Omiai

by atokkota

Summary

Hermione Granger is an unusual young woman; she is an old soul in a young body. Would this unconventional girl accept the challenge of an Omiai meeting? The story is AU, has OCs and some OOC. This story starts during Hermione's second year at Hogwarts when she is 13 years of age.

Notes

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Authors note: It is with great thanks to my beta, the lovely Kallanit, with her encouragement and support I have made it here to this point. Thanks for all the reviews and encouragement that have supported my development and leap back in to creative writing after many many years off from this style of writing.

I tend to mark my work with the highest rating cause I am extra cautious.
Dear Hermione

We're having a fabulous time here in Japan. So many wonderful places to visit and sights to see, that I swear that we're in overload. Your father is still trying to master the vending machines that are here. He has to look at the options of every machine we come across. The things you can get in the machines here can be very interesting. They are very interesting, kiddo, will tell you all about them when we meet up - Dad.

The conference is going well so that means we will be here in Tokyo for another week. While we have been here at the conference we have met up with some old university chums, including my friend, Melina, who now lives in Kyoto. At the end of the conference we're going to head down to Kyoto on the train and spend a couple of days touring the sights and catching up with Melina's family.

Love,

Mother and, of course, Father

oOoOo

Dear Mum and Dad,

It's great to hear that you are enjoying your trip to Japan. It seems that you are having a lovely time and are actually taking a break from the practice. Is Melina your university friend who you always talk about, wondering what happened to her? I hope that you get lots of photos and some informative books for me about the sights you visit. Please, if you get a chance, can you get some pictures of the Cherry Blossoms for me? One day I would like to see the Spring Festivals for myself. If you get a chance to see any Kendo equipment makers, please get their card and some photos of the type of work the artisan is producing. I know Grandpère would love some customised pieces and if you are going to commission work, you want to make sure it's worth the wait and expense of the process.

I have survived Valentine's Day and all the mushiness. I will be going to the Burrow for the Easter break so don't worry if you want to spend more time in Japan. Missing you heaps but I know it won't be long for the end of the summer term to arrive and I will be home. I have so much work to do before then, as there are exams to get through first. I'm studying hard, don't worry about that.

Lots of love,

Hermione

oOoOo

Dear Hermione
We have made it home. It was a great trip and I'm so glad we went to the conference. We caught up with Melina and thanks to her help, were able to get a more in-depth understanding of the culture and places we visited. Yes, I got the photos and books you wanted.

Yes, Melina is my friend who disappeared off the face of the earth after graduation. We all thought she had lost her marbles when she talked about being contacted by a matchmaking service but little did we know she would take off to the other side of the world after graduation to meet the candidate with whom the service thought she would be compatible and then go on to marry him. She obviously loves her husband, Hiroto, and they are very compatible. To think that she just met the Nakōdo (Japanese professional matchmaker) who organised her marriage at the British Museum one wet Saturday afternoon during our 4th year at University. We got to meet the Nakōdo, Uchiha Sakura, who arranged her marriage and she is still organizing marriages today. Madam Sakura has a twinkle in her eye that so reminds me of your Headmaster, Professor Dumbledore.

Melina's husband, Hiroto, was able to take us to some artisan workshops that provide equipment for Kendoka and I have a folio of information for you at home, including photos of previously commissioned custom work, so you can review who meets your Grandpère's exacting standards. It won't be long until the summer and, of course, we are going to your grandparents' estate. We would like you not to be so alone while we are there, so please consider what we talked about at Christmas. Your grandparents won't mind as I have checked with Grandmaman and there are many activities to do around the estate on the farm or in the vineyard during the summer. Really Mémé is so happy that you are helping with his present and you know she doesn't want you to be lonely.

Don't you think that you might want to invite your friends for a visit so you are not on your own over the break? You do know that too much work, or in your case, too many books can make Jill a dull girl? You know you could invite your friends on a rota so that a different friend visits for a week during the holidays, or you could have a group out for a couple of weeks. There is always the barn with all the bunks in the loft.

Think about it, child; we do realise it must be hard for you to be the only one under 30 in a thirty mile radius for almost 9 weeks of the year. I know you get off the estate when you attend the university club dojo with your Grandpère but you need company with people of your own age, not a minimum of 8 years older than yourself. Of course your father and I will be doing our normal rota to cover the practice, so you can always come back to London for a week with one of us if you want to meet up with friends here in the UK. Think about it and let us know what you have organised. Good luck on the exams - we know you will do well as you will be giving 120%. Please don't worry yourself into a swivel before the exams; it won't help if you are sick.

Your father has started talking about summer projects so it won't be long before he writes with a list for your consideration. Mimi, I just have to get the project list manageable first before I write to you about planning our summer investigations - Dad

Much love,

Mother and Father
"Kalós órises, Melina and Hiroto. Do you recognise me? I am your cousin, little Maria. The Aunties are in the kitchen preparing the last of the Pascha specialties so I won't take you back there, as they are likely to curse you for getting in the way. YiaYia is out at the market to pick up some odds and ends after she dropped off the Prosphora that she ordered from the baker. Please come and sit here on the verandah while I brave the kitchen for some coffee," said the lithely 20 something woman who greeted them at the front door of the large family home.

"Maria - it may have been 10 years but you are still a complete chatter box who could hold a table top up with hot air alone," said Melina. Following Maria, the new arrivals walked out onto a verandah that overlooked a pleasant and calm courtyard.

After Maria seated her cousins at a table she walked down the verandah. Placing her head into the kitchen Maria quickly rattled off in rapid fired Greek that the visitors had arrived. Hiroto hoped that there were more English speakers on this trip who would speak to him, as his Greek was not very strong.

There was a sudden flurry of excited voices and suddenly the table was surrounded by a horde of women. The rapid outbursts in incomprehensible Greek and sudden tight hugs of the different women shocked Hiroto. Hiroto felt totally isolated in a bubble of culture and language that was so different from his own. This was the first time they had visited Melina's family in Greece so Hiroto had been shell shocked ever since they had arrived on the island. It seemed that everyone knew Melina and the whole world wanted to talk in rapid Greek at her to let them know what she had missed in the last 25 years since she had last visited the island.

While recovering from the shock of the large number of women talking rapidly, Maria slipped Hiroto a coffee and a small glass of liqueur. "Here, you look like you need some Commandaria," she said. Hiroto had last seen Maria in Australia 10 years ago when she was a teenager and here she was all grown up.

After being introduced, or reintroduced, to the various women, Hiroto was glad just to sit and listen, watching his wife deal with her large extended family as they worked out who was going to finish what in the kitchen and who was going to sit and talk about life with Melina and Hiroto.

The front door opened and in entered a small wiry elderly lady dressed in black accompanied by a tall imposing man with aristocratic nose that had been repeatedly broken in the past.

"YiaYia!" cried Melina as she rushed from the table to hug the little woman.

"Egoni, I have not seen you in many years. Why did you not visit me?" asked the petite woman.

"YiaYia," she replied, "you know why. It was due to the troubles that have plagued the family since Cousin Severus was a foolish teenager."
Turning Melina observed her cousin before speaking, thinking that he looked tired and wondering how he was even here with their grandmother. "Hello, Severus. You appear to be back in the family's good books. Did you sell your mother to bribe your way back in?" asked Melina with some antagonism.

Hiroto regarded his wife with some concern that an old family wound would be reopened when they had only just arrived to celebrate Easter. His lovely wife had not visited Greece in over 20 years due to the family issues that the English cousin had caused.

"No such luck, mother is still hale and heartily bossing me around," the troublesome cousin caustically replied.

"So where is Aunt Anastasia?" asked Melina looking round for the formidable woman, hoping that there would be some explanation as to why her troublesome son was back in the fold of the family. It was because of his foolish actions that the family had been ostracised from the UK wizarding society.

"Don't worry, she will be here soon enough to plague me about not being married and producing any grandchildren for her," snarked the dark, imposing man.

"So, Severus, what type of work do you do?" asked Hiroto. He was hoping to cut off his wife before a verbal war broke out and to rescue the man from the pack of women who looked like they were ready to start getting into him. The unity of gender required that he tried to change the conversation topic and keep the peace - that and the opportunity of actually talking to someone who was not female during their stay with Melina's grandmother. From his previous trips to Australia to visit Melina's relatives there, Hiroto had been warned that on the island he would be outnumbered by women and to watch out for the pack mentality of the Greek Aunties. From his own family experience Hiroto could observe the signs that a number of the older women in the group were preparing to strike at this forbidding man. What had he done or not done to create such ire in the women, this time?

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Καλώς Όρισες (Kalós órises) – informal form for Welcome

Pascha - Easter in the Greek Orthodox tradition

YiaYia – Grandmother

Prospora – Church bread

Egoni – Granddaughter
Hermione Granger was enjoying the quiet of the Presoire. The building was a cool retreat in the baking summer heat. Here in the thick stone walled shade she could find a calm spot to order her mind through the use of meditation or relax in the pleasure of the latest text she was reading. Mother was still upset with her for not organising her friends from school to visit here. The brilliant young witch could not explain to her mother why she was so reluctant but one reason was that she wanted to keep a piece of her life as a talisman unaffected by the war that she knew was coming.

Her grandparents' vineyard and the farms that made up the large estate was another way of life, completely different from her parents' London lifestyle. It was a totally alien culture to magical world she had experienced. Hermione could be on another planet or another life to what was going on in the UK. Here in the tufa stone walled Presoire she had her own studio for practice created out of old storage rooms by her Grandmaman. Grandpère, or one of her cousins if they were visiting, would practice with her and she could just be totally by herself if she wanted total isolation.

Hermione could go out to the local university dojo and just practice her different forms of martial arts once a week. She was not tied into the regular dojo events thanks to her visitor status and here the young witch was not required to demonstrate or hide her ability.

Hermione was accepted at the dojo; she was not required to prove herself and it was a safe environment for her to just be herself. There were no demands that she hide her intelligence when she chatted with the university club members. There were also no demands that the young witch prove herself as an acceptable member of the local kendo community. Hermione could just be herself, enjoy the conversations and at the same time, get an opportunity where she was challenged in skill and proficiency on the dojo floor.

Her new life in the wizarding world was another dimension of her multifaceted identity. As a muggleborn witch Hermione Granger's years of martial arts practice would never be understood. Added into the normal routine of the French communal life and the interaction between her family and the university there is no way a pureblood wizard would comprehend her life with her grandparents.

Ronald Weasley and his family would not be able to cope with the traditional French communal environment as they struggled enough in the hustle and bustle of modern muggle London, let alone keep up with academic conversations that were always encouraged at Mémé's dinner table. Harry couldn't come as he had to stay with the Dursleys for the protection of his mother's family. Harry would be able to cope at a pinch with the communal farming environment, she thought, but even he would not understand the martial arts practice easily. The Gryffindor witch had never let on to the two boys who were her best friends that she practiced any form of martial arts, let alone that she held a high proficiency.

Her wizarding school friends would not be able to cope with the dichotomy of her interactions and family life. Other muggle families from her experience in primary school did not have the same environment with their grandparents and extended family as she did with her French family. Not
everyone talked quantum physics at the dinner table. So no, sorry Mum, she was not willing to invite a friend to stay at her grandparents' home.

Sitting in the Pressoire studio Hermione was disturbed by the sound of a car driving on the farm’s courtyard gravel. Since she was probably the closest and probably the only one awake during the repos d’après midi Hermione arose from her daybed to greet the car, leaving the cool shade. It was probably just tourists who were lost but to be on the safe side, the young witch checked that her wand was readily accessible while still hidden.

"Bonjour Madame, Monsieur. En quoi puis-je vous aider?" asked Hermione. The car plates indicated that it was a French long term rental car but on observing the man's features she thought that based on his physiology that they were tourists from another land so she added "Êtes-vous perdu? Souhaitez-vous que je parle anglais, s'il est plus facile pour vous? Nous pourrions mieux nous comprendre?"

"You speak English," confirmed the Asian man.

"Yes, I speak English. How can I help you? Are you lost? Do you need directions?" replied Hermione rapidly switching back to her other mother tongue.

"We are looking for the family estate of my wife's friends, the Grangers. They live in England but they would summer each year with Mrs Granger's family whom we think are called D'Angers. We were in Doué la Fontaine and Melina recognised the names of places that her friends used to talk about," explained the Asian man.

"I think we are at the right estate as I visited here a couple of times back in university with Hélène about 27 years ago. This place is familiar. Do you know who I am talking about and where we could find them?" asked the woman. "I am Hélène's friend, Melina, from university and this is my husband, Hiroto Kitaguchi."

"Certainly. It seems you have found your way back to Hélène D'Angers Granger, as she is my mother. Mother talked about visiting you when they were in Japan a couple of months ago. Please come to the main house with me. We will have to drive the car round. I am Hélène's daughter, Hermione," she said.

What a lovely, bright, young woman, thought Melina as they travelled to the main house. She is just a little pixie at 5’ 4" and of course I recognise Hélène's mane of hair. The number of times we used to tease Hélène about looking like a lion in the morning, up in the university dorms.

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Pressoire – The pressing house where cider or wine is pressed.

repos d'après midi – The after lunch rest aka siesta.

Bonjour Madame, Monsieur. En quoi puis-je vous aider? (Good day/Hello Madam and Monsieur. How can I help you?)

"Vous êtes perdu? Souhaitez-vous que je parle anglais, s'il est plus facile pour vous?" Étes-vous perdu? Souhaitez-vous que je parle anglais? nous pourrions mieux nous comprendre." (Are you lost? Would you like me to speak English, so it is easier for you?)
A Dragon On The War Path

Chapter Summary

Every Family has a dragon or two in it.

Chapter Notes

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Thank goodness that year was over, thought Hermione. The stressed out witch was not going to use a time turner again. While she had enjoyed the challenge of using it to access more subjects to challenge her active mind, it was just too tiring running from class to class. This year, to avoid her mother’s relentless mantra about having friends visiting the estate, Hermione had organised a summer visit to the Burrow. Unfortunately her visit would coincide with the Quidditch World Cup so Hermione Granger the non quidditch fan would have the extreme pleasure of listening to the universal playbook, so not fun but it would be worth it to be with her magical friends. The whole event would also be a learning experience for Hermione as she hoped to learn more about customs and culture of the Magical world outside the cloistered school environment.

The downside was not spending as much of her time on the French estate with her grandparents, along with missing out on some practice in a dojo or learning more from her Grandpère. Hermione felt that she needed to ensure that she got some more mat time. One thing the young witch would make sure of would be to book herself on the self-defence refresher course while she was in France. If Hermione Granger was thinking more about her movements and actions, maybe she could avoid altercations like the one where she lost her temper with Draco Malfoy and hit him. On reflection, while she had the momentary pleasure of the act, Hermione had been very embarrassed and upset with herself for her failure to rise above the need for aggressive violence.

After much meditation in her studio and discussion with her Grandpère, Hermione had identified that she felt that the time turner was isolating her from her friends during the school year, thanks to the repeated hours in different locations. The main effect from using the device was that she felt older and more mature. It had exacerbated the difference between her and her peers that already existed, thanks to her intelligence and lack of common interests. In her moments of self doubt, Hermione wondered again if she was ever supposed to be in Gryffindor. Many a time she questioned her bravery, daring and nerve: basically all the so-called traits of a lion of Gryffindor.

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Albus Dumbledore looked over his glasses to observe Severus Snape, his Potions Master. This man looked like hell. He was tired and gaunt as he recounted the news from his latest spying mission. At that point an owl flew into the Headmaster's office and delivered a black and red envelope that bustled like a vengeful howler. Both men looked at the owl with some hope of identifying the intended recipient of this bellowing message that they knew was inside the envelope. Just then the owl leaned over to bite the nose of Severus Snape to encourage him to remove the message.
"It must be for you, Severus," said Albus with much relief, as the black and red howlers were always the worst kind. "You know as well as I that it is better to get it over and done with as soon as possible." Severus reached over to detach the envelope from the owl.

"Severus Nikolaos Aurelius Prince Snape how dare you not attend your YiaYia’s birthday celebration? She is most upset with you. Μπορείτε αλίμονο περιφρόνησης γεννηθέντα για, ο οποίος δεν είναι τίποτα αλλά μια επαίσχυντη οργίλος άθλια γι’ ούτ’ δεν έχει καμία σχέση για τη μητέρα του, ή αγαπητό προγιαγά του Τί είδους άνθρωπος είναι Καλύμνιων σας; Εμφάνιση κάποιας μπάλες και να αντιμετωπίσουν την οικογένεια. Νω get you lazy miserable self to Skalia on Kalymnos for the festival or you will regret disobeying your mother again."

At that point the pursed lips of the Howler turned to address Albus Dumbledore. "And you, Albus Dumbledore, I know he has responsibilities in his workplace and the other work he does for you but he also has responsibilities to his family. If he misses another major family event I will visit Hogwarts and hex you from there to Kalymnos and back again. So I swear as Anastasia Eileen Athenaou Prince Snape.” With that last outburst of motherly wrath, the howler ripped itself into pieces to smack both men in the face with force before disappearing.

"So, Severus, it appears that every wizarding family has at least one mother who can impersonate a dragon," commented a very dazed and slightly heat blasted Headmaster. He may be almost 150 years old but listening to the howler the Headmaster felt like a petulant schoolboy who had just been berated by a disapproving parent.

"Yes, while mother can be very loving, you don't think I developed my temper from nowhere, do you? I cannot deny that my mother in full force reminds me of a Hungarian Horntail in attack mode. I will go and see my great grandmother in Skalia and then sort out that business in Rome on the way back. I will return in August in plenty of time for the World Cup. There is something going on round then but I have yet to be informed of what is planned," advised Snape.

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Μπορείτε αλίμονο περιφρόνησης γεννηθέντα για, ο οποίος δεν είναι τίποτα αλλά μια επαίσχυντη οργίλος άθλια γι’ ούτ’ δεν έχει καμία σχέση για τη μητέρα του, ή αγαπητό προγιαγά του Τί είδους άνθρωπος είναι Καλύμνιων σας; Εμφάνιση κάποιας μπάλες και να αντιμετωπίσουν την οικογένεια. - You woe-begotten, contemptible son who is nothing but a disgraceful surly, miserable git that has no respect for his mother, or his esteemed great grandmother. What type of Kalymnian man are you? Show some balls and face the family.
"Vite, vite, ma petite chaton. You must come quickly, my little kitten," advised Hermione's Grandpère as he bustled around her studio, gathering up her equipment and double checking the contents of bags.

"Oui, Grandpère. Pourquoi voulez-vous que je vienne rapidement?" asked a very confused Hermione who had been dosing in the sunny window with a familiar and well read, favourite book. Normally her Grandpère did not bother her in her studio. He had stopped checking the status of her equipment years ago, as she had long ago demonstrated she knew how to look after her Bokuto, Shinai, Kodachi, Tachi, and the rest of her Kendo equipment. Hermione had been folding her own Keikogi and Hakama since she was 5 years old.

As Hermione rose from the window to cross the studio to her Grandpère he explained in rapid reply, "Votre pays vous a appelé à soutenir la concurrence à Paris. Un des membres de l'équipe femme a une blessure et l'entraîneur vous avez vu un il ya quelques semaines lors du tournoi de l'université. Nous devons nous dépêcher pour vous au Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy [POPB] les combats d'ouverture sont ce soir et vous devez vous inscrire avant cette date avec les fonctionnaires."

It turned out that someone had seen Hermione Granger at a Université Angers dojo mini tournament sometime in the summer and passed on her name and her availability to the British team as someone who could compete at fairly short notice in Paris. Thankfully after spending so much time at the Université Angers dojo Hermione was semi match fit and in much better shape than she was at the start of the summer after a year of using a time turner.

After a very rushed trip to Paris from the estate outside Angers, Hermione found herself entering the POPB where she was suddenly grabbed by the British coach and another official, Mr Coe, who pushed her through the registration process in about 30 minutes flat. The young girl was found a uniform that included a GB Keikogi with the wrong name embroidered on it that was miles too big for her and Hermione felt totally out of her comfort zone. The tracksuit was not too bad as at least she could roll the sleeves and trouser cuffs up. She was not a Kendoka for glory or fame but only for herself, so that she could develop herself. Hermione practiced to have mental control and to help control her magic. The young witch did not flaunt her abilities as no one at school even knew that she practiced any forms at all. Hermione had learnt at a young age that if she did not keep her magic under control, she was likely to hurt someone.

Her Grandpère started teaching her in the Gōjū-kai style to help her to develop her control at the age of 3 years after a rather disastrous temper tantrum episode. The young witch had started practicing Kendo when she was 6 years old, as she was fascinated with the ritual and practice on the university dojo floor where her beloved Grandpère was a senior member. All the dojo’s younger students respected him and listened to him the same way she did. So all these years of practice now had to be put into action. Was she even good enough? Was she a proper Kendoka? Did she need some Gryffindor courage? Now was the moment.
"Hélène! Hélène!" a very familiar voice called from the stands in the POPB. It was Melina. So this was the event that she was going to with Hiroto. Hélène rapidly explained the situation of Hermione being called up at the last moment by Team GB to replace one of the women Kendoka.

Hiroto listened to the story details. He had not realised that his wife's friend had links to the Kendo world. This tournament was one of the reasons why they had stayed longer in Europe as it was only held once every three years and Hiroto hoped that one of his sons would achieve the standard for the next world tournament in 1997, which was going to be held in Japan. But if the young petite salon intellectual that he had met on their visit to the Loire was good enough at almost 15 years old to go to the World Championship as a reserve, then she would be worth watching in the future as she must have the potential to be a top flight competitor.

The Katana requirements were the first part of the competition. "Courage! Are you not a Gryffindor? You can do this," Hermione repeated to herself again and again. She just had to believe in herself. On the way to her first match bout Hermione saw Jérôme from the Université Angers Club who was with the French team and he wished her "Bon courage et bonne chance, mon amie," while giving her an encouraging hug. Hermione waved to her Mother after recognizing her call from the stands and saw that Grandpère and the visitors from Japan were all seated together with her parents. "The Katana was not too bad a performance," felt Hermione at the end of the evening, as she had been practicing all 10 forms for over 5 years.

The second day of the tournament with all the match bouts was what worried Hermione the most, as she had concerns about her fitness, both physically and mentally. Grandpère, Jérôme and Mr Coe were really pleased about her performance in the Katana competition as she was the highest ranked GB woman. At a breakfast review of Hermione’s performance in the Katana the night before, Grandpère identified a number of areas that the young witch should address to improve her performance in the future.

As she expected, Hermione competed well enough in the initial match bouts but she just did not have the conditioning required so she only made it into the fourth round before being knocked out of the tournament. It was not bad for her first international competition especially since she hadn’t done any training for it and was a last minute replacement.

Vite, vite, ma petite chaton – You must come quickly my little kitten

"Oui, Grandpère. Pourquoi voulez-vous que je vienne rapidement?" - Yes ,Grandpère. Why do you want me to come quickly?

"Votre pays vous a appelé à soutenir la concurrence à Paris. Un des membres de l'équipe femme a une blessure et l'entraîneur vous avez vu un il ya quelques semaines lors du tournoi de l'université. Nous devons nous dépêcher pour vous au Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy [POPB] les combats d'ouverture sont ce soir et vous devez vous inscrire avant cette date avec les fonctionnaires." - Your country has called you to compete in Paris. One of the woman team members has an injury and the coach saw you a couple of weeks ago at the university tournament. We must hurry to get you the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy [POPB], the opening bouts are tonight and you have to register before then with the officials.
To Declare Or Not To Declare

Following the medal presentation, Hermione's Grandpère rapidly organised a friends and family dinner for that Sunday night at a local Parisian bistro that had a lovely view of Notre Dame. Attendees included Mr Coe, Jérôme, the Kitaguchis, the three Grangers and Grandpère D'Angers of course.

Sitting in a local bistro Mr Coe was fascinated by the diverse nature of the participants at this friends and family dinner. Jeff Coe was still not sure why he was invited, even though Monsieur D'Angers had reassured him that he was now counted as a friend for shepherding his little kitten, Hermione, on the tournament floor.

Jeff was a former gymnast so he was feeling out of his depth at the Kendo weekend. Sitting at the table the young UK Department of Sport representative watched the interplay between the different representatives and the heated discussion about the young girl's performance in her first international tournament. The French coach, Jérôme, and Monsieur D'Angers were both quietly scathing about the British Coach, Peter Slattery, and his complete lack of professionalism.

The whole debacle of calling up a schoolgirl with less than 24 hours' notice to be a national representative at the World championships, which are only held once every three years, and then leaving her to swing on her own was shocking behaviour. Talk about setting up a lamb for the wolves!

Jeff Coe agreed that this situation would never had happened with the Gymnastics Association, as there was a strong culture of youth team development for the senior representative teams. The general consensus round the table was that Hermione had the potential for tournament competition but needed better physical conditioning as well as some more maturity in her control over her emotions.

Talking and reviewing her performance with Grandpère and Jérôme, Hermione felt that besides the physical condition, the key thing she needed to develop as a competitive Kendoka was more confidence in her own capabilities, along with control of her emotions when large crowds surrounded her.

Coe was advised by Hiroto Kitaguchi that when Hermione could forget about the watching eyes of the crowds, her match bouts were brilliant displays of strategy and rapid strike action, but when there was a roar from the crowd it was observed that she was put off and started to hesitate, indicating a loss of concentration that provided an opportunity for her opponent to strike.

Jeff Coe was most upset about Slattery's attitude towards Hermione as he was supposedly the Department of Sport representative and the department had a key goal in youth development. There were some things the official would be following up with Department about the treatment of Hermione and the approach to athlete development in sports like Kendo. If London or the UK ever wanted to win an Olympic or Commonwealth Games bid in the next 30 years it was important that sports development was achieving elite athletes and generating a wider youth participation rate.

Personally, Hermione was angry at Coach Slattery as he did not even do one post match bout review with her or even spend a moment doing the coaching he was paid to do, leaving her, as the most junior team member, to be thrown to the sharks, while trying to learn international tournament Kendo on the fly, with only the support of a sports official who had no real working knowledge of the intricacies of tournament play.
The only time she had spoken to Slattery was at registration and the brief moment when the team uniform items were thrown at her, while the man barked orders about staying in the team seats with Mr Coe. Hermione did not have much trust in the GB Coach since all she was to this man was a place-holder female body, who happened to be handy to ensure the team did not get disqualified due to failing to meet the gender requirements.

It had been Mr Coe who had found out the rules about the Keikogi and managed to get the approval for her to have blue duct tape covering the wrong name on the front of the Keikogi. She could not get a smaller Keikogi as it was the smallest one on the team and they would not let her compete in her plain navy Keikogi. Mr Coe had talked to her during the scheduled match bouts as her team members were never in the official team holding area for very long.

It was during the coffee after dessert that Jérôme put the cat amongst the pigeons with a slowly drawled out question in English. "Well, Hermione, will we see you at the Six Nations in December and if so which nation are you going to declare for?" At this point there was a rapid discussion that switched between French and English while Coe and the Kitaguchis looked on in confusion. After listening to rapid banter between the rest of the dinner party which was starting to become a little heated, Hiroto returned to his peace maker role by asking "But why would she have to declare for a nation? Did she not represent her country over the last three days?"

At this point, Phillip Granger advised the confused friends that "Hermione technically could have competed today for France but since she had competed for Great Britain she was now required to compete under the Union Jack. However, since Great Britain - or more correctly the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - was a unitary state, Hermione technically could represent two of the countries that made up this unitary state: either England and Scotland. The first time she competes at the individual union nation level, she has to declare which country she will affiliate with. It is like sportsmen and women in Australia where Melina has family: they have to declare which State they are competing for - either Queensland or Victoria, for example."

Jeff added on "Here in Europe we have a regional state level competition in a number of sports, which is known as the Six Nations, whereby Italy, France, England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland all compete against each other."

"Jérôme, do you think I could compete at Christmas if I got into training? I need a totally honest assessment here, rather than flattery for an old friend," asked Hermione.

"Yes, Hermione, you could do it if you did the training for fitness and address the concerns we have talked about," advised the French coach, with some bitterness that she had not been available to be selected into the French team due to her schooling in England. If only he had thought she would be willing to compete in tournament competitions and she had been available for the Easter selection camp.

"Before even declaring, I have to qualify for the Six Nations. That's not going to happen, so I won't be competing against you at Christmas," she responded with a slight tilt of her head and a little Gaelic shrug of her own.

"Technically you did qualify. With the score you made in the Katana section, you have enough points to be considered for selection," whined the disappointed Frenchman.

"So, Hermione, who are you going to declare for?" egged her father.

"It will depend on which country Slattery comes from," responded Hermione with the hope of stopping a family verbal war continuing in the car when they crossed the La Manche on the ferry in the morning. This way she could get the losing parent to support her choice of the opposite country,
thanks to a mutual distaste of Slattery.

Hélène was born in London during one of her mother's famous shopping trips, so she was a dual national of France and the UK and she often supported her birth country just to see some sparks in her husband's eyes, but having her foot on either side of the border could create an interesting dilemma when it was the rugby union Six Nations because she would pick the team she would support based on who was available. Phillip, on the other hand, was a Scotsman through and through, from the Outer Hebrides.

After fiddling with his mobile phone for a minute Coe decided to call a friend who was a Quiz Master extraordinaire back in England. "Evening, mate. Could you just help me out here? I am going to die a horrible death of shame in a sporting knowledge quiz: which country did Peter Slattery represent in the Six Nations for Kendo? Right, thanks. I will take you for a bevvy when I am next up at the KOP watching our team."

By this stage the rest of the table were waiting with baited breath for Coe to put his phone away and give them the answer they were all waiting for. After smiling at Phillip Granger, Coe said, "Hermione, I think you should declare for Scotland and we can do the forms tomorrow if you meet me at the Cockspur Street headquarters of the Department of Sport in the afternoon."

"Thank you, Mr Coe."

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As she sat in the ferry lounge with a pot of tea watching the waves and shipping in the English Channel, Hermione considered her situation. After looking at the British newspapers and the Sky News channel on the lounge screen, it appeared that the British muggle news media had not picked up on the Kendo results.

Thank goodness there was not much press about the tournament in the British muggle news media, as Hermione felt that she just could not cope with one of her muggle peers bringing the gossip that she was a Kendoka to Hogwarts. There is no way the rest of Gryffindor would understand or even believe that bookworm Hermione Granger could probably put most of the 7th year boys on the mat in less than a minute. Little Granger could not hurt a flea. There was no way she was sporty in any way, shape or form, because she could not stand Quidditch and flying on a broom.

With the increasing threat of war in the Wizarding world and the threats to her safety as a friend of Harry Potter Hermione really needed to ensure that she was working on her fitness and undertaking more regular meditation to develop her mind. She needed to get back into a daily routine, as the whole use of the time turner had really mucked up her circadian rhythm, so she would have to be especially disciplined to sort out her issues.

Hermione planned to speak to Professor McGonagall and maybe she could also manage to get Madam Pomfrey to support her with a script for physical exercise, rather than a potion to address her circadian rhythm issues. Well, she would see her friends first on her trip to the Burrow and the Quidditch World Cup.

Maybe she could practice rapid meditation techniques when people talked about the horrible game too much in the common room but first she was going to do an observational study of a wizarding sporting event. Hermione just had to survive all the jibing by the boys about her never ever being near a broom first.

Did she really have the potential to have a career in Kendo the young witch wondered?
Did she really want to train for the Six Nations? This would need some careful consideration and some enquiries to see if she could get the support from Hogwarts to keep her skills up and enable her to train to achieve both the physical and mental fitness she would need to even be in consideration.

Did she have the ability to train and compete to an international standard while attending a Wizarding and Witchcraft boarding school in middle of Scotland, could she keep the two worlds separate while having to work in both at the same time?
Dear Professor McGonagall,

I would like to ask for your assistance as my Head of House in a personal matter that I do not want to be discussed with any of my housemates or fellow peers.

It might surprise you to learn that I have been a practitioner of Kendo since a very young age, under the tuition of my Grandpère. During the summer holidays I regularly train at the Université Angers with the elite Kendo club there. During the current summer break I was called upon to represent the UK at the World Cup in Paris as a junior member of the team.

As a result of my World Cup performance I have qualified as an eligible competitor for the next Six Nations Kendo tournament, which is being held over the Christmas break. Due to the family dynamics and the location of Hogwarts in comparison to my family home it was possible for me to declare for two of the UK home nations and I ended up declaring for my father's nation, Scotland.

While I am not currently on the team for Scotland, I would need to greatly improve my fitness to make the selection camp performance grading weekend, which is being held over the October Long Weekend. It is a great honour to be declared eligible and I would like to take this opportunity to see if I can be selected to represent Scotland.

To make sure that I am able to put my best performance in, I will need your assistance and that of the Headmaster to attend an elite Kendo club session three times a week at the University of Glasgow for sparring practice. This would include an all-day practice session on Saturdays and two evenings during the week. In addition to the attendance at the Kendo club, I will also need to increase my physical fitness through a number of methods, but primarily for stamina, I need to swim.

Currently to my knowledge there is nowhere local to Hogwarts that has access to an Olympic length swimming pool. I do not think it is appropriate to consider the Black Lake a suitable alternative to an indoor facility, as I do not want to battle hypothermia. I need this pool length as it is part of the exercise programme for the hyperbaric fitness technique. The University of Glasgow sporting facilities have a swimming pool that is suitable and as a member of the University Kendo Club, I would be able to access these facilities. Where I need your help is that I need permission so that I am able to leave the grounds twice a day for training purposes.

Besides swimming training, I can use the Room of Requirement for an appropriate gymnasium to do the requisite hours of daily training that I would need on top of the swimming requirements. I will also require assistance in negotiating with the house elves to get an appropriate diet to support my training metabolic needs.

As you are aware, I have a history of being able to handle an increased workload and since I am not doing the same number of subjects as when I had the time turner, I was wondering if I could get your support with this matter.

If you would like any further information please don't hesitate to contact my father or myself.

Regards,

Hermione J Granger

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"Well, Albus, it appears that we have another muggle elite athlete attending Hogwarts who we knew nothing about. We really should do something about providing a physical education programme," advised Professor McGonagall. She was quite pleased that the girl was aiming to represent her own home nation.

"But, Minnie, the girl will require the supervision of a teacher while she is off on these jaunts," countered Dumbledore.

"Oh, don't be such a hypocritical wizard. You know you have the Triwizard tournament and Krum has asked for similar access to training facilities.

"Additionally, I am pretty sure I can find some other members of the Order of the Phoenix who would be able to support this training programme. Just because you cannot see any other sport than Quidditch, at least recognise that there are others out there," she huffed at him.

Dear Miss Granger,

I have spoken to Professor Dumbledore and he has agreed to support your endeavours for the Six Nations. I understand that before your return to Hogwarts, you will be staying at the Burrow and will attend the Quidditch World Cup with the Weasley family. I propose that before you leave for the Cup grounds, I visit you at the Burrow to clarify some of the issues.

Professor McGonagall

"Good Afternoon, Molly. Thanks for helping with this matter," advised Professor Minerva McGonagall as she knocked on the kitchen door.

"Certainly. I understand that the Aurors wanted to meet the Trio, especially if they are providing additional security support during the Quidditch final tomorrow"

"Where are they at the moment?" asked Molly's old classmate, Kingsley Shacklebolt.

"The boys will be up in the paddock playing Quidditch and I suppose that I'll find Hermione somewhere here in the house with her nose in a book," advised Molly.

"Do you think you can call Miss Granger down for us, Molly, and she can lead us to the Quidditch pitch?" suggested Nymphadora Tonks, who was Kingsley's Auror partner.

Molly called up the stairs and in response Hermione quickly came clattering down the stairs. Looking in the direction of the kitchen where Molly was pottering round, she made sure that the Professor was not going to discuss her request in the Burrow.

"Hello, Professor McGonagall. Did you have a good holiday?" the young witch politely asked her Head of House.

"Yes, I did Miss Granger. I would like to introduce Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphadora Tonks from the Auror office. Do you think we can head up towards the Quidditch field?" the Professor intoned, indicating that it was a good idea to follow so that they could have their talk.

About halfway up the hill to the Burrow’s practice field there was a seating area. Sitting down in the shade, Kingsley Shacklebolt cast a privacy charm so their conversation could not be overheard.
"I understand, Miss Granger, you are a Kendoka," stated Kingsley in his quiet gravelly voice.

"Yes, I am. I've been training with my Grandpère since I was six. I had already started on other forms of martial arts at a younger age in preparation but Grandpère did not feel that I had the correct mental attitude to start until I was 6. My Grandpère was initially trained in Karate-do by the Cat,"

"So your Grandpère trained with the Cat. Are we talking about Jitsumi Gōgen Yamaguchi?" the dark skinned Auror asked for confirmation.

"That's correct. I attended some lessons with him when he would visit at the university club. There was so much more for me to learn from him but he was a considerable age when he died in 1989," advised the witch.

"So, actually, how many forms of martial arts have you studied?" the interested Auror asked curiously in his rich, baritone voice.

"Closely I would say two but I have also dabbled in other styles so I could learn new techniques and approaches. Now, can I ask why this is such an interest to you, Sir, when I thought I would be talking to the Professor about organizing my training schedule?" queried Hermione, who wanted to understand what was going on.

"To support your heavy training schedule that you outlined would normally be very difficult for the staff at Hogwarts to support. However, there is an event going on this year at the school that is not yet common knowledge, where there is a visiting student who has the similar needs as yours. Basically they are in training and need to maintain their elite athlete fitness. Due to this person's celebrity status the Aurors office is providing a protection detail led by Auror Shacklebolt here," advised Professor McGonagall.

"Also we would be willing to support your training endeavours if you spar and train with Aurors who are also members of the Order of the Phoenix," advised Kingsley Shacklebolt.

"I am not a qualified trainer and I have only been doing light training since I started at Hogwarts. There is much I have forgotten but if you want some practice we can practice together," the young witch quietly acquiesced.

"I'm fully comfortable about the celebrity knowing the full details about my training. You may call me a swimmer, as I have to be in the pool twice a day. If you do tell them the full details, I would prefer that you swear them to a wand oath. I've never shared this part of my life with the Weasleys as they would never understand, and Harry, like everyone else in Hogwarts, sees me as the bookworm," was the calm request from the young witch.

Auror Tonks looked at the surprising girl. "I can see how you give that impression but you use it for cover, like I use my clumsiness. Professor, how many of the staff will know about the girl's training?"

"That's a good question, Auror Tonks, as I see that it could be a loose conversation between two staff members who are more likely to spread my personal life through the school. There are certain members of staff who are known for their gossiping habits," stated the student.

"Miss Granger, unfortunately, those sentiments are correct," agreed the Professor.

"From my point of view, we keep it as an Order need-to-know secret. Those who need to know in the Order know, and everyone else doesn't," advised Kingsley.

"Come, let's go and get these Quidditch players and get back to the house," suggested the Professor.
as Kingsley dropped the privacy charms.
After the Death Eater riot at the World Cup everyone in the Weasley party returned to the Burrow. Hermione was frustrated with Molly, as she kept feeding her high carbohydrate meals and Hermione did not need the bulk at the moment, thanks to her lack of opportunities to undertake exercise without the rest of the family looking at her strangely for her sudden change in behaviour.

A couple of days before the return to school, Auror Tonks came to the Burrow and laid down a cover story that Hermione's Great Uncle had died, so she was taking her back to her parents so she could go to the funeral service. In reality, Hermione was going to the Gryffindor tower and would be spending the next couple of days working with the Order's Aurors.

"Damn, girl, what are you wearing?" asked Tonks.

"This is my Karategi, or uniform, which I use for hand-to-hand training," answered the younger witch. "Miss Tonks, if you're going to be my sparring demonstration partner today, I'll need you to transfigure a similar outfit for yourself."

In that first morning session, some of the biggest and roughest of the male Aurors learnt fear at how easily the young witch could and would use a range of hand-to-hand-techniques to tackle larger opponents. They may have the power and knowledge of spells with a wand but without one they were vulnerable to the girl’s attacks.

After a shower and lunch, at Kingsley's request Hermione changed into her Keikogi and Hakama to demonstrate the sport of Kendo to the Aurors, so that they could understand what she was competing in.

In preparation before they returned from the Great Hall, Hermione used the Room of Requirement to present her with an appropriate sparring partner who was waiting for her when she was ready.

When the Aurors came up to the Room of Requirement for the demonstration, they were joined by the Headmaster and Professor McGonagall who wanted to see what this sport for their own reasons.

"So it is a form of fencing," stated Professor McGonagall, watching the flurry of strikes and hits of a Shinai bout, along with the kiais and foot strikes.

"Minerva, it is more than that. According to my friend, Hikaru, it was once the training method for the warriors who used swords. It is also a mental discipline practice. To be a good Kendoka, according to Hikaru, you need to have physical and mental discipline to maintain the forms, good tactics, strategic thinking, lightening fast speed and flexibility to adapt quickly. Kendoka not only battle with the Shinai, they also practice forms using Katas with a wooden sword initially," explained Albus Dumbledore to his friend.

While Hermione removed her armour after her Shinai bout, she explained how a tournament was made up of two parts: the competitive fighting bouts and the Kata test. Once she had set her armour aside she walked through an explanation of the Kata.

"Miss Granger, do you also practice Iaido and Jodo?" inquired Professor Dumbledore as he had heard this was a common practice for Kendokas.

"Yes, I do, but not competitively," the young witch answered wondering how this British wizard knew about these two disciplines.
"Would you please give us a demonstration of the cutting ability of the Katana sword? I assume that you have your own blade," the Headmaster stated politely, while preparing a number of targets, which he held to one side. "Please demonstrate the Iaido Katas slowly at first and then can you do a fast paced cutting demonstration afterwards."

After doing the slow pace set of Katas with her Katana, Hermione turned to the Professor Dumbledore to say, "It's your turkey shoot; lay on, McDuff."

"Right in the centre of the floor area and at a rapid place, please," the knowledgeable scholar instructed her. Once Hermione was in position the Headmaster threw a silk scarf at her so she could show how easily the blade could cut, before levitating the pieces away from the floor back to himself.

The targets Dumbledore had prepared moved from the sidelines and now surrounded her. The speed at which she parried and thrust her blade caused chunks of bamboo to fly away. Once all the targets were destroyed, Albus cleared away the rubble and then threw one of the silk pieces at her again. Hermione used an upstroke and the silk drifted to the floor in pieces. She returned her blade back to its scabbard before bowing ceremonially. Once she had done this, Hermione returned to her equipment bag and started to pack up.

"Miss Granger, please leave the body armour out. The Aurors need to understand its weight." One after another, the group lifted the chest plate to feel the weight.

"So, little bird, you are strong, fast and deadly in a number of Japanese forms," stated Kingsley before asking, "Are there any others?"

"Yes, but for what you want during the up-coming war, I think you want me to teach you some Silat," she calmly replied. "I assume, Kingsley, that you know some form of Capoeira, so I believe you are looking something a little less dance-step in movement but rather a bit more gritty. Silat in its various forms only came out of the jungle in the last 50 years, so it's still the art of jungle rather than the refined forms that you have seen me demonstrate today."

"She's no little bird, Kingsley, she has sharp claws and pounces lightening fast, so Kitten is a better name," advised Tonks.

"Once you have packed up and changed, please meet Professor McGonagall, Tonks and Kingsley in the Gryffindor Head of House's office," Dumbledore directed.

Hermione walked away to do as instructed, knowing that today she had unbalanced a number of preconceptions amongst the wizards, as there were definitely times when wand work would not be appropriate and she seemed to have the key they were looking for.

When she had changed, Hermione returned to the Gryffindor Head of House's office with the training schedule that her Grandpère had prepared, along with Jérôme's dietary sheets for her. It was during this meeting that Professor McGonagall brought up the need for Hermione to have her own quarters or she would be disturbing the other students in the dormitories. It was decided that Hermione Granger would move out into a guest suite, which was further down the hallway from the Gryffindor Common room entrance. The cover story for the two girls in her dorm who were some of the biggest gossips in their house was that the Head of House had understood their complaints about Hermione’s study habits and so that there was no further conflict amongst the trio they would place Ms Granger in a spare single dorm room. Professor McGonagall was not keen on having that young a girl on her own so she placed her into a two bedroom guest suite where one of the female Aurors could keep an eye on her. The castle reactivated the common room doorway link between the suite's lounge area and the main common room. Hermione moved into the suite setting her passwords and
organizing her study things. The second guest bedroom was for Auror Tonks, as she was going to be frequently visiting the school during the next year as one of the few female Aurors.

After dinner that evening, Professor McGonagall and Auror Tonks took Hermione to the University of Glasgow Kendo Club meeting where she presented her grading papers and joined the University Sporting Association. Tonks explained to the Sporting Services Administrator that the private school had a couple of other elite sporting students and staff members who needed the high standard facilities to train as well, and suddenly by the end of the Kata session, Hogwarts had become a Community Corporate Member for the University sporting facilities.

For the next couple of days until the return to school Hermione worked with the Aurors in shifts, teaching them techniques and training Kata so that they could practice. The young witch demonstrated a wide range of close fighting approaches and working with Tonks, developed likely scenarios and the appropriate counter moves for training sessions.

Hermione had started the twice daily swimming training sessions the next day after Hogwarts had become a Corporate Member of the University's sporting facilities and was already feeling how unfit she was when it was time to return to the schoolgirl persona. Auror Tonks apparated Hermione down to London and she joined the train with her friends to travel to Hogwarts for the new school year.
The Triwizard Tournament

It was announced at the student's welcoming dinner that the school would be hosting the Triwizard Tournament. In the week between the announcement and the arrival of the other schools, the Castle had been polished from top to bottom. It was at the start of the evening meal that the delegations from the two other schools, the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic and the Durmstrang Institute were introduced to the Hogwarts pupils.

As it was a Kendo practice night after dinner, Hermione was carrying her kitbag and her swimming things out to the gates when one of the Durmstrang students who had received considerable attention during dinner, Viktor Krum, stepped from the shadows.

"You are the other student," he queried while looking up and down the short girl in a tracksuit pulling a wheeled kitbag.

"Yes, I am the swimmer," Hermione retorted, not liking his supercilious glance up and down her body.

"Don't look like one. Gymnastics maybe, but swimmer not so much," he flatly stated.

"What are you? A weightlifter, I assume," she asked giving him back the same disparaging glare he had given her.

"Vhat, you do not know vho I am?" he queried, surprised, and not sure if the girl was being honest.

"I wouldn't take it to heart, Vik me boyo, but Quidditch is not a favourite sport for Hermione," advised Tonks who had enjoyed the smaller girl's verbal put-down of the player.

"Viktor, this is Hermione Granger, who is in her fourth year. Hermione, this is Viktor Krum. He's a 7th year and an International Quidditch player for Bulgaria," Tonks introduced the two students to each other who politely nodded. "All we are waiting on now is Kingsley. He will apparate in soon."

Crack. "Just in time. Viktor, get the coordinates from Kingsley and I'll side along apparate Mimi here to her session. I think we are going to need to have a floo connection set up for when winter sets in, Kingsley," recommended Tonks to her colleague.

"I put the paperwork in last week so we will only have to apparate for a couple more days, if the Floo Department ever gets organised," informed Kingsley.

After sparring practice, Hermione hit the pool to do the laps she needed to do. Tonks was sitting on the poolside when Kingsley and Viktor walked up to the pink haired Auror.

"So she really is a swimmer," Viktor commented to Kingsley.

"Mostly, Viktor. She is a high standard national level athlete in more than two sports and I would caution you not to cross her. It's only because of her that you have access to these facilities. You have given your oath not to disclose her and sporting secrets," advised the dark skinned Auror, warning the young man.

"How many more, Tonks?" asked the older man as he watched the small minnow tumble turn yet again.

"She has about 3 more freestyle and then she will do the 10 underwater ones. I just can't comprehend
how she does it. Her lungs must be burning by now." The bubble gum pink haired woman shook her head while tracking the minnow that was gracefully moving through the water before surveying the perimeter again.

"Oh, Viktor, if for some reason we can't escort you off campus, you should talk to Mimi. You will normally find her in the school library when she's not in class. You should ask her about her gym in the castle walls," Kingsley advised.

Viktor Krum watched the minnow do her underwater laps and conceded that she was definitely skilled, as he knew that she would not be able to use magic outside school due to her age. When the minnow pulled herself out of the pool Viktor was able to observe her highly toned form before Tonks wrapped her in a towel.

"I'll just sluice off and be back in a couple of minutes. Then we can return to school and have a meal. I'm so hungry I could probably eat a horse," advised the petite, drowned rat.

Later over the supper in the kitchens at Hogwarts, Viktor got to be amazed again at how much food the damp haired girl was eating.

"I'm using up so much energy at the moment but I have less than four weeks to the selection meet, so I need the energy to train as hard as I'm doing," she advised the large Bulgarian seeker, as she felt his gaze on her eating habits and observed that he was preparing to make a comment on the amount of kilojoules she was consuming.

"Just keeping up with half your routine has been very beneficial to me," advised Tonks lifting her t-shirt to show a ripped set of abdominal muscles.

"So, Viktor, what is your training schedule? I hit the pool at 5am so I can get my laps in and am back here for breakfast and the start of school. Most afternoons I do homework in the library until 5pm. I then hit the pool again and return for dinner in the Great Hall. Two nights a week I have practice and then I hit the pool like tonight. Diet-wise, don't forget to share your coach's sheets with Winky here; she does all the specialised diets. Saturday is pool, followed by all-day practice, followed by a trip back to the pool. Sunday is pool, followed by a couple of hours in the gym and then the pool again in the afternoon," she advised, laying out her schedule so that this Quidditch player would understand she did not just sit on a broom.

Again he was shocked by the dedication this little witch put in to her sport. "Is it a very important selection meet?" he asked watching the animated girl who had been very expressive when describing her schedule.

"Yes, I'm trying to get on the Scotland squad for the Six Nations competition, which is being held at Christmas. The competition will be held here at the University where we were today so it's very, very important to my family and me. It's especially important for my father as he is a Scot and I have declared for his home nation. It's an international tournament and I want to be representing the host nation in my own club facilities. You understand that this is a super important ambition for me and also my supporters, like Professor McGonagall, who is a fellow Scot," she enthused and you could see in her whisky eyes the level of desire she had for this ambition.

"Mimi here was in her own World Cup competition during the summer as well, Viktor, so she knows about some of the disappointment you all face at the international level of competition. Team-wise the UK lost but her individual scores were good," advised Kingsley.

"Next time ve vill vin. Yes," the Bulgarian stated with icy steel in his voice.
"Most certainly, yes," was her fervent agreement, remembering the hurt and disappointment of Paris. Hermione Granger was going to show that incompetent fool, Peter Slattery, that she was better than just a short-term placeholder to keep Team GB in the competition. Yes, you could see the slow burn and the level of her determination in her eyes and it was truly frightening to observe.

"So will you please tell me which sport you do, now?" Viktor Krum asked Hermione politely.

"I am a Kendoka, which is a modern sporting form of a Japanese Martial Art. It is a fighting sport that was used historically to train swordsmen. If you are able, you can come and see some sparring tomorrow night here in the castle, if you want to. I am teaching some of the Ministry Aurors the rudiments of the sport," she stated before smiling. "And I really do know you are a Quidditch player. Sorry, you got my hackles up earlier. I was at the Ireland game with my friends before it all went pear shaped. You played well but the referee was a little biased."

It was the start of a friendship for the two athletes through their mutual respect of the effort they put into training. Hermione made the cut at the selection meet with her friends Viktor, Tonks and Kingsley cheering her on from the stands. Professor McGonagall was also there, proudly cheering this daughter of her House, who was a true lion cub of Gryffindor and flag bearer for Scotland.
It was as friends that Viktor and Hermione attended the Triwizard Tournament Yule Ball together. Hermione was a little tired of the continual gossiping that was occurring about how someone like her could not possibly get a partner for the Ball, and she actually enjoyed the shocked looks when she came down the stairs to meet Viktor. That will teach you, Ron Weasley, to think her as the last stopgap!

