjar should know that Hermione loves to help. They used her kindness against her.

Phyllis Robertson: So how did you find her?

Go Hye-sun: The Lord Potter has a special tracking device planted on the jewel on Hermione Granger's wedding ring. It's a very special tracking device that is undetectable. The ring is infallible since no one can remove it from her hand, including Hermione herself.

Phyllis Robertson: But how is that tracking device possible?

Go Hye-sun: Lord Potter cast the tracking charm using intent-based magic. Furthermore, the ring is locked with a parseltongue password. That way, no one else will be able to remove the ring from
Phyllis Robertson: How did you rescue the Chief? Who were the people involved?

Babajide Akingbade: Less than an hour after Hermione Granger's kidnapping, Lord Potter immediately contacted Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt of Britain, who in turn, informed me of the incident. As the first diplomat of the ICW to be kidnapped in one hundred years, I was in a state of panic. Lord Potter and Minister Shacklebolt, called me via the special communication mirrors that all world leaders have, to be able to keep in closer touch with the ICW, and each other. After the brief call, I invited them to portkey to Switzerland, at the ICW HQ in particular, and then, I set up an emergency meeting that was virtually attended by fifty magical heads of state. There, world leaders pledged resources such as weaponry, money, and their special security or ward forces, to help in the rescue operation which we later called Operation Isis.

Phyllis Robertson: How many people were involved in Operation Isis?

Go Hye-sun: The task force is composed of a battalion of 400 warriors from all around the world. There were 370 wizards and witches and 30 goblin warriors. Those were the people who were directly involved in the rescue. The 50 world leaders just provided their support. I was the commander of the entire operation while Lord Potter headed Company A, whose main task is to break the very strong ward scheme that protected the syndicate’s lair.

Phyllis Robertson: Was it a bloody operation? Did you lose men in your team?

Go Hye-sun: The syndicate has been very reliant on the strength of their wards. So, when we were able to break it, they were very surprised. Also, Strategy One, which made use of blindness crackers, a magical invention from South Korea, handicapped the enemy very much since they can’t see anything from the temporarily induced ten-minute blindness. Obviously, because of careful planning and technology, we did not lose men from our side. The enemy lost six hundred thirty-three men; their leader Karim Hajjar included.

Phyllis Robertson: How about prisoners? How many were you able to capture and put to jail? Are there innocents that you were able to rescue?

Go Hye-sun: In the lair, we were able to rescue around fifty women. They are service women forced to cater to the henchmen's sexual needs. Since most of the women are non-magical, we are working with the non-magical governments to bring them back to their home countries. After Lord Potter had slain the leader of the syndicate, Karim Hajjar, three hundred fifty-two of his henchmen surrendered. All of them are now locked inside the most secure prison cells of the ICW.

Phyllis Robertson: What else about the syndicate were you able to discover? Could we all now sleep soundly in our beds, and have an assurance that the operations of the Red Triangle syndicate have finally been put to an end?

Babajide Akingbade: The troops unearthed as many secrets of the Red Triangle that they could find in their lair in Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, we dosed all prisoners with veritaserum so that we could put a stop to all their illegal smuggling, drugs, and prostitution operations worldwide. We’ve already bombed their lair in Yugoslavia and we have reclaimed their drug laboratory in Germany. We still have one more drug laboratory in Asia, and then the prostitution dens will be next. It will still take some more effort but the ICW can give an assurance that before the year 2011 ends, the ‘Atbae ’Iilah Al-mawt and all their criminal operations will finally end forever.

Phyllis Robertson: That sounds excellent, sir! Finally, the largest syndicate in Europe is going down for good. Lord Potter, how do you feel about all this?
Harry Potter: I only feel relief. Karim Hajjar had a lot of sinister plans for Hermione. I'm just happy that he could never harm her again because he's dead. Also, all of his victims and that of his criminal empire could in a way, get the justice they so deserve after all these years.

Phyllis Robertson: Lord Potter, you were the one who killed the leader of the syndicate. How does it feel?

Harry Potter: I ended that man because he attempted to hurt Hermione. I had no other choice.

Phyllis Robertson: Is it safe to assume that you and the Chief are back together for good?

Harry Potter: I've waited for ten years to get one last chance with Hermione. I've been wooing her ever since she returned to Britain. We just officially got back together on the morning of December 22nd. And then, she was taken away from me on the evening of the 27th of December. So, you could only imagine how angry I was at the leader of the syndicate...

Phyllis Robertson: Lord Potter, there have been rumors that you used a special form of magic to defeat Karim Hajjar, is that true?

Harry Potter: Well whatever I did to end Karim Hajjar's life, is considered as a state secret protected by the ICW and the rest of the people involved in Operation Isis. So, no comment.

Phyllis Robertson: Lord Potter, there are rumors that you battled a mountain troll and killed a basilisk that threatened Hermione Granger when you were still students at Hogwarts. Are those rumors true?

Harry Potter: Yes, the rumors are true. I have always tried my very best to keep Hermione safe. I won't give out any details but I just want this out in public. I have defeated a mountain troll, killed a basilisk, faced a werewolf, killed Voldemort, and Karim Hajjar just to keep Hermione Granger safe. So, whoever is out there who has evil plans for her, threaten her again and I'll haunt you and bring you down... Consider this your last warning. She is the most important person in my life. And I will do anything to keep her safe.

Babijide Akingbade: That will be the last question that we will be answering for this interview. We will be taking no more questions.

There you have it, my dear witches and wizards! We now have all the facts that we can be privy to, straight from the mouths of the men of the hour.

To sum up all the important details, Hermione Granger is now safe, but she is still recovering. The Lord Potter was the one who ended the life of the leader of the syndicate, Karim Hajjar, for threatening his most beloved lady. The ICW, under the leadership of Supreme Mugwump Akingbade and Chief Hit Wizard Go Hye-sun, will continue to end the worldwide operations of the syndicate from the leads they have gathered in the Yugoslavian lair and the prisoners they now held captive.

We at The Times could only hope and pray that Hermione Granger will fully recover from her traumatic ordeal.

As the first issue of The Times for the year 2011 circulated all over the world, the magical
community is shocked at the news. Who would have thought that one woman could cause the downfall of the largest syndicate in Europe?

The entire Weasley family gathered at the Burrow. They have been anxious for any sort of news about Hermione ever since they were portkeyed to Switzerland for the interrogation. As soon as Bill Weasley saw the headline on the latest edition of The Times in Diagon Alley, he immediately bought a copy of the magazine and apparated to his ancestral home.

"Weasleys, look! We have news! Hermione has been rescued!", Bill announced as he entered the main door to the Burrow.

"That's brilliant news!", Mrs. Weasley exclaimed.

"Hurry, Bill! Read the article!", George made a gesture for him to hurry along.

Bill cast a sonorous on himself as he read the article out loud. All members of the Weasley family listened with bated breath. Hermione Granger was once an important friend of the family. And given how much they owed her for saving Freddie and Julianna, they could only hope that Hermione is alright.

When Bill read the last word of the article, Ginny exclaimed.

"It's my fault! It's my fault that Hermione is kidnapped! If only I didn't plan to take away Harry's fortune, Hermione would not have attracted the leader of the syndicate with her world-renowned intelligence as a healer. If only I wasn't so selfish…my actions caused her to lose her daughter, and now, she almost lost her life because of this abduction", Ginny cried. Her husband, Blaise, immediately wrapped an arm around her in a gesture of comfort.

"While I am sure that Hermione would still attract the leader of the syndicate's attention as the Brightest Witch of the Age whether she is a healer or not, your realizations are not far-fetched. Ginny, you of all people, along with your mother, hurt Hermione so much… And while I know that a sorry will never be enough, I can only say that I hope you have learned about the consequences of your actions. How one single action could cause extreme and grave results. Your selfishness destroyed the friendship and relationship between two people… and then by putting shade on Hermione's character, you coerced Harry to act violently which caused the death of their daughter", Arthur Weasley said with a tone of sadness and disappointment.

"The Weasley family could never repay the debt we owe Hermione. The best we could do right now is pray that she recovers from this", Ron agreed with his father's sentiment.

"Mum? What did you do to Ms. Hermione years ago?", Julianna asked with genuine curiosity as she looked at her weeping mother.

"It's a very long story, sweetie", Ginny muttered as she wiped her tears away.

"But I want to know…", Julianna whined. With a sigh, Ginevra Zabini nee Weasley finally admitted to her entire family all that she has done to Hermione and Harry Potter…
Draco Malfoy sighed in relief upon reading the headline. At least his dear friend had been rescued.

"Tori, look!", he handed the magazine to his wife. Astoria sees Hermione as her best friend. So, his wife was very anxious for any news about their friend's safety. While they were confident that Harry Potter would do absolutely anything just to be able to save Hermione Granger, it still is such a huge relief to learn that things are now resolved. Well, Hermione still needs to be healed, but at least the bastard who wants her for his nefarious purposes is finally dead.

Astoria's eyes hurriedly skimmed through the article. When she finished, she smiled.

"Well, we could only hope that the healers could fully cure Hermione. If it's her brain that will be damaged though, what a big loss for our world", his wife remarked.

"We could only pray that Hermione recovers, darling", Draco cupped his wife's cheek.

While the world reads about Hermione Granger's ordeal and how Harry Potter ended the leader of the mysterious Red Triangle syndicate, the healers focused on the Lady Potter's treatment are finally able to delete all traces of the cocaine injected into her bloodstream.

"Finally!", Healer Rostova announced as the test indicates that the Chief is now clear of any substance.

"But that is phase one only. What we need now is how to cure her mind. And well, the magical shield she must have cast as a final defense on herself is still very potent", Healer Omenuko countered.

"We need someone she trusts… We need someone to penetrate her mind shields so that we could bring the Chief back to us", Healer Chien added.

"I will call in Lord Potter. I am sure he will be able to do it", Healer Omenuko suggested.

"Yes. The Lord Potter is my first choice as well. Since the Chief was mentally violated by a man, we need the one man she trusts the most, to bring Hermione Granger back to us", Healer Rostova concluded.

"Must we do the second phase of the Chief's treatment right away? Or shall we wait for her body to be physically stronger first? After all, the cocaine overdose did take a toll on her", Healer Omenuko inquired.

"We do it as soon as possible. The longer she locks herself under the magical shield, the more detrimental it will be for her health. She could lose her magic forever… or worse, she will lose the will to live since her mind will be locked in the dark memories", Healer Rostova explained in a grave voice.

"I will send for Lord Potter right away", Healer Omenuko said with a nod to his colleagues before rushing out of Hermione Granger's hospital room to look for Harry Potter.
Saving Hermione's Sanity

Chapter Summary

This is Chapter One for My Cheating Heart Book 2.

After learning about what it takes to be the Master of Death from Osiris and Merlin, Harry Potter accepts the responsibility to make things better for himself and his lady. Or is it?

Chapter Notes

A/N: So, this is Chapter One for My Cheating Heart Book 2.

I do hope that you will enjoy the 2nd Book and will continue to support this story, just like how you stayed with me through the 1st Book.

This will be the last book for My Cheating Heart. Maybe 20 Chapters to 30 chapters max. One thing is certain, it will be shorter than the 1st book.

I am kind of nervous for your feedback on this new chapter since it sort of reminds me of the feeling of posting something entirely fresh.

Anyway, your follows, reviews, and faves make me really happy.

I am very excited to hear from you.

Plugging my one-shots:

How Joy Came To Be - fluffy smut with a plot
Lurking In The Shadows - Creature Harry and a Horror Romance featuring smut
The Wedding Speech - Godfather Harry fluff
Our Promise - Wedding fluff

Plugging my new multi-chapter story (don't worry MCH 2 is my main priority):

Exerting Control - An angsty post-war BDSM Story

Yes! I have been rather busy with other stories that is why MCH 2 took a little time.
Deputy Chief of the ICW Medical Research Department, Abimbola Omenuko ran as quickly as possible towards Lord Potter's temporary quarters. Harry Potter had never left the ICW Headquarters ever since he portkeyed to Switzerland when Chief Healer Granger was kidnapped on the 27th of December.

As one of the healers in-charge of Hermione Granger's case, he is the one who formulated the antidote to the horrid muggle substance, cocaine, injected into her bloodstream. Finally, they were
able to counter the substance and have all of it diluted from her system via the antidote. After that, they were able to flush the substance out of her body using a spell that forces the person to excrete them via urination. Even in her semi-comatose state, the spell compels the Chief to urinate what's left of the substance.

Now, they only have one task left. They have to bring the Chief back. The drug along with her bastard of a kidnapper's memories trapped Hermione's mind in the darkness. They must force her to come back to them. If not, if her spirit decides to let go, she could still die. Or worse, she would live but she will never be sane again.

As he got closer and closer to Lord Potter's temporary quarters, he cannot help but reminisce on all the things that have happened recently. Sometime in November, Lord Potter came to Switzerland with a distress call from Britain because the epidemic has worsened to epic proportions. When the Chief along with Rosier and Irie handled the case, he had to admit that he was very worried about Hermione. He knew how much pain she left behind in Britain. To his surprise, not only did the Chief lead the operations and the healing of the children, but also, she was able to find healing for all her heartaches. The best thing, Hermione Granger finally found her happiness once again. Ironically, the one man they all loathed because he hurt their beloved Chief so much, is also the same man who has finally made Hermione's eyes sparkle with joy. And then, that bastard tried to kill that joy again by kidnapping her for his dark fantasies of reclaiming Egypt.

During the quest for finding the cure to the epidemic, Harry Potter impressed the hell out of him. It was so obvious that he was a very good man at his very core. A good man who made a big mistake during his youth who is willing to do just about anything to rectify them. Also, he loves the Chief very much.

His respect for the Chief's husband continued to increase as the days passed, ever since he got to know more and more about him during his research for the antidote potion.

He had never seen any other man more in love with his wife, than Lord Harry James Potter.

He did not know the full details, of how the powerful Lord, ended the life of the leader of the largest syndicate in Magical Europe, but he's heard enough rumors. The only thing he is sure of, Harry Potter performed extraordinary feats of magic, just so he could finally end the threat to his wife's life.

Because of Harry Potter's great love for Hermione Granger, and the fact that he is most likely the Most Powerful Wizard Alive, he is very confident that they can save the Chief.

They must save Hermione Jean Granger, the Lady Potter…

Not only is she the Brightest Witch of the Generation, but also, he cannot fathom Lord Potter's reaction should Hermione die.