"So, Viktor, are you ready to meet my crazy family tomorrow when the school breaks up?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, I have to see where you get your fire from. My parents are most grateful that your parents invited them to stay at this house party. They have never been to a muggle house party for Christmas. They do not get on well with my Headmaster and this gives me a chance to see them without too much tension," he replied to his recently acquired female best friend.

"Don't thank me, thank Dumbledore. I think he is trying to match us up. I know I am so not your type. Tonks is bringing a couple of friends to stay at the holiday house and I think one of them is someone you would be interested in. I have met him before at his family events and he is very nice, not at all like his little brother, Ron," she commented.

"Thank Circe! But what about you? Harry? Cedric?" he suggested.

"No way! Harry has his eye on Ron's sister, except he won't admit that. For me, he is just another brother. Cedric, that is a no. He plays for your team. In denial but definitely likes very fit young men," she smirked.

"So do you like very fit women, like Tonks?" he teased her.

"No, while Tonks is bisexual, I'm not. I prefer the male form but unfortunately for me, I also prefer substance over form. Form is good but I need intelligence as well, as they have to be able to challenge me," she advised her training friend.

So, Miss Granger, you knew he was gay and you are using him as your handbag date, thought Severus Snape from his hidey-hole position between two sets of French doors on the ballroom balcony overlooking the rose gardens. It was an interesting side that he was observing from the Know-It-All student who plagued his classroom.

"Vik, when there is a tango later on, let's put the cat amongst the pigeons by doing a particularly spicy one. Not many of these boys here would be able to cope with it. Most of them fluff the formal dances," she suggested to him with a glint of mischief in her whisky coloured eyes and much laughter in her tone.

"I'll do it if you remember to tuck your skirt up to one side and flash those legs of yours. Rita Skeeter will think I'm sleeping with you in no time at all with the gossip from this school," advised the young Seeker, getting into the spirit of the moment with the vibrant young lass.

They must be a good set of pins, thought Severus. I'll have to make sure that I have a look when they tango. Looking isn't touching and I certainly don't want to touch any of my students. But fresh material to assist his imagination was always helpful, especially as between his two Masters there was no possible way for him to be able to have a personal relationship, let alone find a wife, as his mother constantly nagged him about.
About twenty minutes later Professor Snape was in his private rooms dealing with the consequences of observing the Know-It-All and her idea of a spicy tango. She had certainly given the heterosexual male population of the upper grades a Christmas present and a half with her steamy tango. Circe! He had not been that ramrod hard in years; thank goodness for the fullness of robes. Those school robes had certainly hidden what a stunner the young muggle born was from most of the population and she knew how to drape herself expressively, indicating the meaning of the dance.

The Gryffindor minx had certainly given him some future inspiration for his imagination the next time he wanted to wank. Viktor Krum, for all he was gay, most certainly knew a fair pair of legs on a woman and the papas would all think he was straight after that steamy mating display dance. After ejaculating explosively once, his phallus was still half erect. It was then that Severus Snape had to admit to himself that Hermione Granger was not a girl but a very attractive young woman.
Dear Aunt Anastasia,

We are really looking forward to your visit next year in March and April. Thank you so much for consenting to escort YiaYia on a visit to us. The boys will be home on break from university during this time so they will be able to see her as well. Do you think Severus will come out during his school spring holidays? Please let us know as I think Hiroto would love to continue the intellectual discussions with him. Severus, when he relaxes, can be a completely different person than what I remember of him from my childhood.

Hiroto has finally recovered from our visit to Europe last year. I feel that he felt overwhelmed by the Kalymnnian family events. We will also have some other guests at the same time from muggle London. They do not know about magic or that I am a witch. We visited them in France during the summer of the European trip.

After so many years away from my muggle friends I am finding that I need to rebuild the links that I had. How are the troubles at the World Cup going to affect us this time round? Is He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named returning to create chaos again in Britain and Europe? Why has the Ministry failed to address this threat to our society?

Thank you again for helping to bring YiaYia to Japan. It will do her good to visit another country and help her understand my life here in the East. Hiroto has some elderly relatives who are also looking forward to meeting such an esteemed Elder of our family.

When you come, can you please bring some bottles of Commandaria and boxes of the different flavoured loukoumi? If you have some room for some Halva, I would be most grateful.

Hope all is well and safe,

Melina and Hiroto

Dear Mother,

Unfortunately, while I might officially have a spring term break, the reality does not match. This very short break of two weeks is normally a period where I am marking and completing the preparation for the final term, which includes the last run of examination practice for the OWL and NEWT students. I will make sure that I will come and visit YiaYia and yourself for a long weekend but I will not be able to stay for more than 3 or 4 days.

Once your itinerary is a little more settled, I will contact Melina to organise when it would be suitable for her to have me visit. I must catch up with Hiroto as we have an ongoing Igo competition to continue. I hope this letter keeps you happy and that you are safe and well.

Your son,

Severus

Dear Hélène and Phillip,
Thank you for your lovely letter and the photo of Hermione. She looks lovely in that ball gown. What was the name of the school she goes to? My cousin is a teacher in Scotland so I was hoping he could tell me more about her school. It must be a very exclusive school if they have international exchange visits with other schools.

Congratulations on how well she did in the Six Nations competition. We watched the satellite broadcast. Hiroto said she had really come on and it showed what dedicated training could do. Phillip must love that his daughter was in the team that won at home. Hermione is currently getting a lot of press at the moment here in Japan in the Kendo magazines and I have put the cuttings in for you so you can see them. Hiroto has done some translations so that you can all understand what they are writing about Mimi.

Hiroto and I would like to invite you both to stay for the Hanami Festival this spring. The blossoms are expected to open in the last week of March and then there will be many parties and sites that can be visited in the first two weeks of April to see the blooms. Hélène, please say you will come. Phillip, I believe Hiroto would like to continue your Igo competition. Would Hermione be able to come with you at this time or do her school terms not allow her the opportunity to visit? I would love to continue our discussions as she is an incredibly bright young lady.

If you come and see the blossoms, I am sure you can meet our sons as they will be visiting from university. We have a local Kendo competition so that might swing Hermione's vote of approval for the visit. I am pretty sure that if she wanted to compete Hiroto would sort out her entrance paperwork.

Let us know if you can come as I so want to take you all round the sites and I will need to organise tickets for some viewing locations in advance.

Think about it and let us know as soon as possible.

Your friends,

Melina and Hiroto

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Dear Melina and Hiroto,

Thank you for your invitation to attend the Cherry Blossom Festival. Phillip and I will be coming but unfortunately Hermione's school terms do not enable her to travel out and back within the short break she has at this time. Don't worry, she has advised us that she will stay at the school and do some study.

We have some friends who have children in the school as well and they will keep an eye on her while we are away to ensure that she does get some down time. Yes, she has my tendencies to work herself into the ground.

Would it be all right for you if we come out for four weeks? There is a conference the first week that Phillip wants to attend but he can travel each day from yours on the fast train. I am not interested in the conference, so that leaves us more time to catch up and go shopping.

I am looking forward to some serious smoking of my credit card as I have not hit the shops in such a long time. Maman wants me to help her redecorate the gites near the lakeside in the mode Oriental, so I will be looking for key items to help create the theme. Do you want me to bring anything from England for you? Marmalade, Scotch - of course not Johnny Walker but a proper single malt for
Hiroto - or even Scotch finger shortbread biscuits? Let me know and I will make sure we will stock up your stash of English treats. If you want any French treats write back this week as Hélène is visiting her parents over the weekend and she will be able to visit the La Marche Hypermarché on her way home to pick up any items that you are looking for.

All the best and we are so excited. Thank you again for inviting us to this event. Phillip is already researching flights to Kyoto – you know how he gets with contingency planning

Hélène and Phillip

oOoOo

Hiroto Kitaguchi knew something was up when his wife started dancing and bouncing round the room after reading the mail. "Melina Athenaou Kitaguchi what are you up to?" he demanded. "I can hear your brain scheming from here."

"Me? No, nothing, my dear," she guilelessly responded.

Alarm bells rang in Hiroto's head. "Wife, I demand to know what you are up to," he forcefully declared. It was best to know his wife's schemes in advance as she was an invariable mischief-maker who could cause chaos at the drop of a hat. Listening to the stern tone in his voice, Melina laid out her plan to have the Grangers here when their sons were home for the Hanami festival.

"Melina, are you trying to be a matchmaker for our sons?" he asked with concern. "If you are, I would rather you discuss with me why you feel that they need to be married, and if they really are of marriageable age and readiness, I would rather engage the services of a professional Nakōdo like Madam Uchiha Sakura.

"Additionally, I don't know if the Grangers would be open to the Miai process. Remember the choice is from a number of candidates and isn't Hermione a little young as she has not finished her secondary education as of yet?" advised the concerned man.

"Hiroto, I know it is early for Hermione but I think that she could potentially be willing to consider the Miai. It would really depend on Hélène and Phillip becoming open to consider the process, which is why I want to start now so the idea has time to percolate and openly be considered. If you just spring it on the Grangers there will be a definitive no but Hélène, for all her modern ideals and values, is not unused to the concept of arranged marriages or potential match introductions as she had this with her own family. Hélène just found her own match at university."

Hiroto listened to his wife's ideas and thinking about the couple and their daughter, could see why his wife considered the girl as a potential daughter-in-law for their own sons. The boys would not be established enough to have a wife for a couple of years after they completed university but this would allow sufficient time for Hermione to finish her secondary education.

If she considered the Miai Hermione might then undertake her tertiary education in Japan if she had reached an agreement with one of their sons. There was no bias in the family and the boys were both undertaking joint degrees that were recognizable in both the wizarding and muggle worlds. Hermione, with her strong intellect and mature attitude, could possibly consider the Miai and the potential intellect of her children would be considerable. She would also be considerate of the concept of magic if it got the stage where a marriage was occurring. That girl mixed with either of his sons could produce some very strong, academically minded grandchildren.

Melina organised a number of Hanami outings at various Kyoto locations once she had the numbers to book tickets for her party.
Dear Madam Uchiha Sakura

It has been a while since Hiroto and I have had the pleasure of your company. We would like to catch up with you at the earliest opportunity for an English style afternoon tea during the Cherry Blossom Festival. We understand at this time of the year your appointment diary can be very hectic, so can you please advise when it is possible for you.

We have some friends and family visiting during the Spring Festival and we thought we should celebrate our twenty years of marriage in a quintessential English tea party, since you found me in England.

Hiroto would like to make a formal appointment for arrangement services with you later in the year, as our boys will need your services like you handled him and his siblings.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Melina Athenaou Kitaguchi

Loukoumi – is also known as Turkish Delight. It comes in a number of flavours that include rose, lemon, orange, pistachio and hazelnut.
Hélène and Phillip Granger were not the only guests of Melina and Hiroto had during the Cherry Blossom Festival. The others were Melina's Grandmother and Aunt. The four women got on very well as they all had strong ideals, as well as good intellects. Phillip and Hiroto retreated from the four strong-minded women to their ongoing Igo competition while the women gossiped, shopped, cooked and carried on together in a band of united sisterhood.

Melina advised her guests that later in the week the household would have a special afternoon guest, Madam Uchiha Sakura. This was the Nakōdo who 25 years ago this week challenged Melina to an Omiai meeting, which led to her eventual marriage to Hiroto twenty years later. Hélène was excited to be meeting this interesting lady again, while Melina's Aunt Anastasia was thinking that this may be the solution for her and her troublesome son, Severus.

Anastasia knew that Madam Sakura was a witch and used a complex matching process that utilised magical and muggle processes to ensure compatibility for her clients. Melina revealed to her visitors that she and Hiroto were starting the opening negotiations in the matching process for both their sons who were still in university.

"Basically we want her to take an interest in the boys now and when they are ready for a wife, if they do not meet someone in the next couple of years, we hope Madam Sakura will be able to find some potential matches for them."

It was a lovely afternoon tea and Madam Sakura enjoyed herself immensely. Yes, in a couple of years she would have to match the two Kitaguchi brothers but she now had their rough details in case she came across potential brides who they would suit. At some stage in the near future she needed to meet the boys in question individually to get their personal opinions.

It was interesting to meet Melina's friends, who had a lovely daughter who Hiroto enthused about. Apparently she was on the Scottish National Kendo squad.

Looking at the hawk like assessing eyes of Melina's Aunt, Madam Sakura turned to surprise the mature Greek witch when she stated, "I know of your son, I have read a number of his academic journals. Do you realise he is a highly talented Master of his craft?"

"Grandmother, you will have to wait another couple of years before that grandson marries. I think we are looking at three, possibly four years," Madam Sakura sagely advised Melina's Grandmother. Aunt Anastasia took heart at the message but even she could realise there needed to be a settlement of the UK Dark Lord problem that her son had foolishly joined as part of his teenage rebellion.

As Madam Sakura was preparing to leave the Kitaguchi's she advised Melina's visitors, "When I am next in your home countries, would you mind if I visit you? I like to meet interesting people and you could probably direct me to interesting amusements." The visitors all exchanged addresses with Madam Sakura and thus she knew she had another two potential leads for her matchmaking agency.

Melina and Hiroto were disappointed that Severus could not come out for a long weekend. Apparently he was not well and would be in the school sick bay.
It was a lovely Christmas holiday for Hermione after the Yule ball when Viktor and his parents came to stay with her family in Scotland in a large holiday house on a farm not too far from the Glasgow University campus, where the Kendo Six Nations tournament was being held.

Charlie Weasley had the shock of his life when he accepted Tonks' Christmas invitation to say with her and some of her friends at a Scottish house party and she would take him to the Six Nations Tournament to watch her friend who was hosting the house party. His old school chum had given him the invite during the first task of the Triwizard Tournament. It blew his socks off that he recognised former teachers and members of the Order of Phoenix in the crowd but when the friend they were all there to watch turned out to be the Gryffindor Princess, the Know-It-All bookworm and supposedly his kid brother's best friend, Charlie was stunned. Ron had never said anything about Hermione being involved in sport; from what he said she was a bookworm.

Tonks the slapped Charlie Weasley with another surprise when she introduced him to another one of her friends, Viktor Krum, who was also apparently a guest at this exclusive house party. Charlie Weasley the normally cool calm and collected dragon keeper was shocked absolutely speechless.

Charlie was enjoying himself so enormously at the mixed community house party hosted by Hermione's parents that he had only flooed to the Burrow for a minimum stay visit with his family on Christmas day. The dragon keeper told his parents that there was a crisis at the reserve so he only had limited time off. Charlie was getting sick and tired of his Mother's attempts to marry him off to a nice girl and start producing grandchildren.

When the second oldest Weasley son returned to the Scottish House late on Christmas evening, Hermione met him in the study when he arrived. The bossy girl told him to go and make a move before the New Year because the shy Bulgarian Seeker liked him. Who knew that this minx existed? This part of her personality was not something he was used to when he saw her at the Burrow earlier in the year.

When Hermione’s parents went off to Japan at Easter, Auror Tonks escorted Hermione Granger to her Grandparents' estate in France. During the two week break all the Order's Aurors came to stay so that they could practice and train with her and her grandfather. This was when her Grandpère suggested that during the summer, the Order of the Phoenix should use the estate as a training facility. As part of this arrangement with Dumbledore, her Grandpère insisted that Hermione could continue to use the private suite and the access to the floo network to go to training at the University of Glasgow during her OWL year. The cover story of the young witch’s intense focus upon her studies not disturbing her peers in her old dorm again would be used to cover her absence from her year group dormitory.

Viktor's romance with Charlie Weasley started before the New Year with the encouragement of the rest of the house party. Charlie Weasley had turned out to be a very good thing for Viktor, as they were now a confirmed couple when Hermione returned to France for the summer after the Triwizard academic year. To most of the world, Viktor was apparently still mooning over the young witch he escorted to the Yule ball and vice versa as Hermione had been his goal in the second challenge. Viktor and Charlie visited the Loire Valley estate where they were joined by Tonks and Remus Lupin not long after the end of the school year.

Madam Hélène Granger was ecstatic as during the summer break there was a steady stream of visitors who helped to provide life and laughter to the estate farm. The visitors where all involved in the Order of Phoenix in some shape and form, who came for further training. The Pressoir
where Hermione taught meditation when not in an individual coaching session with Jérôme. With the high numbers of Order members at the estate there was a larger permanent Kendoka presence so the local University club visited for a number of Master classes. Even Jeff Coe from the muggle Department of Sport and Recreation had visited during the summer to see how Hermione was progressing.

The key condition that both her Grandpère and Hermione required for the widening of the training camp from just the Order's Aurors to the general members of the organisation was that her individual identity needed to be protected, so she would be a glamoured instructor, the Kitten, for sparring or teaching sessions that were not completely filled by Aurors. It would not be long before she got rid of the underage magic limitation but until then Hermione was required to have the assistance of one of the Aurors who knew her true identity to keep the spell on her when she was required to maintain her hidden identity.

Hermione managed to keep a straight face and her story straight when the Hogwarts teachers in the Order came for a week's defence training at the Estate. Minerva, as her number one fan, was a very enthusiastic student of her glamoured student.

It was during one quiet week between regional weekend tournaments when Kingsley brought Severus Snape to the D'Angers estate so he could train with Grandpère D’Angers. From the loft, Hermione had watched some of training and realised that her Potions Professor had a lovely, very fit body, as well as some experience in physical fighting. After discovering Hermione in the loft, Tonks made sure the girl was out and about rather than watching her Potions Professor training with her Grandpère.

Charlie Weasley and Viktor dropped in to visit the estate the week the Weasley twins were visiting the training camp and had loudly enjoyed the Kitten schooling the twins into behaving during one practice session. Thanks to the regular interaction with a diverse group who respected her physical and intellectual skills, Hermione blossomed, becoming even more comfortable with her own self-identity. The young witch was shocked that she actually had a lovely time with Tonks clothes shopping and clubbing.

When Hermione visited the Burrow at the end of the summer, she found that she had more in common with the twins rather than she did with Ron and Harry. The young witch was still best friends with the two boys but Hermione also did not want to be continually dealing with Ron's immaturity and his emotional range of a teaspoon, while being trapped in the perpetual Quidditch conversation. When the twins were going to play yet another prank that was going to cause grief she let it slip who the Kitten was. The pair of them cracked up laughing at the joke that had been played on them.

Hermione's circle of friends had widened and she now found that she had a long and dedicated list of correspondents but she reconciled herself that she would probably not have a relationship until she left Hogwarts, since she was not interested in boys as there was just not enough substance in them.

Her OWL year started off considerably differently for Hermione, as she was now hassled by the male population of Hogwarts. Well, that will teach her for proving to the senior grades that she was more than just a bookworm. Even though the boys had realised that she was a girl, she did not follow up any offers for a relationship and she got yet another name, "The Ice Queen of Gryffindor."

Hermione was now deemed old enough to be trusted by Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall to floo in and out from the University Sports Centre without the presence of a nominated babysitter. As there was always one or more of the Orders' Aurors around the University Sports Centre, while she was off campus she had their supervision and a regular number of sparring partners. When Hermione
was not training, she was studying and trying to keep the boys out of trouble with the new Professor Umbridge.

Ron had got over his temper for her “dating” of Viktor Krum and had hooked up with Lavender to prove a point. Hermione just did not care anymore: the boys were not what she wanted from life. It now seemed to her that she was only minding Ron to maintain her friendship with Harry. Hermione's friendship with Ron was becoming very strained.

Life was getting tough for students in Hogwarts with the removal of Dumbledore and the appointment of the High Inquisitor, Dolores Umbridge. It was after Hermione Granger put Malfoy on the floor using a sweep kick during the first term that some members of Gryffindor realised that the bookworm actually had some physical skills. Those members of Gryffindor all appeared to be muggleborn except for Harry and she classed him in the same group, as he was 11 before he found out about magic.

With the increased levels of tension in the school, Hermione started to teach self-defence tactics to members of the Defence Association, or Dumbledore's Army, particularly after Umbridge had recruited Malfoy and his cronies to the Inquisitorial Squad.

"Bloody hell, Moine, you kept that quiet," spluttered Ron after Hermione had comprehensively used him in a session as her practice partner (cough cough, whipping boy, cough cough).

"Didn't you wonder why she's really great mates with Tonks and most of the older members of the Order who visit the Burrow during the summer?" asserted an astounded Ginny thinking her older brother was really unobservant.

"Ron, she's on the Scottish National Team, you pillock. She doesn't spend all her life in the library," advised Fred shocked that his brother didn’t know this basic fact about one of his best friends.

"Moggy McGonagall loves her cause she helped win the Six Nations cup last Christmas for Scotland," affirmed George supporting his brother with his knowledge about Hermione’s public Kendo status.

"Yes, she's the rising star of Kendo!" teased Fred. The twins were doing that interlinked sentence thing and it was starting to fray Hermione's temper.

"Oy, knock it off boys, we're not doing Kendo here. I thought you lot wanted some hand-to-hand defence training," she snapped at the twins, embarrassed that more people knew about her sporting credentials.

Hermione's martial arts teaching and training helped various groups of students throughout the year. In particular Harry benefited, when her techniques helped them to get rid of the Inquisitorial Squad when Umbridge was going to Crucio him. It turned out that the connection floo connection in her private rooms was limited to just the University so they had to find an alternative travel method to reach the Ministry of Magic. Hermione wondered if the floo connection that she had to the university was not 100% legitimate as Madam Umbridge never questioned her regular usage of the floo.
After the death of Sirius Black in the Hall of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic that Cornelius Fudge had to admit that Voldemort was back. Harry Potter gave permission to the Order of Phoenix so they could utilise 12 Grimmauld Place as the Order’s Headquarters. It was at this hidden household where Hermione found herself and her Grandpère preparing the upper floor of the building as a dojo at the start of the summer. Once the dojo was set up, her Grandpère returned to France. Hermione's parents had sold their practice during the spring and had decided to travel in Asia for the next 12 to 18 months, after being told by Hermione and some of her friends in the Order of Phoenix that the internal conflict within in the UK magical community was heating up and becoming highly unstable. The Grangers were particularly in danger as the muggle parents of the famous muggle born witch would be used to attack their daughter.

Using the floo network, Hermione continued to train at the University of Glasgow's sporting facilities, as the young witch wanted to qualify for the Scotland squad so that she could attend the European Cup and the next Six Nations tournament. Besides supporting the Order, Hermione was determined to live until the next summer, as the Kendo World Cup was being held in Japan. It was the ultimate goal for her to compete in Japan.

Severus Snape and Hermione Granger worked together on a number of projects in the brewing lab. When the Potions Master was not in residence at Headquarters, the young woman would spar with Order members who wished to sharpen their skills in the top floor dojo. When Professor Snape was in residence Hermione continued to travel via floo to train hard, while pulling long days as his assistant in the Headquarters lab and as an elite athlete in training.

Halfway through the summer break Hermione left Headquarters to visit the Burrow for Bill and Fleur's wedding. With the fall of the Ministry to Voldemort, Ron and Harry decided to go on the run calling it a horcrux hunt. Hermione had tried to reason with them but the boys believed that it was necessary, so Hermione returned to the Order's assistant potioneer role at Headquarters, where she worked under the supervision of Professor Snape most days. With Dumbledore in stasis, Hermione provided an information management and administrative role to the Order while she also continued in her training. Where she could, Hermione supported the boy’s search for the horcruxes and directed the pair of them to the various objects so they could retrieve them and destroy the pieces of soul attached to them.

Before the start of the school year Severus arrived at Headquarters, where Molly greeted him. "Where is my assistant?" he asked, as he had looked into the brewing room and their laboratory but had not seen her there.

"Oh, she is upstairs in the dojo handing Kingsley - and everyone else who thought that together they could take her on - their bollocks in a doggy bag," advised Tonks.

"Tonks! Language, please!" exclaimed Molly.

"The kids aren't here, Molly, and I'm just saying it as it is. Why don't you come and watch the Kitten in action, Severus? Coming?" the bouncy Auror asked as she brushed past him onto the main stairway in the building. "Hang on, I thought you said that Hermione was sparring with Kingsley. Now the instructor, the Kitten, is sparring in the dojo as well? I'm confused," stated Severus as he followed the blue haired witch up five flights of stairs to the top floor.
"Duffer! Hermione is the Kitten. Surely you knew that she is Monsieur D'Angers' granddaughter?" chuckled Tonks when she saw the look of comprehension. Her hair changed to pink reflecting her delight at surprising the dour, dark man.

You mean all this time I've been working with the Kitten and I've never got to see her in action?" complained the dark, brooding spy. Damn, I had wanted to spar with her, he thought.

When they arrived on the top floor dojo, Severus got to watch five wizards who seemed to be losing a battle with the young witch.

"Right you lot, go and rest. Who's up next?" asked the Instructor Kitten. This was a persona of the Know-It-All Severus had never seen before.

"Nice to see you, Severus. Do you think you can help be out in a wager?" asked Charlie Weasley.

"Depends," he commented, not wanting to give too much away.

"Just hold this board up in both hands above your head height," the dragon keeper asked.

"That's cheating, Charlie Weasley. When I agreed to participate in the bet it was going to be you holding the board. You have just added another 8 inches to it. Just you remember, me bucko, I am only 5' 4," she warned her friend's lover.

"Any more side bets?" asked Fred.

"Will you just hurry this up? It's my arms holding this board up in the middle of the air," complained Severus, who was estimated to be about 6' 8". The board was now at least 8' in the air.

With a loud "Kiai!" Hermione launched into a jumping roundhouse kick and the board was shattered in two.

"Damn, I'm going to have to pay up now," said Charlie Weasley.

"It's not like I'm getting you to do something against your will. It is something you want to do but have just been too chicken to do so before now," said Hermione as she smirked at Charlie. She had made a personal bet with the dragon keeper and she was just going to push him a little to do something he wanted to do but seemed afraid of.

"Fred or George Weasley, can you explain why I was holding apparently matchsticks for a bet?" asked Severus Snape as he dropped his arms and removed the splinters from his suit and robes.

"There's a private bargain between those two and then there was also a public monetary wager," explained George to the Potions Master.

"Yes, Charlie now owes Hermione 100 galleons. She did very well out of her side betting as well," advised Fred who was currently working out the dividends of the wager markers he was holding.

"Lunch!" called Molly and the dojo emptied very quickly. Hermione was cleaning up the benches when Severus pulled his wand out to sort the room magically.

"What, are you a witch or not?" he snapped at her.

"Right at this moment I'm an underage one and I'm losing a valuable year of my education being a lackey while there's a madman or two out there who hates me and my kind just because I'm muggleborn. I'm tired, frustrated and lonely. I'm hormonal and I'm nervous. Sorry for my drivel," she
apologised before getting a tissue out to blow her nose. "I'm just waiting to hear if I made the Scotland squad and I don't know yet. My parents won't even be in the same country as me and I'm terribly worried that my family is going to suffer because of my magic."

"It's okay, Hermione. You probably need to get out into some fresh air and sunshine but other than going onto the roof we won't be able to do that today. When was the last time you took a moment for yourself? I don't want to see you in the lab this afternoon. Go find a book and take over the bathroom on the third floor. Just let the wheels of your brain stop spinning. You're the so-called meditation expert - when did you last practice what you preach?" he asked her.

"Not recently. You're right, I haven't meditated all week. We'd better move or there won't be any lunch left. Remember there are three Weasley boys at the table and they all inhale food," the witch commented about the family she knew so well.

It was a rare weekend in October when Severus Snape thought he would make it away from his paperwork covered desk at Hogwarts early on a Saturday morning. Since being designated the Headmaster, the mundane administration of the role had been driving him mad. It was definitely not his dream job, nor was it his chosen career path. Professor McGonagall sent him a message via Winky the house elf asking him to join her in the Gryffindor entrance corridor to deal with a student issue. The thought of getting away from the paperwork just thrilled him; he was also interested to see why Minnie would have a problem in her house area.

"Professor McGonagall, you requested my assistance," he intoned wondering why Minnie would call him up here into her domain. Looking left and right in a furtive manner she shoved him into the doorway of a guest suite before shutting the door quickly behind herself.

"What on earth has gotten into you, McGonagall?" he demanded, not liking the rough handling.

"Transfigure your robes into muggle casual clothing as we're going out for the day," she ordered her friend. Surprisingly Severus undid his robes and she observed that he had a casual hoody and jeans on.

"Do you know, Sev? That is the first time in many years I have not seen you in your dreaded Potions Professor uniform. You almost look like you did when you were my student," she stated with a relaxed and happy smile.

"It was bad enough that I had to spend the morning doing yet more paperwork, thanks to ruddy students. I wasn't going to wear an uncomfortable suit when I'm only in the Headmaster's rooms. It wasn't like many could enter and surprise me. If I've got do the sodding paperwork I might as well be comfortable. So where are we going?" he asked.

"We're going to the European Kendo Championships in Berlin. Transfigure the robes into a coat, we have to catch up with the rest of the gang. Use the floo and say 'University of Glasgow sporting facilities.' We're meeting up with Kingsley and some others there for a portkey to the event," she informed him.

"Before we go, why would I be interested in this?" he queried her.

"Because Hermione Granger, a valued member of the Order of the Phoenix, is going to represent Scotland and we are part of her cheer squad. Don't tell me you don't like the girl, Sev, I've known you too long," snapped his friend.
Scotland was victorious at the European Championships in Berlin and their youngest team member, Miss Granger, who was known as the Kitten, had a loud and enthusiastic cheer squad. Hermione’s Grandpère, with the assistance of Jeff Coe, organised the celebratory dinner at the Go-Jo sushi restaurant. It was not just a Scottish team celebration as there were other Kendoka from France, England and Ireland present at the party. There were also non Kendo friends present from Scotland, England, France, Romania and Bulgaria.

The restaurant was taken over by the party atmosphere. Suddenly there was a cake with candles lit brought out to the youngest member of the party where a loud and gusty rendition of Happy Birthday was started in English by a tall redhead.

"We weren’t able to celebrate your 17th birthday last month. Please don’t think we forgot, it just wasn't possible to see you in London,” advised the dark, broody looking countenanced Bulgarian. He changed his visage with a quick smile after his lover leaned over to give him a kiss on his cheek.

"Thank you all. It really means a lot," the young woman said to the party before she blew out the candles. There were tears of sadness that her parents were not there but there were also tears of joy that she had such good friends to make it up to her when they could.

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Dear Melina and Hiroto,

Here are some photos of the European Championships and my surprise belated birthday dinner in Berlin. Grandpère and Jeff Coe from the UK Department of Sports and Recreation organised the party and I had friends from Kendo and school there.

My parents are off gallivanting through Asia so don't be surprised if you see them for a month or two. I think it is an extended second honeymoon and I don't expect them back until next year.

I know this may be jumping the gun a little but if I make the UK squad, do you think you can help me find a large house so a group of my friends can come out and stay with me while I compete in Kyoto? Normal hotels won't cope with this crowd as they are quite boisterous and really are like one big family. I don't think we want to be in the city centre but rather somewhere we can easily commute to but also have access to a calm, relaxing environment.

Thank you both for your lovely birthday gift. I wore my new Men in Berlin and Grandpère was quite impressed with the workmanship. As arranged with Mother we are looking to get a complete new hand-stitched Bogu for his birthday next year in August. I understand that Mother picked out a design when she went shopping with Melina. Grandmother will be sending his latest measurements through to you soon. Let me know how the Master craftsmen are getting on with this order when you can.

Regards,

Hermione

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Dear Aunt Anastasia,

Thank you for your recent letter. I am very glad that YiaYia enjoyed the trip. Recently I received a letter from Hermione Granger, the daughter of my university friends who you both met when you
were here. Apparently Hélène and Phillip Granger are currently gallivanting round South East Asia on an extended second honeymoon so the girl thought I might see them before she does.

Looking at the photos I was surprised to observe a number of familiar faces that you and I know from the magical world. Now all the hints are coming together to which point I think Hermione is a witch and a very powerful one at that.

Talking to Madam Sakura she agrees that there are a number of well known faces in the photos. She has a copy of these photos and I have had another set made for you so you can see what we are talking about. I have enclosed your copies in this letter. There is one face in the photos that should be very familiar to you, as I would believe it to be Severus. I was not sure at first because he actually looks like he is having fun and enjoying life. Who knew my cousin could smile?

There is another face in the photos that Madam Sakura pointed out and it was the Bulgarian Quidditch player, Viktor Krum. Now when I looked at the other photos, which Hélène has sent me over the years, it appears that Krum was Miss Granger's escort for a school Yule Ball. Madam Sakura advised me that I should inform you that she is currently investigating Miss Granger's suitability for the Miai and she will find out what type of witch she is and will get back to me. Madam Sakura apparently has a close friend at Hogwarts with whom she can consult in relation to both Miss Granger and Severus.

What can I tell you about the girl? She is as sharp as a whip. When I met Hermione a couple of years ago she was 14 years old, and even at this age she was evidently widely read in line with what I would expect from a university literature student. We had some interesting and vigorous discussions. Hélène advised that her daughter had always been mentally years older than her chronological age.

Her father is a Scot from the Outer Hebrides and it is from him that I feel Hermione gets her determination. While her mother is a strong, modern, feminist, intellectual career woman, as you know from meeting her, I feel it is Phillip's influence that accounts for her determination. I know Phillip was very quiet with you and YiaYia but he would have observed you both closely every moment he was with you. Phillip is highly curious and he can make large intuitive leaps of deduction. Not many of our peers realised that Phillip worked his way through university while caring for his younger siblings.

Hermione herself very self-effacing, as she never let on at all during the time we were staying with the Grangers at Hélène's parents' Loire estate that she is a top class Kendoka or a witch. Hiroto wanted to see the Kendo World Cup in Paris as part of our big trip and to our surprise we saw my friends there with their daughter. The girl was called up to represent her country with less than 24 hours' notice and was thrown into the biggest international level tournament competition at the age of 14 years. She has since represented Scotland a number of times.

The photos, according to Hermione's letter, were from a surprise birthday party that was held for her in Berlin. I assume that was during October when she was there for the European Kendo Championships and as per her usual humility, she did not mention that her country, Scotland, was victorious.

My Hiroto is possibly her biggest Kendo fan here in Japan. He has cuttings of her achievements and apparently the Kendo world believes that she is going to be one of the towering greats in the sport. I know the girl is currently working towards the World Cup next year here in Kyoto but rather than focus only on herself, she has already decided that she will organise accommodation for her friends.

Now the thing is, with her skills in Kendo and her practice as a Kendoka, according to Hiroto it would have helped in her development and control of her powers if she were a witch. Hiroto insisted that the boys do Kendo when they were younger and they had remarkable control during their
teenage years. So I would say there is some merit in his theory. Talking to Hiroto he believes that if
Hermione is a witch, with her Kendo practice she would likely have the potential for wandless and
elemental magic.

I don't want to get your hopes up too much but she could be a very good match for that troublesome
cousin of mine. Can you please advise what is going on in the UK, as we are getting conflicting
reports and I would like to know if we are going to have to look out for Death Eaters again.

Regards,
Melina

My Dear Son,

Have you forgotten how to write? Or how to use an Owl? It has been several months since you were
here on the island during the Summer. Can you not even come for a weekend to see me and your
YiaYia? YiaYia is missing you greatly and we are both worried about what is happening in the UK.

Write to your mother, Son, or I will send you a howler worse than the last one and this time I will
make sure it delivers its message when you are at a meal in the Great Hall, in front of all your
dunderhead students.

Mother
A Break Through

Since the weekend in Berlin with Minnie, Severus Snape had found that he was restless in his rooms as the temporary Headmaster of Hogwarts. He always seemed to be on edge and the Carrows were a absolute nightmare. There must be a way he can get the Dark Lord to rein them in.

One of the benefits of not having to teach multiple classes of dunderheads was that former Head of Slytherin was able to claw some time to undertake research. While the Dark Lord may think that his research was for his Master's purpose, the truth was that Severus was running several projects at the same time. There was his personal study of Wolfsbane and the development of a potion, which would kill that horrible snake. It was fortunate that the healers at St Mungo's got a skin sample of the wound and contained Arthur Weasley's shirt and jacket in a contamination protection bag. From the clothing, Severus had been able to extract a sample of the snake's venom and from that, he had been developing an appropriate antivenin and toxin to kill the snake.

Miss Granger had become a very good potioneer and Severus Snape had been using her skills in his research investigations. From his close work with the young woman, he had learnt that she was not a Know-It-All but an extremely curious and highly intelligent individual who had a bright and engaging way, even though she was shy. However, she used the cover of a Know-It-All to hide her true personality and it must have been her help that assisted her Gryffindor peers like Potter through his classes.

Well, the order's potions master needed to check the current brewing of Wolfsbane and that was at Headquarters, so he could floo there but it was Hermione's sparring evening at the university. So Severus could drop in to watch her spar and they could review her research that she had been doing for him. The dark spy was baffled about the separate personalities that Hermione Granger presented to the world. There was the bossy Know-It-All who mothered her housemates, the minx who flirted with the world but did not seem to engage openly, and then there was the shy and unsure young woman at other times. The young woman also had another personality when she was on the dojo floor as a take no nonsense instructor and mentor.

The personality Severus Snape most wondered about was "The Kitten." She was small in stature but she had sharp claws that would strike like lightning. When she sparred she was lightning quick, coldly clinical and aggressive in her strikes against her opponent, yet when she took off the Men she reverted to a kind-hearted, compassionate woman. It had been a number of years since he had seen her in the Defence Against the Dark Arts class and Severus had became concerned that she may not have the training to defend herself magically. Yes, we need to organise some further training for her, he decided.

"Hello, Severus. I didn't see you come in. Do you need me return to the lab urgently, as I have to go to the university library first because there is some literature I want to check out for our furry problem."

"If it's okay I'll escort you there, as there's always a new article for me to read," he advised his lab assistant. They had developed a good working relationship and now tended to use first names for each other most of the time.

"I'll go and change first and I'll meet you at the coffee shop in the sporting centre's foyer," she advised him.

She arrived at the coffee shop wearing a university hoody, sweatpants and what looked like sheepskin boots. She had her wheeled Bogu bag following her and the Shinai case was on hung over
her shoulder. "Right, we must get going as I have some work to do tonight in the lab," she advised him.

On the way to the library they had to walk past the student union bar and it was evidently a rowdy Wednesday evening, the traditional British university student party night. Suddenly there was a group of young men who seemed to fall out the door of the university bar.

"Oy, oy. What do we have here?" one of the thugs shouted raucously. A couple of the young men had the typical signs of cauliflower ears that you see in rugby players. Bugger, Hermione had run into the rugby team who were out on the lash.

Severus was separated from her and he was trying to get to her, around the mass of bodies that were all determined to play with their new toy. Hermione dropped her Bogu bag handle and seemed to push it to one side. Then suddenly she let the Shinai case shoulder strap drop off her arm. Reaching down she grasped the case in her left hand about two thirds of the way down. With a quick glance at Hermione's eyes, Severus could see that the Kitten was present. She tilted her chin slightly which was a sure sign of her anger and her eyes intensely regarded her attackers.

"I will say it once, leave me alone." Yes, there in the voice was the cold steel of an extremely determined threat and the control of enormous level of anger.

"What is a girlie like you going to do about it?" asked the ringleader before he stepped towards her.

In reply Hermione rapidly brought the Shinai case to the front of her body with a sweeping stroke to the head of a thug to her left, which gave her more room for defensive action and allowed Severus to get through the wall of bodies which had blocked his way to her. Hermione had brought the case into a fighting stance and Severus was able to collect her Bogu bag before standing behind her. With the Shinai she would have the longer reach and it was important that they did not entangle with each other. If the student bar security team did not step in soon, he was going to break the statute of secrecy with his wand.

In a flick of a movement the leader reached towards her and she whipped the Shinai case so fast that it was like the rapid strike of a snake. She had struck the rugby player on the shoulder and he screamed in pain.

"I have probably broken the collar bone, if you are lucky. Otherwise, I have may have done the clavicle, acromion and the scapula all together. The next strike will be the melon you call your head," she stated in her steely voice.

"Boys, you picked the wrong lady to hassle. She is the current European Kendo Champion, you dunderheads," Severus advised them, hoping to stop the alcohol-induced bravado when the bouncers started to restrain the drunken louts they could pick off from the side and back of the group. Four of the rugby team lunged towards her and she went into action using body strikes and thrusts on their unprotected backs, stomachs and chests. The four were now on the ground as she had not held back and they did not have body armour protecting them.

"Thanks, lassie, we will deal with them now. We know where to find you if the pollis want to take a statement," advised a large hulk of a man wearing a Security puffer jacket.

Hermione stepped down from her attack mode and Severus grabbed the Shinai case from her before she dropped it, and threw it over his shoulder. The tall wizard quickly placed an arm around her where he could feel her silent tremors.

"We will go home, we can go to the library another day," Severus softly said to Hermione. She was
like a skittish horse and it was probably the adrenalin reaction causing her tremors and current state of mind. One more perceived threat and she would be off, thanks to the fight or flight mechanism.

"No, we need to get a copy of the journal article," she strongly asserted while madly trying to regain her composure.

"Right, my lady. The library awaits you," advised Severus as he guided her to the library.

Severus had quietly supported Hermione through the library and the printing of the journal she was fixated on. The young witch made two copies of the all-important journal article, placing the printouts in the front pocket of her Bogu bag. Severus then guided her back past the union bar where the local police were getting statements from the bouncers.

With a nod to the hulky Glaswegian bouncer who had spoken to them earlier, Severus led Hermione back to the Sports Centre and the floo. On their return to the Headquarters, Severus took her into the library and organised with Kreacher for a cream tea and a vial of Dreamless Sleep potion from the medical stores to be delivered to them. Severus’ choice of the library was to give Hermione somewhere familiar and comforting.

"Thank you, Severus," she said quietly, without lifting her gaze from the fire that was lit to chase the chill Autumn night air away.

The pair of them sat there in the quiet with the scones and tea. Hermione nibbled on her scone, not really hungry. "Please eat that scone, Hermione. It has jam and cream on it and you need something sweet after dealing with a university rugby team," advised Severus, looking at her pale countenance.

"What are you going to do for Christmas, Severus?" she asked. "I'm not spending it here. I have an invitation to Bulgaria but I don't want to go on my own. How do you feel about coming with me as my friend, or do you have to stay close to the school? The Six Nations is being held in Venice so we could do the side trip easily."

"I am not sure of my plans yet, as I have yet to hear from my Dark Master. I was going to visit my grandmother. She has not been well. We hope to give Albus the restorative potion soon and I was planning to install him with my YiaYia while he recuperates. Two feisty biddies together getting looked after by some bossy witches, like my aunts or even worse, my mother," advised the dark man with a laugh over the thought of Albus Dumbledore being bossed around by some of the domineering women that made up his extended family on Kalymnos.

"Severus, I thought you did not have any family and that was one of the reasons why I asked you to come with me, as no one should be alone at Christmas," the kind-hearted young witch informed him.

"I was disowned for taking the Mark. Many of them still don't acknowledge me. My YiaYia, my great grandmother, was the one who led to my reconciliation with my mother but that was only a few years ago. Mother is a strong woman, as she has to be. Do you understand about the traditional wizarding family Head of House? Well, my mother's family is Kalymnian and the island is matriarchal. So my mother, who is an extremely powerful witch like many in the family, is the current Head of the House. As her son, I am supposed to follow her requests implicitly. Let's say I have not been a compliant son, so she is more than a little disappointed in me," he flatly stated, hiding the pain that his family division had caused.

"Living up to expectations are always difficult. My mother only asks that I do what I feel is the best I can do and so as long as I can say that I have honestly tried, she will never be disappointed in me," countered Hermione.
Kreacher had been and gone, clearing away the remains of the cream tea. Severus continued to watch Hermione sit in quiet contemplation. Her eyes reflected the flickering of fire she was watching. Suddenly Hermione retrieved the print out of the journal article she was so determined to access and passed him a copy.

"Read," Hermione ordered before returning to the couch where she stretched out.

Hermione had read the article when she found it online and thought she had clearly understood the implications. This research could provide the breakthrough that they needed to treat lycanthropy suffers like Remus Lupin. She settled down to review the article again while Severus read the article for himself.

Severus was reading the article when he noticed that Hermione's breathing had changed. Looking over he observed that she had fallen asleep. He lifted a throw from the other armchair and covered her.

"Kreacher, watch over her she may have bad dreams. I will be in the lab. If Remus Lupin drops by, send him down to me, please," he ordered with a hint of excitement. The girl may be right, there was a potential breakthrough here.

pollis = police in Glasgow parlance – and local idiom in other parts of the UK as well
Hermione, Tonks and Kingsley travelled to Castle Krum via a portkey from the University Sports Centre. Hermione Granger was looking forward to this Christmas celebration because there was also going to be a bonding. Her personal bet with Charlie Weasley all those months ago was that he had to stop pussy footing about and ask Viktor Krum formally to be his life partner. Hermione had known that Charlie wanted to do this as she had seen the rings he had commissioned for them both, yet he had not taken the vocal step of admitting his feelings and asking his lover to bind with him. As a result of the push to get Charlie to ask his lover for commitment, the Christmas Day binding had come about when Viktor had said yes to his lover's request.

Bill and Fleur, along with the twins, were the only Weasleys at the Christmas Day ceremony. There was a positive message of congratulations from Arthur but it was safe to say the rest of the Weasleys had not accepted that Charlie was gay and that he was getting married to Viktor Krum. Yes, there would be children from this relationship, however, the mother would be a surrogate. Hermione thought it was particularly hypocritical of Molly, considering that her brother, Fabian, was apparently gay.

On the 27th of December the Christmas party flooed to the Krum family's Venetian Palace on the Grand Canal. The Six Nations Tournament was being held in the Gianquinto Sports Centre near the Arsenale over three days. The first day would consist of the Kata grading as tournaments were an opportunity for Dan gradings. The second and third day would be the individual competition followed by the team competition. Under the grading system, Hermione was technically a 4th Dan and this competition could enable her to move up a grading. If there had not been an initial minimum age limit on the Dan awards she would be significantly higher in her Dan rating.

As the teams were lining up on the first day of the competition, Hermione's old nemesis, Peter Slattery, brushed by her, causing her to fall heavily onto her right shoulder.

"That was deliberate, Slattery," shouted the Scottish team coach, Ewan McDuff. "Touch another one of my team again and I will make sure that you will never be able to do it again." There was a formal protest lodged but Hermione knew that there was nothing she could do officially. However, the next time she had an opportunity, she would pay him back.

After the first part of the round robin, Hermione was sitting in 2nd place with a score of 17. She had fought a total of 24 bouts. Not all the bouts had reached the 4 minute time limit before the "3 Bon-Shoubo" rule came into play. It was about halfway through the bouts when the voices cheering for her changed. Yes, there were Grandpère, Tonks, Remus, Viktor and his parents, the four Weasleys, Professor McGonagall and someone else.

"Come on, Kitten, stop being a Know-It-All who is over thinking. Remember, clear the mind and focus," shouted Severus. He had come for the day, leaving Albus under the care of his mother and bossy great grandmother.

The top 16 male and female competitors were selected based on their point scores and then the match draw was made for the place bouts. Hermione easily made the list for the tournament bouts with her round robin score. Once the draw was complete, Hermione found that she had a relative easy progression to a successful semi-final bout.

She was watching the other semi-final between an Italian girl and the current UK number 1 ranked woman, Deborah Price, from the designated resting place for competitors when she had her second run in with Slattery for the day.
"What makes you think you can even last 4 minutes against Deborah, little girl?" he drawled at her. In Hermione's round robin bout with the woman she had quickly lost against Price's rapid head strike movement. Watching Price, Hermione was learning her weaknesses and identifying where she could attack.

When Hermione did not respond to his verbal comment, Slattery stepped into the marked player waiting area, knocking a couple of tournament group competitors' Shinai and Men over to stand directly in front of her. "You can forget about making the World Cup team because I am the selector and you will never get the nod," he spluttered at her in his rage, not realizing he just broken a number of major Kendo etiquette and respect rules.

After the earlier incident the tournament officials were closely watching the actions of the English coach. When he stepped into the marked player waiting area he had broken the rules for coaches along with personal etiquette rules, so when Price won her bout against the Italian girl, the tournament director announced over the tannoy system that the English coach was banned from the floor. Slattery immediately started to complain loudly that they could not take this action when a senior official arrived with a security team to physically remove him from the floor. With great indignation and resentment, Slattery was escorted off the floor.

Sitting in the stands, Jeff Coe had observed the situation and decided to investigate how far the international association, which was the sport's ruling body, was willing to censure the man. Looking round in his seating section, Jeff observed that Mr Kawasaki had seen the incident.

"Hello, Sir," Jeff opened.

"Hello, Mr Coe. How may I help you?" replied the steel haired official. So we have a government official who finally wants to do something about Slattery, thought the Japanese official.

"Would it be possible to organise an appointment to discuss a serious issue? As you know, I am my country's designated department official for the sport but I do not have the intimate knowledge or contacts within the sport. I have some concerns and seek advice. I would like to bring a Kendoka with me to help explain the issue that is troubling me," advised Jeff. If I take Monsieur D'Angers, we can explain both how badly he has treated Hermione in the past, and also about the whispers that he had heard about this coach's behaviour, pondered Jeff Coe.

"I would believe that this is an urgent issue, correct? Come to my hotel this evening at 6pm. I will meet you in the lobby bar," guided Kawasaki. Yes, the UK official needs guidance about how to get rid of the terrible coach. Finally we can address this issue, he surmised.

"Thank you for your time and consideration," said Jeff Coe before he moved through the stands to speak to Hermione's grandfather. It was time to do something about the terrible coach and improve the development of the sport in the UK.

oOoOo

For the required rest break between rounds Hermione stayed where she was when Slattery had taunted her. She was meditating. Price was further down the floor line and kept looking at the girl who Slattery had lost his composure over. It was time and both Kendoka donned their Men and picked up their Shinai before proceeding to their designated corners of the fighting area. With a bow to officials and then with a bow to each other, the two competitors took a defensive stance to start the Shiai (match bout).

The main referee called go, with the commanding hand signal, which started the joust for the title. It was an evenly matched point score between the two competitors and neither had achieved 3 Bon-
Shoubo within the bout time limit. The main referee stopped the Shiai and ordered the competitors to their respective corners where they both sat in a formal manner.

The final was now going to go into a sudden death face off. After the 5 minute rest, the timekeeper called time and both competitors entered the marked fighting area again, where they repeated the formal bows. The main referee again initiated the bout with the commanding hand signal. Both Kendoka were looking for the opportunity to make the decisive strike, the Shinai slid and rattled against each other as they each tested the other, looking for the opening to strike. Suddenly, like lightning, Price started an attack, which Hermione rebuffed. The two of them danced around the bout floor, inside the boundary lines.

Price started a second attack, which Hermione rebuffed and then there was the opening she was looking for when Hermione attacked with a successful head strike. The referees agreed that she had made the point and Hermione was now not only the European individual women's champion but also the Six Nations individual women's champion.

With a final bow to their competitor and to the officials, both competitors returned to the players' area to remove their Men and the rest of their body armour. Hermione had started to pack her equipment away into her travelling bag when Price came across to her and looked down on her seated form.

"You were lucky this time, girl. You won't be so fortunate at the Nationals," she spat at the younger woman.

Hermione continued to ignore the venom and finished packing away her equipment before taking it over to the coach's area where Ewan McDuff loudly congratulated her. One of the tournament officials had seen the unsportsmanlike behaviour of Deborah Price and reported the incident to the main floor referee.

Who would have thought that the incidents caused on this day by the two English team members against the young Scottish representative would lead to the end of two highly successful careers and the UK Kendo Association looking for a new head coach?

The second day of the Shiai competition went well for the Scottish team as they retained their title. As Minerva McGonagall was leaving the stands with her friends after the award ceremony she heard someone calling her name.

"Minnie McGonagall, Minnie McGonagall," said the feminine voice.

Turning round Professor McGonagall found that a petite Japanese woman with a familiar twinkle in her eye was calling her. "Uchi! I haven't seen you in years. What are you doing here in Venice? Why didn't you let me know you were coming to Europe?"

"I did not know I was coming. It was just a spur of the moment trip. I thought I would like to come to Venice for the Christmas and New Year period, and remember how much Jiro loved this place," she told her friend.

"What are you doing for dinner tonight?" Minerva asked.

"I was just going to find somewhere near the hotel," replied Uchiha.

"Would you consider joining my friends and me at a celebratory dinner? One of my students has had a very successful tournament. There will be a lot of people there so another person is no trouble at all. We're going to a restaurant in the Ca' d'Oro. Say yes, it'll be fun," she said encouragingly. It had been 20 years since Jiro had died and it seemed her friend still mourned her husband.
Uchi and Minerva met several times over the next couple of days, catching up and gossiping about many topics from their past and the current situation in the magical world. Uchi was waiting in the Café Florian for Minerva and her young student to arrive. Apparently the two ladies had spent the morning in the Sansovino Library, which was just around the corner.

As soon as Uchiha saw her tall, willowy friend coming across the Plazza San Marco, she ordered three hot chocolates, as the wind was bitterly cold. It was due to the cold that Uchi had chosen to sit in one of the salons rather than at a table out in the Plazza. Today was the day she would get to have an intimate discussion with Miss Hermione Granger to get to know her better and to gauge the young witch. From what she had seen of the girl at the tournament party and from the discussions she had had with Minerva, the girl was most suitable for the Miai process but it was now a question of would she bite if the line was dangled?
An Invitation

Dear Hermione,

Happy New Year and congratulations on your win in Venice. A family friend of ours saw your bouts and she has not stopped praising how magnificent your sudden death point bout was to watch. Hiroto has been most jealous that he was not there to see this final in person. He is waiting to see if they play your bout in the highlights of the competition on the Kendo Channel this week.

Thank you for your Christmas gifts. You know, child, you are just like your Mother. Hiroto is most appreciative of the single malt whisky, which makes me wonder who helped you to buy it, because according to my memory of the UK you have to be 18 years old to buy liquor. Well, whomever you had to help you with this purchase, Hiroto has sworn his undying appreciation of their knowledge. I was not aware of Kilchoman and it looks like I will have to find a supplier for this tipple for him as it has become a firm favourite. I loved the care package basket that you made up for me. You must have remembered what your Mother brought with her on her last trip. I have hidden the tea biscuits. They're mine, all mine you hear! I am not sharing them with my boys or I will not even get one.

We have not seen or heard from your parents yet so I would not think they are in Japan. Your Mother is more likely to drop by for the Cherry Blossoms, which we are expecting in late March this year. We were wondering if you could come and visit during your school Easter Holidays. Maybe your parents will turn up. Also Hiroto was wondering if you would like to compete in the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament.

Think about visiting us at Easter. Even if you don't compete it would be lovely to see you and I could make sure you don't study too much, like your Mother used to.

Regards,

Melina

Dear Hermione-chan,

Happy New Year and best wishes for the coming year. I really like the Scotch whisky you sent for Christmas and I think it has become my new favourite. Thank you also for the signed photos from Venice. Some of them are so Kawaii. I have put a couple up in our dojo tearoom along with a translation of your match report. Congratulations on your win. So how does that place you in the overall world rankings now?

The latest Kendo World is reporting that you ran into some trouble with that horrible coach who led the UK team in Paris. It appears that he and the female competitor Price are facing investigation. I believe it is karmic retribution for Slattery after the Paris World Championships.

A friend of mine organises the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament and we were talking about my close attention to your career on a recent night out after a Kata session at my dojo. He had seen my section of the notice board with your photos. I mentioned that I had met you and that Melina was a university friend of your parents. Since the Tournament is being held on the Easter weekend, I was wondering if you would consider entering as a trial run for the World Cup in July.

The tournament is held at Tokushima Castle and my friend Madam Namiko has a family Ryokan that is not far from the Castle but very peaceful, so accommodation can be sorted out very quickly.
and easily. The Ryokan is called the Hayashi Bekkan and you can look it up on the Internet. If you have any friends that want to come out to the tournament as visitors or competitors, please let me know and I will help organise accommodation for them as well.

Please let me know if you are interested. I have included the brochures and leaflets for you to scrutinise. I have also put an entry form in for you along with one where I have translated the questions and what type of answers they are looking for.

Regards,

Hiroto

Dear Mr Coe,

I was wondering if you could help me to apply for UK Sport Funding. I want to take a team from my dojo to an open tournament in Japan at Easter. Talking to Grandfather, it would be good to help provide seasoning for the World Cup. As you know, I have taken a year off school to focus on my training so I can have a fair effort to make the UK World Cup team.

Hope to see you in Edinburgh this weekend at the Scottish Championships.

Regards and many thanks for all your assistance.

Hermione J Granger

Dear Hermione,

I have identified two UK funding pots that you can apply for funding from for your proposed trip to Japan. One is that you use the funding that you should have received since September via the UK Sport World Class pathway, fill in the form details and get it back as soon as possible and I will see if we can get a back payment to cover from September.

The second funding option is from the National Lottery Fund. I have included the forms and literature for you. We will need to get that one in very quickly as the last 6 weeks of the financial year tends to be a little dry in the bucket.

I have been in contact with Mr Kawasaki from the All Japan Kendo Federation and of course you would be familiar with him as the current president of the Kendo International Federation. He has provided advice that there is funding that you could apply for on the behalf of your dojo if you have a number of senior gradings who are competing along with a group of up and coming Kendoka. There is also another fund for university, police and military groups.

On the paperwork we have for you currently at the Ministry of Sports and Recreation we have you listed as attached to the Phoenix Dojo in London and an associate of the University of Glasgow Dojo.

I will see you at the Scottish Championships in Edinburgh next weekend so I can talk through the Japanese funding options with you but remember for the UK funding I need those forms as soon as possible so turn them round to me in the next post.

Regards,
Jeff Coe
Department of Sports and Recreation.

Dear Kingsley,

How do you feel about taking an elite team of Kendoka who are mostly all Aurors to a tournament in Japan on the Easter weekend? Let me know as soon as possible, as I am looking into funding options. I have been invited to compete and as it is an open tournament, we could take a team.

See you at Edinburgh on the weekend at some stage hopefully.

Hermione

Hermione's visits to the Sansovino Library had been highly informative for a number of projects that she was collaborating on with Potion Master Severus Snape. The first week of January Severus spent pouring over her notes and photographic reprinted copies of pages that had the most important details. Hermione had used a mobile phone in the Library to copy pages on the sly to get the most detailed pages she could. It seemed that there were a number of options illuminated from this research trip for the destruction potion for Nagini as well as the on-going werewolf cure project.

As a result of the negotiation between Jeff Coe, Hermione, her grandfather and Kingsley Shacklebolt, the Phoenix Dojo was now listed with the UK Department of Sports and Recreation as a private Police Member Association dojo. This listing then allowed for Hermione to apply for funding from the All Japan Kendo Association to have a Police Association team visit on a two week tour including competing at the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament. Mr Kawasaki was very quick to approve funding and suddenly the Phoenix Dojo had a team of 8 Kendoka coming out to visit. The nominated team included Hermione, her grandfather, Kingsley, Tonks and four other Aurors.

Hermione had a very good tournament at Edinburgh where she came out as the leading ranked Scottish woman. Minerva McGonagall was so pleased about the result that not even the Carrows could wipe the grin off her face during dinner at the High Table when she returned to the Castle. When she got a chance she shared this titbit with Severus and it seemed to cheer him up as well.

Albus Dumbledore was recovering well under the supervision of Anastasia Eileen Athenaou Prince Snape on the island of Kalymnos. The powerful witch had badgered him and her grandmother into taking their potions, along with following the physical exercise plan that had been designed to bring them back into full health.

It would not be long until the Order of the Phoenix, with the assistance of Harry Potter, would challenge and defeat the Dark Lord. Severus Snape knew the day of reckoning for Voldemort was coming and all he had to do before then was survive the madman, find a solution for Nagini and make sure he had done all he could to undermine the machinations of the Carrows in Hogwarts, since the student population needed protection from the sadistic siblings. Hopefully the post-war Ministry would be willing to recognise his work as a spy for the Order. If he could, Severus Snape would like to avoid an extended stay in Azkaban prison.
By the start of March, Hermione and many of the Order of the Phoenix were all desperately looking forward to a couple of days off from the constant strain of the running skirmishes between the forces of the Light and Dark. It appeared that they had constantly been on the move in action against Voldemort and his Death Eaters since Christmas.

With the support of Bill Weasley, the Golden Trio had retrieved some of the Founders' objects that the boys had located on their hunt. The four of them, using the Marauders' Map and intelligence from Acting Headmaster Snape, had snuck into the school. In the Room of Requirement the trio each destroyed a horcrux using the Gryffindor sword. There was still one horcrux besides the snake to find. Bill Weasley on his next curse breaking trip to Egypt was going to stop by to visit Albus Dumbledore on Kalymnos to see if he had any more ideas about the potential location of the missing horcrux.

The first two weeks of March were quiet and it appeared that there was a lull in the fighting. The Phoenix Dojo team members were all looking forward to the last two weeks of the month as it would be a great opportunity, along with a welcome break or distraction from the continuing war.

Suddenly all the dojo team members were all at Grimmauld Place and it was the night before their flights to Kyoto. Professor McGonagall and rest of the trio were also present visiting Headquarters to see off the team members.

"I don't see why you can't use an international portkey," stated Ron.

"Because, Ron, it would be like painting a target on my back saying, 'Look, here is Harry Potter's mudblood.' Have you forgotten that he currently controls the Ministry and even your Dad doesn't go into work?" snapped Hermione.

"Ooh, it's that time of the month, is it?" suggested the redheaded boy, with his hands up in a defensive posture.

"If it was, mate, you would be dead," snorted Harry. "Ron, there is this thing called tact and I suggest you learn some before you die at the hands of the fairer sex. Even Ginny would have hexed you for that statement."

"What it is, Ronald Bilius Weasley? Is it that I am going away for a tournament to a far-off country? Yet I have all this work here that is not finished. Professor Snape is doing a trial of the cure for Remus next week on the night of the full moon and I won't be here," she said ending with a big sigh after snapping at him. Hermione was tired, frustrated and mentally frazzled by the constant pressure of being an active Order member, along with the on-going pressure of being one of the key organisers for the dojo trip. She missed her parents and she was a little disheartened that they could not seem to organise a meet up with her in Japan since they were in Thailand at the moment.

"Hermione, you need to go on this trip. You're tired and this will be a welcome break for you. We'll figure it out. We just need you to go and have a change of perspective. The light bulb will turn on in the middle of the night, you'll see," advised Harry, trying to calm his friend while providing her with the support and recognition she deserved for all the hard work she did as one of the Order's boffins. Harry understood that there was probably more to his friend's state besides the stress of her current role, the sacrifices of her education and family along with her international sporting dreams. Harry knew she was lonely but like himself she was committed to seeing the end of the war before getting into a relationship, as she had done the sums, just like he had done, in order to work out that anyone
associated with them would lead to a price on their loved one's head. No, the risk was too high, so until the war was over and Voldemort defeated that tension would not be resolved.

"Witches should not be gallivanting off or doing strange fighting, according to Mum," grumbled Ron.

"Get out of my lab and stay out," screamed the extremely stressed witch.

Ron would never learn and simply could not see that the ideas of Molly Weasley were contradictory, as well as very dated. Molly could fire hexes and Tonks could be an Auror but Hermione was unladylike by being a Kendoka and fighting with a stick. Not only did this witch fight with magical means Hermione could fight without a wand. The young woman had received additional training from Professor Snape and the Aurors who frequently stayed at Headquarters to improve her defensive spell work. Hermione agreed with Severus that if someone was shooting Unforgivables at her she was not just going to stun. She was going to put her enemy down and they were not going to come back to bite her or her friends.

"Hermione, don't worry about that prat. At least you don't have to marry him! He's definitely not good enough for you, even if Molly thinks it would be a lovely idea. Be you and be true to who you are," advised Harry. "Don't change because, I will always love you as my best friend. Good luck and enjoy the time in Japan. When this war is over you can take me for a visit and show me the sights."

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After a last check of the documents and the group travel plans, the Phoenix Dojo representative team left Grimmauld Place with a last flurry of goodbyes and well wishes from their friends, family and colleagues. The group met with Jeff Coe at Heathrow who recognised their distinctive logo on the back of a tall, dark skinned man. Monsieur D'Angers, who had arranged for a team uniform along with the appropriate logoed accessories, proudly handed Jeff a wrapped gift. Upon opening the parcel, Jeff found that he had been given membership to the dojo and was recognised as a team management official according to his embroidered polo shirt. There were laughs and grins as he promptly changed his polo shirt in the KLM passenger queue, not caring about showing off his six pack to the rest of the queue. Even though he was no longer a competitive gymnast, he still had the wonderful musculature.

"Right, since you lot made me management – hand over your passports and tickets and let's make sure you have all the equipment bags and personal bags labelled correctly," he stated while handing out luggage tags to the various team members. Seeing the group together in the line, the KLM Check-in Supervisor had walked out into the concourse area just in time to observe the six pack display and directed them across to the business class check-in desk.

"So what do we have here?" asked the Supervisor.

"We're a Police Association Kendo team, going to Japan to compete. I'm the Department of Sports and Recreation representative who is travelling as a UK Government official accompanying the team. We have eight large equipment bags. The Shinai have all been packed into the two boxes and we will need them to be labelled with a fragile label. We have a total of ten personal luggage bags. Everything is labelled and marked as the Phoenix Dojo, as well as being individually named. I'm holding nine British passports and nine tickets," stated Jeff as he stepped forward, to be the official point of contact for the team.

"Do you know how rare it is for me to see a paper ticket anymore?" advised the Supervisor, as he checked through the passenger names and ticket destinations. The Check-in Operator and Supervisor quickly barcode labelled the luggage items before sending them through to be loaded. The luggage
was all given priority and group labels to assist and hopefully ensure that the luggage was checked through to the final destination, as of course they had the short hop to Amsterdam and then a couple of hours' wait before the overnight flight to Osaka. Boarding passes were issued along with baggage check-in claim tickets. The Supervisor also gave the team complimentary passes so they could wait in the KLM Business Passenger Lounge.

The Supervisor arranged for a Customer Service representative to come down to the business class check-in desk to collect the group and escort them to the waiting lounge, to make sure that they were boarded together. When checking in the group, the KLM Supervisor had upgraded them for the first leg to business class, as these seats were available. Looking at the boarding passes and the seat allocations, Jeff handed tickets and passports back to each member of the team and told them not to expect this luxury all the time, while they were herded towards the Business Class Lounge to wait for the boarding call announcement after clearing the security checks that would start the long journey to Japan.

After about 40 minutes the boarding call was made and the KLM Customer Service representative, who had shown them into the lounge after guiding them through the security processes, collected them to herd the group through the departure gate and onto their flight. After a short hop to Amsterdam, the group had a three-hour wait in transit before the next flight to Osaka. Following the overnight flight from Amsterdam, the group arrived bright and early at Osaka Kansai, where Melina and Hiroto Kitaguchi met them. For most of the group it was a matching of names to faces, while for others like Monsieur D'Angers, Jeff Coe and Hermione it was a renewal of their friendships.

"We have arranged for a coach so if we go out this exit we will be able to get on our way to Tokushima," advised Melina.

After a three and half hour journey, an extremely tired group of guests entered the Hayashi Bekkan in Tokushima, where a familiar looking woman who had similar hair to their youngest team member greeted them in the large entrance lobby area. Hermione let out a scream of joy as she dropped her bags to race to hug her mother, Hélène Granger.

"Surprise, Poppet. Your Papa is here as well and is currently out scoping bookshops for you," advised the mother as she enjoyed her daughter's tight embrace.

Grandpère D'Angers moved Hermione's bags from the main walking pathway before coming over to kiss his daughter on the forehead. "It was a good plan, oui?" he whispered with a sardonic smile, watching her hugging his granddaughter like grim death.

The Ryokan owner, Madam Namiko, had quickly organised her guests into their rooms where they were each presented with Yukata to wear. Due to the long journey that the group had made, the owner had prepared their rooms by putting out the bedding for them and after a quick tour of the Ryokan facilities, she strongly encouraged everyone from the Phoenix Dojo to rest and relax. The Ryokan had hot spring style, gender segregated, bathing areas, which helped to get the aches and pains out of the travellers before they wearily retired to their rooms to rest.

Madam Namiko disturbed her guests at 2pm to make sure they were able to sleep in the evening. She provided a light finger luncheon for them round a lobby seating area and suggested (cough cough, ordered, cough cough) that they stretch their legs by going for a walk afterwards through the city centre and over to the castle so they could get their bearings for the competition.

During the afternoon, other guests who were in Tokushima for the Kendo tournament arrived and it was in the lobby entrance lounge that old friends and new acquaintances were made. It turned out that all 20 rooms of the Ryokan had Kendo associated guests so the dinner arrangements were easily organised, as all had checked in before Madam Namoi’s cut off time of 5:30pm. Since she had a firm
set of numbers for her chefs, Madam Namiko gave directions and the various maids reminded all the guests that they were to be seated accordingly in the communal dining area promptly at 7:30pm. There were some additional numbers that had booked for the Kaiseki menu, who would also join the Ryokan guests for this dining experience. The guesthouse's maids had decorated the dining room with cherry blossom to reflect the current season of spring.

It was interesting for Hermione to watch that most of the pureblood wizards and witches of her group struggled with Japanese chopsticks and the 15 courses of regional seasonal food. Tonks for all her clumsiness in everyday life soon got a handle on using chopsticks and Kingsley was highly proficient, although both of them had been at the birthday party at the sushi restaurant in Berlin. There was obviously a story or two there but Hermione hoped to get that out of the quiet, intense man at a later date. There was quite a bit of culture shock setting in but with the help of Sake, their Japanese friends and extended family, along with the helpful Ryokan maids, all were eventually able to manage the consumption of their evening meal. Some dinner guests were not graceful at times but tips and tricks were given for tackling the different textures and there was much hilarity over some dinner table accidents.

While the last course had been cleared from the communal dining room Madam Namiko encouraged her guests to join her for an after dinner drink in the lobby seating area to plan and coordinate the next day while all the rooms were being prepared for the evening. Even though the bedding had been out in the morning the futons had been cleared away from the Phoenix team members' rooms when they were awoken in the afternoon, to discourage additional naps.

Hiroto's local friend, Goro Takahashi, who was organizing the tournament stopped by to ensure that all the competitors had everything they needed to enjoy their stay during the tournament and that there were no problems that Madam Namiko needed assistance in dealing with. As part of the funding support for the tour group the Phoenix Dojo was required to do some promotional visits, so Jeff Coe reviewed the planned itinerary for the next couple of days with Goro, Hiroto, Phillip Granger and Grandpère D'Angers.

After organizing the appropriate wakeup call time with Madam Namiko and advising that the Phoenix Dojo contingent would be eating breakfast in the communal dining room, the lovely Ryokan owner said good evening before excusing herself and closing up the reception desk. Not long after Madam Namiko's departure, Hélène Granger ordered the Phoenix team members off to their rooms and into their beds, as many stifled yawns had been observed. The long travelling journey had definitely caught up with the team. All were asleep in their futons by 10pm.
Early the next morning Hermione had slipped out of her shared room with Tonks and was reading in the internal garden of the city Ryokan. It was amazing that on such a busy street it was so quiet and peaceful in the Ryokan garden. Hélène came out to join her daughter to have a quiet chat about the Statute of Secrecy and how her friend Melina was a witch.

It had been an interesting revelation by Melina and Hiroto that they knew Hermione was a witch, when Hélène and Phillip dropped in to visit Melina and Hiroto in Kyoto a couple of weeks before the team's arrival. Now Hélène was going to quietly inform her daughter that her friends were magical as well.

"Hélène and Phillip, you have been hiding important information about Hermione from us for quite a while," chided Melina when she advised that they needed to have a frank discussion. Suddenly Hiroto took out his wand and laid it on the table. Melina followed a similar action and produced her wand from the kimono she was wearing.

"Why did you never tell me you were a witch?" challenged Hélène.

"It was because of the politics and the war that was going on at the time in the wizarding world. Additionally, I was at university like yourselves getting my degree so I could manage to live in both worlds, no matter what was happening. I, like many of my family, was hiding from the pureblood idiots who were calling many members of my family who wanted to remain neutral, 'blood traitors,' along with having idiots like my foolish cousin who were caught in the thick of the Dark Lord's Army," explained Melina.

"So where do we stand, Melina and Hiroto? You have obviously guessed that our own daughter, to protect her and us from the current unrest, has exiled us from the UK. You should know that she is the best friend of Harry Potter, so you could say the Grangers and the D'Angers, even though we may be predominately muggle, are firmly for better equality in the magical community and strong supporters of our daughter and her alliance with the Light," asserted Phillip, while closely regarding their university friend to observe if it was necessary to flee.

"Don't worry, Phillip. Melina and I are strongly anti pureblood elitist politics and that is why in her family there was such a great discord. Her cousin, Severus Snape, who is acting as Hogwarts Headmaster, was a Death Eater during the last war. We were wanting to warn you that we think it was time to get her out of England and the school, as it appears that Magical Britain is going back down the dark path to civil war again," advised Hiroto.

"Don't worry, Melina. Hermione is not officially in school this year due to the circumstances and she will be taking her NEWT exams through alternative methods. She is currently in hiding in England and undertaking a private study programme that will advance her post secondary magical education. She is also taking her A Levels by distance education. We have encouraged her to keep a foot in the mundane education system, as she could support her magical education with later university study," explained Hélène about her complex and highly intelligent daughter.

"So, Aunt Anastasia. and your Great Grandmother are also witches?" inquired Phillip, wanting to get a suspicion confirmed from their last visit. He had observed a couple of occasions that he believed to be wandless magic by the old lady.
"Yes, both are witches. Aunt Anastasia is the current Head of House as YiaYia has retired and passed the duty down to her. My family is matriarchal so cousin Severus is in trouble for a number of reasons:

"One, he has not been a good Greek boy and listened to his mother.

"Two, he has not been a good Greek boy and got married and given the family children.

"Three, he has been a bad pureblood wizard and has not followed his Head of House, by getting himself involved with the Death Eaters during the last war.

"Four, he has not been a good Greek boy and has not listened to his mother yet again alliance-wise; and

"Five, he still does not seem to be making her happy by even appearing to be looking for a wife.

"Basically he is nothing but trouble for Aunt Anastasia until he gets a wife and children. We have a lack of men in the family at the moment due to the last war, and so the pressure is on him to produce a powerful heir. Cousin Severus is an extremely powerful wizard but he has not married so if he is not careful Aunt Anastasia will arrange a contract, like she has been threatening to do," explained Melina.

"Basically, he is not doing his duty and the family are worried that he will embarrass or bring trouble to the family yet again. Melina's YiaYia forgave him but many are not sure of his current political alliances. Arranged marriages here in Japan are more liberal for the bride and groom than in Europe," counselled Hiroto.

"Hermione believes that that a final confrontation between Harry Potter and Voldemort will occur within the next six to 12 months. That was why she encouraged us to travel, as she wanted us away and safe from the troubles. Apparently there is a battle plan that is leading towards a final confrontation and according to her old Headmaster, Professor Dumbledore, the final battle will be between Harry and this Dark Lord. Basically, one has to kill the other or this civil war won't be over," responded Hélène, wanting to bring some comfort to her friend, Melina, who was obviously worried about the continuation of a magical war and her extended family in Europe.

"From my understanding of Hermione's recent emails, she is working supporting the war effort and the intelligence indicates that there will be a confrontation sooner rather than later," stated Phillip, explaining the discussions they had had with their brilliant daughter, Hélène's father and the Aurors who had been training at the D'Angers family estate over the last couple of years.

"Thank you for that information as it will make Aunt Anastasia calmer, since she will only have to wait another couple of years for the precious grandchildren," a relieved Melina advised her university friends before encouraging everyone to continue to enjoy the dinner she had prepared.

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"So, Hiroto, did you and Melina have an arranged marriage?" inquired Phillip later that night when the men had moved into Hiroto's study for a quiet Scotch.

"Yes, you know that, but it was not like the European arranged marriages. Do you remember Madam Uchiha Sakura, the Nakōdo who you met the other year?" reminded Hiroto after taking a sip of the fine single malt whisky Hermione had sent him as part of their Christmas parcel.

"Yes, she was a very interesting lady and I believe Hermione met her in Venice last Christmas," advised Phillip, remembering his daughter's commentary on this formidable little Japanese lady as he
regarded this Japanese wizard. The differences that he had previously put down to culture during the last visit could now clearly be explained as magic.

"Well, Madam Sakura is a magical Nakōdo or matchmaker, so she organises not only mundane marriage introductions, she also uses magical means to organise match meetings for magical individuals. She is always looking for suitable candidates for people who she has on the books. My family has been using her family's services for generations. For example, she has profiles on the boys and if she finds some interesting matches for them she will contact us and then we will start to negotiate the potential match opportunities. She saw Melina in that London museum and read her aura that day and thought she may have some potential for me. She arranged for a Miai to occur between us and here we are now, married."

Reaching over Hiroto retrieved Phillip's glass and topped it up while continuing on the lecture part of the intense manly discussion. "Under the guidance of the matchmaker, the parents will meet and review the suitability of the other family and then if there is a potential match, the Nakōdo will negotiate a Miai process on the behalf of both parties. At all times during this entire process, the views and consideration of the potential bride and groom are reflected in the actions of the matchmaker."

Settling back into his comfortable study chair, Hiroto went on with a further explanation of traditional Japanese arranged marriage customs. "The Miai, or Omiai, is the presentation of unattached individuals, who are introduced to each other to consider the possibility of marriage. Basically, the matchmaker negotiates and finds people who want a marriage and the Miai is a meeting opportunity with more serious considerations for the future. Some of the hard work has already been done by the families and by the matchmaker so when the couple meets they are going to see if they could have a relationship."

"Historically the whole process reflected alliances and family goals but today it is more equitable. What is especially important in the magical Miai is that the magic of the individuals has to be potentially compatible. The magical Nakōdo will do a number of assessments and readings of all the individuals to ensure that there is a good potential match of the magicks. With the European contract betrothal and marriage traditions, often this important consideration was not undertaken and it was more of a business transaction between the two families," informed Hiroto.

"So it's basically an introduction service for a date but some of the hard work of date screening has already been done by a professional and the family," summarised Phillip as he swirled the last of his scotch in the glass before looking up to pierce Hiroto with an intense glare. "Are you considering Hermione for your sons?"

While Phillip may not have a magical ability that registered in Britain, he definitely had elemental power and was probably a prime source of Hermione's magical strength, thought Hiroto as he observed the aura flashes the man was discharging before carefully explaining his position.

"No, Hermione-chan, is too powerful for the boys. They are not magically compatible but I suspect there are quite a few families who would be interested in her. I would not be surprised to hear that Melina's family is seriously considering her for Severus. They have not said anything to me but I know YiaYia spoke to Madam Sakura professionally. Additionally, I believe she is the wrong gender for my youngest. Yes, in the Asian magical community we do not discriminate against same sex relationships, unlike the mundane community," Hiroto gently advised the quiet man.

"But he is almost 20 years her senior," spluttered Phillip when it had sunk in that Melina's formidable aunt and great grandmother were seriously interested in his precious Poppet to be the next strong matriarch for their family and the mother of the next generation of Kalymian magicals.
"It doesn't really matter in a magical match as we live longer lives, so it makes little difference when you are over 100 years if there is 20 years between you and your partner. I wouldn't be surprised if the reason why Severus has not found a wife is that there just hasn't been anyone who can intellectually challenge him and has compatible magic. He is definitely looking for a witch but I just think he knows he has to wait until after this war is over. Aunt Anastasia was told by YiaYia that she would have to wait for a couple of years for Severus," advised Hiroto.

The two men lapsed into silence to contemplate the topic and the single malt scotch. Phillip stood and placed his empty glass on the table before turning to look at Hiroto on his way out of the room.
"Don't say anything to Hélène yet. I will bring it up with her. Definitely don't mention Severus as a potential at all. She will need to get her head round the idea and while he is a Professor at Hogwarts and Hermione still needs to finish her secondary education, Hélène is going to have problems in reconciling the potential match. Don't forget that my girl will want a career and will not want to be a stay-at-home wife," he advised as before giving his evening salutation and taking himself off to their room.

Phillip did not have a peaceful night as he had many thoughts running through his mind about his daughter and the world and culture in which he felt like a complete alien.
The Phoenix Dojo team had been particularly successful at the various competition classifications that they had entered in at the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament. Additionally, their tour appearances helped the group to make professional and sporting links with other organisations. With disclosure of magic between the Grangers and the Kitaguchis, there was a group meeting between the senior Aurors on the team and their hosts about the rules and regulations of disclosing magic.

After almost 48 hours of intense secretive discussion around the initial days of the competition, Monsieur D'Angers stepped in and made an executive decision: Jeff Coe needed to be informed of magic and that the majority of the team members were magical.

Hermione's grandfather asked Jeff Coe to accompany him on a walk of the castle grounds with Tonks. It was during this walk that Grandpere D'Angers informed Jeff of the existence of magic. When Jeff looked doubtful an eyebrow was raised at Tonks and the metamorphmagus was required to demonstrate her ability to change, along with some simple wand work.

"Don't worry, Jeff, I am not magical myself but most of the team are, including my granddaughter, Hermione. We had to let you know because there are things going on in the UK magical community that could impact on the team and you need to know what it is that is going on. Additionally you have become part of the dojo family and family does not keep secrets from family," advised the older statesman.

"Jeff, we really are a Police Association dojo. We're just a magical policing association. A large percentage of the team members’ work as magical policemen and women. We are just called Aurors rather than Bobbies. Kingsley is my policing partner and we've been work partners for over four years. In the past, both Kings and I have been posted to the UK Prime Minister's office as part of the official liaison process between the two communities. There is currently a civil war going on in the magical community and it's spilling out into the non-magical world, whereby non-magicals are being targeted. As a result of this, there's a civil defence militia organization called the Order of the Phoenix that tries to protect the non-magical community," advised Tonks.

"So that's where the dojo name comes from," stated the man who had just had his worldview turned upside down in a snow globe and shaken vigorously.

"All members of the dojo are members of the Order and Hermione is currently working in the boffin branch for the Order, like Q in James Bond. She's at high risk because her family are not magical and because one of her best friends is a factional leader of the civil war. Even Grandfather here is a member of the Order. Thanks to Hermione and other muggleborn members we have more non-magical members in the Order than we had in the last war, nearly twenty years ago," explained Tonks who then went on in the next hour to explain the UK Statute of Secrecy.

Due to the disclosure of magic the team changed a number of scheduled accommodation bookings into magical premises for the rest of the tour. After the bustle of the tournament there was a scheduled 48 hours in the Shikoku Island region. It was here that Hermione pulled Melina aside during their stay at a thermal hot spring Ryokan where she had been enjoying the external thermal baths, to explain that when she came to Japan for the World Championship, she wanted to host a house party in a magical Ryokan that was easy to apparate to and from for the Kyoto competition. However, she would want it for a longer time than just the competition week, so that all could relax in privacy. Additionally, some of the guests in her house party would be very famous in the magical world so the opportunity to have privacy and peace to relax in a magical environment was necessary.
After the team left Japan to return to the UK, the Grangers and the Kitaguchis developed a list of potential Ryokans based on Hermione's comments during her stay in the various inns, and then went on a tour where they had a personal inspection of the accommodation facilities.

It took them the most of April but Hélène believed they had struck gold when they visited a rural Ryokan called Gyozanen, which was in Ohara in the Koyoto Prefecture. This 24 room guesthouse ticked all the boxes; since it was not too far to apparate and even the mundane journeys would not be that bad. There were 14 mundane rooms and 10 magical rooms, so they could book the whole place out and they would have enough rooms for all the planned guests.

The bus would take 70 minutes but they were not too far from a train station and if push came to shove, it would be possible to organise a minibus which would have them in the city centre within about 40 minutes. The guesthouse inn was near a number of shrines and the landscape was a mountainous resort area.

Hélène went a little mad with the digital camera but numerous photos were taken so that Hermione could confirm her mother's selection of an appropriate location for a magical house party.

For Hermione and the dojo team, the return to Britain brought them back to the front line of the on-going civil confrontation. Fortunately for Hermione, the time away had given her the rest and recuperation she needed to enable her to support the big push which was leading up to the final battle. In mid April Harry slinked into the Grimmauld Place brewing lab late one night to find his best friend slaving over a number of potions cauldrons.

Looking up to see who was coming down to visit her in the brewing dungeon, Hermione observed Harry's attempt to quietly slink into her workspace. "Have you come to tell me you've got all the horcruxes?" she asked as she added fluxweed to her current potion, before setting the next alarm.

"Yes," he stated quietly, with his intense green eyes boring into her. "Well, all those we can get to. We still have that ruddy snake to deal with but you and Severus are supposed to help us with that."

Then with a quiet embrace, her friend tried to express his thanks for all her help and her long, steadfast loyalty to him over the years. "Mimi, promise me that you will survive this war and live your life to the full. I know you're so lonely but please make sure you don't merely settle for what's expected. I want you to promise me you'll do what you want to make you happy, not what everyone expects."

Turning round in the arms of her best friend so that she could regard him rather than have him whispering in her ear over her shoulder, she squeezed him. "I promise I will live past the end of the war and that when everything is over I will live my life to the full, on the condition that you promise me you will do the same thing." Her friend was growing up and the war was shaping this piece of granite.

The two friends were communicating through an intense stare into each other's eyes when Professor Snape entered the lab, observing the pair. The tall man took in the scene and rapidly made some conclusions.

"So, Potter and Granger, you have admitted to each other your romantic entanglement. How sickly sweet. Did you have to do this my potion's lab? There is a whole building for you to go and play 'search for the broom closet' in," spat the bitter man.

"So, Professor, you have been very successful with your Wolfsbane research developments last
month. Remus seemed to be ecstatic about the potential implications," stated Harry trying to remain calm, as this man was important to the Order in more than one role – spy, potions developer, back room boffin and master strategist. The embrace had been released and now both friends regarded their former professor, with Harry’s arm loosely hanging over Hermione's shoulders.

"That wolf can wax lyrical but there is still much work to be done before we can confirm that there has been a positive step in the development of a better Wolfsbane. It is a pity you love birds have realised your attraction now, as I had a semi reasonable lab tech who is now going to lose any sense she had, due to a lack of oxygen from excessive snogging of you. Still, at least it's a better choice than that red-headed weasel."

"Actually we weren't snogging but we were promising each other that we would try to survive this war and would live our life how we wanted to afterwards. It's something you can promise us both to do as well," advised Harry while attempting to stare down the dark man.

"Fine, if I survive this war I promise to live my life," snapped the black suited man. "Just get this sentimentality out of my lab."

"Bye, Mimi, get some rest soon" Harry advised after placing a gentle kiss on Hermione's forehead. As he passed the Professor, Harry touched the man on his arm to get the Professor to look at him, whereupon he murmured, "she is my best friend but she will never be my lover."

What was the insufferable brat on about and why did he even think I needed to know that? wondered Severus, before he glanced back at his lab technician who had returned to cleaning up the work area round the cauldrons she was monitoring. Even though she looked exhausted she was stunningly beautiful with her graceful movements. Yes, Mother, after this war I will let you find me a wife if it stops me twitching over my students, thought the dour man.

"Professor, what can I help you with this evening?" Hermione asked again, trying to attract the attention of the man who seemed to be becoming even more intense as the pressure of his role in the current war ground whatever patience he had left to very, very fine dust particles.

"Run me through what you have brewing and then you need to go to bed. Hermione, you shouldn't be brewing in this condition," he advised her. It was a good thing had she turned away from him to collect her notes or he would have seen her frustration at his statement cross her face and the flash of anger in her eyes. She had managed to calm her features before turning to run him through the brewing, while updating the stock and process noticeboards on the door.

Just as she was standing in the doorway about to leave the lab, she turned her head to glance back at the brilliant man. "One last thing, Professor," she called over shoulder.

"Yes?" he inquired, wondering what else she could do to add to the current to do list. He did not have two Masters: he had two Masters and third taskmistress.

"Harry and I will hold you to that promise," she quietly informed him before leaving to head upstairs to her room.

I really didn't need this additional pressure, thought the troubled man. My life is complicated enough but now I have both the-Know-It-All and the Boy Wonder holding me to a promise. ARGH! Damn! Make that three Masters and one Mistress. You would think I would learn my lesson after almost 20 years.
Aftermath Of The Final Battle

It was in the first week of May that the final confrontation between Harry Potter and Tom Riddle occurred at last. While there were some losses for the side of the light, there were not as many as some had expected from this confrontation. It seemed that the boy rising from the dead as an unknown horcrux was what it took, both to reinvigorate the Light and to totally demoralise the Dark. The next couple of weeks were extremely busy for most of the Order of the Phoenix, as they were all heavily involved in the rebuilding of the UK magical community, despite being beyond tired.

One of Hermione's first post battle actions when she returned to 12 Grimmauld Place was to pull out a mobile phone that she had hidden, in order to call her parents and let them know the news. Yes, she would be coming out to the Worlds and, yes, the civil war was finally over.

"Good. Did you get the photos we sent?" asked Hélène.

"When can you leave Britain and come here?" asked Phillip.

"I don't know," advised the bone tired woman who was looking at the amount of dust and grime she had collected on her body and clothes, concluding that they really did not know how bad the situation had been. She had been on her feet for over 72 hours and all she wanted was a bath and a bed.

"You have three weeks to get to Melina's before I set your Grandfather onto you," advised Phillip in a tone that broached no disagreement.

With that, the Grangers, D'Angers and Kitaguchis, along with other comrades in both the magical and non-magical community, started to plot and plan for the July Championship.

For the month of July, the Gyozanen was booked out entirely by Mr Kawasaki for special guests of the Japanese Kendo Association. It seemed that there were many in the Japanese Kendo community who were also magical.

When the new UK coach, Michael Kendal, was finally appointed in the first week of May, Jeff Coe made sure that Hermione had been selected for the World Championships by dropping in on Kendal to ensure that the new coach knew the full back-story of what had happened in Venice. It was just typical UK practice to have late appointments before important international meets. Kendal had known some of the story when he was appointed but after catching up with his old friend, Jérôme Dupree, to verify all the facts, this led to some firm decisions being made about the existing pre-selections from Slattery: namely that they should all be binned as utter tripe.

Head Coach Kendal was required to visit the various elite dojos and finally managed to schedule a catch-up with the Scottish Kitten during her training at the University of Glasgow at the end of May or the start of June. It was there that he hoped to be able to see her in action and to speak with the young Kendoka. Her track record and the recent tournament win in Japan had meant that she was one of the firm selections for the UK World Championship Team.

Grandfather D'Angers demanded a meeting with the hierarchy of the Order of the Phoenix at Headquarters in the first week of June. It was here that the Order was advised that Hermione's family was putting its foot down and was demanding that she visit them in Japan. Phillip had booked a
flight for her on the 10th of June and, come hell or high water, she had better be on that flight or he would be back to the UK to drag her to Japan. There was concern about her travelling alone, however, they were informed that several muggles who knew about magic would be travelling with her, including her Grandparents and Mr Jeff Coe from the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Albus Dumbledore was tired of being bossed about by extended family members and tried to state that it was not an appropriate time, as there was no one magical who available could go with her. The Headmaster kept trying to assert his authority in the meeting and clearly did not realise that it was time for him to retire and let the next generation take over.

"Albus! Melina and Hiroto Kitaguchi are cousins of your dark master spy, Severus Snape, so there is no problem about wands," exclaimed Minerva McGonagall who was thoroughly disappointed in her old friend.

From the quiet corner in the shadow where the Chosen One had been sitting and quietly observing the meeting, came a voice in a tone that even Albus Dumbledore was not willing to counter. "Don't worry, I'm going with her. I really don't think that anyone would willingly go up against me or the Elder wand. Grandpère D'Angers, I need to see you to organise my travel arrangements, please," advised the young warrior as he stood up to lead the older man out of the kitchen and dining room, and into the library. This move cut off any further objections, as Harry had made it clear that there would be no further discussion on the matter by the Order.

After the departure of the two from the kitchen, the rest of the meeting turned into a shambles. Minnie McGonagall wanted to go and see her friend, Severus, to let him know about the power play that had occurred at the Order meeting. Oh yes, society was changing when a non-magical member of a mainly magical order could go up against a senior leader who held a wand!

Minnie was very keen to share the gossip with her teaching colleague and fellow Order member, Severus Snape, who was still imprisoned in Madam Pomfrey's Palace of Pain, better known as the Hogwarts Infirmary. There was no way this patient was going to be sent off to St Mungo's, when Madam Pomfrey could care for him in the Hogwarts teachers' ward.

As she left the rabble in the kitchen and dining room, Minerva knocked on the library door before putting her head in to ask if she could be of any assistance. She was shocked to see the goblin, Griphook, sitting on the sofa, obviously taking notes.

"Yes, Professor, you can help us. Please come in," advised Harry. Shortly after that, Minerva was surprised when her old friend, Uchi Sakura, arrived via portkey. There were definitely games afoot. "Uchi, what are you doing in Europe?" she asked, hoping to get a clue about what on earth was going on.

"I was just visiting friends in Greece, Italy and France when Hermione's grandfather contacted me and asked if I wanted to come and meet some interesting people here in London. Mr Griphook of the Goblin Nation gave me the portkey yesterday and here I am today," advised the petite witch with a twinkle of mischief in her eye.

"Hello Mr Potter, my name is Uchi Sakura. Thank you for inviting me here today for our discussion," said the small kimono-clad witch as she joined Griphook on the sofa.

"Thank you, Madam Sakura. We will have a chat about the matter after the first part of this meeting. So it looks like I am going on an overseas holiday next week to recharge my batteries and work out where I am going next with my life," advised Harry.

"Have you thought about returning to complete your education?" inquired the Professor.
"Do you really think that with a best friend like Hermione, I wouldn't complete my education? I just don't feel that either of us could ever sit in a Hogwarts classroom in the role of a student again. I think we'll have to go the non-conventional route to complete our educations," advised the young man who had never really had a childhood.

Many ideas and schemes were discussed in the next two hours and a solid plan was developed. At the end of the meeting, Minnie invited Uchi to come and visit a friend at Hogwarts and to have tea after she had finished her private meeting with the famous Harry Potter. Professor McGonagall had not been teaching for over fifty years without being able to realise when there was some further scheming going on and Uchi was a central player involved in whatever plots were being hatched.

Hopefully with the assistance of some fine single malt scotch, she would get more of a clue as to what was happening. Nothing bothered Minerva McGonagall more than when something was going on concerning one or more of her young lion cubs and she had no knowledge or understanding of the complex weavings in which they were involved.
Hermione Granger was at the University of Glasgow Kendo training session when Jeff Coe walked into the dojo with a couple of coaches: Jérôme Dupree and the new UK national coach Michael Kendal. The feel of the session instantly changed. After bowing to the dojo Master, Hermione stepped out of the main area to see why her friends were causing a disturbance at the session.

"Hiya, Hermione. Your Grandfather couldn't be here today as he was at a meeting at your other dojo earlier this afternoon," Jeff informed her. "So Jérôme is here in his stead and, of course, Coach Kendal came up to visit you to meet you as planned."

"Good evening, gentlemen, but it's been a long couple of weeks and I have a number of assignments I still have to finish tonight, including training, so please can we cut to the chase?" the tired witch asked the three men as she packed away her equipment.

"Mon Dieu, child, what have you been doing to yourself? Your Grandmère would have my guts for garters if she saw you like this. You need to rest, eat properly and, most importantly, sleep!" exclaimed Jérôme as he observed the condition of the girl, when she took off her Keikogi and Hakama to change into a tracksuit.

"Fortunately for the UK team, your Grandfather has arranged for you to go off and train for the next couple of weeks with him in Japan. Melina has organised training facilities and all of that. You are flying out next week, on the 10th of June," advised Jeff. "I'm coming out as well to stay with some old friends and will be visiting you. Coach Kendal what is your input in all of this?" Jeff asked the Team GB coach.

"Step one, you're going to get on a pair of scales for me and then we're going to set a weight gain goal. I don't know what you have been doing but you're working yourself into the ground. You're going to cut down on training for the next two weeks, during which time you are to rest and recover. At this stage, I am going to put an alternative on standby and if you're not match fit by the team camp in the third week of July, I will have to put her in your place," advised the Welshman.

Hermione was feeling threatened and overwhelmed that her dream was so close to being snatched away from her. The temperature of the room dropped and, understanding that it was her magic lashing out, Jeff looked round to see if there was anyone he recognised from the Phoenix Dojo nearby, as he realised that it would not be good if Hermione lost control of her magic and it unleashed itself. Just then, a young man who had a similar whippet-thin look as Hermione came into the gym and walked towards the group.

"Hi, Mimi. I just got a call from your Grandfather and I thought I should drop by to let you know that the dojo meeting has finished. It's been decided that I'll be going with you on your trip next week. You can show me the sights and correct my pronunciation," advised the young man. "Hello, you must be Mr Coe? Mr Dupree? Yes, Mimi's Grandfather will be meeting up with you tomorrow afternoon at the dojo, so please give him a call when you get to London. Coach Kendal, Monsieur D'Angers would like me to confirm Friday's meeting time to discuss her training schedule. So that is all the messages done." The young man with the intense green eyes had quickly calmed Hermione down and now seemed to be happy to collect her equipment bags.

"Both of you look like you need a good holiday," observed Jérôme.

"We look ten times better than we did at the end of April. This is an improvement. Thank goodness all those exams are over. We just have to finish up a couple of assignments and then we will have
freedom for a couple of months," advised the young man. "By the way, I'm Harry and for the trip I will be Mimi's dogsbody and bag carrier, since she is taking me with her. I have never been on holiday out of the country, so I am very excited."

"Oh Gods, Harry! We need to get you a passport!" exclaimed the witch.

"Done. I'm picking it up on Friday," advised the lad. "Now, stop thinking and let's go and find something to eat, because I'm starving. Once we hand in the last couple of assignments, we can just think Kendo, holiday and Japan!"

Over a high calorie meal in the Sports Centre Café the next couple of weeks' training was discussed and a general training plan was hashed out. Coach Kendal recorded Hermione's weight in the main gym area of the complex and was quite horrified to see what it was.

"Don't worry, she will be up to where you want her to be because I'll be looking after her for the next couple of weeks, along with everyone else in her family. Our Mimi always forgets to eat when she's doing a worry," advised the young man. "We'll see you again on Friday. In the meantime, let me take this princess home and put her to bed so she can catch up with some sleep. Jeff, our car is this way so we'll be off now," advised Harry as he led Hermione off towards the floo connection that was set up in the complex for magicals.

"Harry where are we going?" asked the slightly cranky witch, who was not used to being bossed around by her best friend, as that was normally her role in the relationship.

"Hogwarts, and we have some visits to make and potions to take. Then we're just going to spend some quiet time in the Room of Requirement with a couch, a fire, me, you and a good book," advised Harry.

With that, Harry got Hermione into Madam Pomfrey's clutches for a full medical and potions regime plan for both of them. They visited Professor Snape and commiserated with him about being an in-patient. In return, Severus commiserated with Potter about bossy women and when Poppy evicted them from her domain, they took themselves off to the Room of Requirement where the pair of them sat in front of a fire, in a comfortable lounge, reading.

When Hermione finally dozed off, Harry covered her with a blanket and sat thoughtfully looking at the fire. His short meeting with Madam Sakura had led to him asking many questions about where and how he was going to go on with his life. His infatuation with Ginny Weasley was over and the more he had seen of her post war, the more he had recognised that she was not what he needed. Harry was not even sure if he wanted to be an Auror anymore. He had been fighting dark wizards since he was 11 years old and he was going to be 17 in July. This trip with Mimi would be a wonderful time for him to think about what he truly wanted, rather than what everyone expected. Yes, he was going to live his life on his own terms and he was going to help his best friend, his soul sister, to live hers.
Minerva McGonagall had had great pleasure in informing Severus and Poppy about the showdown in the Order of the Phoenix meeting.

"Good, it will do the old buzzard some good," articulated Poppy when she had heard what had happened.

"Also, I hope to have a friend visit later and get some more gossip for you," advised Minnie. "Sev here is going to have to watch out as my old friend Uchi is in town and it appears she is taking an interest in members of the Order."

"Why would I have to look out? Is she a journalist? Didn't I meet her in Venice?" asked the confused patient.

"Yes, and you should be concerned if she is interested in you professionally." Minerva McGonagall decided to leave it there, pausing to see which of the two colleagues would crack first: her money was on Poppy.

"What is her profession, Min?" snapped the weary, dour man of Hogwarts, who quickly arose to her bait, as he was tired of the long, drawn out process.

"Damn, I thought you would have more patience," admonished Minerva. "If anyone had asked me to bet on who would fold first, it would have been Poppy. Uchi is a professional, traditional Japanese matchmaker, or is best described as a marriage broker."

"For Goddess' sake! Please, I beg of you, don't introduce her to my Mother or YiaYia or I will never have a moment's peace," asserted the Potions Master with dread in his eyes and a frantic search of the room to make sure the woman was not hiding there already.

"Sorry, Sev, it's too late. She met your Mother and Grandmother when they visited Melina in Japan," replied Min, before breaking out in laughter at the look of horror on his face.

"Don't worry; I plan to ply her with some scotch later on when she arrives and hopefully I can get some intelligence material to let me know what is going on. She's not just interested in you, she has her sights set on the Boy Wonder as well. If you're a good boy, I might share the information with you," Minerva teased the Potions Master, in their typical manner that remained friendly despite all their House rivalry.

"Ah, saved by the price of fame. What else do I have to be grateful for to the Boy Wonder for?" sniped the hen-pecked man just as Poppy's alarm went off that someone had entered the Infirmary. "Min, I'm not a boy, I'm a man," and Minerva laughed even more.

"γαμωτη πουτανα σου" growled the man, not liking being the source of the laughter. Sometimes the old Gryffindor lioness he was friends with could be a right pain.

Poppy quickly stepped out and she soon returned with a visitor and a poorly concealed grin on her face. By this point Minerva was laughing hysterically and when she glanced up, she just waved to her old friend as she tried to get herself under control.

"Hello, Professor Snape. My name is Uchiha Sakura and I met you in Venice with Min here. I thought I should visit you, since I met your Mother and Grandmother the other year when I was visiting your cousin, Melina. I was the matchmaker for her and her husband, Hiroto. Your Mother
and Grandmother were very well when I saw them on Kalymnos last week. I hope you will be out of
here before long, so you can go and visit them soon, as they are most anxious to see you," advised
the mini battleship who steamed on, full steam ahead.

Poppy and Minerva were watching the look of complete confusion that crossed the man's face,
quickly followed by horror, as he did not appear to know how to deal with this pocket sized
battleship.

"Just go with the flow," was Minerva's advice between gulps of air as she was still trying to recover
from his earlier comments. It was not long before Poppy stepped in to rescue her patient by advising
that visiting time was now over, as she wanted her patient to get some rest. Severus Snape had never
been more appreciative for the domineering mannerism of the school mediwitch as he was just then.

"Don't worry. Uchi. I have some nice malt whisky I've been saving for an appreciative audience, so
since you're here, let's crack open the bottle. We need to catch up," advised Min as she led her friend
away to her rooms with the occasional hiccup of laughter.

oOoOo

The two old friends caught up on the last six months and traded information between themselves for
various reasons. With the assistance of the fine, single malt scotch, Minnie confirmed that Uchi was
acting on behalf of Severus' family to find a match for him. She was also interested in several other
individuals who were also Order members. The formidable but kind woman just could not help
herself when she started to collect potential new Miai candidates, as she had been in the business for
over 70 years and new candidates and networking was like breathing – it was simply an automatic
function for her.

Minerva managed to get the details about how Severus' family wanted to find him a suitable wife and
how Uchi had been interested in Hermione Granger for a number of years already. By about the
sixth glass of scotch, the burr of the Scots woman was more pronounced and the language to her old
friend was direct.

"Dae ye realise 'at he has an attraction fur th' lassie an' vice versa? But, Uchi, th' pair o' them ur verra
thrawn an' it will tak' a lot o' wark tae gie them tae acknowledge 'at they ur attracted tae each other?
Thank Goddess it is yer job an' it isnae mine."