Harry Potter would never survive her death…

Finally, he reached the door to Lord Potter's chambers. They will be bringing his wife back to the realm of the sane and of the living soon…

Harry Potter is laying on a small single bed inside the ICW Headquarters. It's his thirteenth night in
Switzerland ever since Hermione's kidnapping. He wants to stay by her bedside but the healers won't allow him.

So, here he is forcing himself to sleep. He was very worried about Hermione. She's never woken up ever since they were able to rescue her. While he knows that the healers have already flushed the cocaine out of her system, Hermione is still not safe. If they cannot heal her mind, she might lose her sanity or worse, die…

Every night, before he succumbs to the land of dreams, he keeps on contemplating whether or not he should just go and perform the ritual of being the Master of Death so that he could beseech the Creator and the incumbent Protector of the Gates to the Afterlife to grant him a second chance to fix things, but he also took Osiris’ advice into consideration.

With that, he decided to postpone his decision. He would give it one month. If Hermione will not get better within his set time frame, he would perform the Ritual of Attestation without her; so that he can get one more chance to set things right.

He was about to close his eyes when he heard a knock on the door. He immediately got out of bed and ran to open it. It could only be either of two things. Hermione is awake. Or worse, something wrong had happened to her.

"Yes? What is it? Is Hermione alright?", the worry in his voice is very evident as he opened the door.

"Lord Potter, we need your help in healing the Chief's mind", Abim said.

"Of course", he agreed immediately as he raised a hand to summon his cloak. He wrapped it around himself as he took hold of Abim's arm. He apparated them outside Hermione's hospital room.

He heard Abim gasp, so he glanced at the African healer.

"Is something wrong?", he inquired.

"It's just, it's impossible to apparate to any other part of the ICW headquarters except the Hall of Heroes", Abim stated.

"Oh, er, I didn't know that", he said sheepishly. *Great Potter! Way to unconsciously show-off your powers!*

"Anyway, Lord Potter, are you ready?", Abim said.

"What do I have to do exactly?"

"You will have to enter her mind using legilimency and show her memories of how you love her… Make her believe that she could still trust a man… Our mind healer believes that she is trapped under the dark bastard's memories hence, her magical shield on herself. So, we need you to convince her to escape her self-inflicted mental lockdown", Abim summarized.

"Alright. Is there anything else I should know before we enter her hospital room?"

"Er, when the Chief wakes up, she might be, er, horny", Abim muttered sheepishly.

"Excuse me?", he was aghast.

"Upon conducting tests on the substance, we found out that it is some sort of hyper stimulant. So,
since the Chief will only trust you amongst all men, she will most likely want to make love to you repeatedly. Until the lingering effects of the cocaine wanes”, Abim explained.

"I see", he mused.

"So, er, I suggest that you take some stamina potions, just in case."

"No, it's alright. I won't need it. Will that be all?”, Harry wanted to make sure that he already has all the important details that he is supposed to be privy to.

"Well, I guess we're ready to go inside", Abim said with a nod. Harry turned the doorknob as he entered Hermione's hospital room.

He could see his Hermione there. She was still wearing the clothes that resembled that of an ancient Egyptian royal since her magic prevented anyone from taking them off. She was pale and still.

He took a deep calming breath to center his mind and his magic. Legilimency takes a lot of toll on someone's magic but he is willing to magically drain himself just so he could save her.


"Yes, Abim already briefed me. I'm ready. Let's do this", his voice filled with determination.

"Here, Lord Potter, drink up. In case the Chief wakes up horny, and you need to, er, you know", Healer Chien, Hermione's healer that checks up on the damage on her magic handed him a gooey green potion.

"No thank you. I'll be fine", he replied. His eyes were focused on his still unconscious wife.

"Alright. We need you to kneel by her right side, please. And then, all three of us will join our magic together as we lower the magical shields she cast on herself", Healer Rostova ordered.

"Got it", he said with a nod as he walked towards Hermione's bedside. Since her bed was lowered, he could kneel easily and his eyes could keep direct contact on her beautiful face.

"On Healer Omenuko's count of three, we will lower her shields, another count of three and then you Lord Potter will immediately use legilimency on the Chief…", Healer Rostova said.

"On my count, lowering the Chief's magical shields in…Three… Two…One…Go", Abim said firmly. Harry could feel the magic pulse around the hospital room even if his eyes were glued on his wife.

"Shield lowering, Lord Potter you're up in… Three…Two…One…Go", as Abimbola Omenuko gave the signal, Harry took a deep breath as he focused his magic. When his eyes glowed, he entered his wife's mind…

What he first saw as he gently entered her mind and tickled the walls of her Occlumency shields is just plain darkness…
"Hermione? Love? Are you there? It's me, Harry", he called out to the darkness.

His eyes roamed around but all he could see is black.

It felt like there is no hope and no tinge of happiness inside his wife's beautiful mind.

"Hermione? My love, are you here?", he tried once again.

Finally, after what seemed like many minutes, he heard a faint sound.

He could hear the sound of sobs. His Hermione's sobs. It was a very sad sound that is breaking his heart. What did Hermione do to ever deserve such pain and torture?

Despite the darkness, he concentrated on the sound of crying that he could hear from a distance. It was the only sound in this dark, cold, and lonely mindscape.

He quickened his footsteps as he followed the sound. As the sound gets louder and louder, he broke into a sprint. And then, he saw a wooden door.

He pressed his ear on the door and indeed, the sound of his Hermione's sobs was emanating from the inside. He slowly turned the doorknob. He smiled faintly when it opened. Good thing it is not locked.

He quietly walked inside the room. He found himself inside a very large library of sorts. This library is only lightened by torches scattered all around. He noticed that most of the torches are turned off. Maybe it symbolizes Hermione's will to fight. He certainly hopes that it was not the case. Because if it is, then he must find her as soon as possible...before it's too late.

When he reached the middle of the library, there was a high pile of books arranged in a circle that seemed to barricade something. Since he could hear the sobs from behind the tower of books, he sighed.

Finally, he found Hermione.

"Hermione? My love? Are you alright?", his voice very gentle. He knows that she is too vulnerable and too scared right now.

"Wh-who are you?", she replied in between sniffs.

"It's me. Harry. Your once best friend. Your husband. The man who loves you with every fiber of his being."

"You-you're not the – bad man?", she sniffed.

"No, love. I will keep you safe. The bad man is dead. I killed him. He can't hurt you anymore!", he reassured her.

"Re – really?", his heart broke at the disbelief in her voice.

"Yes, I am not a bad man... I will end anything that dares to try to hurt you", he promised.

"I remember a little boy... He had black hair and round glasses... He always comes to save me... He jumped on the back of a large monster in some bathroom for me... And then, I could hear his voice when I was like stone... Why did that boy not save me from the bad man?", her voice small and afraid.
"I'm an Idiot! Of course! I was tasked to show my memories to her. I need to show her how much I love her and that I will always be there for her. Instead, I let myself be lured by her mindscape... But maybe, by making contact with her actual voice and spirit, I could strengthen our connection...

"Can I remove the books, Hermione? So that I could bring you to that little boy? You know, your hero?", he coerced her in a sweet and friendly voice.

"Really? You'll take me to my hero?", he could hear a mixture of apprehension and hope in her tone.

"Yes, I'll take you to your hero. I promise."

"What's your name", she replied.

"Just call me Harry."

"Hello."

"Can I remove the books, please? So that I can bring you to your hero?", he said encouragingly.

"Okay", she agreed.

He used wandless magic to slowly move the books to the side so he could walk through the barrier. He bit his bottom lip to stop himself from tearing up. He needs to reassure Hermione so that she will trust him. If he cries, he might end up scaring her and she won't trust him.

His Hermione was there looking so sad and broken. She looked like her nineteen-year-old self. He could see his young, innocent, and meek wife in her current form. This Hermione is not the headstrong Chief Healer Granger. This Hermione is the one he broke many years ago. The one he had hurt so much because of his stupidity, pettiness, and misplaced pride.

"Hello, Hermione", he greeted cheerfully.

"Hi, Harry", she wiped the tears from her face.

"Will you take my hand? I will take you to your hero. I promise that he is waiting for you. But you need to trust me because he sent me to go after you", he said with a smile.

"Really? My hero sent you?", she looked up to him. She was squatting on the floor like a lost little girl.

"Yes. If you'll just take my hand", he extended his right hand to her.

"Are you sure you're not working for the bad man?", she gave him a curious look. Her chocolate brown eyes gave him a penetrating stare.

"Yes. I hate the bad man so I killed him. I will take you to your hero, he sent me to you", he convinced her of his honest intentions.

"You remind me of someone", she mused as she continued to look at him.

"Really? Who?"

"My hero. But you're older. He's a little boy. Brave, isn't he?", she gave a light chuckle even if her eyes were puffy and red from all the tears she had shed.
"Come on, take my hand. When I get you to a safe place, in your hero’s arms, I will buy you all the books you could want”, he enticed her with thoughts of books. His Hermione had always loved books. Her place of solace inside her vast, but now dark mindscape is a proof of that fact!

"Really? I love books!", her eyes sparkled with joy at the thought of books which made him chuckle lightly.

"Well then, take my hand, Hermione. I'll bring you to your hero. You will be safe. And then, I will buy you thousands of books if you want”, this time he knelt in front of her as he extended his hand.

"You know, Harry, I like you", she gave him a light smile before she slowly reached out to hold him.

As their hands touched, he immediately fed her of the many memories they have shared…

Harry held Hermione's hand as he apparated them to his memory of their first meeting at the Hogwarts' Express...

He showed her how much his eleven-year-old self is so amazed at her raw magical abilities when she fixed his glasses for him. He let everything out into the open. Even his thoughts could be heard by Hermione. He chuckled as the nineteen-year-old version of Hermione blushed when she heard his younger self say that he finds her wild curly hair cute because it reminded him of his untamable locks.

The next memory he showed her is the Halloween of their first year. He showed her his guilt when he did not defend her from Ron's harsh words. And then, he showed her that he was the first person to remember her when Quirrell announced there was a troll in the dungeons. When the rescue scene played out, Hermione's eyes were focused on the scene. As the troll fell, Hermione had a bright smile on her face.

"I told you my hero is a very brave little boy!", she clapped her hands in excitement.

"Your hero's strength is you. So, you must fight with all your might to return to him", he gave her a big smile despite the sadness in his heart. He could only hope that he will be able to bring his Hermione back.

"Show me more, please Harry. I want to return to my hero", her voice now filled with determination.

"You must fight, Hermione. Your hero cannot survive without you", this time he let a tear fall.

"I will fight, Harry. I promise", she said this in a way that reminded him of his wife, the Chief Healer Granger.

After that, she just became quiet. Her eyes absorbing all the details of his memories…

He showed her memories of their second year. He showed her how he visited her every day when she got petrified. He showed her how determined he was to write notes in class so that he could give them to her when she wakes up. And then, she heard him promise that he will make whoever it was that dared to hurt her, pay for what they did. He even showed her his battle with the basilisk
and the diary Horcrux. She gasped when she heard him say sorry to her in his head for failing her, when he thought that he would die from the basilisk venom, just mere seconds before Fawkes, the phoenix, saved his life with his magical tears.

He then took them to memories of their third year. He showed her the memory wherein he promised to stop his burgeoning crush on her since he felt that Ron fancied her too. He also let her see the guilt he felt when he stopped talking to her for some time because of the Firebolt. He then let her feel how happy he was when her arms were wrapped around him as they rode Buckbeak during their time travel adventure to save the Hippogriff and his Godfather, Sirius Black.

His best memories of their fourth year were focused on the Yule Ball. He let her hear his thoughts of regret about not asking her to be his date when she walked down the Grand Staircase looking so beautiful in her periwinkle blue robes. He also let her see that he was happy for her since everyone else now got to see the Hermione he's always seen. Her beauty shines from the inside. Aside from that, he let her hear his thoughts on how grateful he was to her every time he successfully conquers and survives the challenges he faced at the Tri-Wizard tournament. He let her know just how much he appreciated her help and support.

For memories of their fifth year, he showed her what happened during his date with Cho Chang. He let her see why Cho got mad at him. He's constant prattling on and on about how brilliant and wonderful his best friend, Hermione is, became the reason why the Ravenclaw got very angry. And then, came the saddest memory of all. He showed her how his world stopped when he saw her get hit by the dark purple curse at the Department of Mysteries. He let her hear his thoughts about him all ready to give up the fight because he cannot live without her. He also let her see how much relief and renewed energy flowed through him when Neville announced that he could still feel her pulse.

The memories of their sixth year were focused on how much it hurt him that she gets so mad because of the Prince's potions book when he only wants to make her proud by getting better grades in class. He also showed her how much he appreciated her compliment about him being as fanciable as ever before the Quidditch tryouts started. She heard his thoughts when he comforted her when Ron kissed Lavender Brown. She heard that he thought Ronald Weasley is the luckiest bloke in Hogwarts to have Hermione Granger, the Brightest Witch of the Age, be so in love with him that she's crying her heart out.

It was very hard for him to show her memories of the Horcrux Hunt, Malfoy Manor, and the Final Battle but he knows that he has to do it. So, he showed her how often he thought of his guilt for dragging her into all of his problems. At the same time, he also let her know that he feels so blessed to have her by his side despite all the darkness in the war.

After that, he skipped memories to the time after Viola Lily died. He showed her his guilt. His drunken episodes. The times he thrashed rooms at the manor because of his anger at himself. And then he showed her how she became his motivation to be better. He showed her how he built the foundation for Viola Lily. He showed her the memory of his kneeling outside her parents' home in Australia just to get any information about her and to simply beg for their forgiveness.

Finally, he let her see snippets of their important memories ever since they saw each other again after ten years...
When all of that is done, he now had tears in his eyes since he too was lost in the haze of all the happy and sad moments they have shared…

"Harry?", a feminine voice broke him from his musings. As he turned around to the voice, his face broke into a big grin.

He could now see his Hermione standing there. His Hermione who is so kind that she forgave him after all his mistakes. His Hermione, the Lady Potter, and the Chief Healer Granger.

"Hermione? You remember me?", his heart beating wildly in his chest as he waited for her answer.

"Harry! You saved me!", she jumped into his arms as they hugged each other tightly.

Harry could feel something shift in Hermione's mindscape…

Everything seems lighter and happier now…

"Harry!", Hermione's eyes opened as she screamed his name.

"Hermione, you're alright!", Harry Potter broke out of the trance of legilimency.

"Harry! So hot! I want you! Make love to me!", she was sweaty and panting hard. Her pupils dilated and her cheeks flushed.

"Ah, er, right!", he said awkwardly as he turned to the three healers in the room.

"Lord Potter take her to your home or somewhere that she feels safe and secure. And then, well, let her release the heat and the, er, horniness", Abimbola Omenuko said awkwardly.

"As expected, the cocaine still has after-effects. So, er, Lord Potter, just, er, make love to the Chief until her hyper-sensitized sexual aggression dies down", Healer Rostova added.

"Right! Okay!", Harry muttered.

"Love, not here, okay. I'll take you back to the penthouse. Just let me set up a quick portkey", he reassured his wife.

"Okay…Hurry", she moaned. He decided to just use her hospital bed as the portkey so that it will be more comfortable for her. Grabbing a firm hold of her bed, he activated the portkey bound for the master bedroom in his penthouse.

_I'll make love to you all day and all night Hermione… Just as long as you're safe in my arms, always…_

"Do you think the Chief will be alright?", Abimbola Omenuko asked Healer Rostova.
"Yes, I think she will be. She just needs to let the heat out", came the Russian healer's reply.

"It seems Lord Potter is in for a long steamy day and night. Maybe three days given the cocaine dose", Healer Chien chuckled.

"You think he should have taken the Stamina Potions?", Healer Rostova inquired.

"Well, he's most likely the Most Powerful Wizard Alive. His magic will help him", Abim remarked.

"Well, maybe the Potters will have a baby after this", Healer Chien added.

"No. The cocaine has anti-conception effects so, very unlikely. Although, Lord Potter is really in for a very wild night", Abim replied making the other two healers laugh.

*Thank Merlin for Harry Potter's extraordinary magic!*

The entire legilimency therapy only took one session that lasted for less than thirty minutes. Lord Potter's magic is a thing of beauty. Coupled with his love for Hermione Granger, Harry Potter will surely do anything to save her.
A/N: The graphic is shown to provide better visuals.

Credits to my friend who made this for me.

After a few minutes of twirling, Hermione's hospital bed finally landed inside the master bedroom of their penthouse suite. As soon as they arrived, his wife hurriedly got out of her bed before taking his hand firmly.

Despite the slight apprehension, he held her hand gently and followed her lead. He believes that
she should just take it easy and rest. But since he remembered the healers' warnings about the heat she could feel from the overdose of the illegal stimulant, along with the way she all but demanded to be made love to as soon as she woke up, he is determined to do whatever his wife wants from him.

His heart erratically pounded in his chest. He does not know how much the latent effects of the drug recently in her system would affect their lovemaking. The few times he shared the physical expression of love with Hermione, it had always been slow, sensual, and sweet.

This time around, he feels that the love they are about to share will be entirely different. While Hermione is never ashamed to let him know of her pleasure as they make love, he had never seen her take any semblance of dominance in the bedroom.

Of course, he did not mind always taking the lead. As the man, he believes he should always make her feel loved, pleasured, and satisfied. Besides, he loves seeing his stern, proper, and bossy Hermione come undone at his touch.

The way her face, along with other parts of her body would flush, the sexy way she moans his name, and the way her brown eyes would darken with lust, is undoubtedly the hottest thing he had ever seen. But tonight, as her hand tugs him to follow her towards their ensuite bathroom, he is sure that he will see a more dominant side of his Hermione during their intimate moments.

When Hermione opened the door, he quietly followed her. Maybe she wants them to take a bath together. She had always been big on hygiene due to her personal preferences and her training as a healer. As Hermione locked the door, he remained standing there. His eyes were focused on her beautiful face.

After days of being afraid that he would lose her for good this time around, his heart is just so overwhelmed with love and happiness at the fact that she is still here.

She is still here with him. She is standing there in front of him.

She is safe. Alive. Breathing.

"Shower with me, Harry…It's so hot", her voice husky and beguiling. His eyes widened as her hands bunched up her long silk dress before haphazardly throwing the discarded garment on the floor. He could feel his body stand in attention at the sight. Underneath the silk dress, she was wearing nothing.

Hermione turned around to walk towards the shower. She glanced at him before she entered the glass door and with a smoldering look said, "Come follow me."

Just like a hypnotized man seduced by a nymph, he is unaware of the fact that his hands roughly raised his shirt so he could take them off. His eyes were glued on Hermione who is now letting the water rain down on her body. Her eyes were closed as she savored the feel of the water on her skin. She looks so innocent and so sensual at the same time.

He was fumbling on the buckle of his belt so he could do away with his pants and boxers but he heard Hermione's voice from the glass-covered shower area.
"Don't worry about them. We'll take it off under the shower. Just join me", she whispered as their eyes met.

He walked towards the shower with his pants on. He promised to do whatever she wants so he immediately obeyed her. When he opened the glass door, he was surprised when Hermione pulled him inside. Her arms immediately wrapped around his neck as she kissed him passionately. Her lips hot and demanding. He returned her passion with equal fervor. He groaned in her mouth when he felt her hands fumble with his belt and jeans.

As their lips pulled apart, he whispered into her ear, "What do you want, love?"

"Just stand still for me, let me have my fun", her lips grazed against his jaw before moving down to his neck.

He bit his bottom lip to stifle a moan and a giggle since her lips are now teasing on the ticklish spot on his chest. Her fingers caress his chest and abdomen slowly and sensually; it is an entirely new form of sexual and mental torture.

When she knelt in front of him, her lips kissing his happy trail, he shivered in anticipation.

He glanced down at her as she lowered his jeans and his boxers. His erection was very close to her face. He lifted each foot so that she could fully remove his clothes off. She left them on the wet tiled floor but he didn't care.

As Hermione's dainty hand closed around his hardness, he cursed at the sensation.

"Oh my! You're so hard but the skin is so smooth", her voice reminded him of the young curious Hermione who is absorbing new knowledge. This is the very first time that she touched his body in this intimate manner. He could explode just by the innocent touch of her fingers.

"Hermione", he groaned when her hands slowly pumped him once and then twice in an experimental motion. When her lips lowered around his hardness, he screamed her name in pleasure.

"Sorry… Did that hurt?", she suddenly pulled away.

"No! No! It feels brilliant! You can continue if you want", he was glancing down to a sight that he would never forget. Hermione kneeling in front of him, her face mere centimeters away from the core of his masculinity.

"Okay…I'm just trying this out of curiosity. I haven't done –"

"You don't have to explain, love. Just do whatever you want. Or you can stop if – ", whatever words he still wanted to say were replaced by a moan when he felt her lips on him once again. While Hermione is a newbie at this, there is just something so sensual about her experimental touch. After a few minutes, he was already biting hard on his bottom lip to stop himself from exploding.

"Hermione…let go… don't want to…in your…mouth", he muttered through gritted teeth as his eyes met her own. He sighed in relief and frustration when she let him go with a pop.

"So… how did I do?", she grinned as she stood up.

"I'd say that's between an exceeds expectations to an outstanding", he chuckled.
“Hmmm… I guess there's more room for improvement. Don't you think?”, she mused as she wrapped her arms around him.

“What else do you want, love? I'm at your beck and call for tonight and for always”, he whispered as he bit her earlobe.

“Make love to me, Harry… Right here… Right now”, she pressed herself even closer to his body. The feel of their skin to skin contact under the cascading waters makes everything more arousing.

“Are you sure?”, he is a bit apprehensive since he might end up hurting her in this cloistered space. He's used to loving her like a queen on a bed of silk sheets.

“Yes… I want you to finally cleanse the last of that bastard's mark”, she pleaded. He captured her lips in a heated kiss as an answer. He lowered his mouth to ravish her chest as his other hand made sure that her body is primed and ready to take him.

“Harry please”, she moaned. Sensing her readiness, he gripped himself as he slowly entered her. He maneuvered them back against the tiled walls so that he could thrust better.

He needs to make this good for her. Making love to her tonight and maybe even the days after, is part of Hermione's healing process. So, he better make sure that this will be the sexiest and the most pleasurable night of her life.

“I love you, Hermione…I will always keep you safe…No one will ever harm you…and get away with it…as long as…I am alive”, he said the words in between groans as he moved in and out of her.

“Harder, Harry…take me…make me forget…please”, she stammered. He could feel her getting closer to the edge since her walls are now clenching hard around him.

“Anything for…you…love”, he growled. He rested his leg against the wall as both of his palms are placed on each side of her head. He kissed her with so much love and tenderness as he pounded relentlessly just like she asked him to. After sharing each other's bodies in an entirely new place for both of them, wild screams of their lover's name could be heard all over the bathroom.

Together, they finally reached the feeling of completion and sexual ecstasy as their hearts pounded in perfect sync to the sounds of their loving.

When he carefully pulled out of her, he pressed a kiss on her forehead.

“Hi, love…You alright?”, he was breathless.

“That was…wow”, she whispered and he chuckled.

“I know…let's get cleaned up and then we can sleep”, he suggested. When he saw her frown, he added, "Or we can make love some more." This time, she smiled. It seems that the side effects of the cocaine last longer than expected…Ah well, at least I get to see a more dominant side of my Hermione in the bedroom, he thought mischievously.

“Come on, scrub my back”, she said bossily.

“Yes ma'am", he chuckled as he reached for the loofah.
After cleaning themselves up, Harry wandlessly summoned some clothes for himself and Hermione. She accepted the nightgown and the black knickers with a pout.

"Just put them on love, the night is far from being over, I promise I have a plan", he cajoled so she wore the nightgown that hugged her curves beautifully.

"Your plan better not involve sleeping anytime soon, Lord Potter… I still feel so hot", she huffed as she pulled the knickers up her thighs before settling them on her hip.

"Aren't you hungry, love? Do you want to eat something?", he asked as he put on a shirt.

"I want fruits, maybe strawberries, and chocolate. I'll eat a heavy meal tomorrow… you'll cook for me, right?", she said as she started to brush her long curly hair.

"Love, why is your hair long again?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's my magic's doing. Or some side effect to whatever was injected on my bloodstream", she shrugged.

"Long or short hair, you always look hot… Short hair makes your face more prominent. But the long hair, well, I have something to grab hold of when I make love to you", he joked. She threw a towel at him which he only caught as he laughed out loud.

"Go get me my food and I'll wait for you on the bed", she said grumpily.

"Yes, dear!", he winked. He was laughing as he left her in the bathroom trying to tame her once again long curly hair. *At least my Hermione is still her same bossy know-it-all self despite what that bastard did to her…*

Harry was busy setting a large bowl filled with a wide assortment of fruit along with a glass of fresh milk. Since his first round with Hermione is rather fast and rough, he plans to fulfill his promise of making love to her all night long.

So, he is now setting the surround sound system to play a sexy love song on repeat. He decided to play *I'll Make Love To You* by Boyz II Men in honor of the song he performed during the Hogwarts' Alumni Homecoming. *On Bended Knee*, his song of apology is also popularized by the same male RnB group.

Maybe he could conjure scented candles all around the master bedroom along with some rose petals on the bed. He plans to make this night as romantic as possible just so he could help clear Hermione's bad memories from her abduction.

Whatever dark memories from Karim Hajjar she must have seen, he knows that it will stay in her brilliant mind forever. So, if by making love to her is a step towards his wife's healing, then he damn will make sure that he will be giving her the love of her life tonight.

When everything is all set up, her food ready, and the sensual song is reverberating around the
room, he levitated the tray as he made his way back towards their bedroom.

It was a good thing that he levitated the tray containing her food because what he saw as he opened the door made his jaw drop. Blood immediately flowed towards his groin when he saw his wife touching herself...

She had already raised her red silk nightgown over her breasts as she used one hand to play with her nipples and the other hand is slowly rubbing against her knickers. She was biting her bottom lip and her eyes were closed. Her hair spread all over a pillow.

"Harry!", she moaned.

Fuck! She's touching herself while thinking of me! So sexy, he stifled a groan.

He decided to just watch her pleasure herself to thoughts of him as he waved his hands all around. *Time to up my game*, he thought. He conjured scented candles that hovered all around the master bedroom. The sweet scent of vanilla and jasmine wafting in the air.

After that, he pointed a finger to the mattress his wife was laying on. He conjured petals of red roses that are scattered all over the bed.

He never had a honeymoon with Hermione. So, tonight could serve as a proxy of sorts for their wedding night.

When he noticed that she was about to pull her knickers down, he interrupted.

"I don't know if I'd be disappointed or proud that you did not wait for me, my love", his voice teasing.

Hermione opened her eyes and she turned towards him with a blush.

"Hey, Hermione", he smirked.

"What took you so long? I am still so hot and then the song was playing and then I – ", she blabbered but stopped when she noticed the floating candles.

"Like the candles and the flowers?", he asked with an eyebrow raised. Her hands groped on the bed and she gasped when red rose petals were now in her hands.

"Harry…this is so sweet", she remarked.

"Here you go, love", he carefully placed the tray on the bed.

"Come and join me", her voice sultry and beguiling as she patted the space beside her.

"Maybe later…you go eat your fruit…I'll take over what you started", he winked before leaning towards her so he could peck her lightly on the lips.

When he pulled away, he walked towards the edge of the bed. He knelt on the floor and then, to his wife's surprise, he dragged her down. Since he could now easily reach her from this angle, he wandlessly levitated her tray of food closer towards her. He added along a sticking charm on the glass of milk to avoid spilling. After that, he summoned a pillow and tucked it under her bum.

"Harry! What are you doing?", there was a shrill of surprise and arousal in her voice.

"Just eat love and let me do my thing", his voice husky as his lips grazed on her abdomen making
her gasp.

"Aren't you listening to the song? *I'll make love to you like you want me to…for tonight is just your night… We're gonna celebrate, all through the night*", he whispered against her skin.

"Harry", she moaned as one of her hands now had a loose grip on his messy hair.

"Shhhh! Love, relax…Let's go slow…I'm just gonna concentrate on you… Just eat Hermione, and let me take care of you", he said before he lowered her knickers down.

"Harry…please…stop teasing", she groaned.

"Eat, love…Let me make this a meal you'll never forget", his emerald green eyes briefly connected with her lust-filled eyes. He parted her legs as he pleasured her with his mouth while she moans and eats her fruits…

As Harry continued his slow sensual assault on Hermione, he could feel her getting sweaty. She was writhing in pleasure and she was calling out his name in sexy whispers…

He was enjoying this. He would never get tired of pleasing Hermione.

To see her come undone from his ministrations is just a thing of beauty.

It's such a delight to finally be able to show her how much he loves her through physical intimacy.