(Do you realise that he has an attraction for the girl and vice versa? But, Uchi, the pair of them are
very stubborn and it will take a lot of work to get them to acknowledge that they are attracted to each
other? Thank Goddess it is your job and it isn't mine.)

"Yes, I know, but I am counting on some inside help from a number of family members and friends.
So what had you in fits of laughter when I came in?" asked the now slightly dishevelled witch, who
was adjusting her Kanzashi and lacquered hairpins.

"Yoong Sev is still verra respectful o' me, e'en though we hae bin fightin' ower ur Hooses fur th' lest
20 years ur mair. In oor verbal sparrin', which we baith enjoy, we will trade rude comments, sarcasm
an' th' occasional expletive but ah ken a hae pure managed tae ruffle his feathers an' gie under his
skin when he swears at me in Greek," Min advised her friend who took a considerable time to work
out what she had just said.

(Young Sev is still very respectful of me, even though we have been fighting over our Houses for the
last 20 years or more. In our verbal sparring, which we both enjoy, we will trade rude comments,
sarcasm and the occasional expletive but I know I have really managed to ruffle his feathers and get
under his skin when he swears at me in Greek.)
"So you are saying you confirmed to him about me being on his case for a brokered match as his worst fear? Teased him like you do and he cursed you? I promptly walk in and do my battleship routine and now he is even more terrified? Thank you, Min, that will make my job so much easier. I am going to play on his fear about a bad contractual match and get him to cooperate with the Japanese traditional matchmaker. I will definitely need to be calling in a favour or two from Hiroto, his cousin Melina's husband. Now, how are we going to get a couple of people out to Japan for a couple of months?" asked Uchi with a glint in her eyes, that Minerva was sure meant trouble for her too.

After the first bottle was put to bed, a second bottle was broached as the two woman schemed to get the list of people Uchi wanted to meddle with out to Japan for a considerable length of time. It was very late at night when the housekeeping elves found both ladies snoozing in Minerva's sitting room and they transferred the pair of them into the double bed. One elf carefully put out the hangover potion vials on the bedside tables.

Once they had put the sleeping witches to bed, the house elf cleaning crew quickly whipped out their wee dram glasses to have a sample from the open bottle. Afterwards, they all agreed that Professor Minnie definitely knew how to purchase a good bottle of scotch. The name on the bottle was duly written down so that the Christmas wish list could be extended, then the bottle was corked and put away in the drinks cabinet, while the glassware was returned to the kitchen to be washed up.

The Room of Requirement changed the lighting the next morning to start to wake its visitors and, thanks to many long days, this change in the light woke the young witch. After providing Hermione with a convenience, she came back into the main lounge area and discovered that Harry was starting to stir. She encouraged him to wake up and after pushing him in the direction of the bathroom, she organised with a castle house elf for breakfast to be served to them in the quiet room.

After a cleaned up Harry appeared back in the main room, the elves delivered the breakfast. It was over coffee that Harry explained to Hermione that she would be sitting an educational assessment today at the Ministry of Magic.

The coffee was sprayed over the table and Harry had to explain that she would not be the only one who was sitting the exams today and tomorrow, but he would be too. The idea was to see where they stood now and identify where they needed further development, as their education had been disrupted. If they did it this way, they would not have to return to Hogwarts as students in September, rather they could get on with working out what they wanted do while preparing to do any necessary study for their NEWTS. With a bit of bullying Harry managed to get his friend showered, dressed and ready to floo to the Ministry. The young man had brought with him a shrunken overnight bag and with the assistance of Kreacher, had packed her travel toiletries and a comfortable outfit that included a smart set of robes, which would look acceptable for a business meeting.

After getting them into their robes, Harry led his panicking friend down to the Headmaster's office where Professor McGonagall met them, who let them in so they could floo to the Ministry. Waiting for them in the entrance hall of the Ministry of Magic was the familiar face of Nymphadora Tonks, along with another Auror to help them with any crowds and to ensure that once they had passed through the security desk they were able to go about their business without too much trouble.

They were met in the Education Department by Mafalda Hopkirk, who explained the educational assessment process procedures before leading them into an exam room for the first theory examination session. At the end of this 3 hour session Tonks brought them lunch and the group had a
pleasant break before the afternoon theory session. The next part of the testing would be practical and it was arranged that this testing would occur at Hogwarts the next day.

It was a very tired pair of teenagers who left the Education Department to floo to Hogwarts at the end of the day. Tonks took pity on the pair of them and threw in the powder, saying "Hogwarts," before grabbing their arms and pulling them into the fireplace. When they arrived she summoned a house elf and asked that they be taken to wherever they had stayed last night. With a sudden pop, the pair of them were back in the Come and Go Room, on the couches.

A barely functioning Hermione shrugged out of her robes and kicked off her shoes before turning to regard the saviour of the wizarding world to say, "Do you know, I could really hate you at this moment?" before collapsing back into the couch.

"Now, you don't really mean that, Mimi," chided Harry.

"I'm too tired to get my wand out to show you how much I mean it," retorted the frazzled witch.

"Dobby?" called Harry.

"Yes sir! How can Dobby helps you today, Mr Harry Potter, Sir?" bounced the over enthusiastic elf.

"Can you feed us and get us into bed tonight, please?" asked Harry. "Watch out, Mimi is a cranky puss today so she is a little snappy."

"House elves who looks after children has all experienced tantrums and knows that a nice night night is the best solution," advised Dobby. With a snap of his fingers the room changed to have two beds. A second snap had the pair of them into comfortable PJs and the third snap had them levitating from the couch towards the beds. With great care, he tucked the pair of them into their beds and they were asleep very quickly.

At 7pm, Dobby woke them up and fed them an invalid meal. It was only a short while after dinner before they both had dozed off again and Dobby, after dealing with the dishes, organised an elf sized Lazy Boy chair and proceeded to make himself comfortable to watch over the pair of them.

Dobby woke Harry first in the morning and set him off to complete his morning absolutions before turning to wake Hermione with the assistance of the smell of fresh, hot coffee. "Miss Grangey, Miss Grangey, Upsy Daisy. Upsie Daisy, now! YOU WILL BE LATES FOR CLASS!"

"What? Which class? Where am I? But I haven't been in class for over a year! Huh?" moaned the frizzy birds nest as it collapsed back into the bed it had sat bolt upright from.

"'Hee! Hee! GOTCHA!' giggled a highly amused elf.

There was the sound of someone else attempting to hide their laughter and the witch whipped her head round to observe the-boy-who-she-was-going-to-hex holding his hands over his mouth in an attempt to stifle his guffaws of laughter. "Just you remember, Harry James Potter, I know more hexes than you do! I also can kill you with my thumb alone!" snapped the indignant witch as she attempted to disentangle herself from the carnivorous blanket and get out of the bed.

"Now, Mimi, it's your turn in the bathroom. We have to be front and centre at breakfast in the Great Hall, as they want to use the Come and Go Room as part of our practical assessment process," advised the Boy Wonder, holding up his hands to show he was unarmed.

"Why are we torturing ourselves this way, Harry?" moaned the girl, as she headed to the bathroom.
"Because we wouldn't be able to settle back into a normal secondary classroom. Everyone knows you could have passed your NEWTS when we did our OWLS. The educational assessment is just identifying where we are in each subject area and where we need to polish up. This just gives us more choices in doing what we really want to do, instead of what everyone expects us to do. Remember we're going to live our lives how we want to. So move that mane of yours because I'm starving," ordered Harry.

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"Thank Circe, that is all over! Now we can go on our holiday and forget about books for a while. Tonight we are going to go and see your Grandad and Mr Coe, so no other plans, okay?"

The last visit to the Infirmary enabled them to get a final check over from Madam Pomfrey, so that they would have all the potions plans they needed for the next month. Poppy provided them with a nutriment plan to get them up to their goal weight and suggested that when they got to Japan, Hiroto should bring in a local healer to keep an eye on them.

The duo also visited Severus Snape, who asked them about the assessment process they had been involved in over the last two days. The three had a pleasant visit and they seemed to be able to have an adult conversation without too much sniping between them. The freedom of post war was allowing the dust of conflict to settle.

After saying their goodbyes just before the two were about to leave, Harry quickly returned to the dark man and quietly advised him. "Don't forget, we're going to hold you to your promise. When you get out of here, you also have to start living your life for yourself."

oOoOo

κατά πατήσα σου (gamoti poutana sou) = Fuck you, bitch.

Kanzashi – flowered hair ornaments
After the testing at Hogwarts, Harry dragged Hermione back to Grimmauld Place where there was a familiar face sitting in the library waiting for her. Taking one look at his granddaughter and her physical condition, a rapid fired berating was given in French. The hackles of the granddaughter were raised and terse comments bounced back. Harry was just glad that her ire was no longer focused on him! She had been severely pissed at him over the whole educational assessment.

"Kreacher, take Mimi up to her room and put her to bed," ordered her exhausted friend.

"I am not a child, as you should very well know, so stop treating me like one!" screamed the witch, who felt pressured from all sides and was absolutely pushed past her patience levels.

"You are when you are this tired. For Merlin's sake, JUST LET ME LOOK AFTER YOU FOR ONCE. NOW MOVE YOUR ARSE UPSTAIRS, YOU HARRIDAN," shouted Harry.

Hermione was stunned. Harry was shouting at her! Then the tears started. Kreacher took the witch's hand and apparated her upstairs to a new suite. "This is Missy's new rooms. You likes? Master Harry wanted Kreacher to do it nice for you," advised the old elf.

"Oh Kreacher, it's wonderful," the tired exhausted witch told him between tears. The room had been decorated in white, sage green and cream tones, with gold highlights. The eggshell white paint on the wooden frames reflected light, while the dark cream carpet was wonderfully luxurious under her feet when she took her shoes off. Hermione’s new bed was a large cherry wood king sized bed in an Edo oriental, calligraphic style. The Edo style had been conveyed to all the other furniture selections in the room as well.

"Come, Missy Mimi, yous need a nice, soothing bath in your own ensuite, which is through this door. Through the other door is your own private sitting room and study. You see, Missy Mimi, my Master Harry really wants you to be part of his family. For all his family he has been doings this here. For us elves, we haves a temporary new apartment suite area next door to the dojo area. Next time you go up there, Kreacher wills takes you for a tour. Now, please Missy, stop crying," implored the elf.

Hermione was taken into her new ensuite where there was a large, double, whirlpool bath and Kreacher started to draw a bath for her, adding calming scents so that she could relax. "Now, what book are you reading, Missy Mimi?" he asked.

"Umm, I don't have a book at the moment," replied the witch.

"Oh, then Kreacher has one for you he thinks you will like," counselled the elf as he snapped his fingers to place a slim novel on the handy bathtub bookrack. "Now, Missy Mimi, Kreacher will be back up in a hour with a light supper and Kreacher has laid your night things out on the chair for you. Takes your time and relax, please," said the old elf as he patted her hand, trying to give her more comfort. This Miss had done so much to look after Kreacher's old Master's name and she took care of the nasty locket for him. The witch had even arranged for him to get Master Regulus' locket and placed a photo of the young Master in it for him.

She leaned down and kissed the elf on his forehead. "Thank you so much, Kreacher. I really appreciate everything you have done and are doing for me. Thank you for taking care of me."
There was a micro meeting of some of the Executive of the Order of the Phoenix in the kitchen area not long after Kreacher returned downstairs. It was in this meeting that Harry informed the Order that Headquarters would be reverting back to his home as most of the Order's business could be done from other secure locations and he needed a home.

As he was going on holiday with Hermione as part of her escort for her lead up to the World Championships, Harry was going to change the ward setting tonight, since Kreacher was leading a team of house elves and other consultants who would be undertaking a restoration of the building. What was not known to most of the attendees was that Harry Potter was making some serious changes to his living accommodation and it was just a reflection of the other changes he was putting in place for his life.

The muggle buildings on either side of the hidden magical house had been brought and the magical builders would be starting work next week to convert and join the three buildings up. Number 11 would contain the new sporting facilities for the Phoenix Dojo, including a multi-disciplinary allied Health Practice. The upper floors of the building would be used as public guest and meeting rooms for the Police Sporting Association. By expanding the range of sports facilities, Harry was hoping to expand the contact between the magical and mundane policing communities as one way of improving the magical ministry.

The other building, Number 13, was going to be made into a Home for Magical Children. Never again were magical children going to be forced to live with magic haters like the Dursleys. One of the first occupants for the new Communal Home would be Andi Tonks. By having this witch in residence as the Director it meant that any underage magic would not be penalised. With Remus' help Harry had planned out the facilities for the Home. Harry was hoping that Remus would become a permanent part of the team who worked in the home, as he was both a great educator and would also provide a great role model to any child who got to know him. The Home would be called Padfoot Manor in recognition of his godfather, Sirius, who had needed a home at 16 when his pureblood mother threw him out.

It was Kreacher and Harry who took up the supper tray to Miss Mimi. It was during the supper in bed that Harry explained the plans for the couple of days and some of the changes he was making to the house. After some apologies between the two of old friends, Harry explained the devious scheme he had come up with in relation to their future education. The educational assessment would give them their NEWTS if they met the criteria, but it would also give them higher levels of achievement if they had met those criteria as well. They would receive the details of their grading on the Friday when they arrived in Japan. Harry also elaborated the scheme he had for their holiday that he had drafted up with the assistance of Madam Sakura, Monsieur D'Angers and Hermione's parents, alongside the organizational application support by his personal banker, Griphook.

"Harry, why do you want me to have this wonderful suite of rooms?" was the tentative question from the surprised witch.

"Well, you are my best friend. I would best describe you as my sister and my only family. You have always stood by me and tried to protect me. I know you had to take a lot of crap and not everyone was aware of the price you have had to pay. I want you to know that you will always have a home in my home and will always play a significant part in my life. I want to look after my big sister. While I love the Weasleys, they just don't get my muggle heritage and I don't want to have any part of Molly's ridiculously unrealistic 'one big Weasley family' dream.

"Ron isn't right for you and the twins are better friends for you than he is. Ginny is a shallow
lookalike clone of my mother and I don't want that. I'm not sure what I want and hopefully with your guidance on this trip, I will find about whom I am and what I want.

"I'm thinking that I would like to extend the trip for longer than the summer. Do you want to make it a Magical gap year? I'm not sure I want to be a full time Auror but I will probably always be involved in the removal of dark wizards in some manner.

"Why don't we think about an extended trip and this time we can take more than that beaded bag of yours? Let's make a list of things that we could potentially need and the places we would like to see."

When Kreacher moved the supper trays away, Harry asked him to come back with Dobby so that the two elves could be involved in the planning. "Don't think that you guys aren't going to have a say in this and see some of the world with us."

The old elf looked shocked before grinning and flapping his ears in excitement. "Kreacher always wanted to goes to the Kumur temple site called Angkor Wat. Master Regulus had a National Geographic article about that, which he kept for a long time."

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The four of them plotted for a number of hours. Kreacher and Dobby both brought in good ideas about logistics and the various plans that they had, including the supervision of the magical renovation of the buildings.

Breakfast was held bright and early in the kitchen the next morning, and the four of them reviewed their plans over a joint breakfast. With the post owls that morning there was a note from Albus Dumbledore to Harry expressing his concerns over the sudden change of use for 12 Grimmauld Place.

"For fuck's sake. He's not my father and he certainly doesn't own this property or me. He's an old man and his time has passed. Like Churchill, he needs to be put out to pasture," snapped the young man who had rapidly matured in the last 12 months and was starting to look at his own priorities in life.

"Don't worry about it. You changed the wards last night and we can lock him out via the floo as well. We're going to the bank, so we can also update the goblin protections with the architect's office. Just let me get my bag and the shopping list and I'll meet you in the foyer," advised Hermione, before rushing upstairs to ensure she had her basic gym kit in her famous bag, as she had a meeting with Coach Kendal and her grandfather in the afternoon and she was not sure if she would be required to do a fitness test.

"Oy, Birds Nest, are yah ready to shop 'til yah drop?" called a familiar voice up the stairs.

"Hold those itchy knickers, Tonks! I'm going to beat Harry downstairs, so I'm not the slow coach here," Mimi shouted back at the Auror.

"Yah want to bet on that because I sort have a gentleman about 5' 10", with messy dark hair, green eyes, glasses and a lightening shaped scar standing here in front of me," the pink haired Auror called teasingly.

"Bugger," mumbled Hermione as she rushed down the stairs to find that Harry was not there yet. "You bitch," she snapped, after rushing even more to get downstairs quickly.

"Sorry, I can be yours but the royal class one is the one on the wall there: my Great Aunt," was the rapid fire retort.
"Hurry up, HARRY! I have a fan witch who thinks your arse is cute!" shouted Hermione

"Cow! Don't say that to him," snapped Tonks who was now blushing nicely.

"Do you know, I think you're sweet on him? I thought you were sweet on Remus?" asked Hermione, curious about the behaviour of the feisty girlfriend she had gained in the last couple of years.

"I just don't know what I want any more, so leave it at that. I will just be happy to window shop at both of you when we go clothes shopping today, because you're both fit," snapped an embarrassed witch, who quickly changed the subject when she heard the tread of Harry on the stairs.

"Right, we're tag teaming with the elves today so we can get as much shopping done in as short a time as possible. First stop, Gringotts. Let's get this show on the road nice and early.

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After four hours in Diagon Alley, Harry was glad that everything magical had been done. It was 12 noon when they flooed into the Ministry to pick up Kingsley and another ministerial representative called Croaker. The appearance of two of the Trio at the Ministry caused a slight crowd crush, so Harry was most relieved when he was able to floo out to their next appointment at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

It was very disconcerting to be given your first passport and then to be given a second diplomatic passport as well. Hermione was also presented with a diplomatic passport and she was completely gob smacked. Jeff Coe was there at the meeting and he just laughed at the expression on Mimi's face and the total reverence she had for the red booklet that had the gold embossed words 'Diplomatic Passport' under the coat of arms.

Kingsley had collected a similar passport himself and was not fazed by the document but he did enjoy the teenagers' response to their new documents. Tonks and Croaker went through and checked a stack of passports against a list that the quiet man had produced and then counter signed for the passports, after showing their own passports and Ministry of Magic official badges. Just as Hermione had suspected, Croaker was an Unspeakable. For the next meeting the teenagers were side-along apparated by the Aurors, while Croaker took Jeff Coe to a certain famous ziggurat shaped building on the Albert Embankment.

"Bloody Hell, Croaker. Are you off your rocker bringing five magicals late to this meeting with the Dame?" snapped a sharply suited man.

"No, it's four magicals and one muggle who knows about the magical world," snapped the gruff Unspeakable in return.

"Right, right, she is waiting for you," advised the double-breasted suited man.

"Good afternoon, Croaker, you are late!" snapped the petite, grey haired woman.

"Afternoon. Let's keep this short and sweet then. Auror Tonks with the pink hair. Head of the MLE, Senior Auror Shacklebolt. The two teenagers are Harry Potter and Hermione Granger – and, no, you cannot recruit her – and this gentleman is one of yours, Jeff Coe of the Department of Sports and Rec. Potter and Granger have been issued with diplomatic passports and will likely be roving ambassadors for the UK magical community for the next couple of years. Kingsley Shacklebolt here is in line to be the next Minister of Magic and that means that Tonks here might be back at 10 Downing Street or somewhere around the world on diplomatic protection detail. Coe knows of our
world through his work supporting our Police Sporting Association, including some of our intercommunity interactions.

I think you need to card and do the biometrics for the two teenagers because they have just managed to take down that psychopath Tom Riddle, aka Lord Voldemort. While we haven't got all of his organization wrapped up yet, they are likely to be high profile targets so these kids will need your 00 protection, especially if they have to whip their wands out and do a Hitwizard number. If you are nice to me, I might even let you borrow Granger sometimes for a consult but my department have first dibs on her," smirked Croaker.

"You always were a smarmy bastard," snapped the Dame. "Nice to meet you all. Here is my card for everyone. You do know how to use a telephone, I hope. Mr Coe, sign the Official Secrets Act documentation on the table or I will get Croaker here to Oblivate you. Smithe, get the biometrics done on the two teenagers and Tonks tout de suite, as I have to see the PM today. Sorry, but you know when you're called, you are called." The Dame ushered them out to the front reception area of her office. Just before she got into the lift to go off to her next appointment, she turned and said, "Make sure you do better next month in the World Cup and tell Min she owes me a wee dram or two."

"Well, bugger me. I need to double check the facts we have on the Dame and Professor Minerva McGonagall," muttered Croaker after the lift doors closed.

Smithe ushered the party into the lift and down into a laboratory area where their biometric data was collected, along with some quick identifying features information, with streamlined efficiency by three teams of two technicians for each individual. For Hermione, that included her Department of Mysteries scar being digitally photographed by the female technicians.

Within 10 minutes they were all done. The next stop was Dei Frescobaldi at Harrods for a late lunch with Hermione's Grandfather and Coach Kendal. Croaker stayed with the group, politely joining in the conversation when required but being mainly unobtrusive.

At the coffee and tea stage of lunch, Coach Kendal asked about visiting the Phoenix Dojo sometime to see Hermione sparring there. At this point they were saved by Croaker who suddenly flashed a SIS (MI6) badge and warrant card before advising Coach Kendal that since it was "A Police Association like the Hereford boys, he did not have the security clearance and would not likely to be getting it, since many of the members were undercover officers."

"So the other night about exam stress was a cock and bull story," spluttered Michael Kendal who hated being lied to.

"I can neither confirm that nor deny that information," advised Harry looking at the angered Welshman with a hard look.

"You recruit them young, don't you? They aren't even adults; she's only 17," snapped Kendal. "How can you, if you are a caring family, let your granddaughter do that type of work as a child?" he asked challengingly to Monsieur D'Angers.

"Our country needed the pair of them. No one else was able to do the one off job that they did, so grow up and grow a pair," snapped Tonks, as she pulled out her badge as an armed undercover Diplomatic Protection Officer.

"Next you will be expecting me to be believe that Coe here is also in one the squirrel branches, too?" asked Kendal.
"Nope, but I have signed the Official Secrets Act so, sorry, I can't discuss anything much more than the Phoenix Dojo is owned and run by a Police Association. Sorry, Mike, but that's the way the cookie crumbles. These black bag types are ruddy scary enough as it is," admitted Jeff Coe with a wry grin, or was that a grimace?

Harry confirmed with Coach Kendal that Hermione had been resting and her weight was increasing. "We will keep Jeff here informed of what's going on with a progress report each week and he can forward it on to you. We'll be flying out to Japan next Thursday and some friends have arranged access to training facilities and, of course, training partners who are at the appropriate standard. I'm not a Kendoka but Mimi's skills as one have saved my bacon on more than one occasion, so I'm going as the chief cook, bottle washer and bag carrier on this trip, so she that is looked after and match fit for the World Championships."

"You do realise that due to security issues, Mimi won't be staying with Team GB at their accommodation, don't you? Don't worry, she will be there at each training session on time but let's just say that after last month we have to be very careful," advised Tonks, hoping to get through to the man that it was for the protection of the rest of them that Hermione did not stay with the team.

After their lunch, Kingsley and Croaker returned to the Ministry while Tonks and the two teenagers disappeared to go shopping. The first item of their muggle shopping was a side trip out of Harrods to further down Brompton Road, where there was a Carphone Warehouse store. After making the sales girl very happy when they purchased 30 new handsets and SIM cards. Harry enjoyed handing over his new Gringotts card and paying for all of them, giving the customer address details as care of Phoenix Leisure Enterprises at 11 Grimmauld Place. Each member of the shopping party carried 10 phones back to Harrods and they then started the next part of their shopping expedition by heading into the menswear section to do a complete wardrobe shop for Harry. While in the changing room, Harry called for Dobby so he could come and get the phone bags and take them back to 12 Grimmauld Place, to Hermione's study. After doing wardrobe shopping for Harry, they moved on collecting some new outfits for Hermione. There were also other muggle purchases on the shopping list that were easily acquired in the large department store. In the Furniture and Interiors section on the second and third floors, Hermione pulled her camera out of her beaded bag and started taking quick photos of all the items that they liked. The photos were so that the house elves could be consulted. Hermione and Tonks struggled to get Harry out of the kitchen section as he wanted to have his dream kitchen in Black Manor, which was the official name of 12 Grimmauld Place, and provide appropriately adapted devices for the new Padfoot Manor.

After Harrods, the trio went on to visit some other shops in the Knightsbridge area and Harry's collection of electronic devices increased considerably. At the end of the shopping day, Dobby collected the shopping from them before coming back to apparate Hermione home, while Tonks side along apparated Harry.
At the dinner table there was much discussion about the items that had been purchased during the day in both the magical and muggle shopping areas. Tonks demanded an explanation as to why 30 phones had been purchased but was told she could wait until after dinner, when the Weasley twins were going to drop by.

Over coffee and sweets, Hermione got the elves to review her inspiration photos on one of Harry’s new laptops. There was much oohing and aahing. There was also some discussion about the options available, along with the pros and cons for some items. As part of their shopping trip they had picked up some fabric swatches and some other samples to gauge the elves' opinion.

"Mr Harry Potter, Sir," said Dobby trying to get his attention.

"It's just Harry, Dobby," he responded.

"Kreacher and Dobby have been workings on the house and talkings about the new buildings today when you were out, and we think we needs more house elves. Now you know Winky is lookings for a family and she is a friend of Dobby. She is also a niece of Kreacher. There are also two other elves at the castle who wants to come and work for you as well. What we are thinking is that for the Padfoot house we will uses the two youngs elves. Winky and Dobby will looks after this building and the gym place and Kreacher will be the boss elf, managing and organizing everyone. Winky is a good cook and house cleaner. She can manages the Padfoot kitchen at the start, and train the two young elves in the cooking. What does you thinks of our idea?" implored the elf.

"Kreacher, are you happy with this idea? I don't want to tread on any toes here. Would you like to be the Major Domo elf for the three buildings? Please tell me if it is too much because we want to look after you," inquired Harry.

"Three buildings would be best this ways and Kreacher could train all the young ones to a good standard. Kreacher would enjoys more company too," advised the elf.

"Now, Kreacher, if you are going to be the Major Domo, you are going to have to buy a uniform for all the elves and you will also need to make sure everyone has beds and bedclothes. With more of you here, you will need to schedule everyone's rest day. Also, we will have to increase the house elf pocket book amount we set up today in the bank. Do you think we can get Winky and the two young elves to agree to the Potter household set up? You know, dinners and holidays too?" asked Harry.

"Winky will agree because she wants to has a family," advised Dobby.

"I think we can be sure that the other two young elves would be keen if it means they could work for Harry Potter," advised Kreacher.

"Well, in that case ask the elves you are thinking of to come and see me and so we can sort everything out," advised Harry.

There were instant hugs from both elves and much glee. After a tight squeeze of Harry Potter, Dobby was off to get Winky and the two young elves before the evening guests arrived. In less than 15 minutes, the Grimmauld Place house elf population increased from two to five.
When the twins arrived at 8pm Hermione was already waiting for them. With the assistance of Kreacher and Dobby she had set up a production line for the phones to put into action her dual band mobile communication system: muggle mobile and magic wandband.

Hermione had done the research and development during the last 12 months and had managed to get a working model up and running quite successfully. She had got Harry involved in the innovation testing to ensure she had it working well and from their trials it seemed that everything was green to go. Now it was time to extend the trial to a large scale pilot, with a greater range of user types. The trip at Easter proved that they need a communication system for the team but the purchase of mobiles just for the two weeks was not cost effective until the initial testing process was complete.

So it was with great pleasure that Hermione and Harry presented the potential new product for Weasleys’ Wizarding Wheezes. A standard muggle mobile phone with the addition of a micro wand, which was charmed to run the phone, and the use of the stannum potest telephonium charm, which had been developed by Hermione, would enable the phone user to connect to either the muggle mobile network or to the magical wandband network. When Hermione used a white board to explain the concept, the twins became very excited about it. Harry went on to explain that they were currently going to be modifying a total of 30 handsets for a wide scale test and the users were all selected to attend a house party in Japan for the month of July, which of course would include the birthday bash for Harry’s coming of age. Hermione demonstrated the adaption of the device for dual band usage and then gave the twins the job of doing the conversion for the rest. When they had finished they were both given a handset each, an invitation each which included vouchers for a Goblin international portkey and Tonks made them sign for their passports, which she had collected that day from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

After a quick rundown on the use of the phone, the house elves were all presented with one as a communications device. Harry, Hermione, Tonks and the twins each took an elf and worked with them so that they could make a call, answer a call, save a number and do text messaging. The new elves, Fern and Flower, seemed to take to the technology really easily; this could be something to do with their young age.

Over the late night cocoa before bed, Tonks handed the official Apparation Information booklet to both teenagers before announcing, "We're going to do the theory here tomorrow and go to practice for the practicals over the next couple of days. I have scheduled both your licensing tests for early Wednesday morning, so that you can go to Japan with an apparation licence. Don't stay up too late reading the booklet – you know most of it already, Hermione.”

The next weekend was a blur of meetings for Padfoot Manor, the building refits and everyone else who seemed to want a piece of them. Andromeda Tonks moved into Grimmauld Place on the Saturday, along with Remus, as they would be working together on the Padfoot Manor project and Harry wanted Andi Tonks to be satisfied with the Black Manor refurbishment, since it was her former family home.

On Sunday morning, Grandmère D'Angers arrived bright and early and proceeded to organise with Kreacher and Andi the interior design plan for all three buildings. The petite firecracker took to Harry like he was her favourite grandchild when he started to loiter around the kitchen when she was cooking with Kreacher. Before long there were discussions about his dream kitchen, while his hands were learning how to cook her family specialties.

When questioned by Hermione as to why trade secrets were being given away, the young witch was
promptly put in her place with a simple statement. "He is family!" There is something to be said about arguing with a French Grandmother – the advice is DON’T, as they are coiled springs of steel, wrapped up in stylish clothes to hide their core. The steely eyed glare that Hermione received was enough to warn the young witch off continuing to complain about the family secrets being given away.

On the Tuesday night before they were due to leave, there was a large semi formal dinner organised by Grandmère D'Angers and Kreacher, where they used the formal dining room for the first time. There was a very eclectic group of guests and much merriment was enjoyed by all, even the dour Potions Master who was on a supervised evening release from the infirmary with his gaoler, Poppy Pomfrey. Andi and Remus were on pre-dinner drinks serving duty, since they were empty handed according to Grandmère.

Charlie and Victor had come from Romania and Jeff Coe and Madam Sakura had come together, as she had demanded he escort her from her central London hotel. All the members of the Phoenix Dojo tour team were there, plus other friends who were familiar with Grandmère and Grandpère D'Angers. The Weasley twins were warned when they came through the door to behave or there would be no desserts for them.

Bill, who was behind them, laughed heartily and mentioned that, “Grandmère certainly had all the Weasley boys pegged.”

When people tried to shush him, worried about the painting, Grandmère advised that there was no trouble as they had had a tête-à-tête. Fleur did a double take and then gave her best Gaelic shrug, as if to say, "Okay, we will leave that one well alone."

Griphook and Filius Flitwick were also included in the dinner invitation along with all the house elves, so there were some seating reorganizations for balance and conversation partners at the dinner, after Grandmère's pre-dinner drinks observation of individuals. Neville Longbottom had escorted Luna Lovegood and his Grandmother to the dinner. The Longbottom Matriarch was a little out of her depth until the arrival of Minerva McGonagall, as they had been close associates for years through the Hogwarts board.

Present as well was Unspeakable Croaker, who seemed to be worried that he was intruding. It was very enlightening for the Unspeakable to see the links and friendships that Potter and Granger had within a number of different communities. It was particularly interesting for Croaker that Headmaster Dumbledore was not present, nor was the younger two Weasleys.

After the dessert course Grandmère stood and announced that for coffee and fruit they were all to adjourn to the formal salon as there were some presentations to be completed and everyone needed a walk too, so they would have some space for fruit. With the assistance of magic and some of the many hands round the table, the dining room was cleared and the next part of the evening was ready to begin.

The Weasley twins made a presentation with the assistance of the Potter house elves explaining the dual band adapted mobile phones and then presented handsets to all those who did not currently own a device, explaining that they needed help from a variety of users to test their effectiveness. Unspeakable Dan Croaker was amazed when it was revealed that each of the elves had their own unit. The flame haired twins went on to advise that each person who had a device had all the numbers of everyone else pre-programmed into their device for them. There was a specially prepared user booklet with moving pictures to demonstrate each function of the device. The potential of the unit was exciting, as it meant that non-magicals like Jeff Coe could easily communicate with magicals.
The next announcement was given by Hermione Granger saying that all were invited to a summer house party in Japan. Tonks had the passports for those who had not previously owned them and these were issued. Griphook issued Goblin international portkey vouchers to all, while Harry went round the room in the opposite direction issuing out trip briefing booklet folders.

"As you can see, I have prepared some information notes for those who have never been to Japan before and I have also included a draft itinerary of activities so you can come and go when you are able to. I would really like it if those who have limited time could be there for the last week of July, as that is when the Kendo world championships taking place and I need my magical cheer squad. Also, we are planning a birthday party for Harry's 17th so we need you all there since it such a special birthday. RSVPs and any tricky questions are to go to Mémé here or my mother, Hélène; both their phone numbers are pre-programmed for you," advised the Hermione.

Coffee and fruit was then served to all before Harry stood up to make the final announcements. Harry went on to present an overview of the restoration project for 12 Grimmauld Place and the two adjoining buildings. The young man introduced the new director of Padfoot Manor, a magical children's home, Andi Tonks. A new business initiative was also announced and all present were given automatic free membership to the new Phoenix Leisure Enterprises Healthy Living Facility that would be in the building on the other side of Black Manor.

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It was a quiet day at 12 Grimmauld Place. The two teenagers had flooed into the Ministry at 7am and had completed their apparation theory test. By 7:30am they were doing the practical and at 8am they had a newly issued apparation license each. By 8.02am they were back at Grimmauld Place.

Hermione was organizing the final packing for their trip, going over her lists with her Grandmère and Kreacher as an itemised check was undertaken. Harry had learned long ago not to mess with either the list or the list maker and was hanging out with Remus, safely out of the way.

Remus was concerned about coming on the trip during his furry time of the month and the difficulty of accessing Wolfsbane, so Harry decided, why not cut to the chase and ask a professional? Using his mobile, he rang Severus who was able to provide the name of a couple of Potions Masters whose product he would trust and also the reassurance that Hiroto and Melina, his cousins, would be able to sort it out. It was during this conversation that the dour man summoned Harry Potter for a private visit in the afternoon.
"Hello, Professor Snape. You wanted to see me?" inquired Harry as he entered the secured teacher's ward in the school infirmary.

"Yes, I did, Potter," retorted the dark haired man before letting out a deep sigh. "Sorry, I'll try that again. Why don't we try to bury the animosity? Please call me Severus and if I may call you Harry."

"Thank you, I will, Severus, please do call me Harry. It's very big of you to try and let the past go. Thank you again for all your help over the years, keeping us alive and everything else that you have done and suffered because of me," the grateful son of Lily Evans advised him.

"Harry, what are you going to do now besides go on holiday to Japan?" inquired his former Potions Professor.

"I really don't know, other than going on a magical gap year tour with Hermione. I don't know who I really am or what I want from life. Since I entered the magical world as an 11 year old, I have been too busy trying to stay alive long enough to remove the evil psychopath who was trying to hunt me down. Education-wise I have had some good teachers and I have also had some piss poor ones. I did the educational assessment to find out where my strengths and weaknesses were. I have been manipulated and used. Now that I have done the job that I could only do, I have no idea what is next. I am sure that Mum would be disappointed in my grades over the years but I think I might have made it up to her. I think bumbling around South-East Asia with Mimi for a while will give me the time and space to work out who and what I want from life. What about you, Severus, now that you are free?" inquired Harry.

"Like yourself, I didn't expect to survive the war and now I have no real idea of what I am going to do. As soon as I'm released from Poppy's care, I'm going to Kalymnos to see my family and sit in the sun. I'm going to be pestered by my mother and YiaYia to get married, especially now that they know that woman, Uchi Sakura," grumbled the tall man.

"Madam Sakura, the pocket battleship, is not that bad when you talk to her, you know," advised Harry.

"She is a bossy controlling witch," snorted Severus looking at Harry like he had rocks in his head.

"You know you like it, Sev. You like the challenge of strong women. It can be seen in your friendships with Min, Poppy and even Mimi," retorted the boyish young man.

"Don't call me, Sev. So I enjoy a bit of spice in my life," smiled the dour man, causing his looks to change to a pleasant, attractive, intelligent face.

"Why not, Sev? My mother did, I believe, according to her diary?" asked Harry.

"You have her diary?" queried the man, wondering what it would say about his friendship with the former Head Girl.

"Yes, I do. I should have had it years ago, along with a whole lot of other papers, but a certain manipulative old fool decided that it was for the good of all that I wouldn't receive them. I'm lucky that it worked out in the end and that others held a contrary view to the manipulative bastard and let me have my family papers now," advised Harry with some anger at his mistreatment.
"My childhood wasn't easy and I know yours wasn't either. Don't make the same mistakes I did and turn into a bitter person who is controlled by others," advised Severus, thinking of his history as a young man the same age as this young man, and how he made a poor decision that he had certainly paid his dues for over and over again.

"Severus, are you going to teach next year? Do you even like teaching?" asked Harry, wondering if the Potions Master had ever enjoyed his job.

"I really don't know about next year because I'm sure that someone will want their pound of flesh out of me. I do like teaching but do you know how hard it is trying to keep students alive in a potions classroom? There used to be a Potions Master and three deputy teachers but I got to do it all by myself. Due to the demands on my time as spy, agent and main supplier for the infirmary here, while also looking after a hot house of trouble, I wasn't able to take on apprentices and Dumbledore wanted to protect my position, so I didn't have deputies who could have helped with the teaching load.

"I also want to do research like Hermione and I did with the Wolfsbane potion for Remus. I liked teaching Defence Against the Dark Arts but I don't think I will be allowed to teach it in the new world, due to my past. The only thing I know for definite is that my mother wants me to get married, so I can expect to get matched up with a suitable bride in the near future," advised the silent man.

It was one of the longest pieces of communication that Harry had ever heard from the man that did not include sarcasm or anger. "You have really been thinking about it, haven't you?" queried Harry.

"Thinking about what? Getting married and my past?" prompted Severus.

"Everything. Do you want to get married?" inquired Harry, wondering if this man could find peace with his past.

"I loved your mother but she didn't love me in that manner. I made a mistake and I became very isolated. I have led a very lonely life as a spy and just like all humans, I crave companionship. Like you I have a responsibility to carry on my family line, but I would like to find someone who truly cares for me. The best I can really hope for in an arranged marriage is someone who isn't dumb, someone who I could hold a conversation with.

If I don't find someone soon my mother will make a contract for me and then I won't have much say at all. My chances of finding someone on my own are slim to none with my prior history as a marked Death Eater," confided Severus. It was strange for him to be having this conversation with the son of his childhood best friend, but saying it aloud was helping him to come to terms with the reality of his future.

"Yes, we both have responsibilities to carry on our family name. Like you, I have the same wishes for a companion who wants me for me, not for money, fame or any other sick reason. Madam Sakura talked to me about what I wanted for my life partner, as she put it. She was offering her services as a professional to make sure I didn't muck up my choices due to post war euphoria.

"She was right when she told me that Ginny wasn't right for me, as all the girl wants is fame and fortune. She doesn't want the same as I want, which is peace and quiet. We talked about Mrs Weasley's idiotic idea of one big happy Weasley family and how it was inappropriate for both Hermione and myself. Do you know that Hermione is lonely?" asked Harry.

"Yes, I remember you said something along those lines when you got me to promise to live my life for myself after the war. I really thought that night you had both made a self revelation that you loved each other," explained the Potions Master, who had been jealous of the scene he had walked into at
12 Grimmauld Place.

"We do love each other, but as best friends. She is my family, as I know she would lay her life down for me no questions asked. I am the same for her. I have no doubt whatsoever that if I was a moth and she needed me to fly into the flame, I would. She is my sister. Sirius was a beloved uncle but I lost him before I really got to know him as well as I wanted to. He would probably never have been a father figure but he was pretty close to all I had as a father.

I have no memories of my own other than the ghostly images I saw in a mirror, your memories and from the priori incantatem. There aren't many I can trust and those who I thought I could trust have abused my trust and loyalty," advised the green eyed young man.

What was going on with the young man? There were hints of more but Severus did not have the full details. It was rather annoying after being a spy for so many years not to have the inside information, thanks to his extended stay in the Hogwarts infirmary. The two of them lapsed into silence, each thinking their own thoughts.

"Severus, visit your family and then come out to Japan for a couple of weeks. Take the step and talk to Madam Sakura. Even if she's a matchmaker, don't panic. She's not like the ones who get paid commission for each wedding. Talking to Professor McGonagall, she has been doing it for 70 years and it's her family business. She knows people and she knows what makes them tick. She can help you sort out what you want, as she has a very good understanding of human psychology. Sometimes it helps to talk to an impartial observer," explained Harry.
First Holiday

It was with much joy and delight at Harry's excitement that Grandpère and Grandmère D'Angers, Jeff Coe, Hermione and Harry travelled to Heathrow early the next morning in two black cabs. Packed safely in their luggage were of course the creature comforts of home, which both Hélène Granger and Melina Kitaguchi had requested that they bring with them.

When they checked in at the KLM desk there was a familiar face on duty. "Back again, I see. Where is the rest of the team?" asked the Check-in Desk Supervisor.

"We're the advanced party this time. The rest will be flying out next month for the World Championships in Japan," advised Jeff Coe.

"So you did well at Easter?" asked the Supervisor.

"She did very well at Easter. She won the tournament and has been selected for Team GB," informed Jeff.

"Good on you, girl," congratulated the Supervisor. "Hang on here for a minute and I'll get one of the girls in the Business Lounge to come and collect you." The Supervisor turned to pick up a hand radio set and call for the Business Lounge Supervisor to send a VIP escort down to the check-in area.

"Me a VIP at the airport. Oh, Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia would be squirming at the thought," whispered Harry into Hermione's ear.

"Small things amuse small minds," was the dry comment from Hermione who was ready to get on with some serious sleeping, as the early start was so not her thing.

"Speak for yourself, Titchy! I'm taller than you," was the rejoinder back at the grumpy girl by her best friend, as he chuckled at her grumpiness.

Harry's enthusiasm was catching and seemed to keep the party excited through the short flight to Amsterdam and the wait there for their connecting flight to Osaka. It was a great relief to Hermione when Harry's energy seemed to wane and he finally went to sleep on the plane. With the assistance of the airline hostess she was able to get comfortable even though her friend had fallen asleep on her, using her as his pillow.

It was with total fascination that Harry looked out the window as they circled to land at Osaka Kansai Airport. "It's a reclaimed island in the bay. I once saw part of a Discovery programme about the airport and how they built it," whispered Harry with excitement and wonder in Hermione's ear.

Normally it was her who would recite all the facts and figures but now it was Harry's turn to demonstrate his fascination about a subject.

Hermione’s father, Phillip, and the husband of their university friend Melina, Hiroto, met them at the airport.

It was a 75 minute train journey from the airport to Kyoto and the party was taken to the Kitaguchi family machiya. From the street, the house look like a standard Edo merchant household but upon entering the building it was more spacious than the normal eel-like buildings that surrounded it. The
building was made of natural materials. On entering the building, Harry was introduced to the custom of removing his shoes and Melina gave him a pair of house slippers. "You might find it more comfortable to be in slippers as there is a little nip in the air at night and you are not used to tatami floors," she advised Harry when she welcomed the guests to her house from the foyer.

Guiding the guests into the lounge room, their luggage was stored in rooms upstairs very quickly with a flick of her wand. This type of house was normally only 20 meters deep but thanks to the extension charms, it appeared to be about 40 meters deep. In the dining room there was a traditional sunken table where there appeared to be a welcome brunch for all the guests. Hélène Granger was speaking in rapid French to her parents. Hermione had appeared to be glued to the hip of her father throughout the journey from the airport and now she was engulfed in a bear hug from him. Suddenly she was released and Harry found it was his turn to be engulfed in a bear hug from Phillip Granger.

"Thank you for bringing my little girl out to her family," he gruffly muttered into Harry's ear. Harry just did not know what to do. His past meant that he was unfamiliar with physical affection but after seven years of being Hermione's best friend, he had learned that when you got a Granger hug you just held on and hoped you could breathe.

"Philippe, let the boy go," snapped Mémé in her way. "He needs to breathe."

"It's Phillip, as you well know," responded the quiet man releasing Harry and guiding him to a seat at the Kotatsu table. Phillip was going to make sure that this boy was fed, as he was as gaunt as his daughter.

There were muted conversations over the dinner table as the guests were fed. Harry felt like an outsider who was intruding in a family reunion. Fortunately Jeff Coe knew the Kitaguchis and he was able to bring the-boy-who-lived into a general conversation with Hiroto. The train journey had been undertaken in a daze due to the crowds and the culture shock, but now Harry was starting to get to know his host.

"Mr Kitaguchi, Madam Pomfrey the school mediwitch, advised that we should talk to you about seeing a local healer to monitor our health and recovery. We are both on nutrient potions and she has written a script so we could source what we need while we are here. I would like to find a healer fairly quickly as we have to get Mimi match fit for next month," advised Harry.

"Certainly, Harry-san, and please call me Hiroto. We will get a healer to visit this afternoon after your nap, so that you are not too jet lagged. I was hoping that Mimi-san was up to visiting my local dojo this evening to look over the facilities," said Hiroto, thinking that this young man reminded him a little of his youngest son but without the self assurance that he would expect as the saviour of the wizarding world.

"Harry!" snapped Hermione because she did not want to cause a fuss for her parents' friends.

"If you think I'm going to look Poppy Pomfrey in the eye and say I didn't follow her instructions as a mediwitch, you have rocks in your head, Mimi. I may be a foolhardy Gryffindor but I'm not stupid!" responded her friend. It was easy to see their friendship, and the closeness between the two teenagers was readily apparent in their body language and verbal sparring.

"You will be seeing a healer, my girl, and that is that," declared Phillip in a tone that broached no argument. Harry was surprised to see his feisty friend become meek and compliant, as her father flatly stated an order.

Grandpère D'Angers took pity on the lad who seemed to be a little confused. "It is not often that her father lays down the law but Mimi has learned not to argue with her father when he does."
"So he really would have got on a plane and dragged her back here, kicking and screaming, if she hadn't got on the flight that he had arranged?" asked Harry of the older man.

"Oui, most certainly," advised Hermione's Grandfather. "Phillip loves his family very much and Mimi is his only child – his precious daughter – so he will always be over-protective."

"It's a good thing I'm her best friend and not her boyfriend! He would do the shotgun act wouldn't he?" stated Harry.

"Of course, he is her father," confirmed Grandpère D'Angers.

"Poor Mimi. She has seven wizarding brothers who will all be over-protective. Then add in all the honorary uncles from the Order. Some of them are super protective since they are also Aurors, so any boyfriend will have to run the gauntlet of over-protectiveness," chuckled Harry.

Anastasia Eileen Athenaou Prince Snape was not a happy woman. In fact, she was fuming mad. Why had no one at that so-called school thought to inform her that her son was injured and in the infirmary? Albus sodding Dumbledore was going to get a piece of her mind, and the list was getting longer by the moment.

The witch had portkeyed from Kalymnos to Athens and then argued with the Greek Ministry to get an international portkey to Britain. The officials were complaining that the safety of Greek citizens could not be guaranteed and they were not recommending any travel to Britain due to the lack of stability in the country and the magical community.

Never argue with a matriarch should be the first lesson that every government employee should be taught. They are dragons. This Kalymnian was one of the most aggressive dragons out there and she was going to see her son.

The redhead who asked for her reason for visiting the UK when she arrived at the Ministry of Magic in London got a sample of her ire in English, Greek and then French to make sure that he understood what she thought of his superstitious attitude. She left the international portkey office and made her way to the floo hall and flooed her way into the Hog's Head Inn. There was the bar man. "Aberforth?" she politely inquired.

He took one look at that regal nose and the dark hair and realised she could only be one woman. "So you have come to see your son?" he asked the mother.

"Yes, I am Anastasia Eileen Athenaou Prince Snape, and I need to get to the castle to see my son. I would rather not go up in public. My troublesome son has previously assured me that you were the man to speak to if I wanted to get into the castle and not see your brother," asserted the woman.

"Hagrid, mind the bar. I have to help this lady for a moment," he advised the half giant before turning and leading the woman through to his store room and up into the castle via a secret passage. Using the back passageways he brought her up to the infirmary. With a quick knock on the doors he confirmed that he had a safe visitor for Poppy.

The mediwitch put her head out the doors to see Aberforth. "Who and what are you smuggling into the castle?" the mediwitch demanded from the brother of Albus Dumbledore.

"A mother looking for her Potions Master son," was the advice that Aberforth gave her before leaving the women to go on. He quickly left the school and returned back to his bar.
"So you got the message, Anastasia. I haven't seen you in years, not even when he came here as a student. Come and see your son," advised the mediwitch leading the mother who had her heart in her throat.

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He was asleep and Poppy advised that he was lucky to be alive. He would need a potions regime but he needed sunlight and relaxation just as much to recuperate after a number of stressful years.

Anastasia sat by her son and was gently stroking his hair while he slept. He looked so vulnerable. He was such a sweet child when he was with her but life had been hard for both of them. Her husband had become an alcoholic and in his booze fuelled rages, had taken his anger out on them. The violence had been particularly bad for her son as it had led to some poor decisions. It took the death of Tobias before she was able to pull herself together and get her life and her magic back under control.

Anastasia looked up to see whom the woman was when she came in. It was her former schoolmate, Professor Minerva McGonagall.

"Minerva," was the terse greeting from the Greek witch.

"Anastasia, you came," was the relieved response.

Over the sleeping man the two witches came to peace as they discussed the troublesome Potions Professor. Poppy joined the conversation and his convalescent plan was made. Anastasia was surprised to hear that Severus was invited to a house party in Japan in July. There were some famous names mentioned but it was particularly interesting that Hermione Granger was going to be there.

"Ah, Mother, I recognised your dulcet tones," drawled the Potions Master.

"We will leave the pair of you now," advised Poppy leading Minerva out to let these two hot heads clear the air.

"Mother!" snarled the man just before he was embraced in a tight hug.

"Μην σας τρομάξει εμένα ποτέ σαν αυτό ποτέ ξανά. Severus Nikolaos Aurelius Prince Snape έχετε ευθύνες και την καρδιά της μητέρας σας δεν μπορεί να πάρει τη σκέψη της απώλειας σας prescious παιδί μου," advised his mother as she cried. Her tears were dripping onto his face as she held onto him tightly.

(Don't you ever scare me like this ever again. Severus Nikolaos Aurelius Prince Snape, you have responsibilities and your mother's heart cannot take the thought of loosing you, my precious child.)

"Mother!" snapped the adult, feeling like he was a small boy again even though he was 38 years old.

"Don't you 'Mother' me! You are going to do as you are told. I am taking you home to see YiaYia. You will eat properly, sleep properly and have your potions when you are told. We will be leaving tomorrow so instruct the house elf to pack for a long holiday for you," ordered bossy mother, who had every intention of taking command of her truanting son.

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After dinner with her son in the infirmary, Minerva took Anastasia to the teachers' lounge so she could meet some of her son's work colleagues. It was there that the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore ran into the very angry Greek mother.
Many of the staff enjoyed her ire as she ripped shreds off the man who she had helped to look after when he was recuperating. "How dare he not tell her that her son was injured? What a traitorous viper in their home he was! They had given him the hospitality and care of the home and he did not look after their important child," was only part of the rant that she shouted out at the man.

Tonks was there in the staff room visiting Filius and she decided to sit back and watch the show with some popcorn. Poppy also enjoyed the show. Trelawney started to make some sort of dire statement when Anastasia rounded on her with a set of hexes and shouted, "Μην τολµήσεις σας απάτη. Το Μαντείο των Δελφών έχει ζητήσει τη γνώµη για το γιό μου. Εάν ανοίξετε το στόµα σας με μια ψεύτικη προφητεία γι’ αυτόν εγώ θα σας καταραστεί στο τρίτο επίπεδο της κόλασης."