"Harry! Stop! Make love to me! Now!", she screamed. He could tell that she's already reached her peak and is still so eager for more.

He stopped pleasuring her with his mouth and he looked up at her. She was flushed and her hair is even wilder than ever. He slowly stood up from his position on the floor as his eyes never ceased staring at his Hermione.

After all that they have been through together, during their Hogwarts years and the war, his stupidity during their one year together as husband and wife, the years he spent away from her, and finally meeting her again just feels so surreal…

He could not believe that this beautiful, strong, and intelligent woman is his…

"What are you still standing there for? Make love to me!", she yelled in frustration which made him chuckle. Every time she uses that bossy tone of hers, it fills his heart with hope that she would fully recover from the ordeal she faced at the hands of her kidnapper.

He hurriedly pulled his shirt off and then he lowered his boxers to the floor. His eyes never leaving hers as he undressed.

"Harry…", she whimpered.

"Coming love", he teased as he slowly joined her on the bed.
He laid down on her left side with his body facing hers. He wrapped her left leg on top of his waist and then, he finally complied with her wishes as he joined their bodies together in the most intimate of ways.

Their lips met in a loving and heated kiss. Since they were quick in the shower, he wants to take his time with her for this round so that they could both savor the feeling of just being together once again.

"You're safe, Hermione…I'll always save you", he whispered as he gazed into her chocolate brown eyes which are now blazing with lust.

"I know…You always do", she moaned in reply as their eyes remain to be connected.

He is slowly loving her as he pulled her closer to his chest. He was content to just make her feel his reassuring presence. His gentle thrusting is a physical expression of just how much he cares for her. He was showing her just how happy he was to be able to make her feel good.

"Does it feel good, love? Tell me, what do you want?", he said before pressing his lips to hers once again.

"Just…keep going…Don't stop!", the last part was said through gritted teeth since he started pounding deeper.

"I'm so lucky to have you in my life… Hermione Potter", he groaned.

Even if the way he is making love to her is very slow, it still feels so hot in the sense that they were so close…Their eyes never cease from gazing into each other… Their lips would constantly meet in slow loving kisses…

"I love you…Harry", she said as he felt her inner walls clenching him tight.

"I love you Hermione", he replied against her lips.

When he increased his pace just so she could reach her peak, she cried out his name in ecstasy. He drowned her screams of pleasure by repeatedly kissing her…every kiss a physical gesture of his love and devotion for her.

He did not reach his peak but it was alright. Her pleasure is more important since tonight is all for her.

As her eyes focused, indicating that her mind is now back to what is currently happening, after her zenith took her to the magical place of sensual pleasure, she looked at him with her mouth agape.

"Harry…you didn't – "

"It's alright, love. That one and everything else that happens tonight is all about you", he said with a lazy smile as he pulled out of her body. He would never tire of watching her reach her peak because of his loving.
"That's... not... fair", she is still breathless. He could even hear the pounding of her heart against her chest since they were pressed against each other, skin to skin.

"I'll be fine, love... Here, eat some more", he wandlessly summoned a strawberry before gently feeding it to her. He also handed her the glass of milk which she finished in one gulp. After that, she opened her mouth so he could feed her another piece of strawberry.

"You know I'm all about fairness, Lord Potter", her eyes sparkled with mischief and determination as she licked the juices of the strawberry after swallowing the succulent fruit. He was shocked when she threw the glass haphazardly on the floor. He could hear the glass crashing on the floor as it broke in shards.

"Hermione!", he growled. His little minx straddled him and then she impaled herself on him in one deep thrust.

"Make love to me like you mean it, Lord Potter!", she commanded.

"I meant... everything... we just did", he moaned.

"Fine! Then, make love to me until you scream your release", she rolled her eyes as she sucked on another strawberry.

"Oh, you asked for it, Lady Potter!", he hissed since at this angle, he was buried deep inside of her. With a strong grip on her waist, he pushed upwards which she eagerly met with a downward movement of her hips...

It was over quickly as they screamed each other's name once again. This time, he emptied himself deep inside of her.

"There... now we're... even", she muttered before pecking him on the lips. He gave out a breathy chuckle.

"Love?", he whispered.

"Hmmm?", her forehead pressed against his chest. Both of them are still panting heavily.

"When... are we... telling your parents... and friends that you're alright?", he asked as he stroked her now sweaty chestnut curls.

"We can call them... my parents... send Patronus to friends... Take me somewhere... Vacation!", she replied sleepily.

Sensing that she is now tired, he levitated what's left of the fruit on the tray towards the nightstand. He gently lifted her off of his body before letting her roll on the mattress beside him.

"We'll do that love. Do you want to go to Black Island? It's a tropical paradise and it will be just us and no one else", he used a hand to push away the curls that are covering her face.

"Okay... sounds good... maybe... sex on the beach will mean more to me... than a cocktail from now on", she tried to joke despite her sleepiness.

"We'll leave for Black Island tomorrow afternoon. I have to set up some arrangements before we go", he said before kissing the top of her head.

Hermione yawned and snuggled closer to him. Her arm wrapped around his chest. He pulled her
closer by settling an arm around her waist. He magically adjusted the covers to keep them warm. Their lovemaking caused the sheets to be bunched up all around the bed and some parts of it are hanging loosely while the rest are on the floor. So, he had to wandlessly make adjustments to keep them comfortable.

When Hermione's breathing became calm and steady, he could tell that she already fell asleep.

"I love you, Hermione. I'll keep you safe, always", he promised before he joined her in the land of dreams.

The next day, after informing her parents and their friends that she is so much better now, Harry portkeyed them to Black Island. Indeed, he showed Hermione that *Sex on the Beach* is more than just a cocktail drink as he lazily loved her on the white sand…

While there, they forgot about the world and just focused on loving each other.

It was a respite that both of them needed after all they have been through these past few months…

They played on the private island just like happy and carefree children as they frolicked on the beach…

He took her to the deeper waters as they used *gillyweed* to breathe underwater. They had fun while using the magical herb just to be able to see the sea creatures and the corals…

They went on romantic boat rides and tried but failed to catch any fish…

Really, after more than a decade, Harry and Hermione Potter finally went on their very well-deserved honeymoon.

They forgot about all their responsibilities even for a little while.

Besides, they have to talk about the big decision that they have to make.
**Family Discussions**

Chapter Notes

A/N:

I will be posting maybe one more chapter to My Cheating Heart before I will take a short hiatus. I am participating in an online writing event soon. It will be about writing a time-travel AU story for any fandom. Of course, my entry will still be a Harry/Hermione story. The thing though is that I can't post the story here on FFN until the full story is posted on the site. So, with that said, the updates will be slow after this one. Since the writing challenge requires a completed novel that is at least 50k in word length, obviously I will be rather busy. If I hit 90% completion for that story, then I can start building up on MCH once again. The challenge will run from November 1, 2019, and the deadline will be in May 2020. So I do hope I can complete my entry before then.

Anyway, I will still be posting short stories as part of my writing obligations for my two forum affiliations.

I also signed up for a Halloween short story fest. It's already posted on A03. I will be sharing it here once the results of the voting and the author reveals are done on the day of Halloween itself.

Also, I have two short stories for Christmas. These stories are gifts of sorts to my Harry Potter Fandom Facebook Groups. The plots and cover pics are ready, I just need to write them. Once reveals are done, I will be sharing them here too.

Lastly, for New Year, I have a revenge story lined up. It will be anchored on Cho, Marietta, and Cormac's revenge on the Golden Trio post-war. It features how their cruel intentions will change the lives of Ron, Hermione, and Harry. Some sort of crime, romance, and angst story. This will be written for another fandom challenge based on a collage mood board I handpicked from a list of 60 choices.

Before anything else, I would like to plug my new short stories:

- Shelter From The Shadows = sequel to my Incubus Harry story
- The Potter Potion = Fluffy Romantic Comedy
- The Daredevil's Fears = If you love traveling, you'll enjoy this
- Just The Way You Are = Fluff and Humor featuring Professor Trelawney

Anyway, here is the update.

I hope you will like this new chapter.

If you read between the lines, this chapter will give you a glimpse as to why MCH needs a second book.

I can't wait to hear your feedback on this.
My Cheating Heart Book 2

By: tweety-src-clt9

Family Discussions

After three fun-filled days of just frolicking all around Black Island, Hermione now wants to start talking about the decision she and Harry must make. While their nights were filled with slow and sensual rounds of lovemaking and their days filled with easy conversation and various activities,
she believes that the time has come for them to start discussing their next steps.

Harry had already talked to her about how they plotted her rescue. He even showed her the letter written by Kei containing all the things he discovered about the history of Osiris and Isis. He also shared the memory of his conversation with the spirit of Osiris on the night before *Operation Isis* took place.

"Harry?" She was resting her head on his chest. After all the swimming, their failed attempts at fishing, and enjoying boat rides, they decided to have a quiet afternoon in bed for today. Of course, since Harry is a very determined and thorough husband, he interpreted quiet times as sexy times. He argues that he must make sure that the side effects of the cocaine injected into her bloodstream is completely eradicated. According to him, the only way to make sure of that is to make love to her as often as possible. While she always rolls her eyes when he uses that line, she always gives in. Making love to Harry is such a sweet feeling of utter bliss, contentment, and completion.

"Again?" He smirked.

"No, you prat! I reckon it's time for us to start talking about all the things we know about the responsibilities of being the Master of Death. You know, those sorts of things."

"Oh. You're right. We better change and talk in the living room. You know to be safe." He chuckled. Since he was a very vigorous and insatiable lover, she reckons that he's making a valid point. Hoisting herself up from his chest, she stretched her arms out.

"Harry? Shouldn't we – " She smacked his face with a pillow since his eyes were glued to her bare chest. She forgot that she only wrapped herself in the silk sheet that fell away during her stretch.

"Sorry, love! Sorry!" Harry laughed as he playfully peeked behind the pillow that hit him.

"Honestly! It's not like you haven't seen them before." She huffed.

"It's a bloke thing." He smirked.

"Come on! Let's go for a quick shower and let's talk." She got out of bed. She used the sheets to cover herself.

"Can I come?" He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively.

"Just shower. No funny business." She insisted.

"Fine!" He pouted as he got out of bed.

After their quick shower, Harry held his wife's hand as they walked towards their favorite part of the beach. He conjured a blanket before they sat down. The sound of the gentle waves, the sun shining brightly, and the peacefulness of their surroundings provide a perfect backdrop for this important conversation.

"Can we talk to Viola Lily before talking about our next steps? Maybe she could give us more insight or something." Hermione shrugged.

"Great idea." He agreed. He closed his eyes to summon all the Deathly Hallows to him. As his eyes
opened, the cloak was draped over his shoulders, the Elder Wand in his hand, and the resurrection stone on his index finger.

"It seems you are now more comfortable with summoning the hallows to you, Harry." She mused.

"Er, yeah. My connection to all three strengthened when I used it to anchor my magic to find you when you were taken away from me." He said sheepishly. He never felt comfortable talking about his power.

"Oh, Harry!" She scooted closer to him. He immediately wrapped his arms around her waist. He was inhaling the sweet scent of hair. Feeling the light sea breeze, he adjusted the invisibility cloak to warm them both.

"Are you ready to see our little Viola, Hermione?" He whispered in her ear. When he felt her nod, he extended the hand that bore the resurrection stone in front of her face.

"Do the honors please, love." He wiggled his fingers playfully. Hermione gently removed the ring from his finger. Turning the stone three times, both of them closed their eyes as they thought about their precious little angel.

"Finally! You and mummy are back together, daddy!" Viola Lily squealed making them chuckle.

"Hello, sweetheart!" They chorused.

"I'm so happy you are safe now, mummy. Though I never doubted daddy! I knew he'd do anything to save you." Viola gushed as she bounced up and down.

"I miss you, baby." Hermione tried to fight the tears but they still escaped. Harry tightened his arms around his wife while his left hand wiped her tears away.

"Please don't cry, mum." Viola pouted. She floated closer to her parents. She hovered just a mere foot away from her mother.

"Do you have anything to share, sweetie? News from Mister Death? Things that you've been up to lately?" Harry took charge of the conversation.

"Well, not much from Mister Death. He just pesters me to convince you to hurry along with your decision so that he could rest. The only thing significant I could remember is that he is open to talking to you one more time before you decide. He says that whatever choice you will make, he will always respect it." Viola reported.

"Hmmm...I see. Do you see Mister Death while performing his duties, darling?" Hermione inquired. From the way her brows furrowed, her head tilted to the side, and the dazed look in her eyes, he could tell that she was processing all this new information in her mind. She's bound to suggest something soon if he interpreted her facial expressions correctly.

"No, mummy. Only the adult spirits could see and remember the process of segregation. The good people go to the place I am in, which is also the place where Mister Death takes his breaks on since he lives there with us. While the bad people, like Mr. Voldy thingy, live in a bad place. That's all I could remember." Viola shared. Her finger tapping on her chin adorably. Their little girl is a replica of Hermione in terms of personality and gestures.

"I have an idea!" Hermione announced and he chuckled. He kissed the top of her head. He missed this! He missed being a witness to Hermione's moments of genius.
"Do share." He teased which earned him a nudge on the elbow.

"Harry, what if you ask your parents to come here? Maybe you can ask Sirius and Remus to come too? That way we can ask them about what Mister Death does. That should help us in planning our next steps before we make our decision." Hermione suggested.

"That is an excellent idea, love! Besides, I never formally introduced you to my parents yet!"

"You'll love Grandma Lily, mum! You are so much alike!" Viola clapped her hands happily.

"Harry will you summon – " Hermione stopped in midsentence when she saw the five spirits floating towards them.

"Mum! Dad! Sirius! Remus! Tonks! I'm so glad that you could join us." Harry exclaimed.

"Er pup, maybe you should remove the invisibility cloak around yourselves? Who knows what your hands are doing under the cloak?" Sirius teased.

"Sirius Black!", Lily Potter hissed.

Harry and Hermione blushed simultaneously as he withdrew the cloak away from them. Instead, he wandlessly cast warming charms around the area. His arms still wrapped around his wife's waist.

"I always knew that you'd get together!" Tonks said happily. She leaned against her husband, Remus, her hair turning blue.

"Hello, Sirius, Remus, Tonks! I can't believe that I get to see you all once again. And well, er, hello Mr. Potter, Mrs. Potter", Hermione addressed the newcomers.

"Just call us James and Lily, dear. My! You are a chocolate eyed beauty, aren't you?" James Potter moved closer to Hermione just so he could get a better look at his daughter-in-law.

"Er, dad, you're embarrassing Hermione. She's not big on compliments on her beauty." Harry chuckled when he noticed his wife's blushing face.

"James Potter! Stop making a poor first impression on our daughter-in-law." Lily smacked her husband's chest making Remus and Sirius laugh.

"This feels so weird," Hermione whispered to Harry.

"I know. A rather crazy lot, aren't they?" He whispered back.

"Nice try, son. Spirits have perfect hearing. We can all hear you whispering from here." James smirked.

"And Harry? I can't believe that you would talk badly about us to your beautiful wife!" Sirius playfully pouted.

"Hello, Hermione dear! Do ignore the ignorant childish prats. It's so nice to finally meet you." Lily Potter gestured to the marauders before flashing Hermione with a bright smile.

"Maybe you should have just summoned Grandma and Grandpa. When all of them are together, it is so annoying!" Viola huffed which made all the adults laugh.

"So, Hermione, what questions do you have for all of us?" Lily said with a kind smile.
"Well, I'm sure you guys know about the whole Master and Mistress of Death thing, right?" She addressed all the newcomers.

"Yes, we all do, dear. I assume you are curious about the responsibility of Mister Death since little Viola over here cannot answer that question?" Lily replied.

"Yes, that's right. So, could you please tell us your experience?"

"Maybe I should answer the question first. Since, well, I died first." James Potter joked making the other Marauders roll their eyes. Tonks and Lily sighed in exasperation.

"Please go ahead, dad. Guess we're doing this in order of deaths then?" Harry remarked. The adult spirits nodded.

Viola Lily squatted in front of her mother with a bright smile on her face. She idolized and loved her mother very much so she always wants to savor her little moments with her mum. When Hermione noticed, she gave her daughter a sad smile. This is the closest thing they could ever have to some sort of bonding moment because they cannot touch each other. Upon noticing Hermione's eyes shining with the tears she tried to hold back, Harry laced their fingers together as a gesture of comfort. He silently promised that he would do whatever it takes to reunite mother and daughter. They will gather all the information they could get before they perform whatever is necessary to be able to prove their worth as the Master and Mistress of Death.

"I'll go first, and then Lilyflower, then Padfoot, Mooney, and Tonksie shall share all that they know," James said after clearing his throat. Harry shot his father a grateful smile. If not for his father's effort to interrupt the sweet yet poignant moment, Hermione would most likely be crying by now.

"Sounds brilliant dad!"

"Alright, so I died on October 31st. You all know that. When I got there, I could see two lines. The one on the right is rather short but it led towards a very beautiful golden gate. I could see vast lands of lush green grass and flowers of all color. Of course, I immediately lined up to the queue that led to some sort of paradise. There is an angel at the end of each line that evaluates a person's file. After that, they get to enter the correct gate. Anyway, Mister Death or as you already know him to be Merlin, he makes sure that each spirit falls in line with the appropriate queue. He also makes sure that no spirit is taken away from where they truly belong. When I passed the brief evaluation, the golden gate opened and I entered. At first, I thought Lily survived Voldemort since I waited a bit for her to come and join me. That's all I can remember from my experience." James narrated.

"So, it's my turn. I'll pick up on where James had left his story. The reason as to why James waited a bit for me, is because I didn't make the daily cut-off. I died in between the end of one cut-off and the beginning of another. There I was, and I just saw the same thing he did. I didn't notice much because I was busy looking for Voldemort's soul. I wanted to make sure that the bastard died so that he could no longer go after my baby. Anyway, an angel suddenly appeared out of nowhere and she started whispering something to Mister Death. When the angel disappeared, Merlin started muttering about Horcruxes and evil immortal wannabes. When I heard that, I knew. Voldemort is still sort of alive and my baby is still at risk." Lily shared her experience.

"So, for me, it's rather straightforward. I fell into the Veil, which is one of the seven secret entrance halls towards the Judgement Room. I overheard that's what they call the place where souls line up to be segregated to the right gates. Upon entering the Veil, I was escorted by the Master of Death. He says that I shouldn't have entered via the Veil since he knows I am not guilty of any crime, but he still escorted me to the Judgement Room. After that, I observed the two queues and I saw the
Master of Death dragging a soul that tried to sneak into the good people's queue. I don't want to narrate what happened to that soul since it's not pretty. It remains to be the scariest thing I have ever seen both in life and in death. That's saying something given my thirteen years of Hotel Azkaban with all those dementors." Sirius last statement ended with a slight shiver in his deep baritone voice.

The other spirits winced at Sirius' words. The place where all the bad people go to must be such a horrible sight basing on their reactions.

"Right, so my experience is much crazier than theirs. The line was long for both the good people and the bad people queue. I saw a lot of our side waiting in line. I also saw the people who sided with Voldemort in the other line. Anyway, I was there, I was praying that my Dora would live. But when I saw her in the same line, my heart broke for our little Teddy. Thanks, Harry for helping Andy raise our son. Well, all was running smoothly until Voldemort appeared. Nasty sight if you ask me! He was forcefully dragged towards the bad people's line. All seven little pieces of his soul, since you know, he created those dark objects. I could never forget his ugly cries of pain and regret." Remus told everyone.

"Serves that bastard right!" James and Sirius chorused.

"Got not much to share except I understand why Merlin is tired. It's hard to guard both queues. I met Isis and she says that when it was her and Osiris' time, there were fewer souls since the population of people is much less. But she still says that it was a tiresome responsibility which they held for more than a thousand years. So, she says that she can't imagine how tired Merlin must be. I reckon Merlin likes little Viola over there because he wants his replacement to be ready as soon as possible. Such a tragic thing, whatever happened to him and Morgana. He still loves her you know? It hurts him so much every time he sees her suffering when they could have been together." There was a lace of sadness in Tonks' voice.

After Tonks' story, everyone fell silent. Each one of them processing all the new information shared.

"I'm bored. Can I go play somewhere?" Viola broke the silence.

"Are you sure you'll be alright sweetie?" Hermione said with worry.

"Mum, I'll be fine. Besides, I'm dead so, you know." Viola said cheekily.

"I'll come with Vi. You guys talk." Tonks took Viola's hand as they floated towards the water. Harry and Hermione's eyes followed the duo's every move. When they disappeared, they gasped.

"They'll be alright. Most likely looking at the creatures underwater." Lily reassured them.

"How are you, Hermione?" Remus asked.

"Yes, sweetie. We were so scared when you got kidnapped. Of course, we knew Harry would save you. But still, when you wouldn't awaken, we thought you'd be joining us soon." Sirius added.

"I feel a lot better now. Sure, I could still recall that bastard's memories. Sometimes, I see them in my dreams...but well, Harry's always here for me." She replied. The haunted look in her eyes speaks so much about all the pain that she's been through. Harry kissed the top of her head in a gesture of comfort and support which made her smile a little.

"I should've gotten married when I was alive." Sirius sighed dramatically.
"Hermione, dear? Harry told you about everything he knows I suppose?" Lily said.

"Yes, he did, Lily. Should we decide to push through with everything, I guess the only thing lacking is the marriage ritual. I'm confused as to what ritual – "

"Come with me, dear. I'll tell you all that you need to know. It will be our girl bonding of sorts. Let's leave the menfolk to talk about their beloved Quidditch." Lily interrupted.

Hermione smiled at Lily before slowly standing up from her comfortable position on the blanket with Harry's arms wrapped around her waist.

"You girls have fun!" James winked.

"We sure would. And you boys have fun congratulating our son for marrying the catch of the century." Lily rolled her eyes.

"Ah, yes! We'll be doing that!" James had a naughty grin on his face.

"I can't believe my little pup is all grown up and married to one of the most influential women in Wizarding Society." Sirius dramatically wiped imaginary tears.

"Mum? Can I come with you?" Harry whined.

"You stay with these idiots, love. I need to talk to my daughter-in-law in private." With a cheerful wave, Lily and Hermione walked away from the men.

"So, Harry, you seem rather cheerful these past few days." Sirius had a knowing smirk on his face.

*Great! I should've forced mum to allow me to come along… I'm in for a whole lot of teasing from these old Marauders,* he thought to himself as he felt his cheeks heating up.

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After their long afternoon with the spirit of their loved ones, Harry cooked Hermione a sumptuous dinner. As they sipped some wine while lounging on the couch in front of a fire, she looked at her husband.

"Harry, your mum told me interesting things about marriage rituals. You mentioned to me that Osiris says that the merging of the flesh, as part of the Ritual of Attestation, is some form of a marriage ritual. She already told me what ritual is best. She suggested that we use the same one she performed with your father." She narrated.

"Mum and dad had a magical binding ceremony?"

"Yes. On their wedding night, they performed a magical ritual. It's the strongest marriage bond. There is a caveat though." She mused.

"What is it, love?"

"Well, should we decide to use that ritual, our marriage could never be dissolved. I will belong to you in this life and even in death, forever. And you will belong to me." She explained.

"Oh. Er, is there a problem with that?" He asked curiously.
"Well, no. But I just, well, are you ready for that sort of commitment?" She muttered bashfully.

"Of course, I am! There's no one else for me, but you. It might have taken me a much longer time to realize that fact, but Hermione, I love you so much." He gently held her hand. He gazed into her chocolate brown orbs so she could see the sincerity in his eyes.

"Oh. Okay." She smiled at him.

"Any other reservations my dear?" He said in a sing-song voice.

"Well, the marriage ritual is rather weird. Your mother says that the shagging should be very thorough. Something like sex magic being more powerful if the pleasure derived from the activity is as intense." She blushed.

Harry snorted. "We got that part covered. Don't worry." He winked. She threw a pillow at him which he easily caught.

"Well then, Lord Potter, if you are so cocky that we got that part covered, I guess I have no more reservations on my part." She huffed.

"Don't get mad but, have you considered for me to chose the Merlin route instead?" He asked.

"Merlin route! Harry Potter! Don't you dare take on this task alone!" She hissed.

"I just, well, I could always find you. We could still be happy. But it will only be I who will carry this burden upon my death." He shrugged.

"Don't be such a noble prat, Harry Potter! You're doing this with me! We're in this together." Her voice filled with determination.

"Alright! Alright! I was just saying, you know. You don't have to get all huffy." He chuckled.

"Have you made up your mind about this?" She inquired.

"Anything to save Viola Lily, Hermione. You know I'll do anything to correct my mistakes. Also, I want to prevent all the bad things that happened to you because of Karim. I want to – " His emotional speech was halted when she leaned in closer to kiss him.

"I know, Harry. I know. That's the reason why I gave you another chance in the first place. I saw how determined you were to atone for your mistakes." She whispered as they pulled apart.

"So… when are we pledging ourselves to be the Master and Mistress of Death, Lady Potter?" He said jokingly. They both know that should they prove to be unworthy, there could be dire consequences.

"How's tomorrow night sound, Lord Potter?" She sassily retorted.

"Sounds like a date, my lady. I'll pick you up from our bedroom at seven." He winked.

"Brilliant! You won't have any difficulty in finding me since I'll be the one in the ritual robe." She laughed.

He wrapped an arm around her shoulders as they enjoyed the comfortable silence. It is a big risk that they are about to take. Even if it's not directly stated in any of the books Irie or Hermione has read, or from the information they received, should they prove to be unworthy, they could be severely punished. Or worse, maybe even die.
Despite the consequences, if they fail at this task, both of them are very determined to try. It was their one chance to save their daughter. It was their chance to make things right. If they fail, at least they will still be together.
Chapter Notes

A/N:

This is the last chapter of My Cheating Heart that I'll be posting in a while. I have to focus on my time-travel story now. Rest assured that this story will never be abandoned because out of all the things that I have already written so far, this is my absolute favorite.

I hope you enjoy this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Harry Potter knocked on the master bedroom of the solitary structure located at the Black Island. He took a deep calming breath as he waited for his wife to answer the door. Last night, it was agreed that they spend the rest of the day in solitude. That way, they could each prepare for the ritual they intend to perform at midnight.

He was tasked to center his magic and energy since he was the main presider for the ritual of the merging of magic and blood. Furthermore, since Hermione is tasked to focus on the magical marriage bonding ceremony, and he will be the one to lead during their physical consummation since he was the more amorous and vigorous lover, he needs to save all his energy. Per his mother's advice, the bonding requires extreme sexual pleasure for the ceremony to be sealed. So, he should be prepared.

And now here he is...

He is fidgeting as he waits for Hermione while stark naked underneath his white ritual robe. Since they are going to attempt an extremely strenuous and powerful form of light magic, Hermione suggested that they should be in robes of purely white linen. Also, as proof of their sincerity and dedication to the purity of their intentions, his wife suggested that they should not consume any food for the entire day. Because of that, they have only been drinking water since they woke up this morning.

Finally, after five minutes of waiting outside, the door opened. Like him, Hermione is dressed in cloth as white as snow. The only difference is that her robe gives a tantalizing glimpse of her glorious naked skin since there was no sash to tie it in place. Despite the humongous task ahead, his body immediately reacted at the sight. When she noticed the burgeoning bulge in between his legs, she chuckled.

"I guess you're right, Lord Potter. We have the marriage bonding ritual covered," she teased. Her chocolate brown eyes shining in a mixture of mischief and nervousness. Her joke about his manly reaction is a poor attempt to lessen the tension palpitating between them.

"Very funny," he rolled his eyes.

"Well? It's half-past eleven. Should we go to the beach?"

"Yes, let's go! We got this!" He held a hand for her to take. With a bright smile, she gripped his hand and together, they made their way to their favorite part of the beach.

As they stood on the sand, with the waves crashing gently on the shore, wild leaves floating on the water, and the moon shining brightly in the sky, their hearts pounded frantically in their chests.

It's a perfect night to perform the ritual when they looked up to a full moon. It's the perfect background to the highly risky sacrificial ritual they are about to perform.

"Are you ready, Hermione?"

"Ready as I'll ever be, Harry."

"May the Creator guide us in our sacrifice," Harry whispered into the night as his eyes closed to call all the Deathly Hallows to him.
When he opened his eyes, they are now glowing an eerie shade of green which made Hermione gasp...

He could feel himself being wrapped in the Invisibility Cloak, the Resurrection Stone on his finger, and the Elder Wand in hand. The floating leaves slowly circle them because of the sheer raw energy emanating from his magical aura. Combined with Hermione's magic that is reaching out to his own, the power between them feels alive and throbbing.