"What was that, Filius?" Tonks asked her former Professor.

"Basically she called Sybill a fraud and said that she has been to see the Delphi Oracle over her son's future. If Sybill even thinks about Mentioning Severus in a prophecy she is going to send her to the third level of Hell," advised the Charms Professor as he improved the defensive shield they had both thrown up when the witch had started throwing hexes.

"Mmmm, I like this snack. What is it called again?" the small half goblin professor inquired of Tonks his former student.

"Popcorn," responded Tonks, as she was wondering if she would have to make an arrest tonight, since it looked like the female dragon was going to get physical with the Headmaster and the Divination Professor.

"Ok, break it up. I don't want to do paperwork tonight in the Auror's office," snapped the pink haired woman. "I've let you say your piece. I understand you're angry but not everyone is as strong as your son to stop your hexes. Do you want some popcorn or would you prefer some of Minnie here's scotch?" she cheekily asked.

There was silence and then the strong husky laugh that was similar to her son's. "Both, you cheeky minx. I take it you know my son's hexes," she intoned.

"Do I ever? I had him as Potions Master in school and also a trainer in the Order. He can be nasty," stated Tonks.

"He learned it all from his mother," advised the proud woman.

"I will take that on advisement because your son is a sneaky bastard," she was bluntly told. There were several hearty laughs of agreement to this statement. More laughs followed when Anastasia raised an eyebrow in an imperious query to explain the meaning of the laughter.

After Sybill and Albus had beaten a hasty retreat from the teachers' lounge, a small party was held between the Heads of the other Houses and the mother of their colleague, with one or two ring-ins like Tonks and Poppy joining the quiet conversation and drinks.

When asked about her plans, Anastasia explained that she wanted to take Severus home to Kalymnos to enjoy the sun and to get him to recover in the care of his family. Tonks put up her drink when hearing this plan and said, "In that case, when will Poppy be ready to release him from the Infirmary?"

"As soon as humanly possible. I want that crotchpot out of my infirmary," she informed Tonks.
"Then I will be off to Kingsley and we will get it sorted so he can travel tomorrow," she advised the party. Poppy passed her some sober-up potion and the off-duty Auror took it before flooing out of the teachers' lounge down to the Ministry of Magic in London.

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After a late night meeting in the Ministry of Magic, the travel arrangements for the mother and son were completed and one less concern was left. When the infirmary was clear Minerva and Poppy were going to join Severus, visiting him and his family on the island of Kalymnos.

The break would be good, since Severus Snape could be protected on Kalymnos while his name was rehabilitated in the UK. Additionally, the other members of the Order could be looked after and could also get some rest on the Greek Island.

Anastasia and Severus were portkeyed out the next morning. The final patients in the infirmary were sent to their various recuperation locations and the halls of Hogwarts started to clear as staff headed off on their summer holidays and a well deserved rest in the aftermath of the war.

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Μην τολμήσεις σας απάτη. Το Μάντείο των Δελφών έχει ζητήθει η γνώμη για το γιο μου. Εάν ανοίξετε το στόμα σας με μια ψεύτικη προφητεία γι ’αυτόν εγώ θα σας καταραστεί στο τρίτο επίπεδο της κόλασης. = Don't you dare, you fraud. The Oracle of Delphi has been consulted about my son. If you open your mouth with a false prophecy about him I will curse you to the third level of Hell.
It did not take long for Hogwarts to be clear of staff once all the patients were out of their hair. Over the next couple of days the magical population of Kalymnos increased to include many familiar faces, besides the dour potions Master and his mother. Minerva and Poppy were staying with Severus' aunts and getting all the good gossip on the wizard over meze plates, a lot of ouzo and much hilarity.

When it came to the second Sunday since Severus' release from the Hogwarts Infirmary, the family and the extended family were all called to YiaYia's. This is where the hospitality of the islands included the Hogwarts staff, who were all included in the invitation – or demand! – that they attend with the rest of the family. It turned out be an interesting day as the older women bossed the younger ones round and put the many hands that were available to work.

"So, Anastasia, where is your son today?" asked Poppy, who had not seen her patient in the couple of days since she had arrived on the island.

"He is fishing with his uncles," advised YiaYia pointing out to a group of men who were short hauling a net along the beach.

"Never! Severus is not out there!" exclaimed Minerva.

"Have a look at the middle one with the black fisherman's cap on his head," advised Anastasia.

"He looks like he is thoroughly enjoying himself. Is that a smile I see? Who knew the dungeon bat can laugh and play?" said Poppy, before bubbling up in laughter at his antics. It was wonderful to see the change in this wizard. He looked younger and more content within himself than he had looked in a long while.

After bringing the net in and getting down to work on preparing the catch, the Potions Master greeted his two female colleagues who were staying with his extended family, before working with his uncles to process the catch quickly and efficiently. "You should lay off the ouzo today. We have visitors coming tonight and there will be dancing. You don't want to be in your cups today before they arrive," he advised them.

There was much teasing and laughter over lunch in the shade of the veranda of the house.

"What do you mean, Severus, that there will be dancing to night?" asked Poppy.

"Well since it's Grandmother's birthday we have a big party every year. It's a whole village type celebration that's why the kitchen is going ten to the dozen. The bakery and ovens all round the island have been going like the clappers today. Tonight is a Glenti, a very big party for her birthday. Don't be surprised if you see some other familiar faces," he warned the two British witches.

After a lovely luncheon, YiaYia commanded everyone to their siesta beds for a snooze before they would be called to help prepare for the party. It was late afternoon and the sun was starting to dip in the sky when they were woken to come and assist in the party preparation. The whole courtyard off the house had been wet down and fairy lights had been hung, stringing across the courtyard and along the veranda. There was a band area set up with chairs waiting for the musicians to arrive.

During dinner a young group of musicians played traditional bouzouki music on a range of instruments, which included fiddles, drums, xylophones, guitars, an accordion and a range of Bouzouki. The fresh fish were served in a range of dishes. The various guests had all brought a
signature dish to this celebration. Running out of food was not going to be a problem. There were several long tables that made up the buffet of courses.

Poppy and Minerva were surprised when some familiar faces arrived while they had been helping to lay the dinner tables earlier. Kingsley, Remus, Tonks, Filius and Pomona portkeyed into the garden area near the courtyard. There was a Hogwarts table amongst the party that night and Severus managed to smile in the presence of Remus. The four Heads of House got into the ouzo and all concerned had much hilarity. It was later, after the dessert course, when the bottles of Commandaria were put on the tables that Anastasia visited the Hogwarts table to find her son.

Anastasia had a white handkerchief in her hand and there was an order in her eyes. _Dance with me, my son._ An older group of musicians were now in residence on the bandstand, and the familiar Sirtarki sound was starting up. Leading out with his mother, Severus collected his grandmother in his left hand to start a line of family dancing together. His grandmother broke off the line and conjured up a matching handkerchief to her granddaughter's. The three of them where surrounded by the other dancers forming rings around them.

After returning to the table for a rest and a drink. Severus's YiaYia was at the bandstand asking for him to come and play for her. She was holding out a beautifully inlayed bouzouki that he took from her.

"Anything in particular?" he asked her, dreading that she was going to make him play and sing, but he could not refuse her.

"Perigiali," was her request.

How like his grandmother to make him sing about change and how life moves on. Perigiali was all about the inevitable changes that occur in life and how eventually you have to let go of things you loved and cherished.

After warming up his fingers while ensuring that the instrument was tuned, Severus Snape took a last sip of water to sing his YiaYia's request.

It was a surprising sound for the British contingent of witches and wizards to hear Severus Snape sing and play an instrument. He had a rich, warm, silky baritone and even though he was out of practice you could tell he was a gifted musician.

At the end of the song it was clear that there were quite a few tears amongst the women at the party and not just amongst those who were sitting at the Hogwarts associated table.

With a kiss to her great grandson's forehead YiaYia thanked him for his song before commanding him in Greek to get them up and dancing.

After a short discussion between the other musicians, Severus' fingers were soon dancing a much more lively tune to encourage the dancers. YiaYia moved down from the bandstand and led out Filius, teaching him how to dance the traditional steps with her.

After another change of players on the bandstand, Severus moved back to the Hogwarts table.

"Severus, why don't you play more often?" asked Minerva.

"Because when I was disowned by YiaYia all those years ago I left my instrument here. My life in Britain has never been conducive to music. I was too busy for far too many years with just trying to stay alive," advised the man before he poured another glass of Commandaria.

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In a later lull when only Kingsley and Severus sitting at the table, the new Minister of Magic asked Severus what he wanted to do with his life now.

"I really don't know what I want. I acted as the Headmaster while Albus was off recovering here and I know that I certainly don't want that job. Nor do I want to spend the rest of my years trying to stop explosions in the potions lab. I'm not likely to be given a job in research or teaching Defence Against the Dark Arts so I just don't know where to go and what to do from here," advised the former dungeon bat.

"Do you know that you've been given a full pardon for all your activities during the war? You've also been awarded the Order of Merlin First Class. So really, the world is your oyster. Slughorn has gone back into retirement. Do you mind going back into teaching if I can get you some teaching assistants, as we would like you to do more research? What about taking on a couple of potions apprentices?" asked Kingsley, hoping to get more of an understanding of this quiet man while he appeared to be in his cups and therefore more loquacious.

"I don't know and I haven't had enough booze yet for you to trick me into a hasty decision. All I do know is that I will be heading off to Japan for a month at the end of this month. I'm hoping that I will find some peace and some inspiration about what I want, rather than what someone else wants from me," he advised Kingsley.
Going Up To Ohara

After seeing a local healer in Kyoto under the supervision of the family, Harry and Hermione were put on an amended régime of potions, along with some additional traditional healing methods such as acupuncture, massage and cupping. Melina and Hiroto cooked specific dishes as per the healer's recommendation and she visited them once a day to give them other treatments.

After two weeks there was a considerable improvement in the two young magicals. Harry had appeared to go through a magical growth spurt and was now even taller than Hermione, much to her annoyance. It was a little disconcerting for Hermione when she realised one night at the local dojo that it was the healer against whom she was currently sparring, under the orders of the dojo Master. It was not until they had all removed their Men that Hermione realised that the little grandmother was the lightening fast opponent she had been paired up with for that session.

Between Grandfather, Hiroto and the local dojo Master, Hermione was quickly brought up to match fitness and Coach Kendal was kept appraised of her improved weight via Jeff Coe's email communication. Harry enjoyed taking a couple of short video clips that were attached electronically to the email reports so that the coach could see her in action.

Besides the improvement in both teenagers' health and the training at the dojo, they also got to see a number of sights around Kyoto with local residents Melina and Hiroto as their expert tour guides. The Kitaguchis' sons came home from University and took Harry-san and Hermione-chan out clubbing with them. Hermione's extended Hermione undertook a number of tourist activities with their hosts that catered for all age ranges. Harry was thoroughly enjoying himself just living from the day to day.

The new mobile phone setups were getting thoroughly tested by the two teenagers and the family. The calls between Japan back to the UK and the other holders of the phones in Europe ensured that the pilot testing of the devices were working very well. Jeff Coe found that being in the presence of a magical on a regular basis ensured that his phone remained charged.

The establishment of Padfoot Manor was going well and it looked like they were going to get their first residents in the near future. The Phoenix Leisure Enterprises had opened its Healthy Living Facility at 11 Grimmauld Place and it appeared that the Phoenix Dojo and Gym had a number of new membership applicants, which had all been thoroughly screened through the organisations and direction of Kingsley, Croaker and the Dame.

Harry had called Professor Snape and it appeared that he was having a lovely time visiting his family on Kalymnos. He sounded much happier to Harry. There were also chats with Harry's business partners and it appeared that they were starting to get inquiries about their phones from other entrepreneurs in Diagon Alley and magical Britain. Minerva and Poppy had really gotten into using their phones when staying with Professor Snape's extended family, finding them particularly useful on the shopping trips to help find each other in crowded areas and make quick shopping decisions.

Charlie and Victor had reported that they had found the device handy for remaining easily in communication and could see potential development options that were applicable to their professions. The ideas of the couple had been shared with Charlie's brothers, the twins, and it appeared that it was not only one Weasley brother who had a potential development idea for this new device. Bill and Griphook had found that using the mobile at work in Gringotts had identified a number of opportunities where it was very useful to the Goblin Nation in improving the profit making options of the bank.
Part of the tourist activities that the Dynamic Duo and the Granger extended family enjoyed, included a visit to wizarding areas within Kyoto. From these visits and the association the Kitaguchis’ sons, further electronic adaptation opportunities had been identified. The wizarding community in Japan appeared to be more closely integrated with the muggle community and when speaking to Hiroto about the reasons for this, he explained that while they had their own Statute of Secrecy, there was greater integration thanks to the historical links of culture and shared traditional practices. The wizarding community had also kept in-step with the muggle community, so there was not this split between the two cultures that could be observed in the UK with the wizarding community seeming to be stuck in the Victorian era.

The adapted mobile phone would not be a product that would be needed or be suitable in the Japanese market as the muggle mobile phone system had been accepted in the Japanese wizarding community in the 1980s, so the muggle network was the only communication band needed. Japan did not have the problem that there was in England where there were two separate communication networks and the need to provide links between both, plus the ability to receive and communicate across both network bands.

Suddenly the 1st of July came round on the calendar and it was time to move up into the mountains to Ohara and the Ryokan that had been booked for them by the Japanese Kendo Federation. Gyozanen was a lovely traditional Ryokan and the Granger extended family party was met by Mr Kawasaki, who was most pleased to be greeting these friends of the Kendo Association. Jeff Coe was warmly welcomed, particularly when Mr Kawasaki found out that the muggle knew about magic and that the country house party at the Ryokan would have a mixture of magical and non-magicals, with no need to hide the fact that magic existed. Mr Kawasaki lived in Ohara and was advised that the door would always be open to him and his family during the house party, as the more the merrier.

Madam Sakura arrived in Ohara on the 1st and proceeded to become a Granger or D'Angers auntie. Melina and Hiroto just thought it was amazing how easily this formidable lady became part of the extended family. Harry found that she provided many helpful suggestions for the planning of his magical gap year. With her network of contacts throughout the world, the two young adults had plenty of people to meet and places to see on their list for their year long holiday.

It was with great excitement when two owls arrived at Gyozanen on the second morning of their stay, when everyone realised that these were the results of the educational assessment. Both teens had read their own letter quietly while they had an audience of anxious and curious well wishers. Looking up from his letter Harry observed the intense gaze of Hermione's parents and grandparents at their magical child and their desire to know the contents of the letter. He had never had that unconditional support. Madam Sakura came up behind him and rubbed him on the back offering him comfort, as she recognised his longing for that family support which he had missed out upon.

When Hermione had read the letter through she passed it to her father and gave him a kiss on his cheek. "Thank you, Daddy. I would never have achieved this without your and Mum's support, guidance and love," Hermione advised her father.

Upon reading the letter to the rest of the party, it appeared that Miss Hermione Granger had been awarded 15 Outstanding marks for the NEWTS as well as undergraduate recognition to the 2nd year of a tertiary degree in four subject areas.

"How did you do Harry?" inquired Phillip. To which Harry handed his letter over to this honorary dad saying, "I couldn't have done it without your Hermione so therefore I couldn't have done it
without your and Hélène's support of your wonderful daughter." It turned out that Mr Harry Potter had received 10 Outstanding Marks for his NEWTS as well as undergraduate recognition to the 2nd year in Defence against the Dark Arts. There was a celebration dinner on that night for the new graduates as the house party celebrated the results.

The guests for the country house party started to arrive during the next couple of days. Viktor Krum's parents arrived from Bulgaria and were warmly welcomed by the older generation as they knew they were soon going to be outnumbered by the younger adults.

Charlie and Viktor arrived a couple of days after the Krum Seniors and then more Weasleys arrived. Fred, George, Bill and Fleur joined the party the next day, along with Griphook and Filius.

By the end of the first week of July, Poppy, Minerva and Severus had arrived from Kalymnos, along with the Longbottoms and Luna Lovegood who had been in Sweden. Remus and Tonks arrived a couple of hours after the Longbottoms and immediately began to create chaos with their light hearted humour.

Hélène and Mémé were in their element as they had a house load of guests to boss about in conjunction with the owner of the Ryokan, Madam Mikako. Melina enjoyed the comradeship as it reminded her of the maternal community on Kalymnos with her aunts and grandmother. Her linguistic skills were needed frequently as Madam Mikako had very limited English. Madam Uchi Sakura became part of the organization coven that was meeting regularly, giving assistance through her experience of running large scale events.

During that first week the organization process for each day was hashed out to the satisfaction of the five ladies. Hermione wanted to be part of the organizing committee but she was out voted and out gunned in the maternal stakes department. Grandpère and Hiroto were ordered to get her into a dojo and let her concentrate on her training, which they did with the assistance with Mr Kawasaki.

Harry kept to the label he gave himself a couple of weeks ago in Scotland. Dogsbody, the gopher, who did this and that to help the house party keep ticking smoothly along. It was his interaction with Phillip and Hiroto that provided him with much growth of his own personal development. The two paternal figures helped in his understanding of what a father was supposed to be and since his arrival in Japan, Harry had become quite close in particular to Phillip, with his quiet strength and solid determination.

Between training sessions, the houseguests were organised in a number activities to suit their personality. There were cultural sight tours, places of interest, garden viewing and afternoon tea parties. The tone of the activities was varied from noisy groups to quiet and intimate moments. The coven of five organisers was highly proficient at making their guests relax and have an enjoyable time.

The Ryokan's thermal bathing pools were a place of same sex comradeship each evening before dinner. The various parties would report to each other about their day and in the ladies' bathing pool, the organisers would receive congratulations on their planning. Minerva and Poppy seemed to have become younger with the stress of the recent years lifting off both women in Greece and now here in Japan. The long war had been extremely wearing on them both.

oOoOo

Tonks, Croaker and Harry, along with Grandpère and Hiroto, took Hermione to the Team GB training sessions in the third week of July, where Coach Kendal was surprised at the fitness and vitality of Hermione. Even though he had seen the reports from Jeff Coe he was shocked at how well the young champion was looking and how high her match fitness was. Mr Kawasaki from the
Japanese Kendo Federation dropped by one of the training session to see Jeff Coe, and the Hermione-corner of the dojo warmly welcomed him.

Talking to Coe later after the training session, he confirmed that Mr Kawasaki was a friend of Hermione's grandfather so they were in frequent contact. Michael Kendal could do his maths like anyone else and put the dots together. One fact plus another fact equalled two in his book, and as such he could read the back-story, namely that Jeff Coe, with the assistance of the French Grand Master D’Angers had helped to remove the previous UK coach for failing to perform.

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Kreacher and Dobby arrived from London during the third week of July and they were fussied over by Madam Mikako, who went out of her way to care for such honoured guests. It was not long after the arrival of the house elves that the international press pack arrived in Japan, aiming to track down the famous war heroine who was part of Team GB for the World Championships.

When it was realised that Harry Potter was in Japan with Hermione Granger a certain part of the press core extrapolated that they must be having an affair. Thanks to the coverage in the Daily Prophet, Molly Weasley sent one of her infamous howlers to the two former friends of Ron. It arrived during a communal breakfast and several looks of anger were observed when it was seen that Hermione was hurt to tears by the spiteful words from the red haired hag.

Hélène was beyond furious and the language between her and her mother in French about the Weasley matriarch was worse than that which would be found in a barracks. When Hermione had gone to the Team GB training session for the morning, a group of ladies gathered round to help Hélène construct a howler of her own. There were quite a few things that this mother wanted to say to the Weasley mother.

In addition to the witches in the house party, there were also several willing wizards who wanted in on this plotting, including four sons of the woman concerned for upsetting their friend. Harry suggested that they create two howlers: one where Hélène could say her piece as Hermione’s mother and one where he could express his anger at the woman himself.

With the technical advice of so many specialists, the super strength howlers were created and Griphook offered to have them delivered by the Goblin Nation to ensure that not only would they arrive quickly and there would also be a witness as to the effect their delivery had on the termagant matriarch.

When Griphook was not at dinner Hermione enquired where he was and was told by Bill that he was on a job for the Goblin nation and would be back later that night. Tonks had been clued in to the scheming so when Griphook returned that evening she had organised with Madam Mikako popcorn and the use of the dining room as a theatre.

Griphook brought his memories of the delivery of the two super howlers to the matriarch at the Weasley breakfast table and look of shock and embarrassment provided much satisfaction for all who viewed the memory projection. There were some who enjoyed the chaos and effects of the super charms produced on the woman and those closest to her, namely Ron and Ginny. Maybe in the future the matriarch would think before letting loose with her ire.
A/N: As per reviewers' requests, the details of the howlers for those who wanted to know.

Madam Molly Prewett Weasley,

Don't you ever send a howler to anyone of my family ever again. I can and will make sure you get in my dental chair without anaesthesia. You have overstepped the mark yet again. Your children leave home as soon as possible since YOU drive them away with your poor parenting and archaic attitudes. You could not even accept your own child's sexuality and his life partner. You total hypocrite. Ronald is a thick-headed waste of space that is nothing more than a walking waste-disposal unit who abandoned his best friends at the drop of a hat if public opinion was against them. The coward!

Harry was never the property of the strumpet you call Ginny. Your slag of a daughter cannot keep her legs shut. The strumpet has worked her way through Hogwarts and then some. Both your younger children are attention-seeking nymphomaniacs with their slutish courtship of the press.

You pride yourself on your maternal qualities but you fail to control your temper and your house is a filthy, disgusting, unhygienic pigsty. I would always disinfect all of Hermione's things whenever she returned from visiting you. Do not contact me or mine again as it would be unwelcome. If you threaten any of my family, I will use my drill (sound of the dentist drill).

Madam Hélène D'Angers Granger

Madam Weasley,

I wish to thank you for your kindness in the past but that does not give you the right to comment or interfere in my life. YOU have never been my MOTHER. She died for me some 15 years ago. You could never replace her and I do not appreciate your attempts to do so.

Ginevra and I are not an item and I would not touch her due to her fickle engrossment with fame. Additionally, why would I supposedly be attracted to someone who looks like my mother? That is totally disturbing.

Your youngest son deserted his so-called best friends when we needed him on more than one occasion. I have previously kept quiet about his desertion out of respect for the rest of the family, however, if he continues to spout his mouth off in the press I will be correcting his – and your – fabrications.

Please do not attempt to contact me in the future, as I do not want to associate with you or your youngest children anymore.

H.J. Potter
These two howlers were delivered at highest volume, to the total amazement of the woman concerned. Molly Weasley was shocked that she would be in receipt of howlers that were so cutting and harsh about her parenting ability. Arthur's commentary on the matter was that she should not be surprised, as it was all true and she deserved everything that had been said, before he moved into his shed.
This time Hermione was prepared and knew the routine of the World Championships. Yes, she was nervous but she had done all the preparation and Hermione had a lot more experience than she did three years ago. This time her uniform had her name on it and it fitted her.

It was with great pride that she walked out with Team GB in the opening ceremonies. Yes, she had made it to Japan for the World Championships. She had achieved a lifelong dream to compete at international level in the home of Kendo.

There in the crowds was her own personal cheer squad, comprising everyone from the house party. Jeff Coe had missed staying with the family during the last week, thanks to his need to stay with the main team contingent. Each time at practice Tonks and Croaker had accompanied her, providing a security detail. Again the two worked together provide security to the young athlete while she was competing. Harry was there as her official bag carrier and he made sure that she had everything she needed.

The first evening of competition was the traditional Kata grading process and Hermione was the second highest ranked scoring for the grading process. After the grading she now had her 5th Dan grading confirmed.

When she came back to the Ryokan that night, Ewan McDuff, the Scottish, coach had phoned her dad and given his congratulations on her performance in the first part of the competition. Apparently there was an Internet television feed and Kendoka round the world who could not get there were watching it live via satellite.

The next morning Hermione was up early, having a cup of tea and a quiet read in the Ryokan garden when she observed Professor Snape returning from a jog around the Ohara area. The young woman arranged that a tea tray be provided for him when he came into the building and the pair of them had a pleasant conversation about her educational options and how she was not sure what she wanted to do now that she had her NEWTS.

Day Two of the competition was the initial round robin bouts, as each member of one team competed against each member of every other team. It was a very long day due to the number of teams participating. Each four minute bout required Hermione to focus and control her concentration. There were some bouts that were shorter due to the "3 Bon-Shoubo" rule where Hermione clearly outclassed her opponents. But there were not enough of these bouts to make the day any shorter for Hermione. The round robin competition seemed to drag and it was a very tiring day. At the end of the day Tonks had to slide along apparate Hermione to get her back to the Ryokan as she was asleep on her feet.

Hélène and Tonks washed her down in the ladies inside bathroom and finally rinsed her off. It was only the last rinse that disturbed the exhausted girl. After drying her daughter off and badgering her into her PJs Hélène had to get Tonks’ assistance to levitate Hermione into her futon.

Severus provided a pepper up potion in the morning to help boost the energy levels of the young competitor. Due to the delays on the first day of the round robin, Hermione was able to rest at the Ryokan in the company of her friends until the afternoon session when she was due back on the competition floor.

Hermione was the top female competitor after the round robin session based on her point score, and the rest of Team GB had also done very well as the team was ranked in the top five.
It was after lunch on this, the third day of the competition, when the final top 24 competitors were selected based on their round robin point scores and the Day One Kata scores. Hermione was in first place amongst the ladies even though there was some strong competition from the Japanese and Russian top ladies.

Looking at the draw table Hermione found that she would have to work hard to be able to reach the finals as she seemed to be selected against every strong competitor while others had an easier match list in their bout draws.

With that observation, Hermione retreated into her own thoughts, using meditation to maintain a calm outlook which could quickly identify opportunities and develop her strategy on the fly to match her bout competitors' style of fighting. All her bouts on Day 3 were four minutes and it went to the judges' point scoring decisions. Hermione did not have a clear decisive win all day but she had made it through the semi final and was scheduled for the woman's final at the prime time of 7:45pm.

Suddenly it was time to maintain her composure and don her Men. Picking up her Shinai Hermione moved to her designated corner of the fighting area. With a bow to the officials and then a bow to her competitor, it was suddenly time to take the defensive stance to start the Shiai. With the commanding hand signal for 'Go!' the main match referee started the joust.

While both competitors were evenly matched, Hermione was able to slip in a strike and achieved the first Bon-Shoubo. The point was awarded and the bout went on. There! Another opportunity and Hermione achieved the second Bon-Shoubo. She just needed one more and this would be hers. Hermione Granger would be World Champion if she made the decisive final point.

Calm! Calm! She needed to control the power. Control the emotion. Look for the opening protect against the strike. Attack! And with that Hermione achieved the 3rd Bon-shoubo. In less than four minutes she had become the Ladies' World Champion Kendoka. The bout was stopped at the awarding of the third bon-shoubo.

There was the bow to the opponent, the bow to officials and the return to the players' area. Hermione could not believe that she had done it. Sitting in the players' area there were tears of joy running down her face as she removed her Men and started to take off her armour. Harry had to hold her for a bit as she was just that overwhelmed. Hermione’s best helped her to remove the rest of her armour as her hands just did not seem to work anymore. Tonks and Croaker had to step in to keep the local press back for a bit.

With a washcloth Harry cleaned up her tearstained face and got her presentable for the final presentation while the men's final was on. Coach Kendal was watching the men's final bout closely even though it was between two Japanese men. It was dependent on the final scoring for this bout whether the UK would win the overall team World Championship. There was no achievement of the 3 Bon-Shoubo and the final was into sudden death. Kendal was double and triple checking the scoring before the start of the sudden death round. Strike! Were his sums correct? Waiting, waiting, and then the tournament announcer declared that it was the presentation time and would the teams line up. Oh, just put them out of their misery thought a number of the team, while others thought based on their own calculations that Team GB had only made it to second place overall.

There were a few speeches by the officials in Japanese and some shorter ones in English. Third place for the team event was called; the Russian Federation was the third placed team. It was now make or break…. The suspense. The second place team was Japan. Oh the shock! In first place was Great Britain. The trophy was awarded and the flag was raised to the sound of "God Save our Queen." There was such pride in the team members on the dais. Everyone was presented a medallion for the team. Then it was the ladies individual presentation and Hermione Granger was the woman's world
Kendo champion. Again, after the medal presentation, the National Anthem of "God Save our Queen" rang out and the Union Jack was raised. It was in a daze that Hermione returned to the team seating area. The emotionally drained witch did not remember much about the Men's World Champion presentation other than seeing the two Japanese flags in first and second position.

Jeff Coe, Grandpère D'Angers and Hiroto, with the assistance of Tonks and Croaker, supported Hermione through the press interviews after the presentation ceremony. There were some members of the crowd who wanted her autograph and Hermione patiently gave it to many who requested it while Tonks and Croaker worked in tandem to provide crowd control for her. There were official team photos and photos calls for the press corps.

Finally, with great relief, Hermione got back to the Ryokan and a there was an instant party to celebrate her win. Between the fire whisky and the different types of Sake there was not much left of the evening and Hermione ended up welcoming the dawn sitting in the external thermal ladies pool with everyone, both male and female, all in the ladies' pool, including Madam Mikako and several bottles of warmed Sake. The grandparents and Poppy had cried off hours ago to find their beds. The water in the pool had been transfigured by Minerva to be opaque. In the milky water nobody was worried about his or her nudity in the presence of the other gender. In addition to the transfigured water Minerva had charmed a screened entrance for each sex so they could enter and leave the pool with their dignity intact. Filius had charmed a couple of floating seats for himself, Griphook, Kreacher and Dobby. Everyone involved in the house party was involved in the celebration.

The Ryokan cooks and maids served breakfast to the rowdy group of pickled prunes before encouraging them into their beds to sleep off the booze. It was about 2pm when Hermione’s grandmother awakened her presenting a vial of hangover potion. It was time to do the English press interviews. There was a call from Team GB hotel and she needed to bring Jeff Coe with her. After more hangover potion had been consumed by Tonks, Croaker and Coe, the group apparated into the hotel to get the press interviews over and done with.

On the return to Gyozanen, Mr Kawasaki was there to take Hermione and Harry down the road to one of the Ohara shrines where there was a couple of wizarding journalists who were selected to do the interviews for the local and international wizarding and sporting columns. Once they had done this press call the holiday could begin and the pair apparated away from the shrine back to the Ryokan. The decision to use Gyozanen for their house party was one of the best things they could have done Harry decided, as it allowed the group to balance between the two worlds and provided the privacy required so that all could let down their hair easily.
A Wizarding Milestone

After the party for her tournament win Hermione was glad that Melina and Hiroto had organised Harry's 17th birthday dinner at Sumiya. This historic Ageya would provide a banquet dinner for Harry's guests, along with the sourcing of geisha to provide the entertainment.

Since the party was for a wizarding 17th birthday, the restaurant asked the leading magical Okiya to send a couple of Taiyu to lead the entertainment along with a large party of geisha and their understudy student maikos. This party was likely to be a well remembered historical event it was felt that maiko should be in attendance, particularly since there were only a small number of magicals entering into the difficult career of geisha.

Harry's birthday party had the house party guests and others to make a very large crowd totalling over 70 guests. There were some guests who portkeyed in just for the evening with goblin portkeys. The guest included the former Gryffindor Quidditch team players, sans the younger Weasleys. Also present were DA members who had survived the war and Orders of Phoenix members including Arthur Weasley.

It was in a quiet moment when Harry went up to Arthur and quietly apologised for the trouble that had occurred between him and part of the man's family. Arthur was not surprised as he was concerned that Molly had lost some of her tolerance with the death of her brothers during the first war. The pureblood wizard had not been happy with his wife's decision to shun their second born son, so there was marital strife between the husband and wife.

Arthur Weasley felt responsible for Harry's issues with Molly, Ron and Ginny as the wizard had not expressed his opinion fully in the past. It was his avoidance of conflict with his wife that had led to the situation where she did not respect his viewpoint in their marriage and thus ran roughshod over his wishes. Arthur finally got to congratulate Charlie on his bonding to Viktor and they arranged regular contact. Since Arthur was not living at the Burrow but rather in his shed, the Twins promptly offered to put their father up in their flat.

It was a very good party. The teenagers and the majority of the guests needed the next day to recover from the event. The house party guests all returned to their various original ports of call. On the 2nd of August the Grangers, D'Angers and Kitaguchis all went out for a quiet goodbye dinner before Harry and Hermione set off on their magical gap year. With the assistance of the Grangers, the teenagers had an itinerary of sites that they were going to visit in conjunction with the Potter House elves.

With a magical backpack each they set of the next day with a portkey to Cambodia and the first stage of their gap year. Harry and Hermione had arranged predefined meet up weeks with Hermione's family as well as a dojo tour of Northern Japan in November so that Hermione could qualify for Scotland and the Six Nations. Harry also had to stay in contact with the UK magical community to ensure that the Padfoot Manor project was up and running, plus maintaining his business interests. The pair of teenagers were lucky that their travel arrangements over the next couple of months included goblin port keys to facilitate their journeys as they did a fair amount of travelling between various sites.

Hermione's parents had purchased a machiya round the corner from the Kitaguchi's and were proceeding to renovate the historical building to make it a luxury home base for the family in Asia as they could see that Hermione would always have something to do with Japan through her continuing...
Kendoka practice.

During their journey, the two gap year travellers had discovered a lot about themselves. It was sometime near Hermione's birthday in September when the intelligent witch had confronted Harry on a beach near Goa about his sexuality. It was then he confessed his confusion and how he was equally attracted to some males and females. Hermione had a long discussion about how she would always support him and there was nothing wrong with being bisexual.

The week after this discussion they met up with the Grangers for a week in Bali. The Grangers brought a parcel from Madam Sakura that contained some literature to help both teenagers on the next stage of their journey to meet up with her extensive network of contacts through the region. The two young house elves, Fern and Flora, enjoyed visiting Bali and seeing all the wonderful temples, craftwork and dancing before they left for a short visit to Japan with the Grangers when they returned to their machiya refurbishment.

It was after three months of travelling through South East Asia that the duo returned to Japan to meet up again with the Grangers and Kitaguchis in Kyoto, as it was now time for Hermione to complete her scheduled dojo tour to enable her to train for the Scottish Championships. As part of their dojo tour, Remus and Tonks came out from the UK to be active participants in the competitive tour as regular sparring partners for the Ladies' World Champion. Hermione was watching the tension between Tonks, Remus and Harry and worked out that her best friend was attracted to both of them and unsure about the situation as he did not want to impinge on their relationship, plus he had to get over being attracted to someone who had seen him in his nappies.

While the wonder pair had been gallivanting round on their gap year it appeared that Professor Snape was having a gap year of his own and spending it on Kalymnos with his extended family while undertaking research. Kingsley could not get him off the island and there was no hurry for him to return to Hogwarts as he felt there was some issues with Albus’ continued Headship. Severus had taken all his backlog of leave, stating that he needed time to heal from his injuries. Poppy had backed up his claims when Albus confronted her about the health of the Potions Master. Personally Severus had time to reflect on the running of the school and he felt that it was time that Albus handed the reins over to someone like Minerva as he had been too busy being a general rather than an educator.

Madam Uchi Sakura's network of friends and contacts had helped the teenage pair meet a number of interesting individuals and observe their traditional lifestyle – both magical and non-magical – in the countries and communities they had visited. For example, in Thailand they had visited representatives of the main seven native tribal groups where the pair worked on a range of community projects to provide education facilities within these traditional communities.

Uchi's contacts provided Hermione with mental and magical stimulation as she was learning something new each day. The visits to the various traditional practitioners enabled the teenagers to develop their magical knowledge and understanding of the use of magic within the daily lives of the communities they were visiting. The time that they spent with traditional healers, herbalists and magical practitioners enabled Hermione and Harry to develop their own magic skills and develop a range of new ideas that they could bring back to the UK.

While on the Kendo tour of the northern Japanese Islands, the pair received an invitation to a magical bonding for Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood at Longbottom Manor. The timing of the
bonding was during the Hogwarts Christmas break as Neville was Professor Sprout's Herbology apprentice. With the assistance of Kreacher, Harry was planning a Christmas celebration at Black Manor. A number of invitations had gone out and the mobile phone conversations between Hélène, Mémé and Kreacher had ensured that the house party organisation was following the D'Angers standard. Goblin portkeys were arranged to bring in the international guests.

The adapted mobile phone pilot was continuing, as they wanted as much real usage a possible. It was hoped that during the Christmas house party that the various users would report back any specific concerns that they had in relation to the product, as by then there would have been a total of six months' trial by the various users.

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On Kalymnos, Uchi Sakura visited the Snapes in mid October. It was during a conversation with Anastasia and YiaYia one afternoon that Uchi informed the women they should visit their Japanese family in the spring for the Cherry Blossom Festival. YiaYia managed to get some time with Uchi by herself when walking along the beach below the white washed walls of her estate.

"So, Grandmother?" intoned Uchi hoping to draw the elderly witch into speaking plainly.

"So, Matchmaker, are you advising that you are going to make a match?" responded YiaYia.

"He knows his match it is just a case of timing now. She has finished her NEWTS and both of them need to work out what and where they are going post war," advised Uchi.

"It is Miss Granger then that you are thinking of for him?" inquired YiaYia.

"Yes, as you already know, old mother. Your own family and contacts with his friends and colleagues have all identified that she is the best match for his magic and his personality. He is attracted to her and she is attracted to him. Minerva has confirmed that there has been an awareness of his attraction with her for sometime but he has not followed up due to her age and the fact that she was his student. Oh, there will be clashes between the two, mark my words, as both of them are very stubborn, but there also will be fireworks in the bedroom when they make up," warned Uchi.

"As long as that passion gives me more grandchildren I am quite happy to sit back and light the fuse," stated YiaYia bluntly. She knew that she only had a few more years before she would cross onto the next journey and she would like to see the start of the next generation of her family.

"One way you can help this match is if you can control Anastasia as she is sniping at him way too frequently and if we are not careful he will get petulant on us when we want him to be amenable. We have to lead him towards Miss Granger rather than shoving the concept of marriage and the necessity of producing the next generation down his throat," guided Uchi, trying to get the magical match of Hermione and Severus to follow her grand plan.

"What is he thinking of doing next year?" inquired Uchi, wondering if there was any further way of getting the pair to interact together.

"We're not sure. Severus doesn't want to return to teaching full time and I can see that it places too much stress on him. This time where he has been here on the island has been good for his soul, as he seems more settled with who he is and what he has done in the past. The time here has also allowed him to work on some research that he had been aiming to do for years and I wouldn't be surprised if he makes another leap in the development of a treatment for Lycanthropy." The last major development had been Severus' research as part of achieving his potions Mastery.
In the UK there were major changes being undertaken within the magical community. Post war there was considerable reflection on the division within the community and how to address the causes of this division. Trials were heard and the Daily Prophet got a serious competitor in the form of the newly re-established Quibbler. Luna had taken editorial control of the paper and with her leadership the papers' readership and staff numbers had increased. The trip to Sweden and then onto Japan had expanded this pureblood witch's horizons and she had collaborated with Fred and George Weasley and the Goblin Nation to implement the modern magical approach to her paper.

Madam Longbottom was particularly efficient in lobbying for change. Her trip to Japan and the exposure to the equality displayed in the house party had exposed her to how modern society could be. After the sacrifices of her own son and his wife and others such as Harry had given to the UK magical community, it was time that they changed. The elderly witch could see that society had been stifled by the pureblood political agenda. Augusta became a major supporter of the new minister, Kingsley Shacklebolt, in the Wizengamot.

It was during a school board visit to Hogwarts talking to Minerva in September that Augusta Longbottom started to be concerned about the quality of education that the so-called premier institution was giving. Neville had started his apprenticeship under Professor Sprout so she had even more insider information than before but it was when she was able to have a quiet cup of tea with Minerva that she became greatly concerned. There was dissent amongst the senior members of staff. Severus Snape had not returned for the academic year due to his recovery from war injuries and Slytherin was in total chaos. The accident reporting rate for potions was excessively high and Poppy was threatening to eviscerate the temporary Potions Master if another potions related injury ended up in her infirmary.

There were new members on the school board replacing those who had been blocking change due to allegiance to the pureblood agenda and losses during the last 12 months of the war. The replacement staff that the Headmaster had employed for the positions that were vacant were simply not up to standard. Augusta had visited the muggle studies lesson to learn more about the society she had been exposed to thanks to her grandson's friendship with the smartest witch of her age and she did not even recognise what was being taught. It was totally out of date and it was factually incorrect. With further investigation she discovered that the new muggle studies teacher was a pureblood that had only passed the required NEWT level many years ago. The curriculum was no longer leading the way and this would not help the development of a more tolerant society who was able to cope with the challenges of the future.

Neville on his weekly visit for tea on Sunday reported that the muggleborn numbers were down at the school and it appeared that many former students had transferred to American institutions due to the lack of opportunity and the poor quality of the education they were receiving from the school. It was time for a radical change to occur. Just how was she going to get the reforms implemented at Hogwarts and lead her Alma Mater back to its former level of prestige?

The London Health Facilities set up by Phoenix Leisure had a core membership from the Ministry of Magic that reflected the modernisation approach that was occurring within key departments, such as the Aurors from the MLE and in the Department of Mysteries. It was interesting to note the increased membership of the Phoenix gym by muggle members from the various parts of the shadow community. It was through the interaction with pure muggles that the pureblood witches and wizards began to have their horizons expanded. Cross-links between the magical and muggle government agencies started to develop and there was greater sharing of information.
The Weasley Twins, as part of the Phoenix Leisure Board, organised a deal for the employees of the Ministry of Magic where they had a subsided gym membership scheme at the London premises. It was interesting that outside Magical Law Enforcement and the Department of Mysteries, most of the uptake could be attributed to muggleborn magicals. From this membership, muggleborn witches and wizards in the wider community started to enquire about joining the gymnasium. Soon the Twins were looking for a second and third location for additional premises. From the phone conversations with Harry, he was keen for the next premises to be located in Hogsmeade to be close to Hogwarts, as he wanted to provide gym facilities for the school in addition to the need to find premises close to the Ministry of Magic to support all the ministry office workers.

There was a building being prepared in Hogsmeade for a January opening. With the assistance of the Goblin nation and Griphook as Harry's personal investment banker, Fred and George were looking at other properties in and around London to add to the gymnasium portfolio.

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Taiyu = premier ranked geisha

Okiya = house that the geisha works under contract from
The wanderers returned to the UK in mid December. Hermione Granger visited the Phoenix Dojo and used the facilities at the Phoenix Leisure Centre every day. Hermione also flooed up to the University of Glasgow Kendo club and met up with old friends. There were some new members who were quite excited to see the World Champion and at the end of the dojo session, Hermione found that she had to sign quite a few autographs.

Over coffee in the Sports Centre Café Hermione was caught up with what had been happening at the University Club and how they seemed to get more members after her win was announced. It was only good for the sport and Hermione found that she could easily fit in with the persona of a university student. As she was showing Harry round the campus she passed the student bar on the way to the Library.

"Hiya, bonnie lassie. Where have yah been, girl?" was a query from the darkly dressed large man. Harry automatically went on the defensive alert.

"I've been travelling for the last couple of months. I've just got back in the country," she advised the security guard, who she recognised from her run in with the rugby club.

"Congratulations on the Championship, lass. I saw it in the university newsletter. You coming back to train more regularly at the gym now that you're back?" he inquired.

"I'm not sure what I'm doing at the moment. Everything is crazy and I've taken a break from study," she advised him.

"Pity! I could use you with the current rugby First 15 as they need to be reminded that they aren't the cocks of the walk that they think they are. Let me know when you are next coming into the dojo cause I would like to see you in action under lights, girl, rather than in the dark," advised the large Glaswegian.

"I will be here for the Scottish Championships in January. Look, make sure you visit the Sports Centre and I'll make sure you get some tickets in thanks for your help that night," she advised him.

"No, lassie, you helped us out that night so don't you be worrying about thanking us," he responded.

"No, thanks for your help that night with the police. I was in a bit of a state," responded the girl thinking back to her emotions on the night.

"I reckon the fella with you would have gutted the lot of them if they had touched you. He had that look. So you dealing with them saved a lot of paperwork, and blood is such a pain in the neck to get out of clothes and off the pavement. So you did us a favour that night," he advised her.

"Well. Umm. We'll be off now and don't forget to check at the Sports Centre desk for those tickets in the New Year," she advised pulling Harry with her to go down to the library, feeling totally embarrassed about the whole incident.

"What was that about?" asked Harry as he was curious.

"Oh, I had a little argument with some drunk rugby players one night on the way to the library after practice and I convinced them not to play with me," she explained, hoping she would not have to go into too much more detail about the event and the fact that it was Severus Snape who was with her that night.
By the 20th of December, Black Manor was starting to fill up with houseguests. With the assistance of Hélène and Mémé's, directions Harry and the Potter house elves decorated the house. Melina and Hiroto arrived with their two sons, Keji and Akio, Minerva came down from Scotland with Filius and Poppy, the Krums and the Weasley-Krums arrived from the continent, and Tonks along with Remus had joined the household during the day from their residences in the nearby buildings.

After watching the interaction between Harry, Remus and Tonks; Phillip stepped up and interfered. He pulled Remus aside over a quiet drink and asked him what were his intentions.

"What are you talking about?" inquired Remus wondering what Hermione's father meant.

"Remus – Harry and Tonks. Is it either or? Or is it both?" Phillip bluntly, stated to get to the heart of the matter quickly and plainly.

"What are you talking about?" snapped Remus as he was unsure himself.

"Looking through the books here in the Library and talking to Uchi Sakura, apparently triads are not that uncommon in the wizarding community. You survived the 1970s so you should have been exposed to flexible relationships. You need to settle this confusion between the three of you. Harry won't as he is too young and he respects your authority as the last remaining member of the Marauders. He is attracted to you, we all can see it. Harry is also attracted to Tonks. You can see that Tonks is attracted to both of you so she would be up to sharing Harry with you. According to Uchi, it's down to you and your inner werewolf. So, Mr Wolf, are you going to get both Red Riding Hood and the forester?" inquired Phillip before taking another sip of his scotch.

"Why are you so interested in Harry, Tonks and my personal lives and relationships?" inquired Remus, who was slightly irate at being spoken to in this manner.

"My daughter is his best friend and thus my wife and I view him as another child in our family. I care for the lad and I don't like to see him hurt. He has been hurting for quite a while and the last couple of days back here in the UK have made him realise that he doesn't want to choose between you and Tonks. Harry doesn't want to interfere in your supposed relationship with Tonks as he's worried that it would hurt the other if he followed up on his attraction to either one of you. So each time he sees you he is hurt and that hurts my family," he advised the werewolf. Phillip then stood up and poured another scotch for himself and Remus.

"You haven't hooked up with Tonks yet because something is holding you back. So if you want them both you will have to seduce them together," was the paternal advice. "Just make your move soon because we want him happy." After finishing his scotch Phillip left the brooding man to think. Hopefully this stress would stop soon for Harry.

Madam Sakura arrived on Christmas Eve just after lunchtime and there was much gossip in the kitchen as Winky, Mémé and the other women in the household put the finishing touches to the preparation of Christmas Eve Dinner.

Everyone was called together at 6pm to decorate the tree and Harry was given the Star to put on the top. Mémé ushered everyone in to the dining room to eat. Harry was happier than he had been in a long time as friends and family surrounded him. After dinner Mémé sent everyone upstairs to finish wrapping presents with the command that all gifts were to be under the tree at a reasonable hour.
It was later in the evening when Remus, with the assistance of eggnog and some mistletoe, finally acted upon Phillip's instructions and did something about his situation with Harry and Tonks, while wrapping presents with the pair of them in Harry's room.

The next morning there was a particularly excited witch that was rounding up people for breakfast and the opening of the presents. After knocking on Harry's door and hearing no response Hermione put her head in the door to see three people lying in Harry's bed. Remus and Tonks were on either side of Harry and he was sandwiched between the two of them in a tight embrace. The smile on Hermione's face reached megawatt proportions.

The witch carefully negotiated the room around to Remus' side of the bed and gently roused him before advising him he had five minutes to get his butt downstairs with the other two or she would be sending in the big guns in to get them out of bed.

"Phillip?" was the sleepy query.

"No worse, Mother and Mémé," was the tart response as she straightened up before slapping him on the backside on her way out the room. As she closed the door she heard some alacrity in the movements and attempts to wake the other two and get dressed quickly.

Everyone appeared front and centre downstairs for the Christmas gift presentation ceremony. The house elves had brought all the presents for the wards of Padfoot Manor under the tree so there was a large abundance of gifts to be distributed.

Andi Tonks had ushered her wards through to Black Manor via the interlinking corridor that connected the two manors. There was much merriment as the presents were passed out by Dobby and Winky in their Mr and Mrs Claus costumes. There were some secret smiles and grins amongst the new triad but they were focused on making sure that all the Padfoot Manor wards were having a Christmas day they would enjoy.

There was a large luncheon with all the guests. It was about 3pm when Andi Tonks commanded her wards back to Padfoot Manor for the video she had organised for them.

Phillip made the comment, "we have just enough time to hear the Queen's speech and then it will be time for a siesta," before turning to the new trio "and I mean siesta time." This message was followed with a glare and the members of the new relationship were all alarmed. There was a wave of merriment from Hermione at the looks that the three of them pulled.

Boxing Day at Black Manor was a crazy mad dash of trying to get all the bonding guests dressed and pressed on time. Mémé was in her element, bossing people left, right and centre. Eventually all of them got to Longbottom Manor to see the bonding ceremony witnessing the commitment of Neville and Luna to each other. Charlie and Viktor were just as sentimental as many of the females who watched the ceremony with damp eyes, as they remembered their own ceremony just the year before.

The London house party continued until the New Year and it was an interesting time within the friends and family's dynamic adapting to the new relationship. The feedback from the adapted mobile
phone users was highly useful and there were research and development meetings with the Weasley Twins to produce test variations for the Goblin Nation and for Magical Law Enforcement.

Hermione defended her Scottish title yet again with her support army in tow in the first week of January. The University of Glasgow had some strong local supporters for the young champion. In the crowd Hermione recognised a couple of faces from the Student Union Bar Security Team. Like the Barmy Army for the England Cricket team, Hermione's supporters were getting press for their consistent presence and their diehard fanaticism for her. Normally having her supporters there was settling and comforting but this time it was disconcerting for Hermione as she did not feel settled while competing and she could not seem to find her balance. What was the cause of her equilibrium disturbance? Hermione just did not know what was the cause.
With the unsettled feeling from the Scottish Championships, Hermione could almost swear that trouble was brewing for her on the horizon even though she did not have much faith in divination. Harry's houseguests had all returned back to work and their normal lives and only Hermione's parents with Melina and Hiroto Kitaguchi were still in residence at Black Manor.

Harry and Hermione were supposed to be continuing on their magical gap year but the new situation with the triad made the plans for the next couple of months seem to be in doubt. Hermione had an appointment in Diagon Alley with the Weasley Twins to discuss further research and development requirements and, thinking her father would like a father/daughter outing to the store, brought him with her. That was when Hermione ran into trouble in the shape of Ronald Weasley. Phillip had not seen that particular redhead in a number of years but he instantly remembered the loose cannon behaviour.

Hermione had just nipped across to the bookstore to pick up her order, leaving Phillip discussing other business opportunities with Fred and George where there could be a crossover between the muggle and magical community. She had almost made it back to the front entrance of the store when Ronald Weasley accosted her on the footpath. Trouble had been brewing since last May and the situation between Molly and Arthur just made it worse.

In Ron's eyes it was her being unfeminine with her continued fighting with a stick and her stupid ideas about having a career that had contributed to the lack of relationship between them. The idiotic wizard had seemed to forget that there really had not been a friendship between the two but rather toleration by the witch for the last couple of years. Added to his illusions about the witch being his, there was Harry's so-called desertion of Ginny, which somehow was blamed on Hermione and her muggle ways.

There was some fear in Ron's hysteria that his former best friends were more than best friends. So with the combined hotheads of Ron, Ginny and Molly all feeding each other's anger, Ron exploded with anger upon seeing Hermione for the first time in months.