Hermione slightly shivered as his magic reverberated all around them. Commanding his magic to create a force field that will protect them both, he beckoned his intended Mistress of Death to step closer.

When Hermione stepped toward him, he extended a hand which she immediately accepted. The very moment their skin touched; Hermione's eyes glowed as well. Instead of an eerie glow, her chocolate brown eyes darkened and exuded a feral glint in them. She gasped when he tugged her closer to his body.

"I, Harry James Potter, Lord of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, do hereby commit myself to partake in the ritual of attestation. With my blood, flesh, and magic, I seal my promise for my pledge to be deemed worthy by the Creator and the Master of Death. Should my ritual sacrifice be for naught, I hereby accept the burden of punishment. So, mote it be!" He did not know where the words were coming from because everything seemed like an out of body experience. Whatever it was, he was certain that it's the right thing to do and say.

When his eyes connected with Hermione's, she gave a subtle nod indicating that she understands that she must follow his example.

"I, Hermione Jean Granger – Potter, Lady of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, do hereby commit myself to partake in the ritual of attestation. With my blood, flesh, and magic, I seal my promise for my pledge to be deemed worthy by the Creator and the Master of Death. Should my ritual sacrifice be for naught, I hereby accept the burden of punishment. So, mote it be!"

"To show our worthiness, we merge our blood," Harry conjured a dagger and a chalice. He sealed the first part of the ritual by cutting his left palm. When his blood oozed from the wound, he used the chalice to catch every single drop. After that, he handed the dagger to Hermione and she hurriedly followed his example. As their blood mixed in the conjured cup, the magic surrounding them pulsed even further and a pure white light glowed from it.

"As I drink my beloved's blood, so shall I seal the first of my promise," he declared before drinking from the chalice. He handed it to his wife once again.

"As I drink my beloved's blood, so shall I seal the first of my promise," she said in a voice that's loud and clear before finishing the last of the blood. When a jagged streak of light hit the chalice before engulfing them in the glow, they heard a loud roaring of thunder. To their surprise, the light felt warm and pleasant.

"I invite my beloved to share my magic through this wand," Harry looked at Hermione as he held out the hand that was gripping the Elder Wand. With a nod, she signaled her readiness and understanding.

"I accept the burden from my beloved to share my magic with his, through this wand," she replied as she placed her hand on top of his. Together, they held the Deathstick and said in a loud voice, "Expecto Patronum!"
Both of them were surprised when his stag Patronus played with Hermione's otter. When the two corporeal animals kissed, it merged into one large creature forming a unicorn. Once again, there was a blast of lightning accompanied by a rumble of thunder that made their magic tingle with excitement.

"I now commit my flesh to be one with my beloved," Harry proclaimed.

"I now commit my flesh to be one with my beloved," Hermione followed. When their eyes met, they nodded to each other. With that, she shrugged off her robe. Since they already talked about this last night, she will be in charge of the marriage bonding ritual and he will only take over during the consummation part.

As her naked body is exposed to him once again, with the moonlight glazing over her skin which gave her an ethereal look, his manhood stirred to life. Without tearing his eyes away from her, he hurriedly removed his ritual robe and haphazardly tossed them on the ground.

When he was fully exposed in his birthday suit just like his wife, he waited for her signal. As she held out a hand, he immediately took it and followed her lead. He could see that Hermione had conjured a thick woolen mat with intricate designs which she settled on the sand.

She led them to stand in the middle of the mat with both of their hands firmly intertwined. And then, she started the marriage bond ritual with a nod of her head.

"Inprecantes Prospera amor noster," Hermione began and with a twitch of her eyebrows he understood that he should repeat her chants.

"Inprecantes Prospera amor noster," he followed.

"Inprecantes Prospera amor noster!"

"Inprecantes Prospera amor noster!"

"Nostris animabus coniungens," Hermione chanted and this time she moved closer to him. Their faces mere inches away from each other. Suddenly, she maneuvered his hands to cup both of her breasts and she laced her palms on his chest. With another eyebrow twitch from her, he understood the signal despite his mind getting hazy with arousal.

"Nostris animabus coniungens," he proclaimed.

"Nostris animabus coniungens!"

"Nostris animabus coniungens!"

"Adhaeret corpora nostra," as she said this, he bit his bottom lip to stop himself from groaning out loud since her right hand closed around the center of his masculinity. When she nodded, he obeyed her silent command.

"Adhaeret corpora nostra," he used his occlumency shields so he could focus on the ritual because she guided his left hand to cup the apex of her thighs making it even harder to concentrate.

"Adhaeret corpora nostra!"

"Adhaeret corpora nostra!"

"Et sic erimus," Hermione maintained her hold on him while making sure that his hand is still
securely in place before lacing their foreheads together.

"Et sic erimus," his eyes boring into her chocolate brown ones. There is this feral glow in her eyes and this time around, he could also see the lust in her eyes. He was certain that her lustful gaze matched his own.

"Et sic erimus!"

"Et sic erimus!"

"Aeternus et umquam," she continued.

"Aeternus et umquam," he could feel himself getting lost in her beautiful eyes, but he didn't care. While he could feel the powerful energy in the air during the merging of their blood and magic, this time, it's like their love is physically taking form... in the sounds of the waves, the rustling of the wind, the leaves dancing in the air that surrounded them, the power of their love is eager to blaze out in full manifestation.

"Aeternus et umquam!"

"Aeternus et umquam!"

"In hac vita," this time Hermione's eyes glowed white. It was blinding but he could not bring himself to look away. She had always been beautiful to him, especially after realizing how blinded he was in the past, but under the moonlight, as they partake in this eternal marital bonding, she looks so perfect that she seems out of this world, a goddess who came to bring him on his knees.

"In hac vita," he no longer cared if there was no signal from her to copy her chants because he would gladly follow her lead always.

"In hac vita!"

"In hac vita!"

"Et in Mortis!"

"Et in Mortis!"

"Et in Mortis!"

"Et in Mortis!"

By this time, both of their bodies are emitting this white blinding light as their bodies give out a pleasurable tremble as their magic reaches out to one another.

"Hoc enim pignus!"

"Hoc enim pignus!"

"Hoc enim pignus!"

"Hoc enim pignus!"

After their chanting, he winced when Hermione lifted his right hand so she could bite a finger to draw some of his blood. And then, she sucked on his finger without breaking eye contact. Following her example, he does the same to her right index finger as he licked all the droplets of
her blood from the tiny wound. This marriage ritual is the most sensual experience he has ever shared with Hermione. Something about the merging of themselves in this strongest of bonds makes him so excited for the final part, the physical consummation of their union.

As their promises are sealed, there is a flash of lightning and raging thunder once again.

When the lightning and thunder ceased, Hermione whispered to him with her eyes beguiling and coercing him to submit to her sensuality, "Make love to me, husband."

Their lips immediately connected in a heated frenzy as she maneuvered them both to lay down on the mat with Harry hovering on top of her. Their movements were wild and frantic as they expressed their love in little touches, passionate kisses, and the joining of their bodies in the most intimate of ways...

They did not even notice that their bodies were glowing as they shared each other's pleasure while they danced to the old familiar tune of lovers underneath the moonlight...

As they screamed each other's names in ecstasy, Harry panicked when he saw that Hermione lost her consciousness. Suddenly, he was surrounded by a blinding light and he knew no more…

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Harry's eyes opened and the first thing he saw is a bright blue sky filled with fluffy clouds. He gasped when he saw himself lounged on still crystal-clear waters without drowning. He slowly stood up from his awkward position and to his surprise, he can stand on the water like it was made of glass. His surroundings seem so peaceful and perfect. Everything feels so heavenly where ever this place is.

Remembering his state of undress, he glanced down his body. To his relief, he is now wrapped in the same white ritual robe he wore before they had partaken in the physical consummation of the merging of the flesh through the marriage bonding rites.

He looked around to search for his wife, but he could tell that she wasn't there with him. *Maybe we were deemed unworthy and this is the afterlife,* he mused. With that realization, a surge of worry crept to his chest. If this place reminds him of heaven, then surely Hermione must be in the complete opposite of this paradise. *No! If one of us deserves to be punished for an eternity in hell, it should be me and not Hermione…*

"Harry Potter! It's so good to see you here!" A familiar voice called out. When he turned around, he saw Emrys Myrddin standing there with a big smile on his face. Beside him, he could see Osiris who greeted him by placing his closed fist across his chest with a quick head bow. He followed Osiris' gesture before turning to Merlin.

"Hello, Sir!" His voice filled with respect.

"Tsk! Didn't I tell you to call me Merlin?" The spirit of Britain's Most Powerful Mage rolled his eyes.

"Er, right. Sorry…" He muttered awkwardly.

"Right! So, come here and let me introduce you to the Masters of Death before I give you one final test. After that, you get to meet the Creator," Merlin said cheerfully as he made a gesture to come
and follow him. Osiris gave him a friendly smile and all three of them walked together to some unknown destination. He could only see miles and miles of sky and still water so he had no idea where they were going.

"Marhabaan, Harry Potter!" Osiris glanced at him as they continued to walk on the water.

"Hello, Sir," he gave a shy grin.

"What did I tell you about confidence, Harry Potter? You will be meeting very headstrong alpha personalities soon. As I said, should you pass all the tests, you will surely be the humblest Master of Death ever," Osiris snorted. Well, it's as close to a snort that he could ever see from a Pharaoh.

"Oh…okay."

"Since you have been brought here to meet all who have taken on the mantle of being the Master of Death and Protector of the Gates of the Afterlife, it only implies that you are a very strong contender indeed," Osiris explained.

"What happens to Hermione, Sir? Why isn't she here with me?"

"Your Hermione is still unconscious in the realm of mortals. She has already done her part by committing herself wholly to support you. As soon as you got here, you are on your own," Osiris added.

"I see…"

When they heard a throat clearing, they turned to Emrys Myrddin.

"Harry Potter upon entering this door, you could never turn back. Should you be deemed unworthy, eternal damnation awaits you and your beloved. Are you ready to make your choice?" Merlin asked in a voice filled with seriousness.

Harry took a deep calming breath before giving a firm nod. "I am ready to face the last of the challenges. I am here to prove my worth as the next Master of Death," his determined voice displayed his eagerness to accept the responsibility.

Emrys Myrddin opened the mysterious wooden door and beckoned him to enter. With his brows furrowing in concentration, he entered the door first and prepared to face whatever challenges that awaited him. Merlin then walked in and Osiris was the one to lock the door. There is no turning back now, Potter! You better prove yourself worthy or you would only be bringing Hermione to eternal damnation with you...

To his surprise, the door led to a cave of pure gold. Everything inside was made of the solid precious metal. Waiting for them at the center, standing on golden tiled floors, were three men and one beautiful porcelain-skinned woman who all look powerful despite their varying ethnicities and stature.

"Welcome, Harry Potter!" The four chorused. Harry tried his best to stop his knees from shaking in nervousness. Now is not the time to show any weakness. While he always felt comfortable talking to and just being in Merlin and Osiris’ presence, these four are of a different caliber. They all made him feel inadequate.

"I think we should all introduce ourselves by order of appointment," Osiris suggested. The other Protectors of the Gate to the Afterlife nodded in perfect synchronization. So creepy, Harry mused.
"Osiris. First Master of Death. My partner is the Mistress of Death, Isis. We lived in Egypt during our time as mortals," Osiris started the introductions with his signature closed fist across his chest and a quick head bow.

"Hades. Second Master of Death. My partner, the Mistress Persephone. We're from Greece," came the gruff introduction from the tall Caucasian man. He had a distinct cockiness in his air while he presented himself.

"Oh. I thought it was you, Hades, who had to contemplate if Emrys deserved the title as Master of Death despite being alone," Osiris muttered.

"You're an old idiot, Siri! I came after you," Hades huffed.

"Pardon these idiots," the only female interrupted with an eye roll.

"Anyway, moving on. I am Yama, the third Master of Death. My Mistress of Death is Dhumorna. We lived in India as mortals," the statuesque bronzed-skin man introduced himself. Like Osiris, he had an air of authority about him.

"I am Amaterasu, the fourth Master of Death. I am the first one to ever manage the protection of the gates by myself. As a mortal, I lived in the Land of the Rising Sun, Japan. Banzai!" The beautiful porcelain-skinned woman with adorable Oriental eyes announced.

"Flair for dramatics," Osiris snorted.

"Drama queen," Hades mocked.

Osiris and Hades winced when they were magically drenched in water conjured by Amaterasu. Harry bit his bottom lip to stop himself from laughing out loud. The other Masters of Death pointed at the two wet men and nearly rolled on the golden floors as they laughed at their now drenched comrades.

With a wave of their hand, Osiris and Hades immediately dried themselves and glared at the petite fiery woman who only rolled her eyes.

"Laki, just introduce yourself before these idiots further embarrass themselves," Amaterasu pointed to Osiris and Hades.

"My name is Apolaki, the fifth Master of Death. My Mistress of Death is Diyan Masalanta. As mortals, we lived in the Pacific islands but they call it Philippines now," the shorter but buff mocha-skinned man said.

"Hi, Harry Potter! My name is Emrys Myrddin but you can call me Merlin. I'm the incumbent Master of Death. I have no Mistress; you already know that story. Please, please do your best to prove your worth. I'm bloody tired!" Merlin whined which made everyone chuckle.

"Shut it! It's not like you didn't feel the same way when you were in service," Merlin huffed.

"Now that the introductions are done, Merlin over here will talk to you for a while. If he deems you worthy, we will each mentally transport our memories to you so that you will be better equipped to face the Creator and ultimately, for your role as the Master of Death," Amaterasu explained and the rest nodded.

"Good luck, Harry Potter!" Osiris said and the rest waved at him. Merlin beckoned for him to follow. With a gulp, he walked towards his second to the last test.
They entered another door; this time it was made of pure gold with sparkling diamonds engraved in a delicate pattern. When they entered, he gasped when Merlin tackled him in a big hug.

"Er – "

"Thank you, Harry Potter! Thank you!" Merlin cried.

"You're welcome, Merlin… Sir," he muttered.

"Since I was the one who kept on hinting to your adorable little girl about what it means, should you and your wife decide to be the Master and Mistress of Death, clearly, I have already deemed you worthy… I need no more tests or questions to ask of you… I have watched you ever since Voldemort killed your parents… You have remained steadfast and resilient… When you made mistakes, you did your best to atone for them and to change yourself for the better… I could not have parted with the mantle of being the Master of Death to anyone as worthy… and a countryman at that," Merlin was teary-eyed as he let out all of his emotions.

"Oh… I – I am so honored, Sir," he can't think of anything else to say since he was overwhelmed at Merlin's words.

"Close your eyes, Harry Potter. I'll show you my memories and inform you of all that you need to know," Merlin touched his forehead. He immediately obeyed the wise wizard's command. While his eyes are closed, he could feel a foreign entity tickling on his occlumency shields. Oddly enough, this entity seemed nurturing and helpful, so he opened up. As Emrys Myrddin, the greatest wizard in the history of Britain shares his memories to him, Harry's mind was blown at the magical potential that he has learned.

When Merlin ceased from merging his memories to him, Harry's eyes opened and he was drenched in sweat. "Wow…." That was the only reaction he was able to make after stacking all those history and information in his mind.

Merlin laughed. "I felt the same way when Apolaki finally deemed me worthy after I passed his tests. Isn't magic bloody amazing?" Merlin winked at him which made him chuckle.

"It is bloody amazing!" He agreed enthusiastically. He cannot wait to teach Hermione all the new things he has learned from the Most Powerful Mage in British History.

"Come on! I am sure everyone is excited to share their knowledge with you," Merlin said before he waved his hand to open the golden door.

"We won't ask the result since we've always known that Merlin likes you and your wife very much. So… Come here, Harry Potter! Let me show you the wonders of Egyptian Magical Practice," Osiris greeted as they walked out the golden door.

After a series of memory and skills transport, Harry is now equipped with the knowledge of Ancient Egyptian Magic, Indian Ritual Magic, Japanese Combat Magic, Pacific Elemental Magic, and Magical Innovations from Emrys Myrddin himself. Aside from that, he now understands the details of the responsibilities and limitations of being the Protector of the Gates of the Afterlife. It is a very difficult task, especially if you will be forced to watch the severe punishment of those who end up in eternal damnation, but it's a great honor to even be considered for the role.

"Here, Harry Potter. This book will take you to the Creator. He is waiting for you," Amaterasu handed him a small and worn tome which he accepted with a smile.

"Good luck, Harry Potter!" The six Masters of Death chorused. He wasn't even able to
acknowledge their well-wishes since he suddenly disappeared from the cave of gold.

When he appeared to his new destination, he shielded his eyes because of the blinding light. Because it was too bright, he could barely see anything else except for the very pure white light. Despite the glaring sight, he could feel that he's safe and at peace in this holy place. Remembering that he is in the presence of the Creator, he humbly knelt.

"Greetings, Dear Creator, oh Powerful One!" He venerated.

"Hello, Harry Potter!" A deep strong voice could be heard all around. This voice reminded him of a gentle yet stern father figure.

"I am humbled to be in your presence, oh Powerful One," his head bowed. He cannot imagine ever being in the presence of the one who created all things, and yet, here he is…

"Why are you here, Harry Potter? Why are you presenting yourself to me?"

"I am not worthy to be in your presence, Almighty One! But I am here... I am here, willing to commit myself in service to be the Protector of the Gates of the Afterlife in my time of passing. I, along with my beloved wife, pledge ourselves to be tested so that we may be deemed worthy of the responsibility," he confessed.

"Do you know, that if I feel your sacrifice is inadequate and your intentions impure, I could punish you and your beloved to eternal damnation?" This time, he could hear the stern and firmness in the Creator's voice.

"I know, Sir... But I – I want to try. For my daughter's sake and my wife. I am here to atone for my mistakes. That way, I could prevent them from happening again," he admitted.

"Stand, Harry Potter!" With shaking legs, he obeyed the Creator's command. He crossed his fingers as he waited for his fate.

"I who sees all things... I who hears all things.. And I who knows all things, have seen your heart. You have been through so much darkness, yet your heart is true... You have proven your worth, Harry Potter..." With that statement, Harry could feel a mixture of cold and warm air engulfing him and he could no longer remember how or when he left the Creator's omnipotent presence...

"Ahhh!" Harry Potter yelled as he woke up from a very weird dream. As his eyes focused on his surroundings, he gasped. He's back at Hogwarts! He groped all over his body and he could feel that he's much smaller now. Wandlessly conjuring a mirror, he nearly screamed again in surprise.

He looks just like his fourteen-year-old self! He's back in his fourth year at Hogwarts!

"Harry Potter… I have granted your heart's deepest desire… Your sacrifices are deemed worthy… You and your wife in the past timeline has proven your preparedness for this responsibility… As
the Master of Death, I have granted your wish… You now have the chance to set things right with your wife and child… The symbol on your wrist is a mark of my blessing…” A familiar voice, the one he heard in what he only thought was a dream, the voice of the Creator reverberated around his bed.

Indeed, when he glanced on his right wrist, there is now a unique looking sort of birthmark there. It looks like an outline of a fish but the tail is not closed together so it only looks like a curve.

He bit his bottom lip to stop himself from cursing. *I'm fourteen years old again! What the heck?*

Chapter End Notes

A/N:

Translations:

Inprecantes Prospera amor noster = Invoking our love

Nostris animabus coniungens = Uniting our souls

Adhaeret corpora nostra = Joining our bodies

Et sic erimus = So, shall we be one

Aeternus et umquam = forever and ever

In hac vita = in this life

Et in Mortis = and in death

Hoc enim pignus = this we pledge

Master and Mistress of Death Origins:

Osiris - God of Death in Egyptian Mythology; husband and brother of Isis

Hades - God of Death in Greek Mythology; husband of Persephone

Yama - God of Death in Hindu Mythology; husband of Dhumorna

Amaterasu - Goddess of the Sun in Japanese Mythology; married to Tsukuyomi but he killed the food goddess Uke Miochi

Apolaki - God of War in Philippine Folklore

Emrys Myrddin - British Folklore

Diyan Masalanta - Goddess of Beauty and Fertility in Philippine Folklore
Fifteen-year-old Hermione Granger woke up with a very confused look on her face. She could never recall a dream that's so vivid and so realistic that it honestly felt real to her. It's so strange that
even the healing spells and potions that she saw herself doing in the dream seemed to be stuck in her head. Grabbing her wand by her nightstand, she wanted to test how vivid her dreams actually were. Deciding to try something, she tried to do a diagnostic spell – something that she honestly didn’t know how to perform. She gasped when her wand emitted a bright light after she performed the correct wand movements and thought about the spell in her mind. Non-verbal casting! Wow! I've never done this before, her jaw dropped as she saw a summary of her health condition and vital signs floating in front of her. This is super weird…

In her very detailed dream last night, it showed her a version of herself at around her thirties and she was an extremely talented healer. In fact, she seemed to be world-class since she held a high position in some sort of research facility. To her, this dream was so strange because she always fancied herself to pursue a career in law, maybe even be the Minister for Magic someday, no matter how far-fetched it sounded because of the pureblood ideology. And so, to see herself even if it's just a dream, to be thriving as a healer was indeed very odd.

The dream was actually quite scary given the responsibility she witnessed herself doing in those operations and meetings in that research facility. And now, waking up to actually be able to perform one of the complex spells she saw in her dream, made it even more alarming. It could only mean that the dream must be telling her something. The question that needed to be answered now was – what could it possibly mean? Will the dream have an impact on her? Or was the dream just a prophecy? Or what if it's a glimpse of her future? Whatever it was, she needed to solve the mystery behind them.

Stretching like a cat to bring herself to be fully awakened, she rolled her eyes as she saw the closed curtains from her roommates' beds. From her position on her mattress, she could easily hear the snoring from Lavender and Parvati. I should teach them how to cast silencing charms on their beds, she thought as she headed for the showers.

When she entered the common ladies' bath, there's no one else around. Since she always woke up first, it's normal for her to find herself with the luxury of having the entire bath to herself. As she took off her nightclothes, she started singing to pass the time.

"I wanted you back, I'm so through with that. 'Coz honestly you turned out to be the best thing I never had... I bet it sucks to be you right now... What goes around, comes back around... Hey, my baby! What goes around comes back around... I bet it sucks to be you right now," she belted out to the soulful song. She's never heard this song before in as much as she loved music, but the odd thing was that the song seemed very familiar. It's as if the song was like a soundtrack of sorts for her. In fact, along with the dream of becoming a world-class healer, this mysterious dramatic song was related to the dream. After all, along with the dream of curing various people, there seemed to be a man, most likely a wizard, who had hurt her so much. The details about the man's face and identity were not depicted but she knew that this unknown person was one of the reasons why she became a healer.

When she turned from the clothes rack so she could walk to the showers, a symbol imprinted on her right breast caught her eye as she passed by the mirror. She walked closer to the mirror so she could get a better look at the mark on her breast. She gasped when she noticed that the mark looked like an outline of a fish but the tail is not closed together so it only seemed like a curve. She knew this mark, as a muggleborn who studied in a Catholic school, she could never forget what this symbol meant. It was an ichthus – a symbol of the divine. It's a symbol of blessing and favor from the Creator. What happened to me? What could this mean?

As she turned the shower on so she could immerse herself in the heat from the water, so many thoughts were running through her head. After changing into her uniform, she went down the
common room to wait for Harry and Ron so they could go down to the Great Hall together. Quietly sitting down with an opened book on her lap, there's only one thing running through her mind… *I should research what this mark means in the wizarding world… Also, I should look up about dreams and their interpretations… I should spare some time to read about these topics even if I have to do my advanced readings for homework when I go to the library later.*

Harry Potter all but ran down the stairs that led to the common room. In his entire Hogwarts experience and even when he married Hermione, she had always woken up early. So, he's so excited to see his wife. *Well, if she remembers all that happened, she's my wife… If not, then I intend to pursue her this time around.*

He had a bright smile on his face as he leaned on the wall to watch the fifteen-year-old Hermione Granger sitting on her favorite armchair as she read a thick tome. In as much as he's used to being with his feisty and headstrong wife, the Chief Healer of the ICW's Medical Research Department, this Hermione – the young Hermione – was a version of her that he sorely missed when she left him years ago. This Hermione, his best friend, was the first person who showed him what love truly meant as she showed him how to love by being his number one supporter. This Hermione, who secretly loved him in their Hogwarts years, was the one person who never wavered in her faith in him. *If you don't remember our previous life together, then you better brace yourself, Hermione Granger! I will treat you like the queen you really are and I will never let you go…*

Hermione must have sensed his presence since she looked up from her book. When she saw him leaning against the wall, she gave him a bright smile. Her chocolate brown eyes looked so sincere and happy. Her front teeth were still much larger than the rest which made her look absolutely adorable.

"Good morning, Harry!" Hermione greeted cheerfully. *Oh… She seemed to not remember our past life together,* he thought.

"Good morning, my lo – er, Hermione," he grinned sheepishly as he walked towards her. *I should be careful about not being too forward or eager… I might scare her off and then blokes like Viktor Krum would be sweeping in."

"My lo – what's that all about?" She gave him a curious look.

"My lovely best friend?" He said cheekily and she rolled her eyes. He could see a faint tinge of pink on her cheeks though which meant that she's affected by his subtle compliment. *One point for Potter.*

"You seem cheerful this morning," Hermione mused.

"Scoot over, Granger," he pouted. She moved to the side so he could have some space. He sat beside her and since the armchair was designed for one, they were sitting too close to each other. Deciding to be playful and to hint at his romantic interest in her, he wrapped an arm around her shoulder as he leaned in to see what she's reading about.

"So… What are you reading, 'Mione?" He whispered against her ear which made her yelp. If not for his hold on her shoulder, she would've fallen on the floor.

"Harry! You prat!" Hermione smacked him on the chest which made him chuckle. He only pulled
her closer to his chest which made her huff.

"What's making you so jumpy this morning?" He tickled her ear which made her laugh.

"I had this weird dream," she said.

"Oh? Care to share?" He stage-whispered.

"Well, let's just say that I was a world-class healer in this dream," she shrugged.

"And?" What if this Hermione is still my Hermione although she cannot fully remember all that happened between us?

"It's complicated, Harry," she sighed as she placed her head on his shoulder.

"You know that I'm always here for you, right?" He whispered.

"Likewise, Potter," she said cheekily.

"Don't you want to go down for breakfast, Hermione?"

"What about Ron?"

"Oh, he'll manage. He's a big boy. Besides, I'm hungry," he whined.

"You know, being a happy person seems to make you hungry," she said smartly.

"Oh? Is it? What about you? It seems that your dreams make you grumpy," he retorted and she laughed.

"Come on, Potter! Let's go," she patted his leg. Removing his arm around her shoulder, he stood up and gallantly extended a hand to her. Hermione shook her head in fond exasperation as she accepted his hand, but then, her eyes zoomed in on the Creator's mark on his wrist.

"Harry, where did you get this?" Her fingers traced the mark on his skin.

"I – I don't think – " He stammered as he thought about an acceptable excuse. He wanted to tell Hermione the truth but she seemed to be unaware of their past.

"Harry Potter! Don't you dare lie to me," She said sternly.

"It's a very long story. And I promise I will tell you everything… Just not right now, okay?" He looked into her eyes as he pleaded for her to understand.

"Alright… It's just so weird… I too have this mark," she sighed.

"Really?" He knelt in front of her as he inspected her hands for the same mark that he had on his wrist.

"Er, it's not on my hands," Hermione carefully pulled her hands away as she blushed crimson.

"Oh? So where is it then?" He asked with anticipation.

"It's embarrassing," she looked away.

"Come on, Hermione… Tell me," he cajoled.
"Are you sure you don't want to wait for Ron?" She inquired.

"Huh? Oh! Of course! Ron's still snoring like crazy right now," he shrugged.

"Oh…okay then. Let's go," she stood up from her seat, closed her book, and placed it on her bag.

"Here, let me help," he removed her bag strap from her shoulder and carried the heavy bag for her. Hermione gave him a curious look but she didn't say anything. She walked toward the portrait hole first and he followed her lead. Once they were outside, Hermione held his hand and to his surprise, she seemed to be leading them towards the moving tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy. When they faced the empty wall across it, Hermione walked three times and murmured something. After that, a door opened and Hermione turned the doorknob. She entered the door first and he immediately followed. The Room of Requirement seemed to have provided them with a smaller version of the entertainment room of his penthouse in London. Even the muggle appliances were supplied by the room.

"Please have a seat, Harry… This could take a while… I'm not certain how to explain this but… well, this mark on your wrist and my er – whatever, I'll just have to show it to you… and then there are my vivid dreams of being a healer… I mean I've never wanted to be a healer… reckon I'd be making laws or something… run for minister maybe… Anyway, what I'm trying to – "

Instead of following her command and taking a seat, he decided to interrupt her rants and her pacing on the floor by wrapping his arms around her waist. The body in his arms was truly different from the wife he's so fond of holding. This Hermione felt like a young lady. Her body was still developing and growing.