Hermione chose not to make a scene in public and attempted to get off the street away from the explosion of rage that was waiting to happen when she realised it was Ron blocking her path. That's when the gloves came off as Molly was not far behind her youngest son. Ron made the fatal mistake of grabbing Hermione to haul her back so that she had to listen to his rant. Hermione reacted with all her training and promptly dealt with the issue by putting the wizard on the floor so she could get away. It was then that hothead Molly struck throwing a number of hexes at the young witch's back.

Phillip had been watching the store window and recognising Ron, had alerted the Weasley Twins that trouble was brewing outside. Fred and George managed to get out on the street and subdued their mother but it was Hermione who needed medical attention at St Mungo's and the whole sorry story was in the Daily Prophet.

As an outcome of this incident Molly and Ron were both charged with breach of the peace and given restraining orders in relation to Hermione. The legislative recourse available to Hermione was biased against her blood status. The Quibbler ran a number of stories about the inequality and unfairness of the legislative situation. Madam Longbottom was a leading advocate working to address the inequalities but Molly Weasley basically got away with a minor slap on the wrist thanks to being a pure blooded witch.
To get away from the fishbowl feeling of London, Hermione in the company of the Grangers and the Kitaguchis, travelled to Ireland and then onto Belgium. The primary reason for the journeys to both countries was that there were two university open days that Hermione wanted to attend.

While her own parents could give her good advice about muggle university they really did not have the background knowledge that enabled them to comment or provide a rational discussion about the magical university options. Hermione had taken the Kitaguchis and her parents to open days for UK magical universities but truth be told she was not very impressed with the institutions as they appeared to be too hide bound with the politics of blood and the course options were very constricted in their educational style.

In Ireland they visited Trinity College in Dublin and looked at the options available for a young witch with Hermione’s academic achievement. It was a significantly impressive institution and yet there was something about the courses on offer and the system of teaching that did not enthuse her. It was a better option than the UK institutions but Hermione was starting to fear that she would have to look at the US or India if she could not find a European option.

On the other hand, the University of Ghent in Belgium even though it was just as ancient as Trinity, felt more reflective of what Hermione was looking for in a higher education institution. This university had been affected by the crossroad effect of recent history of the European Union and the effects of the Death Eater war. It was during Voldemort's attempts to spread his domination into Europe that this institution had lost its top management in a Death Eater attack. As a result of the loss of top management, a younger middle management team had been promoted in the time of crisis to run the organisation and this had resulted in considerable modernisation of the magical university in-line with its muggle counterpart.

If Hermione decided to study at Ghent she had a number of courses available to her that interested her, plus she would be relatively close to Paris and London. As Brussels was not too far from Ghent she had an international airport that meant that she could travel very quickly to a number of locations. There were additional factors that made this university very attractive to the witch, such as the Kendo Club and standing of the University of Ghent Dojo.

It was while in Ghent when Hermione received an urgent visit from Unspeakable Croaker. He needed her to do a favour for the Dame. Thanks to her connections with the Kitaguchis and her current lack of commitments it was felt that using the cover of her magical gap year and travelling with Melina, Hermione could do a little job in Greece.

It was just a look, see and report task and they already had the cover in place. Melina was excited to help Hermione in this task as she could take her to Greece and they could go and visit Kalymnos and her YiaYia. After doing the Unspeakable work Melina was excited to be able to take Hélène and Phillip to see the traditional family life that she had grown up in, all the while further exposing Hermione and Severus to each other. If they all got to see Severus in a non-stressful situation it would be all well and good, thought Melina.

The look, see and report job for the Unspeakable Dan Croaker on the behalf of the Dame took almost two weeks and it was finished by the start of February. During their time in Greece, Hermione had completed a mainland dojo tour using her cover as the current European, World and Scottish Woman's champion to support the surveillance activities she was undertaking. After reporting her findings to Unspeakable Croaker using the adapted mobile phone Hermione was advised to move on to the next travel location and the Dame would take it from there.

It was time to go to Kalymnos!
Hermione and the Grangers had a wonderful time with Melina's YiaYia during their two weeks on Kalymnos. It was the end of the winter and they were all waiting for the break of the cold weather and the start of spring. Aunt Anastasia was apparently very busy running the various estate businesses that included some agriculture (mainly citrus growing), traditional crafts and a small fishing fleet, so she was not able to be a driver or tour guide. Melina's formidable aunt was mainly seen in the evenings.

Since Severus was living in his own beach cottage on the estate and working in the lab far too much, according to his YiaYia, so he was roped into being an additional driver and tour guide for Melina and her guests.

From a number of discussions on the veranda in the afternoon with both Hermione and Hiroto, it appeared that the Potions Master was working on extending the research ideas he had been previously working on for a werewolf cure. There had been some significant developments last Easter and the effectiveness of the Wolfsbane had been improved but more needed to be done for a final cure of this dreadful disease to be achieved.

Hélène Granger was highly impressed with the intellect of the dark haired man on their trip to Chorio. During the drive Severus Snape had discussed a number of scientific subjects with Hermione and her and then when they got to Kasto Chrysocheiras the potions master was able to discuss the artistic and cultural heritage of the site. Severus was a well rounded man and Hélène had a detailed discussion about the design and development of the Byzantine castle and the activities of the Knights of St John during the Crusades.

During the two weeks with Melina's family, Phillip had enjoyed fishing from the beach with Hiroto and Severus on a number of occasions and it had given him an opportunity to make some observations about the former spymaster. Phillip went back into his normal reserved shell that he used to observe closely Severus and Hermione's interaction with each other.

While walking back to the main estate house, Phillip was able to question Severus about his plans for the future including if he was going back to full-time teaching at Hogwarts. The man explained some of his doubts and the fact he was taking his time to look at the opportunities he had available.

Phillip had remained very quiet during their stay with Melina's extended family and closely observed the Potions Master. Severus was not openly courting Hermione but Phillip could observe the mutual attraction between the two with the mutual respect and intellectual friendship they shared. After fishing on the beach one afternoon Phillip asked Hiroto to go for a walk.

"So, Hiroto. Is Melina's family going to push for something between the two?" Phillip queried the man who had married into the Kalymnian family.

"If we were doing the Omiai, Madam Sakura would be here to keep an eye on matters, so I don't know. The visit was an opportunity rather than a planned invitation so I would say that the formal opening moves of the Omiai have not yet begun," advised Hiroto.

"Will we even know if the formal negotiations have started?" inquired Phillip as he felt that it had started in a way, in the way they had interacted with YiaYia and Anastasia.

"I think, my friend, that you will have to wait and see. It is interesting that YiaYia has been able to spend so much quiet time with us as normally the extended family would be around the estate house as well. The older family would have been here most afternoons and they seem to have been ordered away to give you space," observed Hiroto, making a comparison from the last two times he had
visited the island and stayed with YiaYia.

Phillip came to understand what Hiroto meant about the extended family on the last Saturday of their stay when a large posse of older women invaded the house in the morning not long after breakfast. It was a case of getting out of the way and staying out of the way. Sitting on the kitchen veranda, Phillip had to chuckle when YiaYia ordered Hélène, Hermione and Melina onto tasks before turning round and advising that Hiroto and himself should walk down to Severus' cottage to say out of the way. Some net fishing would be a good idea.

Severus was sitting on his veranda with a coffee and a paper when he observed the two exiled men walking down the beach top path towards his abode. With a flick of his wand the kettle was refilled and the coffee was set to brew, while two settings exited the cupboard and found their way to the table.

"Looking for sanctuary are you?" asked the man with a hearty laugh. "Sit," he ordered before asking, "do you want some of the papers? What have you been ordered to do?"

"It was suggested we go net fishing," advised Hiroto.

Severus then pulled out a tide chart book and proceeded to look at the specific details for the day and their regional location. "Well, we have about five hours before we can manage a net down the beach and there are only the three of us. I am expecting some of the uncles later today so we can do that then. How do you feel about pottering round my lab for a few hours?" inquired Severus of the two.

?? seemed to be the feeling of two visitors and so they found things to occupy themselves with in his lab. The time seemed to fly when YiaYia arrived with a luncheon dish and disturbed them. It appeared to be a stop and go visit by the older woman who basically called out in Greek and was gone before they disengaged from the various activities they were working on.

"Lunch. It appears we are getting fed," advised Severus translating the rapid fire message before banking a cauldron fire and setting a timer. With a quick clean up, the lab was ready for another session.

The three of them had enjoyed a quiet luncheon and were doing the clean up when an older man appeared at the cottage calling for Severus. It was Uncle Alexi advising that the uncles were gathering to pull a net down the beach. Alexi sat and talked on a variety of topics with Hiroto and Phillip while Severus finished up the cauldron he had been working on before lunch.

As they were about to leave the cottage, Alexi went to a cupboard on the veranda and pulled out two guitar type cases. Alexi handed one case to Severus and took one for himself. Phillip was curious how a guitar case would help in pulling a fishing net down a beach so it was with gentle comradeship that the four set off to the beach meeting.

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Down on the beach directly below the estate house the doors, had been opened onto a large cave that was used as a boat shed and net storage locker. It was also used as an informal taverna when there was a gathering of men. The beach had net mending equipment set up and it appeared that there were several nets needing repair. After several friendly "Yasous," Phillip found himself being sat at a table with a pair of pliers, a whetstone and a whole pile of lures.

He was then given a choice of beer or ouzo or retsina by an uncle who seemed to speak English with a very strong Australian accent. Phillip decided to play safe and go for a beer. "So, Phil, me boy. You going to sharpen the hooks for us today?" he was advised by his Ocker Greek instructor after he
had placed a cold beer on the table for Phillip. His instructor put him to work, while joining him at the table with another set of pliers and a whetstone.

Hiroto had been roped into checking a net and marking where there were holes needing repair. It was then that Phillip spotted Severus joining them at a nearby table after drying his feet off with a towel. He had been in the boathouse earlier when they arrived, dropping off his guitar case before going out to help with an outside task.

Looking out from the boathouse and onto the beach area, Phillip observed that a net was pegged out at the other end of the bay area of the beach with a boat in the water holding the end steady. There was a fire on the beach where the land based net watchers were based. Alexi advised Severus something in Greek and the man retrieved his guitar case where he proceeded to play bouzouki tunes, as per the request of the workers. Phillip got into the swing of the sharpening work with his instructor. The conversation turned to soccer as the Greek Australian called the noble game of football. It turned out he was sitting with a Liverpool fan. Just to stir the pot, Phillip mentioned he liked the Blues (Everton) and the discussion was on for young and old round the other tables where the various males were all doing fishing related chores.

There was a chuckle from Severus and a nod acknowledging the hit that had been made with delight. The lure pile seemed to quickly dissipate with comradeship, beer, conversation and musical accompaniment. Soon it seemed that Severus, following a signal from the boat, put his bouzouki away, took his shoes and socks off again and rolled up his trouser legs. "It's time to pull the net, Phil, so get them brilliant white pegs out," the Ocker Uncle, who apparently was known as Eli, advised.

After following Severus' lead in relation to his clothing, Phillip joined the group assembling down at the beach fire. After feeling the cold sand under his feet Phillip, was not looking forward to getting wet. It was then that a number of wands appeared and the net was dragged down the beach towards the boathouse cave and its boat ramp. The boat moved slowly but slightly ahead of the beach end and there were a couple of rowboats in the water coming up behind the net.

When the larger boat reached the ramp, magic was used to bring its end of the net up to the beach. The line had become a half circle and now the manpower was used to haul the net in. The ramp group brought in the net volume while the fire end of the net were holding the line, slowly making the net arc smaller and starting to pull the load up the beach. Suddenly the fish trapped in the net confines realised that they were trapped and there was a flash of fish attempting to flee. The net men, rowboats and the magicians using their wands all worked together to hold the load. The catch was brought up the ramp while the boats were beached.

With the many men present the catch was quickly processed and the bounty was divided up into baskets, which were named. The larger fishing boat was pulled up the ramp onto a trailer and covered. The boathouse cave was packed away so that it no longer looked like a taverna. All the repaired nets were stowed and the beach was cleared of the presence of industry. A last warm drink was served after shoes and socks were returned to cold legs. The baskets were divided up between the named individuals and the groups of men walked up the beach path and disappeared into the tree line.

Those men who were not carrying baskets up the hill were found to be setting tables out along with the string of lights when Phillip, Hiroto, Alexi and Severus brought up the basket for the estate house. Phillip and Hiroto were carrying the guitar cases from earlier while the basket load was shared between Alexi and Severus. YiaYia quickly ordered them around and they suddenly found that they were spreading the estate house portion of the catch out on a veranda table where decisions were being made about the cooking options. All too soon the four men found they had joined the cookhouse activities amongst the throng of women preparing the fish dishes that were to be added to
the evening meal.

After completing the fish dishes preparation YiaYia ordered the male visitors up to the showers. It had been noted that the number of women in the house had decreased until it was just Anastasia, Melina, Hélène, YiaYía, Hermione and Maria, who was Alexi's wife, bustling around the kitchen area.

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During the party that evening in the courtyard Hermione had to stop herself several times from staring too closely at her former Potions Master and his easy manner with his extended family. The last two weeks had shown her another side to the complex man who she valued as an intellectual friend. Not only did Phillip and Hélène notice Hermione's distraction but also the wise old eyes of YiaYía followed the young girl as well. There was a command from the regal woman for some dance music and Severus was ordered to dance with the young lass. Quite a few heads nodded and commented on what a lovely couple the pair made, while the pair in question were both heartily embarrassed by the attention they had gathered thanks to YiaYía's order.

"Don't listen to the old biddies. Just enjoy the music, Hermione. This always happens when there are younger people around. It's just the way of life for them to gossip," advised Severus before he left her to dance with an Aunt. Hermione found that she did not get a chance to sit for long as every male soon partnered her, making sure she was not left out of the dancing. It was a relief for Hermione when she got a dance with her father.

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It was with sad farewells that the visitors departed from Kalymnos the next day back to London, thanks to a couple portkeys arranged by Head Unspeakable Dan Croaker. After the departure of the visitors there appeared to be a blanket of unnatural quietness in the main estate house and a sense of life being too quiet. Severus found that he had to fight the boredom by throwing himself into his lycanthropy research.
Nakōdo Meeting

It was strange for Hermione to be at the Black Manor, as she just did not know how she fitted in with Harry's new relationship. While it was good for him, the young woman felt like a spare wheel in the household. There was a short debrief at the Department of Mysteries on the return of the Kalymnos tour party but by the end of the first week in London, Hermione had convinced her family to visit the Loire estate and to review the University at Angers as a possible post secondary place for her.

The Grangers and Harry saw Melina and Hiroto off back to Kyoto during that first week in London and time at the Loire estate gave Hermione some breathing space. Hermione returned to regular training with Jérôme at the local university dojo. The problem was Hermione was lost in the routine. March resulted in several groups of visitors coming out to the estate on different occasions. Harry, Tonks and Remus came out for long weekends from London about once a fortnight. The triad were always accompanied by other friends who were invited out by Grandpère and Mémé D'Angers to expand out the weekend house party numbers, such as the young Longbottom couple, the Matron Longbottom and Minerva. Members of the Order, such as Kingsley, and others like their new friend Dan Croaker, were also invited out. The Weasley Twins came out one weekend and Phillip laughed his head off at the mischief they got up to. Charlie and Viktor also visited one weekend when Viktor had a match in Paris.

The latest news from Charlie was that Fleur was pregnant and it looked like Arthur and Molly were heading for a divorce. There was some mention of a possible court case over line theft and the use of potions but Charlie seemed to think that if they did divorce his father would want to quietly break the links he had with his wife. The press was still circling Harry and it appeared that there was some speculation about Hermione's disappearance from London.

The problem for Hermione was the daily routine of the estate life was boring her. The quiet of the week would drag for her and the weekends were flying away at a great rate of knots. The great thing about coming out to the estate in the summer was that she would always be coming to recharge and recuperate after a busy year of learning and activities. Now she did not have the stimulation and there was recognition from Hermione that she could not permanently be tied to the land in agriculture. She needed more – she needed mental stimulation. Phillip was glad to see that Hermione was reviewing more university prospectuses. There were two other university brochures in addition to the Ghent prospectus that was being closely investigated and these were from Tokyo and Mumbai. There was some concern for Phillip that his poppet would really go so far from the UK for her degree years.

There were phone calls on the mobile and Hermione was keeping up with events and gossip from the UK. Severus called from Kalymnos asking her to do some research at the local university library to check some facts for him. After doing that task and reporting back to him Hermione had not heard anymore from the Potions Master. Hermione had even baked with Mémé but nothing seemed to engage her for very long. There were big sighs and Hélène was ready to throttle her daughter as she moped around the estate. Hermione had read everything at least once and she could not train anymore than she was' she did not have enough willing partners at the Angers dojo as Hermione had gone through everyone. Grandpère cautioned patience, as Hermione would have to find her own purpose and drive after the war.

Finally there was a break in the routine in the first week of April when a formal invitation from Madam Sakura came to the estate for Hermione and her family to attend the Cherry Blossom Viewing Festival as her guests. It was an opportune moment as Hermione had also received an invitation from Goro Takahashi asking if she was willing to come and compete in this year's Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament and defend her title.
There was a frantic phone call from Phillip to Hiroto on the day Madam Sakura's invitation arrived to ensure he was reading the meaning correctly and what was the correct way to respond. Over the phone Hiroto coached Phillip in the formal wording for the two options: decline or accept. When Hiroto asked Phillip how he felt about the potential match meeting, he was actually excited for his daughter as he could see that she needed more than her current despondent existence.

With the assistance of Kingsley, it did not take long to get a portkey from London to Kyoto. It seemed that many were concerned about the witch and it was hoped that a change of pace would engage Hermione and bring her back to her normally vibrant self. Within two days of Madam Sakura's invitation the Grangers were in Kyoto staying at their machiya. The first day back Phillip called Hiroto so he could drop round and check the acceptance letter wording. Hiroto had a secretive smile on his face that evening when he came home to dinner, which Melina bugged him about in their bedroom later that night. It would do his inquisitive wife good to wait and see, the Japanese wizard thought and smiled to himself.

Melina and Hiroto had invited Severus, Anastasia and YiaYia to the Cherry Blossom Festival in the second week of April. Anastasia cried off citing her workload with the family businesses but indomitably advised her son he would be escorting his grandmother to Japan. YiaYia and Severus arrived in the first week of April and Severus was able to visit some Potions Masters at the University of Tokyo to talk to them about his recent research. There was a research protocol set up and it appeared that his second cousin, Keji, would be a post-graduate research assistant involved in the protocol. If all was going well by July they would be able to test on live subjects and then monitor to see if Severus had cracked the lycanthropy cure. The details and existence of the project was very secret as the potential outcomes had monumental implications for existing suffers of this terrible affliction.

Since the visit to the University by Hiroto and Severus, it appeared that Keji had developed a case of hero worship for his cousin. Poor Akio could not understand why Keji seemed to be madly blathering about cousin Severus and his brewing brilliance in their shared apartment in Tokyo. It seemed to him that Keji wanted to go home to Kyoto at the drop of a hat to see the European visitors on the weekend. Akio decided that it was best to ignore his brother and hit the books, as his third year exams would soon be upon him and he wanted to achieve good grades.

With Keji home for the weekend the three males in residence at the Kitaguchi machiya decided that valour was better than the stupidity of staying in a machiya with two Greek women who appeared to be baking for some event, and so they went out on Saturday morning. Hiroto led their party out into the small neighbourhood streets before knocking on the door of a machiya that Keji was not familiar with. Opening the door, they were welcomed in to a private men's teahouse. So this is the Ojizo Teahouse, thought Keji. He had never been brought to this men's domain before and it was certainly only because Severus was with them that his father had included him in this invitation.

The three men had a lovely morning of gentle conversation, Igo and good tea. The teahouse had a range of papers and several customers who he knew well greeted Hiroto. There was an old face from Hiroto's childhood visiting the teahouse as well and Hiroto introduced Severus to Daichi Yoshida who was an academic somewhere in Europe. Keji was just happy to listen to his brilliant cousin in his discussion with Daichi as it appeared that it had not taken long for them to get into teaching theory and practice. It seems all those years in Scotland at Hogwarts had developed several ideas about the type of teaching environment Severus wanted and the acknowledgement that he was wasted in a secondary school. Daichi was in town for the Cherry Blossom Festival so his mobile number was added to Hiroto and Severus' phones for a meet up on another day.
Walking back from Ojizo Severus seemed to be in a world of his own, which was suddenly burst into by YiaYia when they got back to the Kitaguchi machiya. She demanded that he wash up and change into a particular suit of clothing she had laid out for him. There seemed to be a frenzy of nerves between the two women and then it came out that there was going to be a visitor for afternoon tea, Madam Sakura. So that explained the baking session in the morning. Apparently Melina had received a phone call from Uchiha Sakura early that morning requesting a Nakōdo meeting at 2pm and the women had decided only to inform the rest of the household at lunchtime.

Keji was grateful that he had his own room to retreat to when the Greek started flying between his mother, YiaYia and the Potions Master. Hiroto stepped in to the line of fire and asked Severus to join him in his study. It was not very often the quiet man raised his voice but the tone was clear: Severus was to go to the study and his wife was to think about her actions more carefully in future.

"Sit down, Severus, and stop pacing on my floor," ordered Hiroto. When Severus was seated Hiroto, regarded the agitated man before flatly stating, "Now, you knew this day was going to come. Your family wants you married and you have to do your duty. Be thankful it is a Nakōdo rather than an archaic European style betrothal contract."

"Yes, but I am not ready yet for marriage. I don't even know if I am going back to teaching or what sort of career I want. I can't get married now, I don't know if I could support a wife," Severus snapped at Hiroto.

"Well, this is where a Nakōdo comes in as a fairy godmother. Madam Sakura is asking to meet with you today to find out your circumstances. She is alerting you that she potentially has someone who she thinks would be suitable. Today is only the initial meeting – the whole matching process can take years. Think of today as a chance for you to express what you want in a bride and how you feel that now isn't a suitable time, since you don't have your work life sorted out. The Nakōdo can also do some life coaching with you to help you identify your goals and improve your work life balance," advised Hiroto.

After going through the formal greetings and how to respond in the meeting, Hiroto ran through the formal language of posture and traditional Japanese dress that a Nakōdo like Madam Uchiha Sakura was likely to wear. Hiroto was preparing the former spymaster in how to read the body language and subtle meanings of the formal language. Severus was operating in a totally foreign environment.

Promptly at 1:55pm the woman arrived. Severus and Hiroto could hear Melina and YiaYia greeting the woman and guiding her into the living room. Melina knocked on Hiroto's study screen door before opening it and invited the men to join the ladies for afternoon tea.

Madam Sakura was seated at one side of the sunken table while Melina was at the top in her normal place. YiaYia was next to Melina but on the opposite side to the Nakōdo. Hiroto guided Severus to sit near his grandmother before taking his usual place at the head of the table across from Melina. You could cut the air in the room with the tension.

Uchiha Sakura had not been doing the job as a Nakōdo for over 70 years for nothing and she decided it was time for plain speaking. "I will speak plainly. Do you know why I am here, Severus? The war is over. You don't have any Masters any more, which means you are a free man, up to a point anyway. Your YiaYia is not getting any younger and your family wants you married. Be thankful your friends and family have been talking to me for years or your mother could have resorted to a contract betrothal. As a Nakōdo, I take your views into consideration. I consult you in
the process of finding a potential match. Even then it is your choice when you meet someone who I find per your requirements to make a more formal step. There are no guarantees as even the girl could turn and say no. You will have to work to achieve a successful outcome. Now we will have tea and talk about other things. You and I will talk privately later," advised Uchi.

Hiroto was a little blown out of the water by the straightforward approach of the woman while YiaYia was hiding a grin. Melina was concerned as it had not been a gentle approach like her own but thinking about Severus, he had probably had enough intrigue to last a lifetime already.
The rest of the weekend was strange for Keji as his cousin Severus seemed to be even quieter than before. It seemed he was lost in a world of thoughts. There was the silence between his parents and the overjoyed happiness of his great grandmother. Keji was grateful to return back to his Tokyo apartment as it felt like he had been walking on eggshells all weekend.

It was with relief that Hiroto entered the Ojizo Teahouse. The scheming wizard had given Severus the directions for the train to take him to Gio-ji Temple. The Potions Master had a meeting with Madam Sakura where they were going to view the moss gardens. Hiroto had come to the conclusion that he really was not made for the spy game as he was struggling to keep the secret that Hermione and her family were in town. As he was starting to think about returning to his home, Daichi arrived.

The old acquaintance after greeting him opened with, "I hear you had the Nakōdo visit last Saturday. Are congratulations in order for young Keji? To think she organised all of our year matches."

"Not for Keji and it way too soon to say the match is sealed. I don't think the prospective bride has had her initial Nakōdo visit yet," advised Hiroto. With that there was prompting from Daichi for further details and over tea the whole sorry story of Hiroto's involvement in intrigue was spilled, along with the divided loyalty issues he had for both people involved.

There was much discussion about the future career options available to the former Hogwarts Potions Master, particularly when Hiroto mentioned that he currently had a research protocol going on at the University of Tokyo and that his eldest son, Keji was a research assistant working on the project. Since Hermione was going to compete in this year's Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament according to Hiroto's friend, Goro, Hiroto extended an invitation to come to the final day of competition with Severus and his family. Hiroto would be apparating in for each session of the tournament as he was determined to be there for the Kitten.

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The first few days back in Japan were wonderful for Hermione as she felt that she could just chill and lose herself in the crowds when they visited various tourist sites. Hélène had apparently not wanted to impose on Melina straight away and was going to make contact next week, as it was understood that her friends had visitors at the moment.

It was a pleasant few days and the Granger family had already booked to stay at the same Ryokan in Tokushima as last year for the next weekend. The rest of the week before then was basically would be left to their own devices except for Hermione's appointment with Madam Sakura on Monday afternoon. Knowing the woman that was likely to change, so Phillip looked round the machiya to see if there was any work that needed to be done on the place. He found himself ending up out in the small garden doing routine maintenance.

It was 1:30pm and Hermione was getting ready to go to Daigoji Temple for Madam Sakura's Hamani viewing afternoon tea party at 2pm. When she came downstairs from her room, Phillip sent her back upstairs with the advice to go and put something posh on. Hélène turned to give a look at her husband.

"So I did some reading. These dos can be very formal. It's not a crime to do research," he advised her.

"Well, in that case she is not going on her own. Get into a suit Phillip. You have hoisted yourself on
your own petard," snapped Hélène as she raced to find a suitable posh frock for an afternoon tea party. It was handy having a witch in the house, as there were quick spells that dealt with creases and getting to places on time.

Phillip made up a gift basket of English and French items, such as shortbread, and was holding it waiting for the two women to get down the stairs. It was a really good Kodak camera moment for him when Hermione walked down the stairs. Reality had hit: his poppet was no longer the baby girl he cherished. Rather, she was a grown woman who he had to let fly free from the nest.

"Right, baby girl. You are going to have to do that wriggle your nose thing and take us to the temple. Don't forget to take your invitation so hopefully we will be able to find her there, since it is likely to be very busy," stated Phillip with a slight catch in his throat, hoping that neither woman would quiz him about it. The Scotsman was just being a sentimental softie and he needed to pull himself together.

It was ten minutes to 2pm when they arrived and being in Madam Sakura's party meant they got a guided tour on the way to her party location. It was a pleasant afternoon tea and the other guests were all interesting conversation partners.

Phillip was watching the rest of the guests quietly, enjoying not having to make conversation. He was a people watcher and it was interesting to watch the dynamics between two couples. "So you know why the invitation was made from our mutual associate, Hiroto," came quietly from behind Phillip. It was Mr Yoshida. "Please call me Daichi."

"I am Phillip and, yes, I know," acknowledged Hermione's father.

"You see the two couples there," pointed Daichi. "There are both sizing up each other's family for a potential match of their children. There is a bit of shock in both families as they have not been known to be friends – more like antagonistic rivals would be better description. Their children have compatible magic and refused other match proposals so now it is a case of getting the families to bury the hatchet long enough to see if would be feasible," he advised before lapsing into comfortable silence. "I met the Potions Master on Saturday with Hiroto and talking to Hermione, I understand why my Great Aunt believes there is a possibility. Watch, she is making her move now to bait the hook," referring to how Madam Sakura had convinced Hermione to go for a gentle stroll with her through the tunnel of blossoms.

Whatever was said between the two witches obviously had Hermione thinking deeply when she quietly returned to the party. His daughter talked and participated in a number of discussions but Phillip could tell she was distracted. Hélène went to go and say something to Hermione however Phillip stopped her, advising that he would explain later. That earned the calm man a fierce glare. Yes, he was going to have to face the music of Hélène's temper.

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It was with relief that Phillip found the teahouse Daichi had mentioned when he organised the tea date the previous afternoon. Upon entering the Ojizo Teahouse Phillip saw a familiar face, Hiroto, who was sitting with Daichi.

"It appears you two have the same dilemma being married to strong tempered wives and sometimes it is good to know someone else who is in a similar position," stated Daichi making a very astute comment about the two men.

"Oh, by the way, Daichi Yoshida, I have not forgotten that Madam Uchiha Sakura is your Great Aunt. You had thought I had forgotten that? Severus has not been seen since yesterday morning and
I have had to deal with two upset Greek women. One is bad enough but two are not a good place to be. At least he sent a note saying he was going away to think for a couple of days," growled the sleep deprived man.

"So you're in the dog house too. Want to go on a jolly for a couple of days?" asked Phillip, trying to lighten the tone that was developing in their meeting.

"Nice idea but no. I don't think I could take YiaYia, Melina, Hélène and Hermione all wanting to kill me, because apparently it is all my fault when it was those women and their scheming," said Hiroto before almost going to sleep back in his tea.

"Pity, because Hermione is not exactly all here at the moment and Hélène is about to have my bollocks for garters. I had to sit down and explain what was going on last night. So, Daichi, what is going on? Please explain it for this poor father who is completely alien to the whole world we are in, along with this whole matchmaking process," implored Phillip.

"Well, you saw the challenge dare invitation yesterday? 'Would you consider meeting someone who you may be magically compatible with?' Severus probably had a similar meeting with Auntie in the morning. I know she was a little more blunt with him last Saturday but she is playing a very skilled hand here," advised Daichi.

"Look, we won't know until those two know what they want to do. I suspect Severus has already said yes as it sounded like they played the family duty and you don't want an archaic contract betrothal line on him, according to Hiroto. So it would seem that the ball is in Hermione's court," counselled Daichi before turning to see a slightly snoring Hiroto. "Take him round to your place and let him get some sleep. At least he isn't likely to get hexed too much in your house, unlike his own."

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It had been a very interesting and enlightening meeting for Severus Snape with Madam Sakura. After the meeting in the moss gardens the Potions Master had taken himself off to think. There was no way he could think at Melina and Hiroto's house. The former spy master had taken himself up into the hills to Ohara. The Ryokan owner had recognised him and he had got a bed to stay at her inn at very short notice. Severus was wondering about Lily and what his childhood friend would think of the situation he now found himself in. That infatuation had a significant impact on his life, the wizard had come to realise since he had been staying on Kalymnos. The more he stayed with his family, the more disillusioned he was becoming with Albus Dumbledore. Had he only been a pawn in the man's manipulations? he mused.

Severus Snape hoped the research protocol would bring success by July, as he could resign from Hogwarts in good conscience. Yes, he wanted to teach but not a bunch of raging hormones. The wizard wanted to teach those who wanted to learn his craft. The potions master had really enjoyed his time pottering in his lab at the beach cottage but he come to realise he need mental stimulation of human interaction.

Who was the woman that Madam Sakura was thinking of? Severus wondered if he had met her before sometime in the last week or so, as apparently her parents lived in the same neighbourhood as Melina and Hiroto. Could he really be up to meeting a young woman at his age? For Goddess' sake, he had been off the dating scene for donkeys' years, not that he had ever really been in it at all.

Cousin Severus had sent a text message to Melina for YiaYia, saying he was going to think and would not be back for a few days. Thinking his balls would be in even more of a sling if he pissed the Nakōdo off, he had also messaged Madam Sakura his current location when he confirmed that Madam Mikako was willing to give him a room for a couple of days.
Hermione had been thinking extremely hard since she had the stroll with Madam Sakura through the cherry blossom tunnel. Would she be willing to meet up with someone who was magically compatible with her? The person in question was looking for a long-term relationship. The wizard was apparently an intellectual who spoke a number of languages, including English.

Was she ready to commit to a relationship? Was it loneliness that had been making her feel off for the last couple of months? What harm would it be to meet this man? She did not have to commit to a relationship they have just to meet and have a couple of dates to see if there was some possibility of a relationship. Madam Sakura had done half the hard work already, as she had checked out their magical compatibility and had looked at both of their backgrounds. Apparently the man would strongly support her academic endeavours. Was she game enough to meet him?

After her father came home from the teahouse she had talked to both Hiroto and him about the Omiai challenge. Hiroto had explained it from his own experiences and his perspective as a traditional Japanese wizard who grew up in the cultural practice of using a matchmaker. After Hiroto had advised her that he would see her at the Tournament, she had some quality time with her Dad.

"I know you're lonely, Hermione, and you will always find it difficult to find a boyfriend, lover and husband because of who you are and who you know," advised Phillip regarding his daughter with a haggard look on his face. It was difficult to talk to her about relationships as it meant he had to acknowledge that she was no longer three years old.

"Is it the fame or are they being serious about looking for a relationship? I know we brought you up in a different culture but somehow I think that maybe the skills and contacts of Madam Sakura could be extremely useful for you. She is screening out the undesirables for you. The ones who are looking for a trophy to have on their arm, without caring about your feelings," he advised his daughter, knowing who she was being set up to meet on this occasion.

"It's just a meeting you don't have to marry them if you go. Think of it as a blind date set up by some good friends with another person coming along on the same outing when you are introduced for the first time. You can take your time to get to know them without worrying about their motives for going out with you," he said, at the same time thinking would she question the motives of them all when she found out who it was.

"Baby girl, all we want is for you to be happy. You were a little down when Harry, Tonks and Remus finally hooked up. You felt like the spare wheel because you did not have a relationship of your own. Ron had been your handbag holder for years. Everyone assumed that you two would hook up but the weak boy is not what you need. You know that you would have been settling with him, Mimi. I really don't think he was ever your true friend, considering what I have heard about how Ronald Weasley has treated you over the years and the comments you made in letters Home. So Madam Sakura has a wizard who is looking for a long-term relationship, is magically compatible with you, and is an academic who would support your own academic endeavours. What have you got to lose? Your time? Are you a Gryffindor or are you a mouse? Where is the Kitten?" he goaded her, trying to get her to give the meeting a go.

Hermione left her father and the machiya to walk through the neighbourhood so she could think a little more. It was 5pm and all the workers were starting to return home. Thanks to her discussions she had clarified her own concerns and thought, "Well why not? Am I a Gryffindor or not?" before she dialled Madam Sakura on her adapted mobile phone.

"Madam Sakura?"
"Moshi moshi"

"Madam Sakura, it's Hermione Granger,"

"Hai, Hermione. Have you made a decision?"

"Yes, Madam. I will meet this wizard. I am at the tournament this weekend but other than that I am relatively free. I have to travel on Friday to make the evening Kata grading."

"Thank you, Hermione. You won't regret this. I will find out when he is available but I would like to introduce you this week before the tournament. I will call back later when I have spoken to him. Good evening, Hermione," advised Madam Sakura with a smile in her voice.

And with that phone call Hermione agreed to meet a wizard in an Omiai meeting.
To say a certain little Japanese matchmaker was doing a jig for joy was a bit of understatement. She was dancing round her house and was just about controlling the shouting from the rooftops feeling. Right, right! What to do now? A quick list was made and the lady concerned picked up her wand and her mobile phone as she had a large number of tasks to do this evening in the next hour, so that everything would be in place at by the 9pm meeting.

There was an apparition up to Ohara and Severus Snape found himself being bossed about by a Japanese witch who ordered him to smarten up and to be at the Imperial Palace Gardens by 9pm. After a quick look over his wardrobe Madam Sakura had pulled out a small box that she then enlarged. It turned out to be a traditional wooden travelling wardrobe. From this wardrobe, she quickly pulled a number of items together for him to wear in his proverbial black. To add salt into the wound, the matchmaker had spoken to the Ryokan owner Madam Mikako and now he had two women on his case about not being late for the Omiai.

Severus had attempted to get dressed on his own but found that between Madam Mikao and some of her senior housemaids; this just was not going to happen. He was going to be dressed by them. It was at this point that Severus put a frantic call to Hiroto to come and save him from a horde of bossy, little Japanese women as his best sarcastic professional stare had done nothing to stop their attack on his person.

Fortunately for Severus, Hiroto was amenable and when he arrived he managed to keep most of the biddies away from Severus. However, Severus had to endure being dragged out to the front lobby lounge and being put on display. He felt strange in the Hakama and kimono but he had to admit he liked the dark matte silk clothing. What had surprised Severus the most was when Madam Sakura had selected a nagajuban she had looked at the coloured ones before going "No, he needs black." This undershirt he had seen on others to be strikingly patterned or coloured yet the matchmaker had remembered his history as a spy and let him have a dark undershirt under his dark slate, almost smoke black kimono.

Hiroto did the obligatory photos for the family and then he gave Severus a firewhiskey and told him to sit. For Goodness' sake Severus felt like a little firstie on the first day of school.

Madam Sakura had been busy on the phone and suddenly at the Granger machiya there was knock at the front door. Hélène opened the door to find a delegation of Japanese ladies asking for Miss Hermione. Being the polite hostess, Madam Granger led them to the dining and lounge room while she did a mad dash round the merchant house to find Phillip and, more importantly, Hermione. One of the visitors had observed that Hélène had been preparing dinner and they went into action, saving the meal and organizing the necessary additions for extending it to cover the six visitors who had suddenly arrived.

By the time Hélène had found Hermione and led her downstairs, the pack of women had mobilised. Another knock on the door and Phillip was assisted by the cook lady to answer. It was a wizarding takeaway deliveryman. With some lightening fast Japanese and the exchange of Yen, Phillip found himself being used as a packhorse to bring in bento box after bento box of items into his kitchen.

"Miss Hermione, Madam Sakura sent us to help prepare you for your appointment tonight. I am Kameko and will be leading your dressing team tonight," advised the bossy cook one as Phillip had called her in his own mind.
Kameko then proceeded to introduce the rest of her team, while putting Phillip to work laying out the bento boxes as she served up Hélène's prepared dinner in another set of serving dishes. With a swish and a flick of her wand the dining table was enlarged so that all could sit comfortably. There was a nod to her second in command and Hélène and Phillip found that they were served Sake. "No Sake for Miss Hermione. You need a level head to make decisions," the young woman was advised when she was served apple juice.

There were questions about what was going on and Phillip just advised Hélène to go with the flow and he would explain later when he got an opportune moment.

The group had a strange but pleasant meal before Madam Kameko – or should that be Officer Kameko? – checked her mobile phone and then proceeded to order Miss Hermione to the bathroom so she could be bathed. The offsiders all swung into action and were busy rearranging the lounge dining area into their workspace with military precision.

One of the little ladies had peeled off from the dining area and was now apparently scrubbing Hermione's back a little too hard according to the verbal commentary floating down the corridor from the bathroom. The dinner dishes were magically handled and by the time Phillip had explained to Hélène what was going on, the chief protagonist of the whole situation had arrived at the house, in the shape of Madam Uchi Sakura.

To deal with the slightly confounded mother, Madam Sakura gave her the chore of getting a nice white fairly plain underwear set out for her daughter so it would not show too much through the clothing that they were going to dress her in.

Phillip chose that moment without either mother or daughter present to ask Uchi why she was going for the intrigue, as both parties of the meet up knew the other. It was then explained to the father of the potential bride in simple words that the couple needed to see each other in a different light. By not advising the whom they were and going along to the meeting in traditional Japanese clothes would stop any unwanted preconceptions occurring. Oh, they would make assumptions but the assumptions would be wrong.

Hermione was directed in her underwear and robe to the dining and lounge room of the renovated machiya to find that the room had undergone a radical change while she had been bathing. Sitting on a chair, her freshly washed hair was attacked by two hairdressers. Fortunately for Hermione they were also witches so they could charm her hair rather than use the other methods to form a fairly traditional Japanese up do, the taka shimada, as that would enable the addition of the kanzashi when she was fully dressed.

Hermione was bundled quickly into a very light almost spider silk thin white nagajuban. This undershirt was then covered by a white patterned silk kimono. It was then that Hélène was brought into a discussion over the outer kimono. It turned into a fairly heated discussion before they were done.

Using magic the war band had put a number of kimonos on formal stands for the decision making purpose. There was a pale mint green kimono with cherry blossoms on it that Hermione was quite drawn to while the other were a little more flashy and gaudy to Hermione's eye.

In the end it was Phillip who settled the discussion (a polite way of saying almost argument!) between mother and daughter with a comment that the green one was nice. Madam Sakura jumped at that and Hermione was placed into the outer kimono and then proceeded to be ordered to stand on a step while her Obi was tied onto her. "Magic makes these tasks so much easier," advised Kameko.

At 8:45pm Hermione had been primped and preened to an inch of her life. She felt that even
Lavender and Parvarti could learn something from Madam Sakura's helpers. The matching Kazshen had been added to her hair, a suitable mini handbag found for a small purse and her mobile, her wand had been placed in her sleeve, light make up applied and a pair of light coloured slippers conjured for her feet. The obligatory photos were taken. Madam Sakura had been using her mobile phone frequently and it appeared that she was the stage manager for this event in more than one manner. In rapid Japanese she fired orders off over her phone before clicking and saying it would be a good time to go so Miss Hermione would not be late. With a final thank you to her dressers and well wishers, Hermione Granger squared her shoulders to embark on the next adventure.

"Now, Papa. We clean up and then we have a firewhiskey or two," advised Kameko.

When Madam Sakura and Hermione arrived at the Imperial Gardens the older woman reminded the younger witch to breathe and that the man she was meeting was shy but did speak English. There was a pleasant walk through the gardens to the predefined meeting point of a cherry blossom tree that shaded part of the South Pond of the Sento Imperial Palace grounds. There in the dark shadows of the tree off the main path round the pond was a tall dark haired man dressed in a kimono and hakama looking out across the pond. Looking from the rear it appeared that he was fit and very tall, thought Hermione.

Listening to the crunch of the stone path told Severus Snape that two women were there. Was it her? Apparently she spoke English. Why am I doing this to myself? thought the man. Duty? Honour? Family? Shit, I am just lonely.

"Konbanwa" called Madam Sakura.

oOoOo

Konbanwa = Good evening
"Konbanwa" called Madam Sakura.

Turning around Severus answered with a polite "Konbanwa, Madam Sakura" to regard the young woman. There was a whispered "You!" from the brown eyed girl.

Before he could speak anymore the matchmaker had grabbed onto his arm before formally intoning, "Mr Severus Snape-san, I would like you to meet Miss Hermione Granger-san."

Placing Hermione's hand on the Potion Masters arm she proceeded to guide the extremely quiet couple to one of the two teahouses. In a private room looking out on the garden Madam Sakura got down to business.

"No, both of you did not know I had selected the other for this meeting. Both of you are compatible with the other if you just take your time to be the normal logical people that you are. She is no longer your student and he is no longer your professor there is no reason why you cannot see each other in a different light. Here is the Omiai - do you or do you not meet again? Could the pair of you have a chance of a long term relationship? If so how do we proceed? I will contact both of you in the morning for your answers. Now enjoy the firework display." Advised the matchmaker before she left the couple in the private room. The tea house staff opened up the outer doors of the room so the couple could observe the lake and the firework display. It was up to the pair if they remained in the room or moved out to the verandah

The pair moved out onto the veranda so they could see the fireworks. Sitting in the dark, a small hand reached for the dark man's larger one. It felt nice and comforting to hold her hand in his as they sat in the dark and watched the night sky lighting up with the brightly coloured fireworks.

"Hermione, you don't have to do this you know? They can find you someone more your age," advised Severus. His pride had taken something of a beating that night when he had turned and heard her response. He had taken it as a dismissal. There was no way this young vibrant witch could even think about being with him as he did not even have a future.

"Severus, you are a friend but I never imagined that you would even consider someone like me. I am just a foolish girl fresh out of the school room that can't even decide on a career or degree programme," advised the young witch before biting her lip.

They discussed her current dilemma and how he did not want to go back to Hogwarts. It was with easy and comfortable companionship. It was almost 10:30pm when they were being ushered out of the gardens when they fell into silence. Stopping at the outer gates, the young witch stood on the tips of her toes to kiss the surprised man on the cheek before quietly advising that she would go out on a date with him if he asked. The former Potions Professor stood there shocked and it seemed that his failure to respond quickly had embarrassed her as there was a little hitch in her breath before she said, "Sorry. I'm Sorry. I hope that won't make life difficult when we meet in the future," as she quickly looked around before whipping out her wand, looking to quickly apparate away.

"No, don't go, Hermione," called Severus, quickly grabbing her and then reaching down to lightly kiss her lips before pulling back to regard those chocolate orbs of hers with his own obsidian eyes. It was a moment later he whispered in her ear "Κοίταξα βαθιά στα μάτια σας και είδα το μέλλον μας" before kissing her forehead. "Let me take you to your home," he advised her before apparating them to Melina and Hiroto's street. Sitting outside the corner eatery machiya were Daichi, Hiroto, and Madam Sakura.
Damn! There was no avoiding the bossy witch. "So," drawled the curious woman who had made her own conclusions on seeing the pair walk down the small street to the corner.

Being the Gryffindor she was, Hermione answered "Yes," in her own challenging manner while Severus, ever the quiet man, just nodded. The grin on Hiroto's face was spectacular. "No gossiping with them," snapped Severus, advising that it would not be a good idea to spread the news with Hiroto's wife and his grandmother.

Madam Sakura led the pair away towards the Granger machiya. The matchmaker organised the pair of them in a meeting the next morning before sending Severus off with a flea in his ear when they reached the machiya not to be late. Upon entering the household the questions started. Kameko put the kettle on to brew the tea before advising she would assist Hermione to get out of the kimono and remove all the hair pins.

"It was a success," reported Uchi to Hermione's parents. "They have agreed to meet up again. I think you will have a son-in-law within the next year," advised the woman.

Hélène who had been kept fairly in the dark about the situation and only had the bare minimum of details supplied to her turned and demanded "Well, who is he? What does he do for a living?"

Phillip Granger may be a strong and brave man but being married to a lively Frenchwoman all these years had taught him when to pick his battles. Deciding that discretion was greater than valour, he turned and said, "I believe Madam Sakura knows all the details," while ducking out to get the whistling kettle to make tea.

Around a tea tray in the lounge dining room Hermione and Madam Sakura were quizzed on the Omiai meeting. Kameko asked how many meetings had been agreed.

"We have not set a number," Hermione nervously responded, as she was not sure if her parents knew the pertinent details.

"So you are not rushing into this good. Good," advised Kameko.

"I would hope not, Hermione Granger. What are you doing thinking that you can date your former professor?" snapped Hélène. There was a rattle of French phrases and from the tone alone the rest of the room could assume that they were less than complimentary. Madam Sakura stepped in and waved her wand, freezing the woman in place.

"Now you will listen to your daughter, husband and myself and only then will I release you," she advised before proceeding to provide a briefing on the man selected and why her daughter had been selected. It was after this briefing that Hélène was released from the spell binding her.

"He is a friend, Mother, and you cannot rabbit on about the age difference. Look at your own parents, there is 12 years between them," snapped the hurt young woman.

"What is so wrong with going on a date or two with someone who you already know as a friend? For some it is love at first sight even though I don't believe in spontaneous love. For others it is a friendship that later deepens," there was a look from her father back to her mother hoping that some common sense was seeping back into her mother's brain.

"What I took from tonight's Omiai meeting was that both of us are looking for a long-term relationship and we are going on a few dates to see if the spark that seems to between us is more than just friendship. All Madam Sakura is asking from both of us is to give it a chance, as we have some points of compatibility. Thank you, Madam Sakura. I will retire now. Good night all," advised the
witch, returning up the machiya stairs to find her bed and get some sleep before her date the next day.

It was after the clearing away of the tea tray items following the departure of Madams Sakura and Kameko when Phillip Granger decided to have a heart to heart with his dearly beloved.

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Severus returned to the Ryokan where he had been staying for the last couple of days. A curious owner regarded him with an impatient question in her eyes for him. He nodded yes to her unspoken question with a small-pleased grin slipping out and changing the look of his face. Her "Hai!" and her smile as she left him, let him know she was pleased. Turning into his futon that night, Severus Snape struggled to overcome his excitement before finally falling asleep thinking of a pair of chocolate coloured eyes who had reached out to him.

oOoOo

Konbanwa = Good evening

Κοίταξα βαθιά στα μάτια σας και είδα το μέλλον μας = I looked deep into your eyes and saw our future.
Who Is It?

The next morning after a pleasant breakfast from Madam Mikako's kitchens, Severus packed his meagre belongings away, before shrinking the overnight bag and placing it in his pocket. There was a comfortable chat with the Ryokan owner as he settled the bill.

Knocking on the door of Melina and Hiroto's machiya resulted in a flurry of Greek from his cousin and his grandmother. After getting rid of his shoes and slipping on his house slippers he got a grin from Hiroto. Over good, strong, black coffee Severus got to explain he had some time to think and he had met with the matchmaker again.

"It is like pulling hen's teeth out of you," pronounced Melina over the brevity of information he was disclosing.

"And I have a meeting with her a little later today," he advised his cousin with a smirk.

Hiroto had enjoyed the byplay as someone in the know but could fully understand what was frustrating his wife. YiaYia had a grin, a whispered message and a kiss for her Grandson. There was a flush of embarrassment across the man's face. After finishing his coffee, without supplying the requested information to Melina, Severus took himself upstairs to his room to change and put away his belongings.

When he came down the stairs he was met by a frustrated witch and the laughter of his YiaYia and the witch's concerned husband. With her wand out Melina demanded, "Will you tell me the name of this woman you are going on a date with? I will call Aunt Anastasia!"

A silent wandless cast later found Melina stunned stationary but aware of her surroundings. "Bye now. I don't have to say anything about the woman. YiaYia knows who she is and said I wasn't to tell you," was all the man advised with a smirk that would have been familiar to many of his students, before he stepped into the foyer and put his shoes on. The last thing he did before leaving the house was a finite to lift his earlier spell. Just after closing the door he heard the sound of spell fire striking it. Well, Melina was a Kalymnian so she has a temper, Severus thought as he walked through the neighbourhood to the Granger residence.

After knocking on the door Severus Snape was invited in by Phillip while Hélène was a little frosty in her attitude towards him. Hermione had come down the stairs and there was a little uncertainty about how they should greet each other in front of others. Phillip just brushed past all the nervousness of the two and bundled them out to the foyer to get their shoes and go off on their outing. The pair had a lovely time at the Kyoto National Museum and found a nearby Obanzai Ryori luncheon restaurant. The luncheon restaurant environment enabled them to have a comfortable discussion about where and what they were going to do next. Hermione reminded the Potions Master that she would be competing over the weekend in the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament.

Walking from the Obanzai Ryori restaurant they entered Konchi-in temple to stroll though the complex and view its delicate gardens while making some decisions. During the outing they both seemed unable to not be holding each other's hands. In the restaurant they were seated together on a long bench table surrounded by other luncheon guests. There was a comfortable close companionship between the two of them and they found they had an easy conversation. In the temple grounds, Severus found that Hermione was very tactile and seemed to want his touch, which was a little disconcerting to say the least. The witch had noticed his uneasiness when she touched him and found a bench in a quiet part of the gardens to sit down with him.
"What is wrong with my touching you, Severus?" she went directly to the heart of the problem.

"Hermione, it's amazing enough that you were willing to go on an outing with me but I'm just not used to being in the presence of a woman who willingly wants to touch me. For far too many years I haven't experienced any affection. I was always looking for the next attack on my person, so I'm little surprised when I'm given affection," the wizard advised, while holding both Hermione's hands as Severus tried to get through to her that it was not her but rather a problem with him.