"Hermione, stop… Take a deep breath… Good… now turn around," he said. When she turned around, she seemed much calmer and there was an adorable flush on her cheeks.

"Thank you, I needed that – I tend to – " She stopped talking when he cupped her face.

"I know," he whispered before letting go of her cheek. He took a seat on one of the couches and she sat beside him. They were facing each other and he waited for her to talk. Since he was the one who had complete memory of all that happened to them, he let her start the conversation just so he could gauge how much she remembered from their past life or whatever that timeline was supposed to be called. At least I'm not entirely alone in this adventure… Somewhere deep inside this young Hermione is still my headstrong wife – the Lady Potter – I've grown to love even more than her younger self…

"Okay so let's start with the facts that we're already certain of, is that okay?" She turned to him and he nodded. He held her hand in reassurance.

"Take your time. Remember to breathe okay?" He grinned and she blushed. She tucked a stray strand of her long curly hair behind her ear, a gesture that he'd come to associate to her being nervous.

"Is it just me or are you just more in-tuned to my gestures and such things?" She gave him a penetrating stare and he feigned nonchalance which made her huff.

"Just start talking my lady," he winked and she rolled her eyes. He wanted to make her calm and relaxed. He knew that by acting cocky, she'd eventually loosen up.

"Alright… So, you have a mark on your wrist, and I have mine too… Also, I'm certain that this mark is called an ichthus, years of studying in a Catholic school makes me very sure about this
fact… We have to study the implications though since this symbol is a mark of being blessed by a higher power… Anyway, I woke up this morning with a series of very strange and vivid dreams, did you have them too?" She ended her statements with a question.

"Not really a dream but I woke up at dawn feeling weird too but when I slept again, everything seemed fine after that," he shrugged. He gave her an expectant look so she could continue. Well at least Hermione knows what our mark is actually called, he thought.

"Okay, so we have a sort of similar experience then… Good to know. Okay, so where was I – ah, yes! So, I said I had dreams about being a healer, right?" She prodded.

"Yes, you said something about that in the common room," he remarked.

"Right so healers have this array of spells that are way beyond our years of instruction but then when I woke up this morning, I tried this complicated spell and it not only worked out perfectly, but I was also able to do them non-verbally. I mean come on! I study in advance but even I'm not that advanced! And then there's the biggest surprise this morning when I entered the bath," at her last statement, there's a prominent blush on her cheeks.

"Oh?" He prodded.

"I'm gonna show you but your eyes better not stray somewhere else except for the mark, okay?" She gave him a stern look.

"I'll try not to but well, I can't promise," he smirked. She grabbed a pillow and threw it at him which he easily avoided.

"Honestly!" She snorted.

"What? At least I'm being honest. Besides, it's a bloke thing," he said mischievously.

"I can't believe I'm doing this! But really! We have to solve the mystery between these marks," she murmured and he bit his bottom lip to stop himself from grinning like an idiot.

"Well? Should I turn around?" He offered. In as much as he could remember every curve and every freckle of his wife's gorgeous body, this Hermione was still young, innocent, and insecure about herself.

"Thank you," he could hear the relief in her voice. He shifted in his seat so he could turn away from her.

"Just tell me when I can turn around," he said when he's fully facing the wall. Since the room was so quiet, he could hear Hermione's every movement as well as her intakes of breath. What if the mark's located near her… oh, shit! Potter focus on something else… This Hermione is not your wife yet…

"You can turn around now," Hermione said with a shaky voice. He gulped when he saw Hermione sitting just a couple of feet away from him. She removed her robe and her sweater. The top buttons of her white shirt were opened and she lowered the right cup of her bra just so he could see the same mark. Instead of looking at the mark though, his eyes were drawn to the slight swell of her breast and the same smooth skin he's so familiar with. Hermione's breasts may be smaller than what I could remember, but her effect on me remains to be as strong as ever, he thought. Since he could feel his body react to the sight, he grabbed a pillow and covertly placed it over his lap. Great! I hate being a fourteen-year-old hormonal bloke, he chastised himself as he thought of disgusting things that could clear his head from the naughty memories he shared with the older
version of this young woman in front of him.

"Er, Harry? You can see it right?" Hermione's voice interrupted his thoughts.

He cleared his throat, before he said a breathless, "yes."

"Okay… So, can you face the wall again? I have to change," she blushed.

"Of course," he said as he turned around once again. After a few minutes, he heard Hermione say, "you can face me again now." He had a fond smile on his face as he faced her once again. Hermione was blushing so hard right now and her eyes were glued on the floor just so she could avoid looking at him. He could only smile at her because she was just so lovable and cute.

"What do you think about all this?" He broke the awkward silence.

"I don't know… do you think it means something?" She finally looked at him again.

"Hermione… would you believe me if I said that your dreams of being a healer actually happened in an alternate timeline? And that you and I, we're given a second chance so we can save someone?" His eyes searched her face for any recognition.

"It's you, isn't it? The man who hurt me in that alternate reality… it's you, right?" She inquired with her chocolate brown eyes staring intently into his own.

"I'm not sure if you remember how much I hurt you but I truly am sorry, my darling… I would never tire of saying it every day and yet, I'd still feel that I'm not doing enough," he sighed. To his surprise, Hermione stood up from her position on the couch and she sat right next to him. When she leaned her head against his shoulder, he immediately wrapped an arm around her waist.

"I don't know all that's happened to us in that life, Harry, but I married you, didn't I?" She whispered.

"Yes, and I screwed it up… We were both at fault but you didn't deserve the way I – "

"It's not important right now… You can explain all that to me some other time… But Harry, I want to know… What happens now? It's Halloween… And the odd years before I became a healer, I cannot remember anything at all. I couldn't remember us as older Hogwarts students except for the first three years of our academic journey here… I'm scared. I feel that something's going to go wrong again… Harry, something's gonna happen this evening again, right? Please be honest with me." She asked.

"Yes… I'll be chosen as the fourth champion of the Tri-Wizard Tournament – "

"Harry! No! You'll get hurt!" She lifted her head from his shoulder and there were tears in her eyes as she worried for him. It made him feel really bad to see her crying since it reminded him of all the hurt he caused her before.

"Hermione, don't worry… I'll be fine. I survived it before, with your help… Don't worry, I got this… We got this," he cupped her cheek as he wiped away her tears.

"Whatever happens later tonight, just trust me okay? I'll be fine," he reassured her as he let go of her face and held her hands.

"So, what happens now? To us?"
"Well… I intend to chase you all over Hogwarts until I can convince you to marry me again," he said in all seriousness.

"Oh, is that so?" She challenged.

"You better brace yourself, Granger," he pinched her cheeks.

"I intend to make you work for it, Potter," she snorted.

"Well, I expected you to, as you should do... You're a prize after all," he chuckled and she huffed.

"How did we pull this off? This weird time travel or is it a memory transfer?" She turned to him with a curious look – an expression that's never changed when she's eager to learn something new.

"Well, we pledged ourselves in that alternate timeline, to be the Master and Mistress of Death," he said.

"Master and Mistress of Death? That sounds dubious but I do trust you," she looked at him with confusion and unwavering trust. The faith she had in him had always been so overwhelming.

"Yeah, this isn't the right time to talk about it. I can't remember our class schedule but if it's Snape, we really can't be late," he chuckled.

"Could you show me something cool, as the mysterious Master of Death," she said with an eyebrow raised.

"Okay," he shrugged. Closing his eyes, he shapeshifted into his basilisk form. Just like the first time around, Hermione yelped in fright. The King of the Serpents slithered closer to its mate as it coiled its large body around her legs.

"Harry?" She asked the basilisk who moved its head up and down.

"Amazing," she whispered. The basilisk moved away from her before it transformed back into an amused Harry Potter.

"You're such a prat! You could have warned me!" She smacked his chest.

"You know, you're more frightened the first time around," he chuckled.

"Let's just go. I'm hungry," she said grumpily.

"Oh, alright!" He said as he carried her bag and his own. Holding out a hand to her, he said gallantly, "Shall we go, my Lady?"

"We shall," she took his hand and together, they walked to the Great Hall. When they got there, Ron was already sitting beside Neville, Seamus, and Dean. He could feel everyone's eyes focused on him and Hermione since they were holding hands as they walked along but he didn't care.

Guiding Hermione to sit down on the bench, he placed their bags on the floor before he sat beside her. Ron gave them a curious look but he didn't say anything because there was so much food in his mouth. Glancing up the grandfather clock, there were only thirty minutes left before the start of the first period so they hurriedly ate their breakfast.
Ronald Weasley had been anxious the entire day. First, his best mate, Harry Potter, didn't wait for him so they could walk to breakfast together along with Hermione. When he ran towards the Gryffindor table, he expected Hermione and Harry to be sitting there, but he was so surprised along with the rest of the student body and the teachers, to have them walking in late with only thirty minutes left for breakfast. What's more interesting was the fact that they were holding hands as they walked to the Gryffindor table. He even noticed that Harry carried Hermione's bag and he helped her to sit on the bench. These were things that Harry had never done for Hermione before. If he were honest with himself, it seemed that Harry was showing signs that he fancied Hermione. He honestly didn't know how to react to that since he expected Harry to fancy someone prettier. Hermione's just so – Hermione – that he couldn't understand why Harry seemed to be besotted by her.

As he spent the day with his best friends, except when Hermione left them for her Arithmancy and Ancient Runes class, Harry had been overly attentive to the female member of their trio. Not only that, he noticed Harry sneaking dreamy-eyed glances on Hermione which irked him, to be honest. He didn't understand why it annoyed him to see Harry being so caring to Hermione but it just made him feel weird. Truth be told, this entire day felt so weird.

Now, as he's sitting here in the Great Hall in time for the Halloween feast and more importantly the Goblet of Fire's selection for the Tri-Wizard Tournament, he found himself all alone once again. After their very boring Divination class with that batty professor, Harry told him that he's off to fetch Hermione from Ancient Runes. He waited for his friends in the Gryffindor Common Room but they never came. He tried his best to ignore the feeling of being abandoned or worse, they were off on a date or were snogging somewhere. He just couldn't see his friends together because his mother implied that he and Hermione would make a really good pair. He didn't really believe that but he didn't want Harry to win something over him either. And to him, whoever got together with Hermione first was the clear winner in the chase for her heart.

He frowned when he saw his best friends walking together once again. Since Harry was carrying three large books which he could only assume were Hermione's weekly readings from the library, he noticed that Harry had a hand on the small of her back. He had only seen that gesture in couples. No, maybe Hermione's just not feeling well and Harry's helping her, the thought as he munched on his large helping of shepherd's pie.

As his friends took the seat across from him, he only acknowledged their presence with a nod which they returned with a nod of their own. When he noticed that Harry and Hermione were taking food from each other's plate, as they whispered to each other like they were trapped in their own little world, his frown deepened.

"Ooh! Pav! Look! Harry and Hermione are so obviously together and it's so adorable. I always knew they'd make a good couple," when he heard this remark from Lavender Brown who sat near Seamus and Dean, he started getting angry. If Harry and Hermione are truly dating, shouldn't they at least have the decency to tell me first?

Pouring his anger to the lavish feast, he continued eating to his heart's content. When Professor Dumbledore stood up and started talking about the Goblet of Fire's selection, he didn't care. After all, he wasn't a participant in the stupid tournament. Besides, there's nothing in it for him anyway. Also, he couldn't bring himself to be excited because Harry and Hermione were ignoring him since they're so caught up in each other. The weird lovey-dovey behavior from his best friends made him really pissed at them.
It barely registered to him that Viktor Krum, his hero, was chosen as the Durmstrang representative, along with the bloody hot veela from Beaubaxtons, Fleur Delacour. When Cedric Diggory of Hufflepuff was chosen as the Hogwarts representative, he rolled his eyes. There's no way that a Hufflepuff could ever win against Viktor Krum of all people. Hogwarts might as well concede its position for the Tri-Wizard cup since Diggory stood no chance at all.

"Harry Potter!" When Professor Dumbledore called Harry's name once again, he looked at his best friends. There was a worried look on Hermione's face but Harry only cupped her cheeks and kissed her on the forehead. *These two have been keeping a secret from me*, his jaw clenched in anger.

He was surprised when Harry stood up from his seat, pointed his wand to his throat and said in a voice that reverberated throughout the Great Hall, "I, Harry James Potter, swear on my life and magic, that I did not enter myself nor did I convince someone else to enter my name in the Goblet of Fire. So, mote it be! *Lumos!*" As Harry's wand emitted a very bright light, the Great Hall was quiet as all eyes were focused on him. Harry held Hermione's hand and kissed it before he confidently walked toward the professors and the other three champions.

"Hermione! You're dating Harry Potter!" Lavender squealed with delight as she and Parvati tackled a blushing Hermione with lots of questions.

"It's not official yet but I did promise Harry that I am giving him a chance to secure my affections," Hermione said coyly which made Lavender and Parvati giggle.

*Harry just has to have everything. First the tournament and now Hermione,* he clenched his fists in anger as he tried to ignore the gossip about the new couple and Harry bloody Potter's unseemly participation as the fourth champion. Since he was so focused on his joint anger at his supposed best friends, most especially at Harry Potter, he didn't notice that his sister, Ginny, left the Great Hall with tears in her eyes.

As Harry Potter listened to the instructions from Professor Dumbledore and Ludo Bagman about the preparations for the tournament, he could only think about sneaking off later to call on Osiris and Merlin for a chit-chat. He tried his best to not roll his eyes at the dramatic protests from Igor Karkaroff about his participation. *This cowardly Death Eater is so annoying,* he thought as he began to formulate his plans for the Horcruxes, Voldemort, and more importantly, winning his Hermione's heart all over again...

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to update MCH during Christmas but I had so much writing deadlines to finish. So, I wrote this chapter as a new year's surprise instead. Happy New Year everyone! I hope you enjoy this chapter.

Plugging my newly completed Christmas story, Queen of the Yule Season. It's a fluffy and smutty Christmas fic. I have so many stories published recently so just click on my
author's link and see if you could find something for yourself to enjoy.

May 2020 bring you happiness. I really have to focus on Quantum Bang soon.

I'm looking forward to your feedback on this one.

Reviews, faves, and follows make my day so drop them here.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!