She looked at his dark eyes and saw glints of colour flashes as Severus tried to explain why he seemed to be so surprised by her touch. After his explanation, she reached up to brush his hair away from his eyes as it had dropped down during the short discourse, before proceeding to give him a heated passionate kiss. "Never doubt that I want to be with you. Even if we don't work out romantically, I will always still be your friend," she advised as she pulled away from him a little breathlessly.

There were a number of other kisses between the two and a joint decision to phone their respected home bases to find out the evening plans of the rest of the household. It was decided with the assistance of Madam Sakura for all to meet for dinner at Goutez, a fairly new French bistro in the local neighbourhood. Since Hélène was feeling a little irked over the situation it was felt that making a concession to her heritage would help smooth the troubled waters over.

Madam Sakura led Hermione and the Grangers to their dinner appointment while Severus had to put up with Melina's continued demands to know who the woman was. It had seemed to Severus during his day out with Hermione that his cousin had apparently badgered her husband and their grandmother about the Omiai match and failed to get an answer so by the time he had returned and was getting ready to go out, she had worked herself up into a right old state.

Upon entering the bistro Severus gave the name Sakura and Melina stopped badgering him in Greek about who it was. There was the look of the hunt in her eyes. This witch was going to get her answer! Following their server to a private eating room there was stunned silence from Melina in the doorway, as she crossed into the room where she stood rock still when she recognised that the Grangers and Hermione were there with Madam Sakura. So they did match the pair of them – that explains YiaYia's secretive smile all day.

Stepping around his stunned cousin, Severus reintroduced his grandmother to the Grangers and there were friendly greetings between them all. Thanks to Melina's look of shock, Hélène was able to greet her friend and commiserate that she had also been kept in the dark about the matching of the pair.

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Much planning had been done between the families over their schedule for the next couple of days, since there was the Kendo tournament to go to over the weekend. The new couple briefed their families that they were not inviting discussion on the matter with anyone, as it was so new. They were all given instructions not to gossip and they would tell their friends and associates at a more appropriate time. During dinner there were light companionable touches, mostly under the table, between the two.

As part of their planning, Hiroto had been onto the phone to Goro, his friend, to find out if there was more room in the inn for them or if the Snape contingent would have to apparate in and out of Tokushima each day. Fortunately for them, Goro's cousin, Madam Namiko, had rooms available at her Hayashi Bekkan Ryokan. It was then discovered that was the same Ryokan Phillip had booked the Grangers into as they had stayed there last year for the tournament with Madam Namiko and had a lovely time.
It was with great familiarity and joy that Madam Namiko welcomed the young Kendoka and her party to the Hayashi Bekkan Ryokan. They had travelled down on the train from Kyoto as it gave everyone a chance to relax and see some of the scenery along with becoming more comfortable with all the other members of the party again. Hermione and Severus were both found with their heads in a book during the journey.

After a short walk to find a lunch spot, the party met back in the lobby to share what they had scoped out on the individual recognisance paths the various members had taken. Hiroto had remained behind in the lobby to wait for Goro and there was a third man in discussion with the two men. It was Mr Kawasaki from the Kendo Federation. The Federation representative greeted Hermione enthusiastically and he was highly deferential to YiaYia. As the group reported back about their findings for lunch, Mr Kawasaki stepped in to advise that he was taking them all to lunch if they did not mind a couple of other Kendoka coming too.

The Kendoka were all members of a police team who were touring through the region. Hermione traded cards with them explaining her Phoenix Dojo card, as if they were ever in London and wanted to visit a police dojo this was the one to go to, since a variety of service agencies used the dojo. They had a lovely seafood lunch down on the riverfront and it was a pleasant experience for all. On their way back to the Ryokan there was a minor discussion of the afternoon's plans. Hermione apprised her companions that she was going to read, rest and soak before going to the registration and evening session of the tournament. Mr Kawasaki wondered if he could impose on her slightly by allowing a press interview to be done for the regional news. After the lovely lunch she was very willing to say yes.

At 2pm Ms Hermione Granger the returning champion Kadoka met the local TV crew and they did a short interview in the Ryokan garden, with Hiroto as her translator. When asked about her plans for the future she explained that she was currently considering a number of universities including the University of Tokyo for the next academic year. So it seemed the young Kendoka could be based in Japan in the future. There were some further inane questions but the interviewer quickly realised she had crossed the line when she asked about boyfriends, based on the glare from the young woman. The interview finished not long after the boyfriend question because the interviewer had run out of questions she was game to ask after the paint stripping glare she had received from the World Champion.

Severus took Hermione for a walk to the bookshop Phillip had pointed out on their reconnaissance mission. After a pleasant stroll in the English language bookshop and a couple of purchases for both of them, Severus asked "What is really bothering you?"

"Um," nibbling her lip. "What do we use to describe us at the moment? Boyfriend/girlfriend? Sorry I am not calling you that – it makes me think of Ron Weasley. That's something childish and what we are isn't childish, even though we're only new at this more-than-friends relationship," she tried to explain to him.

"Don't ever compare me to that red-headed fool ever again," Severus advised Hermione with a little bite in his tone.

"See what I mean? Totally light years away from the red-head," she confirmed, while gently soothing him at the same time with a light touch on his arm.

"What brought this on?" the Slytherin wizard questioned her to again as her nervousness over the
whole situation particularly showed with her vicious attack on her own lip. After a deep breath and a bit of sigh Severus responded with, "I am definitely not a boy but I am a friend. I'm not your lover yet but I can confirm that I am physically attracted to you. So we're not friends with benefits but I don't want that type of relationship from you. I'm not really sure what phrase or term I want to use to describe us at the moment?"

"They all seem rather trite, don't they?" Hermione agreed with him. Was it too soon for a more formal declaration was it too soon for the thought of being his fiancé, his betrothed?

When they arrived back at the Ryokan Hermione took herself off to the ladies’ bathroom to think and soak in the lovely thermal hot tub there.

After getting through the registration process and the small opening ceremony where Ms Hermione Granger was announced to the crowd with the required wave at the TV camera, Daichi joined Hiroto and Severus in the stands to watch the Kata bout of the competition. Mr Kawasaki was sitting with the Grangers, YiaYia and Melina.

"She seems especially focused tonight. Her forms are very strong. Is she angry with you Severus?" asked Daichi.

"No, not angry, but unsettled would best describe her at the moment. I am unsettled myself," Severus explained to both men, not taking his eyes off Hermione. You could see her passion and her control of her power in each stroke and step of the form that made up the Kata. She was truly beautiful to watch in motion.

"Do you know traditionally by the third date or meeting of Omiai as a couple you are supposed to make a decision?" inquired Daichi, wondering if the unsettlement between the two was because they did not know themselves the outcome of the Omiai process.

"Explain," snapped the dark man, as he turned his piecing gaze onto the great nephew of the famous matchmaker.

"In the olden days, by the third meeting the couple would announce the decision they had made either to accept or decline. If both accepted they would then be betrothed by the groom's parents in a traditional ceremony," the academic explained.

"Do you think you can get your lovely great aunt to drop by later this evening at our Ryokan, as Hermione and I would like to talk to her?" Severus asked but there was an order in the tone of the voice.

At the end of the Kata grading, Hermione was putting away her equipment into her bag and looking through the crowds trying to find her parents and Severus. There he was. He certainly stands out in a crowd with his height.

There was a rush of fans that wanted her autograph and to have a picture with her. It took her time to work through the crowds to even get near the changing rooms. Severus seemed to appear through the crowds to take her equipment bag from her while advising her to get showered and changed quickly because it appeared that they were going out for dinner with the Kendoka community.

As they walked back to the Ryokan to drop off equipment bags, Severus managed to get her away from the main group to ask why she was angry, "You looked really focused tonight. Is there something wrong?"
"No Severus nothing is wrong. It's more like something I need to work out and I just haven't yet," Hermione explained, not wanting to go into detail about exactly what was bothering her.

After dropping their equipment bags off at the Ryokan, the group crossed the street and entered the local yakiniku restaurant. Yes, there were many familiar faces round the various grill stations. For dinner the new couple found that they were separated from the family as Daichi had joined their grill table. Finding space at another grill table they joined other Kendoka in a relaxed, easy conversation.

It was easy for Hermione to put her arm round the tall man's waist and lean into his warmth while they were watching the meals being made. Severus arm was over her shoulders and upper back and he seemed to be continually making a soothing motion with his hand on her upper arm. The repetitive gentle motion was extremely soothing and very comforting. How do you describe us to the rest of the world? How do I want to describe us to the rest of the world" she thought.

"We have a coffee appointment after dinner so leave so room for some cake," Severus had advised her quietly when they were reviewing the menu selections. I wonder whom we are meeting up with? Hermione mused during the dinner, as it had sparked her curiosity.

It was with relief that Hermione and Severus had found a comfortable lounge in the lobby of the Ryokan to wait for their coffee guest who was apparently bringing the cake. Finally some semi alone time for the couple, as today had felt like they had both been on permanent display in a living museum. They were sitting, snuggling to be truthful, together on the couch. Hermione was securely wrapped in Severus arms when he asked, "What are you thinking so hard about?"

"Oh, just silly thoughts," Hermione muttered into his chest, not wanting to admit them.

"You having silly thoughts? I don't think so, and if you think any harder I think we could see them on a big screen. Remember a problem shared is a problem halved," the wizard gently reminded her.

Hermione turned her head to stare up at his dark eyes before in a quiet voice intently asking, "How do you feel about becoming my life partner?" There was a hitch of breath but who took it neither would be sure. Severus watched her lick her lips nervously with her eyes never leaving his face.

It seemed the world around them had slowed. Severus could hear his heart beat in his ears and feel hers on his chest. Her chin was resting on her hand against his chest. There was as slight flutter of her fingers as she worried his shirt button. She was nestled into the crook of his arm. "How would you feel about becoming my life partner?" Severus queried Hermione before saying, "I have no future except for what I saw in your eyes. This I can promise you: I will always support you in any endeavour.

Σε λατρεύω, είσαι η θεά μου, αστέρι μου, το φως της ζωής μου. Your light, your joy, gives me hope," he advised her.

A tear dripped down from those rich chocolate orbs onto her cheek and a work roughened thumb gently smoothed it away. "You know, Sev, you're going to have to teach me Greek if we're going to spend the next 100 years together," Hermione advised him.

"Sev? When did I become Sev?" he imperiously questioned her. "Besides, I want you for at least the next 200 years, if not forever."

"So how are we going to do this adventure?" Hermione asked, placing a gentle kiss on his hand that was clasping hers.

"What is it with plans, organization and you?" Severus playfully snapped before placing his own
gentle anointation on her forehead. "I prepared a solution earlier. I've called in the expert: Madam Sakura. She's bringing the cake for our coffee meeting."

With that comment the man was rewarded with his witch’s rich bubbling laughter. They were calmly sitting just gently enjoying the presence and feel of each other in a comfortable silence when they were interrupted by comment from behind them "Progressing well, I can observe." It was Madam Sakura and she had the most lushest chocolate cake in a box for them to have with coffee.

"So what was the urgent reason Daichi called me to see you both?" she inquired while regally visually inspecting them. "Things between you seem to be going along nicely so what is the problem for me to solve."

"Where do we start?" Hermione asked almost rhetorically.

"Normally at the beginning is a good place, I find," she advised the young couple while reading their combined auras. Yes, this was a good match, even though there was some grey on the outer edge. However, this could be the conflicting feelings of the problem they have called me here for.

"Daichi mentioned the third meeting tradition," explained Severus getting right to the core of the matter.

"And I thought you both wanted to take it slow. That is only an ancient tradition, not the normal practice now. Now we do the face-to-face meetings to regard each other and let it go from there. So what is the problem?" she inquired hoping to clearly get to the heart of the matter.

"How do you describe us in polite company when we have to introduce each other? He is not a boy, so calling him a boyfriend is undignified. Lover? Not yet? Life partner yes but officially he is not. Can you see our issue here?" Hermione attempted to explain.

"There is more. Tell me," Madam Sakura demanded as she could see between the two of them.

"We want to be each other's life partner in every way but we're unsure how to get there, including dealing with family and the formal technicalities. I have no job that I want at the moment and she doesn't know where or what she wants to study. That's not really a good basis to build out long term future on," explained Severus. After taking a sip of his coffee he continued, "I'm also conflicted about the process ,as mother wants me to marry a wife but that would not honour our commitment to each other. I don't want to be binding Hermione to any restrictive traditions like a Master in the normal patriarchy approach of wizarding marriages. I want her to be her own self."

"Thank you, Sev," was the quiet whisper and the gentle touch from the woman held in those strong arms that would protect her always.

"Have you thought about a different rite to the western engagement betrothal and marriage? You could always do the Youmi and then marriage. The Youmi is a betrothal but both of you can be equals in the process. You give each other gifts and your families acknowledge the joining between the two families. The thing is that normally it is done when you both have set a wedding date. So are you ready to admit that you want to be bound to each other as a family couple? If so when do you want to get married and how do you want to get married. If you do the Youmi you could go all the way with a Shinto marriage blessing. It could solve some of the cultural issues you both could encounter. Are we talking a big or small wedding?" inquired the Nakōdo.

"Hermione, we can't just get married. I don't have a job I want to go back too and you need to do your degree. We need to be realistic here." Severus explained.
"What do you want in a wedding, Sev?" Hermione asked pushing the question with her eyes and the clasp of her hand.

"You and me, I suppose. I've never really thought about my own wedding before," he explained.

"Why don't we try another angle of attack? What don't you want?" asked Madam Sakura, with her notepad out.

"A big poufy dress and the big poufy production," advised Hermione.

"Yes, not the grand hoo-ha of a traditional Orthodox Greek islander wedding. I don't want the party for 600, with all those aunts and uncles you don't see until the next wedding. Mother will probably kill me for it but, no, I don't want a Kalymnian wedding," explained Severus.

"It's your day, not hers. I can deal with bossy mothers," stated Madam Sakura flatly and she left an impression that no Bridezilla or even MotherZilla would lock horns with her and win.

"Hermione, do you want a Christian ceremony?" Madam Sakura asked.

"No, but I don't want a registry office wedding either," she explained. "I want something that is reflective of the two of us."

"When does university start? When does Hogwarts require you back if you had to go back to teaching?" inquired Madam Sakura.

"Most start in September. If I was to start teaching, I would have to go back in August to do the preparation," explained Severus.

"How do you feel about getting married in two weeks' time in a Shinto wedding? We could do your Youmi tomorrow night or Sunday night. That way, we could easily have time for Anastasia to travel here," suggested the tiny Nakōdo.

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Σε λατρεύω, είσαι η θεά μου, αστέρι μου, το φως της ζωής μου = I adore you, you are my goddess, my star, the light of my life.
Ummm, could they really get married in less than a month? Were they really ready to make this announcement to the rest of the world? Merlin, they were going to get some flack. How are they going to handle the parents? But together they could handle the details of working out their lives.

"Yes," was the instant response from Hermione.

His witch was such a Gryffindor who leaps before they look; her response was so typical of his little warrior. "Hermione, I would love to marry you in two weeks time but we are going to get a lot of flack. What about your parents?" Severus asked, trying to be logical and reasonable.

"Together we can work out the where and hows, Severus, but we will be together sharing the load rather than shouldering it all on our own. We have fought a war against a psychotic madman, we have paid the price more than once. Why not jump and reach for the stars together? We both know we are in this for the long haul so why wait? Why not formalise our relationship in a manner how we choose, not how everyone else would want us to?" Hermione passionately implored Severus with her small hands clutching his.

"I wouldn't do this folly for anyone else. Bring on the parental disdain. Hélène is already frosty with me and my mother really doesn't know you at all, even with your short visit to Kalymnos. I will help with my side and you will have to help me with yours. Yes, I concur. Let's get married in two weeks' time" the Potions Master readily agreed thinking he must be losing his marbles but sod it he was going to live his life. Many would not recognise the dark man who was in a casual shirt and trousers, especially with his radiant smile.

"In that case I have a busy couple of days ahead of me. Particularly when I have to deal with the parents of both of you. At least I have a couple of allies on your side of the family, Severus. The one here who could put the spanner in the works is Phillip," advised the Nakōdo. "But he can be the most logical one of the lot of your family, you know, Hermione."

"Did I hear my name being spoken in vain?" intoned a quite but gruff voice before the man it belonged to moved around the couches and proceeded to sit next to Madam Sakura.

"Ah, Phillip-san, we were just working out our next steps in the Miai," advised the businesslike woman. Madam Sakura had a notepad and it appeared she had been making numerous notes on the paper.

Once Phillip had acquired his own coffee and a piece of the delectable chocolate cake the discussion resumed. While holding his fork over the plate Phillip was regarding the sight of the couple on the other couch. Severus was holding his daughter like she was the most precious thing in the world and the look on his face when he spoke to her was that of wondrous devotion. This man had a dark and painful history and yet here he was looking like he would walk through the fires of Hell for his daughter. This day would come, Phillip had known it when she had first been placed in his arms as a newborn. He had known for months what was going on, so Phillip had time to come to terms with the situation.

Added to the picture was his daughter looking safe and secure. Hermione appeared to be so happy and was almost radiant in the presence of Severus and she had been like this since the initial Omiai meeting. There was magic going on and Phillip thought he would be a fool to interfere if the relationship made his Hermione this joyfully happy. After taking a bite of the rich, intoxicating cake, Phillip put his plate down on the glass coffee table before standing to walk round it until he was in
front of the couple. They had moved so they were a little straighter in their seat and were attempting to tuck their legs out of his way.

Leaning down he kissed Severus on the forehead before saying "Welcome to the family, Son. Just remember who her brothers are and if you hurt her you will have all of us to deal with." Phillip then turned to kiss Hermione on her forehead. "I hope you two have many happy years together achieving both your dreams and wishes. Your mother and I will always be proud of you as we love you so much, Poppet."

The new couple looked at Phillip a little stunned as he returned to his former seat and the consumption of the chocolate cake. Madam Sakura seemed to take his easy acceptance in her stride. "So we organise a small intimate Shinto wedding here in Japan on the Saturday two weeks from tomorrow with only family and close friends for guests. Or shall we go for the house party feeling that you Grangers do so well? The formal engagement ceremony we can do tomorrow or Sunday," she asked.

"Thank you," said Severus unsure of what to call his future father-in-law, who he had previously called by his first name.

"Phillip will do, Severus," the father advised with a chuckle, understanding the confusion he had caused by calling him son.

"So, how do we do this?" asked a curious young witch who was starting to get excited. She was getting engaged! She was getting married! Oh my! I'm getting married and we have so much to do! You could see the running commentary as emotion after emotion flickered across Hermione's face.

"First, before you hyperventilate, stop panicking. I have lots of experience at this. I've been doing it for over 70 years," ordered the little Japanese matron, looking at the young bride.

"We will make some lists, then use the mobile phones you all have and make some calls. I am sure we have some people we can call some favours in from. Now, let's get down to the lists we have to do," ordered Madam Sakura.

The next half hour was spent making plans for the upcoming nuptials. The guest list had been fairly well hashed out and it was now time to get on the phone to call some favours in. Severus left the group to go into the courtyard garden and call his mother.

"Μητέρα?" (Mother?) the potions master tentatively asked when he heard the sound of the connection with her personal study floo. It was late afternoon Kalymnos time as the island was six hours behind Kyoto time.

"Γεια σας ο γιος μου." (Hello my son) was the warm response from a Mother who missed him greatly. The witch had gotten used to him being in her life on a daily basis after so many years away, where she would be lucky to see him from one year to the next.

"Η μητέρα μου μερικές καλές ειδήσεις για σας. Έχω ευλογηθεί με μια όμορφη μάγισσα που έχει συμφωνήσει να σύντροφο της ζωής μου και να παντρευτεί εμένα." (Mother, I some good news for you. I have been blessed by a beautiful witch who has agreed to be my life partner and marry me.)

"Ναι επιτέλους! Πες μου ότι είναι αλήθεια!" (Yes at last! Tell me it's true!) was the response. Severus was sure he heard his refined mother squeal with joy over his news.

"Ναι ο γιος σας είναι τελικά παντρεύεται." (Yes, your son is finally getting married.)
It was at that point that Severus could hear his mother break down into tears. Her sobs were quite loud on the phone. He was a little overwhelmed at how emotional his mother was over the whole situation and if you had looked closely in the dark garden light, you would have seen a tear or two in his eyes too. The guilt for all the pain he had caused her over the years was there in his throat when he next spoke on the phone.

"Θα θέλαμε να πάρει αρραβωνιασμή παρακαλούμε να έρθει στην Ιαπωνία, ώστε η τελετή μπορεί να ολοκληρωθεί. Παρακαλούμε μητέρα έρθει το συντομότερο δυνατόν, δεδομένου ότι είναι σημαντικό για την οικογένεια του και τα δύο μέρη να είναι εδώ για τον αρραβώνα τελετή. Θα θέλαμε να κρατήσει τον αρραβώνα τελετή αυτό το Σαββατοκύριακο."

(We wish to get betrothed. Please come to Japan so the ceremony can be completed. Please, Mother, come as soon as possible as it is important for the family of both parties to be here for the betrothal ceremony. We would like to hold the betrothal ceremony this weekend.)

There was a hiccup of a swallowed sob and then silence.

"Μητέρα?" (Mother?) Severus was tentatively questioning if she was still there and ok.

Θα πακέτο και τώρα είναι στην πρώτη λιμάνι κλειδί που μπορώ να πάρω. Θα σας δούμε σύντομα τώρα που είμαι εγώ είμαι πρόκειται? (I will pack now and be on the first portkey I can get. I will see you shortly. Now, where am I am going?)

Κιότο. Κεφάλι στη Μελίνα και τον τόπο Ήιροτο του. Όταν φτάσετε εκεί καλέστε Μελίνα θα έρθει και να σας πάρει. Θα οργανώσω μία αίθουσα για σας εδώ. Σας ευχαριστούμε Μητέρα. (Kyoto. Head to Melina and Hiroto's place. When you get there call Melina, she will come and get you. I will organise a room for you here. Thank you, Mother.)

Σ’αγαπώ ο γιος έτσι φυσικά θέλω να είσαι ευτυχισμένος. Αντίο τώρα εγώ θα σας δούμε σύντομα. (I love you Son, so of course I want you to be happy. Goodbye now, I will be seeing you shortly.)

It took a few moments for Severus to control his emotions as he felt like he was trapped in the waves crashing on the rocks below the cliff face. He heard her light step on the path and he turned to see his light and joy coming towards him with a look of concern on her face.

"I'm fine. Mother is pleased and will be on her way as soon as she can bully a portkey out of a lazy, sleeping official in the Greek Ministry. She will contact Melina as soon as she arrives and we will send someone to apparate her back," he advised his beautiful star who he would have to help guide him for the rest of his life.

When Hermione reached him she gave him one of her infamous bone crushing hugs before releasing his arms so she could drag his face down to hers while on tippy toes to deliver a very passionate kiss. It was only released when her body demanded air. There was a floating light beside the pair, which they had not noticed during their kiss. Hermione reached out to grasp the flame and it sudden turned into a written message in the air.

"Now that I have your attention, watch out. Please do not go overboard with the PDAs. Hermione, you need your sleep and Severus, I have some tasks for you. Uchi Sakura."

With a wry grin, "Well, we have been told. Who would have thought that I would be schooled at my age and profession?" Hermione's tinkling laugh joined his as they started to walk back into the Ryokan. "Thank you, Sev, for taking this leap with me," she said before kissing his cheek and entering the building. Hermione headed off to her room and Severus returned to the lobby lounge area.
"Is Anastasia happy about the news?" inquired Phillip.

"Ecstatically jubilant would be the restrained commentary," Severus explained with a grin. There was a questioning peer from the matchmaker. "No, I have not told her who. She didn't ask in her joyful dancing round the room and bout of tears. Mother will be on her way to Athens by now knowing her, so Melina will be getting a call sometime in the next hour"
Mothers-In-Law

Many a married individual will tell you it is the mother-in-law who is most scary of your partner's parents. The mother is the one to be watched as she is the bear who will fight to defend her cubs. If she feels that the spouse of her cub is not up to scratch you can bet your bottom dollar she will be the one making sure that all and sundry knows it.

Severus disturbed Melina with the suggestion she go home for a while to wait for his mother. He looked in on YiaYia and gave her the news that his mother was on her way from Greece. There was a bit of teasing and gentle banter between the two before she wrapped her thin but wiry arms around him in a strong hug. "May you both be very happy for a very long time," she advised before kissing him on the forehead.

There was a brief meeting of Madam Sakura and Anastasia Eileen Athenaiou Prince Snape where they organised to have a longer meeting in the morning. There were going to be words but how many it was unknown at the moment. The initial exchange was brief and to the point but it was easy to see that two strong personalities were starting to lock horns. YiaYia welcomed Anastasia as her bunk buddy and was refusing to provide more details about the bride, with a comment of wait and see. There was the teaser that the pair together looked like a Klimt painting but she should go to sleep so she could see it in the morning.

Phillip had been on the phone to family in Europe. Grandpère and Mémé had been informed. Harry had also been informed and his help was enlisted to get the D'Angers out to Japan quickly. It shouldn’t be too much trouble for their adopted son to organise portkeys, as it was still only early afternoon in London. Kyoto is 9 hours ahead of London.

After a good night to Madam Sakura following updating his task list with the mini major general, Phillip returned to his room where Hélène was sitting up waiting for him with the assistance of a good book. The woman regarded her husband of over twenty years before the inevitable question came, "What is going on?"

Phillip hugged his wife and advised her that he had just given his blessing for the marriage of his only daughter, before breaking down in tears. His tears were falling in her hair as she held him in a close embrace. Hélène had to acknowledge why Phillip was sad but she was also excited for her daughter until she started to remember whom the groom was. "But he is almost 20 years older than her?"

"You should see them together. They have that look of inevitable life companions. You can see how much he cares for her and vice versa. I knew the day was coming and made the decision we were not losing a child but gaining another. How do you feel about being the parent of three children now, Hélène?" Phillip asked gazing at his lover.

"Only three? I thought we were including Remus and Tonks so make it five. But I can see how you get three as the official three," she concluded.

"We have a meeting in the morning after the competition starts with Madam Sakura. Apparently we are going to be very busy in the next couple of days," Phillip advised Hélène. The Scotsman deliberately did not mention that the wedding was in two weeks' time, as she would have made sure that he would never have got any sleep that evening if he had said anything about it. It was going to be difficult enough as it is to get some sleep and that was just down to remembering his poppet at different stages of her life with them.
As Severus had given up his bed to his mother he had found himself snoozing on a couch in the lobby, where he was discovered by Madam Namiko's cooks when they came in to do the breakfast preparation. Thankfully they took pity on the tall man when he explained his mother had arrived late in the night and they did not want to disturb the Madam to provide Severus with some good strong black coffee. He was going to need to have a caffeine drip today to do everything that busy little Japanese woman had planned for him.

When Madam Namiko came bustling in to see her kitchen staff Severus Snape quickly spoke to her, advising that they would need the last two available rooms for some more of the family that were coming and an extra breakfast this morning as his mother had arrived late last night. When it came to the question of why his mother had arrived in the middle of the night, he blushed and said he was getting engaged. There were many congratulations from the early morning staff and his second coffee of the day had a little scotch in it to help fuel the day from the chief cook.

Hiroto stumbled out to interrupt the Potion Master's early morning reverie. "Melina advised me that you two are getting married. Congratulations. I hope the pair of you have many happy years together," advised the cousin in law.

Hiroto was quite thrilled that the two bright people were going to marry each other. There was something about the couple that just jelled right. Hiroto could not put a finger on it but all he could do was smile.

"Thank you, Hiroto. Just keep smiling when Madam Sakura puts you to work today. We have some shopping to do for the Youmi so I will need your assistance," the swarthy man advised the shorter of the two wizards.

"You are doing the Youmi! So you have set a date?" exclaimed Hiroto.

"Hai! And Hai! to your second question, too," Severus chuckled at the surprise of the man.

"What type of Youmi are we talking about here?" queried Hiroto wanting to understand the details of the arrangement the couple was making. While Severus was family, Hermione was a friend, so Hiroto was hoping for the equitable form rather than a patriarchal relationship.

"We are doing a Youmi between equals and it will also be that way in our marriage too. The wedding is two weeks today," explained Severus before regarding a totally floored Hiroto. Hiroto was stunned about the simplicity of the solution and the very tight time frame of the wedding following the engagement ceremony.

"Are you going to tell me you have already planned your honeymoon?" inquired Hiroto with a slightly sarcastic tone of voice and being a little overwhelmed at the thought of organizing a wedding at such short notice, especially a Greek wedding that would normally be a large fanfare.

"Now, now, down boy. At the moment our honeymoon is this summer while we work out the rest of our lives," explained Severus hoping to soothe the normally peaceful man.

Now that Hiroto had joined Severus in the dining room, one of the cooks came out with the breakfast trays for the two men and a comment of "Last meal for single man, heh!"

All Severus wanted to do was bash his head against the dining table while Hiroto laughed at the fun being poked at the man. Opening the trays there were even more messages for the single man. Hiroto removed the notes and proceeded to read them. When Hiroto blushed at some, Severus was even more thankful he did not have that much Japanese under his belt.
"So what do we have to do today?" asked Hiroto.

"First off, before Hermione gets up I need to get my hands on a posy of jasmine flowers," explained Severus. **Who knew that this formal closed man was actually a highly passionate individual who would use his knowledge of potions ingredients to send a message to his beloved?** thought Hiroto as the list grew.

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Hermione was still in her bed when Madam Namiko knocked, before bringing in a flower arrangement made up of mostly jasmine. There was a card. The arrangement was put on a small table by the windows that looked out onto the garden. Madam Namiko bustled around, convincing Hermione to get up and get dressed. All the while the bossy woman talked about how cute a couple they were and it was so kawaii. When Hermione had exited the room's toilet dressed for the day, she was given the card with the demand that she read it.

In his familiar scratchy scrawl the message on the card said "**I promise you, my goddess, my star, that I am yours now and forever.**" Madam Namiko took a couple of the jasmine flowers from the posy and placed them in Hermione's hair. "There you go. You are promising him your obvious love. Good luck today at the tournament!" said Madam Namiko.

Hermione was met by Severus in the breakfast room with Hiroto. Leaving her in the capable hands of Hiroto Severus gave Hermione a kiss on the forehead before going to see what his mother and grandmother were up to. Hélène and Phillip entered the dining room where the mother hugged her daughter tightly while whispering, "I hope you both will be very happy."

"I plan to be, Mother. I plan to be," was the gentle response.

After leading his mother and grandmother into the dining room, Severus took the time to reacquaint everyone with his mother. It felt to Hermione that she was being x-rayed by the older woman's intense gaze at her, while she was attempting to eat breakfast. Severus seemed to save the day when he gave his mother a cup of coffee. Checking her watch, Hermione saw it was time to head over to the castle where the tournament was being held.

Hermione excused herself from the breakfast table to head back to her room and pick up her gear when she found had Severus accompanied her. Inside her room they managed to get some serious snogging done as Hermione showed her appreciation of the posy and its message.

"Keep the jasmine in your hair for me today?" he asked her as placed a kiss on her forehead and picked up one of her equipment bags. Severus looked tired to her but very relaxed in his black trousers and steel grey shirt. The couple walked comfortably together to the castle where Hermione slipped off to get into her Kendo gear. Severus made sure he had extra safety pins on hand to help attach her competitor number on her Keikogi sleeves.

Hermione returned in her Keikogi and Hakama. Severus helped Hermione to check that her competitor numbers were securely pinned on her sleeves so she could sign in at the registration desk. After the sign in Hermione moved over to her allocated competitor seating area where Severus helped her to unpack her armour so she could wait for her first scheduled bout. As the other competitors started to arrive, Severus wished her luck and gave her a kiss before returning to the Ryokan to get started on the task list drawn up for him by Madam Sakura.

It was fortunate that Severus returned to the Ryokan when he did cause he could see that his mother was probably about to explode. Taking his mother in hand Severus managed to communicate to Melina that they needed a small family conference in one of their rooms. Melina brought up the rear
with YiaYia and Hiroto in tow.

"Right. Hiroto, you need to explain to Mama here the whole Nakōdo experience and its formal ins and outs. Madam Sakura will be meeting both Hermione's parents and Mother later to discuss the Youmi. By the way, everyone – the wedding will be by Shinto rites in two weeks' time," Severus advised the group, wanting to get all the explosive bursts of temper over and done with.

"What! Two weeks to organise a wedding?" shouted Melina and Anastasia.

"Are you witches or not?" snapped the slightly put out man. His cousin had been married using the Nakōdo so she should know that it was the woman's business to organise weddings so two weeks should not be a problem.

Hiroto then reminded his extended family about the role of the Nakōdo and the power she held in the Japanese community, both magical and non-magical. The formal requirements of dealing with the Nakōdo were also mentioned, including why Melina and Hiroto needed to stay in this woman's good books for their own sons.

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The Kalymnian contingent joined the Grangers in the lounge lobby for coffee while waiting for Madam Sakura to arrive. The conversation was very stilted between the future in-laws. YiaYia and Melina tried to smooth over the cracks that were rapidly appearing. Madam Namiko had organised one of her private dining rooms to be turned into a private sitting room, with the use of some magic to transfer four of the lobby couches into the private room. When Madam Sakura arrived the group was ushered into the private area. Severus and Hiroto left them all as Severus already a number of things to do today that he could get on with, with the assistance of Hiroto.

If the arguments were going to happen, thought Madam Namiko, at least they could be private rather in the public space of her front lobby lounge. There are definitely some hot heads in both families of that kawaii young couple. The Ryokan witch also added some power to the privacy spells and in particular added a silence spell to the outer wall of the room near the lobby.

In the new private sitting room the parties were wound like a tiger ready to leap. Pulling out her wand, Madam Sakura threw up a privacy charm to ensure that the family matters stayed private before starting. "We are all going to be busy today and over the next couple of weeks for the joining of Hermione and Severus. So I would like to establish the details of what we are facing. First off, we are planning to complete the formal betrothal tomorrow night after the tournament. This is the Youmi and there are specific roles for each side of the family and I will be talking to you separately about this. Before the Youmi can be undertaken the couple are required to set a date for their nuptials. This couple has continued to follow tradition and set a short engagement period. They have also decided on the type of ceremony that they want for both the Youmi and the wedding. Any questions?" Madam Sakura asked turning to the floor to the families.

"As an Athenau he should be married on Kalymnos, particularly as he is the heir. What is this rubbish about a Shinto rite? They will be married in an Orthodox church near the estate. YiaYia was married there and the majority of the family was married there. Even Melina and Hiroto had an Orthodox marriage service," stated the Greek matriarch flatly, determined to get her way in this matter.

"Now Anastasia. Melina and Hiroto had both a Shinto marriage and the Orthodox ceremony reflecting their mixing of the two heritages. This couple does not want a large ceremony or event, even though with a small and simple ceremony they will still have a large attendance, due to their
families and who they are in the magical world," advised the Japanese matron with a hint of steel in her voice. It looked like there was going to be a show down between the two and it seemed that Madam Sakura was going to cut off Anastasia at the knees.

"My son is going to be married in the Orthodox tradition," was the terse response.

Turning to the Grangers, Madam Sakura asked what religious tradition they were and it came out it was Catholic and Kirk of Scotland. This explained why the bride was so willing to give up a Christian ceremony.

"Anastasia, there are three Christian traditions in the families so the couple have asked for simplicity. Since they started as a couple due to a traditional Omiai process and followed it with a decision at the third meeting as per tradition, they have gone on with the tradition of the Omiai culture and practice. They will be betrothed using the same tradition in the Youmi and thus be married using the Shinto rites," explained Madam Sakura again patiently, hoping that it had sunk in to this mother that she was not going to get her own way.

"My son will have a Greek wedding," was Anastasia's adamant reply.

"Anastasia, your son does not want a Greek wedding. He and his bride that you have been harping on for years about him finding are marrying in a ceremony of their own choice. IT IS NOT YOUR WEDDING, IT IS THEIRS. Got it?" shouted Madam Sakura at the end.

There was a stunned silence in the group. For a little woman she sure could pack a punch. YiaYia then put the nail in the coffin for Anastasia's argument. "I want to see my grandson happy and if his happiness is getting married how he wants to then I will attend a Shinto marriage ceremony to represent his family, with or without his mother. Anastasia you are being pig-headed. You want him married and now he is about to do that, you are putting more conditions on him. Be happy your son has found a wonderful witch who adores him just as much as he adores her. It's a love match." It was like a judge had spoken and that was the simple facts of the matter settled.

"Madam Sakura, what would you like our help with this morning?" inquired YiaYia. This was a clear indication that at least Severus' grandmother was supporting his choices.

"I need you all to confirm that we have everyone covered in the prepared guest lists that the couple have identified, to make sure there are no serious mistakes. I will meet with each of you this afternoon to discuss the Youmi."

After the tussle between the two matrons, everything settled down until there was a knock on the dining room door. Then Madam Namiko came in and waited for Madam Sakura to drop her privacy charm. "Some more of the family have arrived and are looking for the Grangers. Do you want me to bring them in?" Madam Namiko asked.

"Certainly and we will need a refill and some extra refreshments for the new arrivals," advised Madam Sakura.

Shortly afterwards five people entered the private sitting room. It was the D'Angers, along with Harry Potter plus his partners, Tonks and Remus Lupin. More hands on deck to help with the guest list. Remus extended a couple of couches so that they had more seats.

At the lunchtime break of the tournament, Mr Kawasaki approached Hermione.

"Hermione-san, where is the rest of your family and your loyal supporters? You are missing a few.
The crowd has been too quiet," he explained.

"It is quiet here but I doubt it is quiet back at the Ryokan. I am getting engaged tomorrow so the family are all on deck following the orders of Madam Sakura today," she advised the older man.

"Congratulations. Is it a love match?" was the polite enquiry from the official.

"Yes and no. It's an Omiai but we have realised that we love each other," Hermione explained with a very endearing blush across her face.

"Since your family isn't here, I will look after you this lunchtime," he instructed and Hermione found herself with some other older Kendoka eating a noodle lunch across the road from the castle gate entrance.
Youmi Preparation

In the afternoon session of the tournament Hermione recognised Severus in the crowd with his YiaYia and gave them a wave. Later on she recognised his mother had joined them along with Hiroto. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Mr Kawasaki have a conversation with Hiroto and he appeared to be congratulating Severus on their engagement.

Hermione had a bout where her corner was going to be close to where Severus was sitting in the stands. When she walked over he saw her smile and nod for him in the crowd. Sitting in her corner she adjusted her armour before putting on her Men and Severus could see that she had put her game face on. She was in the zone for the bout. The referees called her to her bout and started it. Hermione was just so beautiful to watch. Elegant and powerful in her strikes. The kiais were loud and the stomp of her foot resounded in the hall. The English woman won the bout easily, it was clearly seen in the judges' flags. After completing the bows, Hermione removed her Men. The power of the witch could be seen radiating off her. "See the warrior I am marrying, Mother. She will look after me and guard any of our children."

It was then that Anastasia had to acknowledge that the witch was a not just a good match for her son but she was an extremely good match for him. Looking at him he seemed happier than she had seen him in years.

Hermione had every right to be suspicious of Mr Kawasaki’s meeting with Hiroto in the stands. It was when they had returned to the hotel after she had a long soak in the hot spring fed baths that Hermione found out she needed to dress up for dinner, as there appeared to be some sort of party on celebrating the engagement.

Hermione and Severus were sitting in the lobby lounge area that had been put back to rights after the meetings with Madam Sakura. Hermione was snuggled into the side of Severus. His coat was over the back of the couch further down from them so it wouldn't get crushed. Severus was filling her in on his day and the many activities he had got up to. It was then he dropped a bombshell on her: they were going ring shopping later on this evening after going to dinner with the family.

There was a joyous reunion between Hermione and the Boy Wonder. On their way to dinner, Severus found himself flanked for a moment by Harry and Remus, with Tonks distracting Hermione. It was then he got the proverbial brother talk that could be summarised as, "You hurt her and we break your face.” Tonks handed Hermione over to Harry and Remus and dropped back to the dour Potions Master.

"What they said and then some. Just remember who my aunt was and I could do my impersonation of her if you hurt the lass. By the way you should be glad Kings or the twins weren't here as they all could have ganged up on you. Don't forget Charlie, Viktor and Bill, too. I wouldn't be surprised if you get Dobby and Kreacher dropping by for a similar chat, or even Griphook and Filius,” she advised him.

"Thank the Goddess for small mercies then. I suppose I'll have to endure the warnings from all," he drawled, getting a nod from the pink haired witch. Hermione had dropped back to see what was going on and basically check over Severus. She had her suspicions that Severus was getting the brother talk from the gang. Once she had made sure he was not injured in any way she slipped her arm round his waist.
"I see you have survived then," Hermione said acknowledging that he had been threatened by all the younger arrivals. They arrived at their dinner location where they were surprised by an Indian restaurant in a provincial Japanese town, which would not have been out of place in the Manchester Curry Mile on Wilmslow Road.

When they entered the restaurant a round of applause welcomed them, as it appeared that everyone and anyone somewhat associated with the pair who was in Japan was there in the restaurant to celebrate the engagement. After a champagne toast led by Grandpère D’Angers the couple found that they could relax and enjoy themselves with the visitors and family. There were lovely photos of many guests taken that night as it seemed that there was much fun and laughter. After her Mango Sorbet, Severus whispered in her ear that they needed to leave now for their shopping expedition.

On their way out, Harry stopped Hermione and slipped an envelope into her purse. "Take it so you can by a suitable engagement symbol for him, like a new pocket watch, plus your wedding band for him. You haven't left us much time to organise this wedding so you might as well do it while you have the opportunity to do so." Hermione was stopped a further two times by her father and her grandfather, both giving her ideas and envelopes of cash to go towards her expedition.

Hiroto was just confirming the details of their trip with Severus when Madam Sakura advised she wanted a breakfast meeting with the pair so she could go over the Youmi preparations with the couple. Were they never going to get out of the place and out onto their shopping trip. Finally Severus held onto Hermione and said he was going to do a slide along apparition so they could get out of the restaurant crowd. Pulling Hermione into the restaurant servers’ nook before wrapping his arms around his witch. Severus then apparated them out to their shopping expedition.

After steadying her, Severus gently let her go from his encompassing arms before leading Hermione into a small machiya, which was a wizarding jeweller. Looking over the displays, the couple discussed what they were looking for and needed in their wedding bands. There was a discussion over metals and how both needed to be careful about their rings being too proud so the didn’t catch on everyday items.

Finally after a wait a wrinkled old craftsman came out from behind the jeweller's table and greeted them. When the old man realised that they did not have much in the way of working Japanese he called for what turned out to be his teenaged granddaughter, who was apparently doing her homework in a back room. There was a discussion about what they were looking for in the two wedding bands and an appropriate engagement ring and male engagement gift. It was after explaining through their interpreter that they needed wedding bands that could handle the harsh environment of the potions laboratory that the old craftsman started to select drawers for them to look at. Similarly, the engagement ring would have to cope with the harsh environment of the lab so rings with a pearl setting were not appropriate. "I'm not really a traditional diamond girl, so the standard De Beers princess cut is not for me," advised Hermione.

Hermione had moved over to another section of the store where she spied some netsuke. It was there that the witch observed a black titanium otter netsuke. Hermione then looked over the watches and found some hunter's watches that would be suitable for him in both the wizarding and muggle community. When the witch returned to the craftsman she inquired if he had any titanium rings that had oxide patterns that looked like the hamon effect on blades.

It was then that the questioning got a little more intense and Hermione had to explain that she was a Kendoka so she wanted something that reflected the both of them and the titanium would suit his profession as a Potions Master.

Suddenly the shop front doors were shut and they were led into a workshop area where there were
two titanium rings with a Notare (wave) pattern on the worktable. The wave was made by the application of the black steel coloured oxide onto the ring. So here were rings that were light and dark. Yes, they had found their wedding rings but this did not solve the problem of engagement rings.

"Considering you are not a traditional western bride, Grandfather asks if you would consider a dark gem stone such as a black diamond or dark blue diamond?" explained his granddaughter.

"I'm not sure of what you are thinking of," explained Hermione "The problem we have is that the Youmi is tomorrow night."

The mention of Youmi set off a fast paced rattle of Japanese from the old craftsman in which Hermione caught only Omiai and Nakōdo.

"Hai, our Nakōdo is Madam Uchiha Sakura," confirmed Severus.

This time the rattle of Japanese was clear they were to sit on the stools and wait while he called a colleague. While they were waiting, Hermione asked if she could see the hunter's watches and the otter netsukes. The pair viewed the watches and then there was a knock on the shop front door. The craftsman put his head out and then went to let the visitor into the store area. After locking up again, he brought the other man, in all the time explaining that they were looking for a different stone for an engagement ring. Fortunately for Severus and Hermione, the colleague had significantly more English than the older craftsman.

The new craftsman opened up a jewellery roll that had a number of zipped pouch areas filled with small packets of stones. The older craftsman had made a sketch that showed an inlaid setting of nine stones in a wave pattern. It was a stunning design and its interplay between light and dark truly reflected the yin and yang of Hermione and Severus' relationship and past.

The gem cutter inquired when was their birthdays all the while flicking through the pouches. Hermione replied that hers was September while his was January but unfortunately the garnet did not have a high enough of a mohrs score for the ring wearer's occupation. The gem craftsman brought out five black diamonds and four smoke coloured sapphires laying them on a cloth for the couple to see the effect. "Hai! Hai!" was the response from his colleague. Both Severus and Hermione could see how this ring would look and agreed that the design was perfect for them.

"Just to confirm, the wedding and the Youmi are when?" asked the gem craftsman.

"The Youmi is on Sunday night at 8pm and the wedding is two weeks on Saturday," explained Severus.

"Then we have some work to do tonight. We need to measure both your ring fingers and discuss the individual business transactions. After measuring ring fingers, Severus was sent out to the front of the store while the bride-to-be's individual transactions went on.

The inscription for Severus' wedding ring and the wizard hunter's watch were sorted out. The netsuke was selected for the watch. When asked why the otter, Hermione demonstrated her patronus.

The couple exchanged rooms and while Severus completed his inscription requests and payment for the rings, Hermione perused the store's other types of watches and necklaces.

Seeing her regarding the necklaces, Severus chuckled "So I am learning the lesson never go into a jewellery shop for one item with the woman in question. You will come out a heck of a lot lighter in the wallet and there will be more than one item purchased." Hermione had the jeweller's and his gem
merchant's cards and she had an idea for a wedding present that she wished to discuss at another time without the master spy present. They were let out of the shop and they apparated back to the Ryokan.

"Successful then," was the comment from Tonks who was sitting on one of the lobby couches. "She looks like a cat who has been in the cream."

Sitting together, Hermione snuggled into Severus' side. "She should be," was his terse reply. "But I adore her so it's no trouble at all," as he leaned down and kissed Hermione on the forehead.

"You know, YiaYia is right. You pair look do like that Klimt painting," advised Remus as he came to join Tonks on the couch.

"So we have Huey and Dewey, where is Louie?" inquired Severus. There was a ripple of laughter from Hermione, while there was a pair of blank looks from the pair on the opposite couch. "Call yourself half bloods? You don't even know your cartoon characters?"

Harry, aka Louie, appeared not too long after with a tea tray and five cups. After a calming cup of tea, the various relationship groups said good night to their partners. Tonks would be bunking with Hermione while the wolf and the boy were bunking with Severus. It was put up with these two males or bunk in with his mother. The former spy preferred the males, thank you, especially as both he and his mother had the same temper and the pair of them were definitely not afraid to use it.

At the breakfast meeting the next morning, Madam Sakura congratulated them on their ring selection before they had even discussed their late night shopping trip with her. She proceeded to tap her nose and it was then that Hiroto explained that the jewellery store he had sent them to last night was actually owned by a cousin to the matchmaker.

"Now, we have some final details to settle about the wedding place. Last night, Mr Kawasaki offered his family estate in Ohara for your wedding house party and reception. It would solve some of the security concerns we had and we could put the not-so-close guests in the Ryokan you both know. There are several shrines so we could get one at the time we wanted and then you could have the reception luncheon you wanted," enthused the matchmaker.

"Here are some photos of the estate and you will understand why I think it would be suitable," said the woman as she passed out a number of photos to the group. "We need a decision people, as we have to send invitations out today!"

The almost engaged couple was holding hands while looking at the photos. If it meant that they could have a larger house party of their friends and family, with all the security they needed for some of the guests and family, then Hermione was all for it.

Severus, on the other hand, was a little unsure of the offer. "Why, Madam Sakura, would Mr Kawasaki offer his summer estate house to us?" he inquired, regarding the matchmaker with a dark and intense questioning gaze.

Grandpère D'Angers came up to the breakfast table with his black coffee "As a thank you for the service our Mimi has done for the International and UK Kendo Federation. She has also done much for the rejuvenation of the Japanese Federation," he explained.

With that explanation, Severus agreed to the location. Uchi made them look over the guest lists one last time and there were only minor amendments. It was then time for Hermione to leave for the last
day of the tournament. Severus and Hermione walked peacefully along to the castle together just enjoying the chance to be together without the panic of making a decision or being on display. It was incredibly calming for Hermione just spending time with her arm around Severus waist and his arm reaching along her back to her waist. Hermione felt comfortable in his embrace and smiled happily to herself.

Again they went through the same routine at the castle as yesterday. Hermione left Severus to get changed, they then checked her competitor number attachment to her sleeves before the witch Kendoka then signed in to receive her final match round allocations and today's player seating placement.

Once Hermione was organised, Severus found a seat close to her player's seating section that would enable him to see his witch when she was resting between bouts and when she was up on the floor during her bouts.

Severus found that some familiar faces, including Daichi who he had met with Hiroto and a couple of other times, had joined him in the stands. When Phillip and Monsieur D'Angers joined him the potions master was surprised to find that there was an easy comradeship building. Suddenly the crowd was thicker and it seemed that there were posters and flags surrounding the seating area they were in. Looking round, it was the Scots Kitten's local branch of supporters who had joined them in the stands and this barmy army was here to scream for his Mimi.

*She was his Mimi!* was the thought that repeatedly ran through his head, before a smile creased Severus' face with joy.
Hermione successfully defended her title and she managed to organise with Goro for a photograph to be taken of the stand where Severus and her family was sitting. In the presentation ceremony the announcer slipped that she was getting engaged and her local group of supporters went wild. In addition to her winner's medal, she was also given a bunch of flowers to mark the local association's congratulations for her forthcoming engagement and nuptials.

Severus had to work hard as her escort to enable Hermione to exit out of the castle on time and head back to the Ryokan. There were a number of flashes going off. Phillip was just laughing at the embarrassment of the Potions Master when Severus' mobile went off. It was the taskmaster, Madam Sakura, demanding where were they? Trying to explain to a tiny Japanese matron that you are running late for your engagement ceremony was something Severus did not want to try to do, so with a quick word to Goro he lead Hermione to the apparation point and got the pair of them back to the Ryokan. Goro was going to get Phillip and Grandpère sorted. Coming into the lobby area of the Ryokan, Severus reported that they were back to Madam Sakura in the reception area and that Hermione was on her way to the communal traditional style bathroom.

"Good, she will find a familiar face there," the Sergeant Major for the event snapped. Her next order was for him to get his behind into the bathing rooms as well.

When Severus went into the men's bathing room he found that there seemed to be a production line, to make sure all that the key men in the ceremony were suited and booted appropriately. Madam Sakura had organised a barber to be present in the men's communal bathing area to ensure that they all looked sharp and that there were no nicks due to nervous hands.

In the ladies' bathing area Hermione encountered a couple of familiar faces: it was Madam Kameko and the hairdressers from the Omiai meeting night.

"So, I thought you two were not rushing into this? Hmm?" commented Kameko before she ordered the bride-to-be to hurry up. There was no long soak in the spring fed thermal pools for her tonight, it was a quick wash only. Hermione was quickly ushered back to her room where the ladies had obviously been earlier as it seemed they had prepared their workstations like the first meeting night of the Omiai.

Tonks was already dressed and placed on a chair so that she could not get messed up. Tonight the hairdressers put Hermione's hair up from her face in two braids leaving the rest of it to fall down her back. Jasmine blossoms had been placed in her braids.

Hermione was being dressed in a similar mint green kimono to the one she had worn last week but this time the pattern, besides having cherry blossoms on it, also had cranes. Once Hermione was dressed she was commanded to sit next to Tonks while they put the final touches on her hair and makeup.

Grandmère and Hélène joined the group waiting in Hermione and Tonks' room with their dressers. It seemed all the women were going to be in kimonos. Apparently the dressing team had done the ladies on Severus' side of the family earlier before heading over to sort out the Granger party.

Tonks complained about the lack of movement and mentioned that for the wedding she could not be in a kimono since she would be required to be part of the security for the event. "No problem, Tonks-san. We will put you in Hakama for the wedding," advised Kameko.
Similar to the ladies there was also a dressing team for the male members of the family. Severus returned from the bathroom in his yakata to find a little tailor present in the rooms. The wiry small man had apparently already dealt with Hiroto, Remus and Harry when Severus found himself being promptly ordered around. The other three wizards were all sitting on folding stools against one wall, keeping clean and well out of the way.

Tonight Severus found himself being dressed in the same dark matte silk Hakama and kimono as he wore to the first Omiai meeting but this time apparently according to the wiry little tailor was required to have a white nagajuban. When looking closely at the light silk nagajuban Severus discovered that there was subtle patterned of cranes woven into the light undergarment.

Once Severus was dressed he found that he was also forced to sit on the stools against the wall with the rest of the reprobates. It seemed that the older men of the group were also going to have to face the ire of the tailor. While waiting for Phillip and Grandpère to be dressed, Severus checked with Hiroto that everything was ready and that the individual engagement gifts had been wrapped so that all parties could do the gift exchange.

Once Phillip and Grandpère were dressed, Madam Sakura bustled in. The formidable lady had changed her kimono since Severus had seen her earlier in the reception area. It was definitely inspection time for the six men and there were a couple of minor adjustments before the tiny Sergeant Major was happy and directed them towards the private dining room to make sure everything was set up properly for each side of the family.

There in the private dining room, on two low tables, the gifts were arranged on trays. Hiroto explained the gift selection to Severus along with the meaning that each tray meant in the formal exchange process.

There are normally nine gifts besides the engagement ring and male engagement gift as part of the Youmi since it was an equitable match between the families they were going for a fairly even division of the gifts. The reason why there are nine family gifts is that it would make it difficult to split the couple. Severus's mother and grandmother would do the four family gifts that reflected his role in the marriage and Hermione's parents were giving four family gifts that reflected her role in the marriage.

The first gift tray of the nine family gifts was clothing. If the couple had been doing the traditional male dominant engagement this gift would be given by Hermione’s family to indicate Severus was the dominate partner but since this wedding and engagement was a meeting of two halves the gift would be jointly given by the families to the couple. Severus was giving an engagement ring to Hermione and to ensure that there were uneven gifts between the couple, Hermione was giving Severus a Hunter's watch and an otter netsuke.

When everyone in the family was present in the room Madam Sakura asked for the parents to be seated in front of their respective gift tables.

The rest of the family were in a ring around the front to view the ceremony. Madam Sakura and the couple were between the two tables.

Madam Sakura formally introduced the Athenaou Prince Snapes to the D'Angers Grangers before she started on a formal speech explaining that today's betrothal was the joining of two families. The nine gifts from the family to the couple were to reflect the difficulty of splitting the couple.

The first gift exchanged between the two families and the couple was an obi for Hermione and a
dark matte linen Hakama for Severus; this gift was to represent the couple's fidelity for each other. Each parental representative presented the individual gift to their new child-in-law at the same time.

The second gift tray was polished abalone shell known as Naganoshi, which was presented to the couple by Anastasia and YiaYia to symbolically represent the good wishes by the families for the couple.

The third gift was the Kinpou, or the betrothal money, in an envelope that was tied with a string. Phillip and Hélène presented that to the young couple.

Katsuo-bushi, was the fourth gift. This gift was a pair of dried bonito fish showing the dorsal aspect and abdominal meat. Since this was the ingredient for soup it represented the wish for a vitality in the marriage. It seemed highly appropriate that Anastasia and YiaYia were making this presentation as the family had a small fleet of fishing boats on Kalymnos.

Hélène and Phillip's next gift was the Surume. This is dried cuttlefish that has extremely good keeping qualities and reflected the wishes of the parents that engaged couple have a long marriage together.

The next gift was Konbu, which was two pieces of dried kelp. This gift by Anastasia and YiaYia caused a bit of a blush with the couple as it represented their parents' hope that the couple would have numerous and healthy children. The proverbial wish for grandchildren. YiaYia had a little giggle over the blushes of the couple.

Tomo-shiraga, which was a large white bundle of hemp thread which was tied like a tasuki cord, indicating the wish that the couple grow old and grey together was the next gift given by the Grangers on the behalf of the parents to the couple.

Suehiro, was a pair of white fans reflecting the hopes of future happiness for the couple from both sets of parents presented by YiaYia and Anastasia.

The last gift was a wooden barrel made from willow called the Yanagi-daru that contained Sake. Hélène and Phillip's final gift presented on the behalf of the parents reflected the hope that the couple could achieve gentleness, compromise and flexibility in their marriage.

After the parental gifts were set nicely out. The couple was instructed to come forward and they both exchanged a jasmine flower bunch with each other before presenting their individual gifts to each other. A final toast of Sake was poured for all and Madam Sakura led the toast with "Severus and Hermione."

Once the toasts were completed Severus and Hermione unwrapped their individual gifts. Opening the hunter's watch Severus found it was inscribed with, "You have my love, my friendship always, my life partner. Today is the beginning of our forever." He closed the watch, putting it on before reaching over to kiss Hermione gently on the lips and whispering thank you.

Hermione ducked her head as she tried to stop the tears while she opened up her gift box. It was the ring designed last night at Madam Sakura's cousin's workshop with their selected stone inlaid setting. She read the inscription inside the band, "My hope and joy."

Seeing the moisture on her cheeks Severus wiped away Hermione's tears. "You are, you know, Hermione," Severus confirmed while taking the ring from her grasp and slipping it onto her left hand ring finger. Hermione looked back down at her hand before kissing Severus passionately.

"Oy, oy! Break it up, you two! No PDAs, we want our dinner," commanded Tonks.
Madam Sakura opened the private dining room doors up and waved to Madam Namiko and suddenly all hands were on deck moving the gift trays from the tables so that everything could be displayed in the main dining room, and moving all the family out to a celebratory table in the main dining room.

There were many Kendo friends there who had booked in for the kaiseki dinner to help celebrate the engagement. All the other kaiseki guests had delayed their dinner and dressed in formal clothes so they could eat with the family and help celebrate this special occasion. Hermione and Severus were called to pose for several photos with their engagement gifts.

Hermione was pleased to see the dressing teams all seated at one table and walked over to the table to thank them. She then visited a couple of the other tables to thank them as well for coming to help celebrate. Severus had to use his professor voice and tone to get her back to her dinner place, "Granger, out of bounds already."

There was a ripple of laughs at Severus' phraseology and Hermione scuttled back to her seat so that dinner could be served.
The family enjoyed the evening celebrating the engagement of Severus and Hermione. The engaged couple could not seem to leave each other long without some form of personal demonstration of affection. At the end of the evening Madam Sakura boxed up the gifts and arranged for them to be put in Hélène and Phillip's room. Madam Sakura's dressing team then helped to get everyone who needed help out of his or her kimonos. Once Hermione was in her yukata, she headed out to the lobby area to thank Madam Namiko and the Ryokan staff for their assistance in making the evening a lovely event.

Hermione joined Harry on a lobby couch for a cup of tea.

"Are you happy, Mimi?" he asked his best friend and sister.

"Ecstatically!" she exclaimed, giving him a wide grin.

"So show us your rock," he teased her. She promptly gave him her left hand and he asked the necessary questions about the design. They were talking quietly when Severus joined them.

"No, I'm not going show you the inscription because that is personal between Severus and myself," advised Hermione, moving to get closer to Severus. Tonks and Remus joined the trio not long afterwards.

"Thank goodness I'm not wearing a kimono to your wedding, guys. That was pure torture. There is absolutely no way to run in those dresses," advised the female Auror.

"Well there is, but you can't take your normal, long stride," refuted Hermione.

"Just to let you know, we sent all the invitations out this afternoon. Madam Sakura organised with Mr Kawasaki that the house party covers the two weeks from the Saturday you two get married. So once the reception is held, all the extra hangers-on can shove off while the rest of us kick back and relax," advised Tonks.

"Do you know, I'm rather getting into the thought of a two week house party," advised Harry. "It's just surviving the two weeks before then. I thought you were bad around exam time in school, Mimi, but Madam Sakura seems to have topped you there."

When Madam Sakura's dressing team passed them, Hermione thanked the ladies for all their assistance and advised she was looking forward to seeing them later in the week.

"Tonks, put your men down and come to bed," advised Hermione. "We have a long day travelling and doing wedding things tomorrow."

"I'll trade you Severus for me," suggested Tonks hopefully.

"I can see you getting that past YiaYia, Mother, Hélène, Melina and Madam Sakura... NOT!" advised Severus, "Nice try but I want to make it to my own wedding alive."

"All right then, since Hermione would prefer you intact, I'll go and bunk in with her and leave you to the boyos here. Night, Sevvie," called Tonks on her way back to the room she was sharing with Hermione.

"Good night, Nymphadora," called Severus.
"It's Tonks!" exclaimed the witch.

"It's Severus or if I'm being really pissy, Potions Master Snape or Professor Snape," retorted a man who really did not appreciate the shortening of his name the witch had used.

Not long after the departure of the witches, the men of the group departed back to their shared room for some shuteye. Severus had the tick of the watch his witch had given him to help lull him off to sleep.

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After an early breakfast at the Ryokan, the Grangers and Snapes returned to Kyoto. The Grangers and the D'Angers were transported back to Kyoto by the magical children and it was a relief to put everything away after the busy weekend they had all had. The Kitaguchis and Snapes returned in a similar manner back to the Kitaguchi machiya.

Hermione looked at the kitchen and thought that with the extra mouths in the house she better go and get some more supplies. The witch managed to get a list out of Hélène and Mémé before she grabbed Harry to come and help. At the local stores she was quizzed about the engagement ring and asked if Harry was the lucky fellow. She had to explain that Harry is her brother and has his own girlfriend. They managed to get all the items on the list, plus some other items such as chocolate for Remus and more fruit for the rest of them. There was a florist and Hermione brought a small Jasmine posy that she was bringing home just for her room.

Harry and Hermione organised lunch under the expert supervision of Mémé and the family gathered together to eat the meal in peace. Everyone seemed to be knackered. As they were tidying up after lunch, Hermione's phone rang. It was Severus and she stepped out into the garden to get a moment's peace from the rest of the family.

"Hello, Sev. Can't you go four hours without me?" she asked cheekily,

"No, minx, but I was calling because Mother wants to take both of us out to look at a house. I thought if you and Phillip join us we could look at it," he explained.

"Why does your mother want to look at a house?" she asked him a little confused.

"It's a tradition to give the couple a house when they get married. She wants to give us a machiya here in the same Kyoto neighbourhood as Melina. I have a house in England and we'll look at a flat wherever you decide to go to university. There's the cottage on Kalymnos for now as well," advised the rich baritone.

"How did she get onto a machiya?" she questioned.

"Hermione, you can do the 100 questions later. Mother just wants to know if you're available," sniped the slightly frustrated man.

"Give me a minute, Sev," she advised him before she walked back inside. "Daddy, are you free to come and look at some real estate this afternoon with Anastasia and Severus? I believe they want your advice over another machiya," Hermione explained.

"We could meet up at 2pm," agreed Phillip Granger.

"Dad said we can do from 2pm," relayed Hermione.

"Right, my star. I'll let Mother know and find out what she has organised with the real estate agent
and get back to you. Bye, s'agapo" signed off Severus from the call.

Not long after that, Phillip and Hermione got a text on their phones from Severus advising that Anastasia and himself would be dropping round at 1:50pm. Apparently the machiya up for sale was on the same street as the Grangers, so Anastasia had organised to meet there.

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At 1:50pm there was a knock on the door and Severus and Anastasia sat in the foyer while Phillip went upstairs to get a coat and Hermione put her shoes on. When Phillip arrived downstairs, he slipped on some loafers and proceeded to usher everyone out the door.

"We can't be late for this appointment. Which way are we going? Do we have a game plan here today?" inquired Phillip as he bustled everyone in the right direction, after being shown the address by Severus.

"Would it be a good idea if I only spoke in Greek to put the agent off a little?" inquired Anastasia.

"Well, that may work and we always need every advantage we can get in negotiations," suggested Phillip.

When they arrived at the address, Phillip, Hermione and Severus were all slightly confused. It was not a house but a courtyard street. In the entrance to the courtyard, the real estate agent Mr Tanaka was waiting for them. It was the same real estate agent that Phillip had dealt with when he purchased the Granger's machiya.

"Good afternoon, Mr Granger-san. It is nice to see you again. I take it you are good friends with Madam Snape-san?" was the warm greeting from the affable, little man.

After the introductions were made the agent explained that the whole courtyard was currently up for sale and that it was a former commercial property complex for rental income. As there had been no interest for the complete complex, they were now starting to show individual units of the courtyard.

"Since when?" demanded Anastasia, sharply. Well, that blew that game plan out of the water about only speaking Greek!

"I received the new instructions this morning," advised Mr Tanaka.

"I was interested in the complex as an addition to my investment portfolio," explained Anastasia. "Can you go through the complex details with me?"

Severus looked slightly shocked that his mother was putting her game plan so bluntly down on the table. He was not surprised by the attractiveness of the complex for her, as the rental from the rest of the complex could help subsidise the home she was interested in for them. As the matriarch of his family, Anastasia was a shrewd businesswoman and would see the possibilities in the enterprise.

Hermione had grasped Severus' arm tightly when Anastasia had calmly announced that she was interested in the courtyard complex. It was too much, just what was going on.

In the courtyard, there were 20 machiya in total with 10 shop fronts currently active. At the end of the courtyard street there was a former banqueting house and guest inn that currently was not in use.

They were in the banqueting house and Hermione and Severus were in the garden away from the agent and their parents. "This is too much, Severus!" exclaimed Hermione.
"I'm not certain what she has in mind but let's take a home for the newlyweds out of the equation. Mother is always looking for investment opportunities so that she can increase the diversification of the family estate and businesses. Now, we are always going to have some association with Japan, which is very clear to her. Melina is out here and her sons are here as well. So it's time for the Kalymnian community to get into the local trade.

"Historically there are some links between the sponge divers and the pearling industry, so it's not that far of a stretch for a Greek family to have links in Japan. Now, if she purchases any property or businesses in Japan, she would seek to ensure that there was room for growth and opportunities for further income generation. So don't panic. This is a time to look, listen and learn," advised Severus.

As Mr Tanaka took them to meet some of the existing retail tenants, Hermione received some recognition as a Kendoka in one store and she politely signed autographs for the occupants. In the next retail space, she was greeted as the heroine of the Battle of Hogwarts and that was when Mr Tanaka acknowledged that he was a wizard. Phillip just laughed, "I'm the odd man out here, as I'm just the muggle parent of five magicals."

"You mean there are more bright, intelligent, young Grangers?" inquired the shop owner.

"Technically, no, but we have five children of our heart. I have recently gained a son-in-law in Severus here, so he is child number five. Hermione has a best friend and he and his family are the other three children," explained Phillip.

"Congratulations! Many best wishes to both of you," exclaimed the business owner. "So, Severus-san, what is your profession?"

"I am a Potions Master and academic," advised Severus politely, a little embarrassed about the attention he was getting. He really was not used to positive attention.

"Mr Tanaka-san, you must show them the old Inoue machiya. Severus-san would be highly interested in the basement area of this property," advised the elderly businessman. "We have not had a good apothecary here in the neighbourhood for many years."

When they were in the Inoue machiya Severus looked like he had hit the jackpot when they explored the basement area of this property. Phillip was walking round and to him it looked like a good laboratory. However, moving through the upper levels of the house it could be seen that it needed significant repair.

"Ah, Mr Granger-san, here we come to the heart of the problem, but you are not frightened of the work involved in owning a culturally important property. It is good that you are here to provide advice to your son-in-law's mother, as you have already learnt the ropes of the requirements and have an understanding of the fine details. What did you say you were again?" inquired the real estate agent.

"My wife and I are dentists. We have two different areas of specialist practice and we had taken a year or so off our practice during the magical war in the UK, Mr Tanaka-san, as our daughter was one of the Golden Trio, being a best friend of Harry Potter. Lately I seem to be a liaison or consultant between the UK magical and non-magical worlds," explained Phillip.

Hélène and Phillip had had a number of discussions lately and both were a little unsure about the thought of returning to a full-time dental practice. They wanted to be more involved in their daughter's life, where possible. Now that she was getting married in two weeks, they were going to have to find a new way to balance their involvement in her life as it would not just be her, it would be Severus as well. Phillip knew that they would have to give the newlyweds some space, but what
was bothering them was how much space the young couple would need.

They continued to tour the various buildings that made up the complex. At the end of the tour, there was an inquisitive look at Madam Snape from Mr Tanaka, as he was not sure about the formidable woman and her reaction to the property. "Madam Snape-san, do you wish any further information to assist you in your deliberations?" came the polite inquiry.

"Right! I want the full plans for the buildings, a financial return breakdown of the rental income and the local property rates and taxes. I want any details on the specific limitations for the properties that the Cultural and Heritage Registration status means for any potential future use and the requirements in relation to the upkeep of the buildings. I believe we will need a structural engineer's report for the complex.

"I would also like to get some quotes from appropriate, suitably qualified restoration services, as I assume that is part of the sticking point for the rebuilding. I would also like you to facilitate an introduction to the local Business Association, and I will need information on the zoning categories that the buildings have.

"I'm not only interested in commercial properties like the complex but I'm also looking for a machiya for my son and daughter-in-law. Is it possible to get a breakdown of the neighbourhood businesses on a street by street basis?

"I assume that you have contacts in the local municipal office, so I will need an introduction to the Development Officer, along with the building control section as well. It's probably going to take a little while for you to get all of that pulled together for me but I would like it be known to the current owner that I want first bid rights, as I am interested in the entire complex.

"Why don't we go for a cup of tea while you put my first rights requirements to the owner? Can you recommend anywhere good?" she inquired.

"Better still, I can take you somewhere that is private and very good," advised Mr Tanaka, and he proceeded to lead the party off to the Ojizo Teahouse.

Phillip did a double take at the teahouse Mr Tanaka led them to, as he thought that the Ojizo Teahouse was a male-only domain and for private members only. When they went in, the owner set up a larger table for the group and proceeded to take their orders. Mr Tanaka excused himself from the group for a moment to make a couple of calls.

At that moment Phillip, asked a couple of questions that had been bugging him for a while.
"Anastasia why did you want me to come this afternoon and what did you mean about purchasing a house for Severus and Hermione?"

"Well let's deal with question one first. Hiroto said that you had purchased and restored the machiya yourselves non-magically, so I assumed that you would be familiar with the building control issues and would have some inside information about the types of problems I might encounter with the complex. When I have someone knowledgeable available, I use them for advice.

As to the second question, it's a traditional wedding gift. I know that it's a long way from England but you have a house here. I was just acknowledging the fact that Severus and Hermione will probably be spending quite a lot of time in the region. So I was thinking that I should purchase a house here for their use. Severus has a house in England but if I could get him to sell it and buy a new house, I would be an extremely happy woman," explained the older witch.

"Mother, I couldn't do anything about selling up Spinner's End until Voldemort was finally
vanquished and I knew what I was doing. I'm still not entirely sure, so we'll be holding on to the place until Hermione here has made up her mind about her university course,” replied Severus.

When Mr Tanaka returned to the party at their table, he advised that he had organised most of Madam Snape's requests already and the documents she wanted would be available this evening. It was then that a request was made for a full copy of the documents to be delivered to the Grangers as well, with the explanation that since Kalymnos was a matriarchal culture, Hermione, as Severus' wife, would be expected to know the business, since one day she would be the one in control of the family estate and businesses. So Madam Snape was starting the younger witch’s estate management education early.

While in the teahouse, several introductions were made and with each new introduction came congratulations for the new marriage. There seemed to be considerable admiration for Hermione and she was asked to sign a few autographs. On the completion of their tea, the group disbanded and went back to their own primary local residences. Severus had organised to visit Hermione after dinner. He had recognised that it was that time of her cycle where she was not comfortable. The Potions Master was going to have a chat about some personal matters with his future wife and he hoped the hormonal being she was at the moment would be patient with him.

Σ 'αγαπώ (S'agapo) = I love you
Family Planning

When Severus arrived at the Granger residence after dinner, he found that Mr Takana had dropped off the paperwork stack and it appeared that a family conference was occurring over the documents. It appeared that everyone in the Granger residence was getting involved in the business analysis for the complex.

Hermione looked tired and she was definitely hormonal. After participating in the discussion for about an hour, Severus finally manages to hold his witch. Phillip had suggested that the couple could escape the business analysis by having some quiet time in his den. Sitting together on the couch, Severus found his witch snuggled in.

"Hermione, we need to talk about something important," he explained, while holding her hands and running his thumb in a soothing pattern on the back of one of her hands. "We need to discuss family planning, especially with a wedding less than two weeks away. Are you currently using any birth control?"

"No, since I wasn't in a relationship I didn't see the point," she explained.

"I think we're not quite ready yet to share our lives with children, as we have some life goals, such as a university degree to achieve first. Unfortunately, as a result of over exposure to many other potions while trying to keep myself alive during the war, I can't take the male potion if we want to have children in the future. I need to talk to you about your medical history and we need to see a healer tomorrow so I can brew a tailored potion for you. Did you take the 100 day potion at Hogwarts?" he asked, trying to keep an objective approach even though he felt like he was blushing madly.

"No, I wasn't able to. I had a reaction to one of the ingredients but Poppy never worked out which. That's why I don't take Witch's Friend or some of the hormone adjusting potions either," she explained.

"I wish you had talked to me about this when you were my lab assistant for a year. We could have done some initial testing for you and maybe found a solution. You shouldn't have to suffer like you do each month," he said, as he applied a wandless, silent, directed heating charm on her lower back.

"Mmmm, that feels good," murmured the witch, who now had a magical hot water bottle heating her aching back.

"I'm glad to be of service. Have you tried any of the muggle options?" he wondered.

"I looked at some of the options and thought it was too much mucking about with my hormonal balance. I'm enough of a disaster already that I didn't want to make it worse for everyone who has to deal with me," explained the witch, who was beginning to tear up a little, thinking about how horrible she could be during her cycle.

"You're not a disaster, you're just less immune to fools," explained Severus, wiping away the tears on her cheeks and continuing to rub soothing circles into her upper back.

"That's one way of describing it!" she huffed at him.

"By my calculations, you came on this morning?" he cautiously asked for confirmation.

"Oh, aren't you the observant one?" was her retort but there was no longer the sting of anger in her eyes.
"Professional spy here," he lightly joked, as he continued to massage the knots out of her neck and shoulders.

The couple had enjoyed a peaceful hour together when Phillip put his head round the door to see the quiet interlude between the two. Phillip commented, "Good thing you're learning how to handle her. There were times when she was a teenager, I swear I was ready to shoot her. She even has Harry trained to provide salt and vinegar crisps and dark chocolate on demand."

"Oy! I am here, you know, Dad!" exclaimed the witch with ready ire rising to the boil.

Phillip came further into the den and seated himself at the desk area before turning to regard the couple on his couch. "Severus, what do you think about your mother's idea of buying a house here for Hermione and you?"

"I know it may seem strange but think about it this way: it's a peace offering and it's a way of helping a young couple to become established. Mother really wants me to be happy and if that means I live in a house near you and Hélène, then so be it. She'll just make sure we have room for visitors. Hermione will always want to be close to her family, or just see them regularly, so it makes sense to have an apartment near her parents, as it's always nice to close your own front door. Where we end up really depends on Hermione and where she wants to go with her career. I can brew anywhere. I've come to realise that I don't want to teach full-time. I'd rather be a researcher but I still need the interaction with peers, even though I'm really not that much of a people person. I was thinking about teaching part-time to those who want to learn my craft, as that would be a way to maintain the interaction I believe I need," he explained to the quiet man.

"I wouldn't say that, but I get where you're coming from. Hélène doesn't have the patience for whinging patients so I get them. She does her specialism and I do mine. What about taking over the Inoue place? I saw you in there – you looked like a kid in a candy shop. Although I can't see you as the front man in a store," commented Phillip.

"No! Heavens, no! I just don't have the patience for it. However, you're right about that lab. It was even better than the private potions lab at Hogwarts," explained the Potions Master who was still drooling about the set up he had seen that morning.

"Now, Daddy. You shouldn't already be enticing my husband into a man cave. There will be no man caves in my marriage. If you have a room of toys like that lab, I want to play in there too," elucidated the determined witch.

Both men had to stifle their own laughter over her unintended double entendre.

"Get your minds out of the gutter, the pair of you! You're worse than most 7th years," muttered the witch when it clicked with her the other possible meaning of her earlier comments. "I just like playing with boys' toys just as much as you do, Daddy. We haven't done any experiments or projects in ages. If we had a workshop set up like that lab, we could get up to all sorts of mischief. We could probably give those twins a run for their money."

"Now you're talking, lass. Your mother and I don't want to go back into full-time practice so we're scratching around for ideas for things that could keep us occupied. I'm already doing some business consulting for the twins and Harry. Harry was very interested in the business complex, by the way, and he wants to have a look over it. I think he wants to have his own place here and further expand his business portfolio," advised Phillip. "I understand from Hiroto that when you mother eventually wants to hand over control, that she will hand over control to Hermione?"

"What do you mean, hand over control?" queried the young witch, suddenly concerned about the
implications of the discussion that was going on at the moment.

"Eventually, Love, as my wife and the mother of our children, you will become the matriarch of the family and with that will come the responsibility for the management of the family estate and enterprises. We have always had to diversify, as the estate alone doesn't provide more than a subsistence level of income and it's never a good idea to have all your eggs in one basket. Don't worry, Mother and YiaYia will train you in the business management and you already have good common sense most of the time," he explained, all the while rubbing her back to get her to calm down, as she had become agitated when she realised that potentially she would be looking after complex finances.

"But I'm not a pureblood witch who has been trained in all this from birth!" exclaimed the very overwhelmed witch.

"No, but we have always tried to explain the workings of our business transactions to you since you were little, so in a way, it's the same," explained Phillip.

"You have an extremely brilliant mind, Mimi, and you will bring creative new ideas to whatever enterprises you may be involved in," stated Severus, trying to get her mood back into a more cheerful frame of mind.

"I have some ice cream in the freezer, do you want some?" inquired Phillip, realizing that his daughter needed cheering up.

"Chocolate?" was the peep from the couch.

"I might even have mint chocolate," was the retort from the father, trying to entice his daughter out from her dark place.

"Well, I'll get the bowls and you get the ice cream. Sev, do you want some?" inquired the witch who had bounced off the couch and was almost out the door, heading for the kitchen.

"I'm not really a mint chocolate person," explained Severus, cringing at the thought.

"Don't worry Severus I have plenty of other flavours. I will even do vanilla ice cream with a splash of Drambuie, if that will tickle your fancy," suggested Phillip. "But I'll give you this piece of marital advice: always have some mint chocolate ice cream in the freezer for when Mimi is miserable, as that is her favourite and it will make your life more pleasant."

"I'll take that under advisement," Severus simply responded.

The next day was filled with a visit to a healer and further discussion between the two over their options. There was a trip to the local magical shops for ingredients. Hermione was more aware that she was making notes about the businesses and the gaps in the market that she had spotted.

Harry, Phillip and Anastasia visited the complex again with Mr Takana and there were introductions made to the local Building Control and Development officers from the local council. Harry seemed to be attached to his adapted mobile phone most of the day after looking the complex over.

Madam Sakura and the head of her dressing team managed to nail down Hermione and the female members of her family for a day of sorting out their individual wedding outfits. It was during this
shopping trip that Hermione engaged the small pocket battleship's assistance in organizing a wedding present for Severus from her cousin, the master craftsman jeweller.

Hermione had asked Severus to conjure a patronus for her, as she wanted to see what form it was now. He was surprised to see that it had changed to a fox. She explained to the craftsman that her patronus was the otter and the netsuke that she had purchased previously was representative of her. Now, however, she wanted something that was representative of Severus, as a wedding present. After a detailed discussion, the craftsman proposed a design and she accepted. So besides sorting out the wedding outfits, she had managed to organise her wedding gift to her spouse.

Madam Sakura advised that there had already been quite a good response to the invitations and Griphook at Gringotts had been particularly helpful in arranging international portkeys.

Anastasia Snape had been seriously considering the complex purchase and looking at it in-depth, no matter what item she was looking at in the business analysis, she found the figures added up. She had a gut feeling that she should make the purchase.

Phillip Granger and Hiroto had escorted the witch to the local Heritage and Conservation Association meeting where she was introduced to a number of individuals who were quite interested in meeting the woman who was considering taking on such an extensive undertaking.

There were nights out with the younger crowd and Severus and Hermione were getting more closely entwined. Several comments about the number of PDAs were made.

It was interesting for Harry to see the complete change in personality and attitudes that Severus was displaying so freely here in Japan. Harry could see that some of it was due to not having to play the double agent within a complex web of lies all the time. Getting away from Hogwarts and the master manipulator, Albus Dumbledore, had definitely had a very positive effect on the previously dour man.

Harry's own relationship had settled into a long-term triad and now that Hermione was getting married, his own mind turned to the concept. Harry was still trying to work out what he was going to do career-wise as he was a little disillusioned with the Ministry. Spending time with Phillip while doing the business analysis for the property complex had stirred an interest in Harry and he was starting to think that he should be doing some further study in business management, as he was going to need skills in this area to manage his family vaults to ensure that they continued to grow.

Over the weekend, the first of the guests for the ceremony and house party started to arrive in Kyoto and it was evident in the neighbourhood that a special event was happening, as it appeared the excitement had spread from the families to the rest of the residents. Famous faces were seen on the neighbourhood streets and in the local Ryokans. Added to that, there appeared to be groups of smiling and exuberant Europeans visiting the local sites and eating at the various eating establishments.

Ojizo Teahouse started to see a regular gathering of men from the couple's families and their friends who were escaping the madness of Madam Sakura and the women fussing over this or that detail for the wedding. Phillip felt that he was starting to integrate into the local community more when he could recognise other teahouse patrons in the streets and stores of the local neighbourhood.
The countdown to the wedding hit Severus when Minerva McGonagall arrived. The Scots woman seemed to be very happy with the situation of one of her lion cubs marrying him. There was a chance to catch up on the school gossip and Severus was even more grateful he was not there at Hogwarts and still a current Head of House. It appeared that the School Board had undergone some massive changes and with Augusta Longbottom as the Chairwoman, there was a push to improve the quality of the teaching curriculum as well as structural changes. Apparently Madam Longbottom and the Headmaster had locked horns several times and it sounded like the staff were caught in the middle of the battleground while trying to teach the current students.

With an increasing number of guests arriving, Severus and Hermione were finding it difficult to have quiet moments together. While they enjoyed the company of their friends and former colleagues it was annoying continually to be the centre of attention. Severus had been brewing for his bride-to-be and finally he was able to give her a basket of toiletries that had been crafted for her with the touch of jasmine and vanilla that he associated with her.

On the Thursday morning before the wedding, the couple finally got some time to themselves. Severus had brought the tailored potion for her. There seemed to be some electricity in their touch of each other. Standing in the kitchen of her parent's machiya she gave him an intense look before opening the vial. With a 'bottoms up,' she downed the mixture. Severus was watching her closely to see if she had an adverse reaction but, fortunately, there was none.
Absolutely Manic

The countdown was finished and the wedding would be taking place on the following day: Saturday, the 23rd of May. Now they just had to survive the combined family and friends’ dinner! Sitting together, it was easy for the observer to see that there was a deep friendship and love between the couple that were getting married.

There were ribald jokes and puns poked at them by the party guests. Some of the worst of the bawdy jokes came from the various redheads that all seemed to be one family.

Madam Sakura, ever the organiser, cut the bridal couple off from the Sake pretty early, as she said that not even potions were going to cure some of the hangovers that their guests were going to have, and they had to walk in tabi and geta tomorrow.

The bride and groom got to have a quiet moment before they were bundled off to their respective family residences. Meanwhile, as predicted, the guests kicked on at the restaurant for quite some time and it was a very lively affair.

The various dressing team members disturbed the families bright and early in the morning as they were deployed to each residence. There was a message that Madam Sakura would see them at the Kawasaki Estate House and to make sure everyone was packed for the house party.

The D’Angers/Granger household was all ready packed as Hermione had kicked into overboard on Friday afternoon, making sure that Harry was packed and likewise bullying the rest of the household. After the dinner there was a ritual sitting down with the rest of the family for ice cream at 11pm that night. There were a few tears but as the bride explained she wasn't really leaving they were just adding another child to the mix they already had. Admittedly Severus was almost their age but hey heck he was Mimi’s intended.

The morning breakfast with the dressing team was helpful, as Hélène and Mémé had repeatedly had moments of tears, so all were eventually fed. "Women and weddings!" commented Grandpère, rolling his eyes, but if you looked closely, he was a little emotional too.

At 9am the hairdresser and barber arrived and then Hermione knew the countdown was on. Her hair was put up into the bunkin takashimada, which is a high bun, that allowed the wearing of the distinctive Horns of Jealousy headdress, the tsunokakushi. Good luck ornaments were then added to the headdress and Kameko slipped in some jasmine into the hairpiece.

When Hermione was in her white shiromuku kimono she was ordered to sit on a stool while the rest of the household was dressed in formal kimonos. Tonks got her wish with a modified Miko outfit where she had a black Hakama. The men of the household, like all the male participants in the wedding ceremony, were all dressed in the formal black montsuki kimono and Hakama.

There was delivery of the bridal bouquet that had been arranged by Severus. The flowers each had a message and Kameko teared up when she saw the bouquet. Finally, the parties were all ready according to the mobile phone conversations. The final photos were taken and then Hermione's wataboshi was put in place. This hood would stay up until after the ceremony as only Severus would see the bride. The wedding party then apparated up to the Kawasaki Estate where Madam Sakura met both groups. In the large lounge room, the first part of the wedding was completed with the civil paperwork. The formal documents meant that she was now Hermione Granger-Snape. The wedding party with Madam Sakura then apparated to Okazaki Shrine where observers at the Shrine looking at the family found it was difficult to see where the four redhead males fitted in family-wise when they
were all washing their hands at the entrance to the shrine. It seemed that they were there as their heart-sister was getting married to her dungeon bat.

In the shrine sanctuary, the priest purified all present in the Shubatsu using a wand and gave a small blessing for the ceremony called the Norito-sojo. When the priest used a wand to magically purify all present, it seemed to Phillip that the air had changed.

"It is a blessed day for us today as we celebrate the wedding of Severus and Hermione before the gods," intoned the priest.

It was now time for the San-San Kudo. The nuptial cup containing Sake was passed by one of the shrine maidens, a Miko, between Severus and Hermione a total of nine times to help in the sealing of their marriage bonds.

It was time for the couple to say their vows in the Seishi Sodoku.

"Do you promise to honour each other and live in peace?" he asked.

"We do," the couple answered in unison. Their magic was starting to merge and there were bands of gold and silver surrounding Hermione and Severus.

"Through both the joys and sorrows of life do you promise to keep each other and care for each other?" the priest asked again.

"We do," answered the couple. Now bands of colour were mingling with the earlier bands and there appeared to be a radiance surrounding the couple.

"May you engage in a peaceful life that is long and paved with the blessings of children and prosperity," intoned the priest, sprinkling the couple lightly with water and salt.

"We pledge to honour each other with loyalty, fidelity and love. We ask for the protection and guidance of the gods in our long journey with each other," intoned the couple together.

The radiance was getting brighter and brighter and it was difficult to separate the two individuals from each other.

The Miko gave the couple a bundle of twigs, which was the Sakaki branch. Severus and Hermione together placed the branch on the altar before saying their final oaths.

Together the couple pledged their commitment to each other, while placing the ring on each other with the words, "With this ring I pledge my life, my love and my magic, so mote it be." There was a flash of magic and it seemed that rings on both their hands were infused with a brilliant light before dying down.

After this final vow, the Mikos moved through the rest of the family present, starting with their parents and then grandparents, to give them a cup of Sake. Once the elders had their cups, all the rest of the family, which included four redheaded men, two black haired men and a tawny haired man as the bride's brothers, along with a witch in a Hakama and celestial red hair, were presented with their cups of Sake. Everyone then drank a cup of Sake in celebration.

Severus took Hermione's cup from her and placed it on the altar stand that they had been standing before. Looking at her, she was glowing with happiness. Holding her hands, the intensely private man told her, "Thank you for your love and vows today. I adore you, you are my goddess, my star, the light of my life," before soundly kissing her in a passionate embrace.
The wedding party then apparated back to the reception at the Kawasaki Estate. The whole time throughout the wedding Madam Sakura had been going mad with the camera, although she also had a wizarding photographer in attendance, which was also taking a fair number of photographs of the family and the couple.

When Hermione arrived at the estate, Madam Kameko was ready to help the bride with a change in kimono from the white wedding kimono to a red and gold crane patterned kimono. The wataboshi hood had been removed when Hermione had changed out of the white kimono.

Formal posed photographs were taken of the couple with the wedding party and any of the reception guests who wished to pose with the couple. The wizard photographer was getting a little frustrated with the couple as they kept looking at each other rather than in the direction of his camera.

Once the majority of the guests had had their photographs taken with the couple, the reception was on for all. The couple continued to respect the local traditions by visiting each table and lighting a candle as symbol of their togetherness in marriage.

The reception banquet followed the theme of nine, with nine courses of traditional foods that included two dessert courses. The first dessert course was fruit and Champagne. The second dessert course was a white sponge cake with layers of barely sweetened whipped cream and large strawberries. Between the dessert courses, under the direction of Madam Sakura, Severus and Hermione broke open a cask of Sake with a mallet as their first act as a married couple together.

All in all it was a marvellous feast and very enjoyable reception. When the last of the guests who were not staying at the estate left, the couple were thankful for the assistance of Kameko to help them out of the kimonos and into comfortable yukata.
A Wedding Night

When Kameko left the couple there was a hesitancy, a nervousness, between the two. Yes, it was their wedding night but it was still afternoon. It was only five o'clock in the afternoon.

Severus lay down on the bed and called her to him, "Come, snuggle a while. You must be exhausted from the day, so come and rest for a while. I'm going to have a nap."

His easy actions and simple relaxed pose on the bed calmed her down. Hermione admitted to herself that she was tired and a little nervous about taking the next step with him. It was really that she did not want to disappoint him. She really did have a fear of failure and it leaked into all parts of her life, not just her scholastic endeavours.

Severus wrapped her in his arms as he spooned behind her. Whispering in the shell of her ear he provided a hypnotising murmur of, "Sleep now, my angel." Hermione found herself following his prompting and soon her eyes grew heavy and drooped shut. Not long afterwards, he was rewarded with the sound of her slow, settled breathing.

Severus heard the opening of a screen close to the bedroom and it put him on alert. It appeared that someone was setting up a dinner table for the couple and placing their dinner under a stasis charm. The person then discreetly left the suite of rooms.

The former spy opened the bedroom screen door and saw the lovely, intimate table settings. Turning round in the doorway he found that Hermione was now awake and coming over to hug him.

"Peckish?" was the inquiry he asked her.

"A little," she commented.

He led her out into their private dining room and sat her in her seat. Over dinner they talked about the day and the various moments that they had enjoyed and the conversation relaxed Hermione even more. It could have been the wine but when he admitted that his favourite part of the day was kissing his wife for the first time, he could have sworn he saw a flash of desire in her eyes.

They had some lovely fruit for dessert, like their luncheon banquet, and Severus almost took her when she was nibbling on the honeydew melon. Hermione was looking for some more of the fruit so she was scraping and sucking the rind to ensure that she had got all of the fruit. Severus leaned over and gently kissed her to taste the melon on her lips. It was a slow anticipatory kiss of more to come. Hermione broke the kiss off to retrieve a piece of melon from his plate where she proceeded to share the tempting fruit with him by feeding him with her fingers. To say that the fingers were thoroughly enjoyed to ensure that there was no more juice on them would be an understatement. The couple were playing a merry dance of seduction, using the fruit to help their anticipation of further intimacy.

Taking a sip from the sweet wine that they had for the fruit course, he pondered the next step with his wife. Severus wanted to ensure that she enjoyed herself and that he made the night special for his wife. *His wife! He would never tire of saying that.*

"Well, we are out of sweet melon. What are we going to feast on next?" she asked him, regarding the rest of the fruit selection.

"I don't know about you but I'm going to feast on you," he intoned in his baritone voice that made
her knickers even wetter. Severus scooped her up bridal style from her seat at the table and took her back into the bedroom before laying her gently down on the bed. Laying down beside her he cupped her face before gently covering her lips, tasting the melon and wine mixing when their gentle kiss turned into a tangle of tongues.

Severus kissed Hermione’s jaw line and worked his way down her neck with nibbles and licks finding that spot below her ear where she was so sensitive. The dark man was cherishing every response that his attentions provoked from his demonstrative little witch. His wife was so responsive. Slowly they began to loosen each other's yukata obis and as they revealed more skin, each other's mouth would lay claim to it. Kisses, nibbles, licks, soft blows of air and gentle strokes confirmed that the exposed skin was tasted and enjoyed by their partner.

Hermione’s hand slipped inside the cotton yukata and found that Severus had very sensitive nipples when he gasped as she brushed them with her fingers. She pulled his yukata further open to lave at his sensitive nubs.

"For someone who is inexperienced, you certainly are gifted," he groaned when she scraped her teeth across the aroused nubs.

"Not uninformed, just lacking on the practical application," Hermione informed him as she opened his yukata fully, trying to slip the sleeves from his arms. Together they removed the cotton yukata and both were left in only their underwear. Looking down at her, he voiced his enthusiastic appreciation of her white silk bra and knickers set. It wasn't lacy but rather sleek and very feminine.

Their touching was becoming more intimate during their slow leisurely kisses.

Severus pulled her from her back up onto her side with a demanding hand on her hip and proceeded to nuzzle her neck intensely. Reaching behind her he undid her bra before pulling her up onto his chest. The witch enthusiastically responded to their skin to skin position by quickly removing the bra straps from her arms to free her breasts.

Severus explored her peach shaped globes, laving her nipples alternatively while rubbing his hands down her back to clasp at her bottom. Hermione started to arch her back as his tongue and mouth explored her breasts in great detail. The fusion between her legs was increasing and she realised that she felt so ready to take this next step with him. Hermione was aching for Severus to gratify her and make her, his.

Rolling back onto her side and facing him, Mimi traced his arrow of body hair down to his boxer's waistband. Hermione was aroused by how Severus felt under her hands and his breath on her ear told her he was enjoying her touch. That, along with the tenting, she could observe. Hermione slipped her hand under the band and reached down to try and grasp his erection. Her small hand found she could not close round his girth. So the mischievous witch slid her hand down further to cup his balls before stroking the underside of her husband’s penis to further tease him.

Severus reciprocated Hermione exploration by sliding his hand under her knickers’ waistband before a gentle exploratory finger lightly grazed over her sex. He felt the moisture of her arousal but he needed her to orgasm at least once before he took her virginity. He asked her permission to remove her knickers and she lifted her hips to make the task easier for him. Severus moved to cover her. She could feel his erection pressing into her sex and the cotton trapped between them frustrated her. She rocked her hips and there was a laugh in her ear, "Patience, minx. I want to taste you to see if you are as sweet as that melon," before he continued to attack her breasts. Severus slowly moved his way down his wife’s naked body.

"Oh yes, Sev, please," Hermione breathed pleadingly, pushing her fingers through his hair. Severus
dutifully followed the commands of his goddess. His fingers traced her outer sex and then his hands moved down her milky thighs. She could feel his breath on her sensitive skin. The potion master could smell the musk of her arousal.

His mouth was on her thigh teasing her while his hands moved up along the outer side of her legs teasing her by not touching her inner thighs. Hermione spread her legs wider hoping to entice his gifted mouth on her demanding core. Finally, his mouth enclosed her clit and Severus started to suck upon it. Then he brought his tongue into play and she arched up. Holding onto her hips Severus lapped at her delicious juices. He moved it up by bringing his finger into her tight entrance. His eyes glanced up to hers before he dipped back down to explore her delicate flesh. Hermione’s head fell back on the pillow with the pleasure she was experiencing. This was way better than her masturbation in the bathtub.

Severus was slowing investigating his witch’s glistening, wet folds with his tongue, licking and sucking her clit gently. Hermione had planted her feet on the bed so that she could push her core and hips up closer to Severus' talented mouth. His fingers were finding and stroking her G-spot. Moving from one finger, listening to her moans of pleasure, to two fingers and it was evident to him that her orgasm had been building. With a few more passes of his talented tongue on her sensitised clit in conjunction with the pumping movement of his fingers, Hermione fell head first over the edge with a rush of juices. Severus continued to manipulate his fingers in her channel to help prepare her all the while happily lapping her up. She was as sweet and heady to him as that delicious melon. That was a flavour that Severus would be surly tasting again in the future.

Severus moved back up her body to kiss her passionately while laying himself between her legs letting her rock against his erection. She could taste herself on his lips and it made her feel even more united with him. Hermione’s inhibitions were falling away as she felt more confident in her husband’s presence. She was safe and trusted him to care for her. She moved to make him more available to her by sliding her hands down his sides to the waistband of his boxers, before pushing the fabric down to expose his chiselled backside. Teasing her rock hard nipples Severus looked down at his wife. Oh yes, she was beautiful. She was passionate and she was his, only his.

He kneeled up to help her removal of his boxers and she freed his erection. Suddenly Hermione had flipped him on to his back while she proceeded to fully remove his boxers tossing them somewhere in the room. He rolled her back onto her back while he played with her clit with the head of his penis. Teasing her entrance and the powerful wizard slowly entered his prize by a half inch. It was a brush in and pull back teasing movement. Soon Hermione was writhing and demanding more from her husband. Severus length had reached her barrier. Looking her in the eye, he told her he loved her before quickly thrusting his full thick length into her tight embrace. She gasped, "Sev," and he stilled.

"Breathe, Mimi. Let this pain go. I don't want to hurt you ever, my star." Hermione could hear his voice laced with concern as he lay deep but still inside her, filling her. Severus was holding himself rock still until he knew she was more comfortable again. Hermione kissed him hard before starting to move her hips. Severus then moved within her. The size of him stretched and filled her completely.

Hermione moved her hips against his while he teased the pulse point on her throat with his lips. He teased the shell of her ear and nibbled soft kisses on her face. Severus gave her two soft kisses to her eyes, like he was promising to be always there for her. The languid kisses deepened and so did the pace of their dance until they had an intensely tender rhythm for each other. Their tender passion for each other was their affirmation of their vows.

Severus felt loved in her embrace and was humbled by her free responses and the total trust she had shown him this evening, despite her earlier nervousness. With every thrust that resulted in her responsive moans, he felt closer to her and needed to complete his claiming of her as his. Her internal
walls caressed him and teased him further and it seemed to him that she had been made especially for him. Severus found was able to plunge into her depths without holding back as she could take his length and girth.

The wizard was able to give her as much pleasure as she could enjoy with her inexperience. Severus moved her legs over so he was thrusting deeply at another angle and he started to hear Hermione’s pants and breathy moans that indicated he was pleasuring her. Hermione was starting to beg with him, pleading with him to go there again. His lips and tongue caressed her and she was holding onto the sheet tightly with one hand while trying to clasp him to her with her other hand. The couple's skin was flushed and damp when her orgasm finally crashed around him and her fluttering walls pulled him over the edge to join her.

Severus shuddered against her filling her body with his seed and his magic. "Thank you my goddess, my star, my hope and joy. I love you," he whispered to Hermione after he finished claiming her.

Severus had collapsed onto his side, taking Hermione with him to wrap her in his arms. He was holding her tight so they could snuggle like that oft mentioned Klimt painting.

"Thank you, Sev, for making it good for me."

"It was good for me, too," he told her, holding her tight giving the necessary reassurance to his wife.

That night the couple tasted the delights of their marriage on more than one occasion. In the dark of their room they learnt the maps of each other's pleasure zones and how they could tease and entice the other to further heights of enjoyment.
Wedding House Party

The next morning found the pair still entwined in each other’s arms, when there was a discrete knock on their suite door. Someone came in and the dinner remains were removed. The individual left again, not disturbing them in the bedroom.

A little while later his Mimi opened her eyes before proceeding to lustfully attack her new husband. Severus was not sure if he had heard another knock but at that point he was being effectively distracted by his wife’s extremely talented mouth.

Later looking at the clock the wizard found that they had definitely missed breakfast and if they were not careful they would miss lunch too. Severus went to find the bathroom that he had discovered in a midnight stroll. There was a large shower in their ensuite and he looked at himself in the mirror on the way out. Yes, she had claws, which could be seen from the scratches on his back, but the dark eyed man just smiled in satisfaction as it meant that his wife had enjoyed their entanglements.

Coming back into the bedroom to observe his wife and her mane of hair on the futon bed, he tried to wake Hermione up. Severus pulled the sheet from her body where the air did not seem to affect her. Leaning over her, he laved at her breast to watch her nipple respond to his attention. The delicious witch just sleepily rolled onto her back and so Severus applied the same attention to her other breast.

"Mmmm."

"Like that?"

"Mmmm."

"I'm going to have a shower. We missed breakfast."

"Mmmm, I didn't. I feasted on you," was the sleepy response from a well satisfied life partner.

"Oh, in that case I will leave you here while I will go and find some lunch," Severus advised her, as he left her to head into the shower. He had shaved first and was now enjoying the power shower massaging his shoulders with the pounding water. He had just started to shampoo his hair and needed to duck his head under the showerhead when the door to the cubicle opened and closed.

It was his wife, he could tell by her small hands and her gentle touch. Looking down he had a wonderful sight. Although tempting, he could not see how they could couple easily in the shower as they had issues due to the differences in their heights. In the end, he bathed her in the new bath products he had brewed for her. Hermione was clearly enjoying his touches and caresses. Kneeling, he worshiped her breasts alternatively while his hand teased her sex. She leaned over and reciprocated his touches with her own. Hermione ordered him to sit on the floor and she quickly straddled him, to impale herself upon him. Severus lifted his legs and moved them up behind Hermione’s back to help support her.

She was creative and explorative in her ingenuity. Severus appreciated Hermione efforts immensely and was extremely pleased that she was confident enough to take control of their coupling.

Holding each other as their breathing calmed down under the shower spray, he thanked the Higher Powers who had gifted him this goddess. Severus moved the wet hair from her face where it was resting against his chest. Hermione lifted and turned her head towards him before asking, "Are you ready to face the family? We have some wedding presents to open and some guests to entertain."
"You know we're going to get some ribbing."

"Better to get it over and done with then. A problem shared is a problem halved. I somehow remember you saying that a while ago."

"All right, minx. You're going to have to help me get up from this floor by getting off me first." They finished their shower and helped each other to dry off with tender touches. He combed her wet hair and braided the front of her hair away from her face before tying her hair back. She repeated the same act of loving attention when she combed his hair.

Coming back into the bedroom, Severus saw that his wife had been busy before she joined him the shower. Hermione had roughly made the bed and their discarded clothing from the night before had been collected. Opening the door to the sitting room they found the youmi clothing had been laid out with two matching yukata type kimonos, suggesting that these were what they were to wear.

As the couple dressed after getting fresh underwear from the wardrobe, Severus watched Hermione dressing and thought that she had an interesting taste in underwear. She definitely made him feel alive.

Hermione helped to dress him in the hamaka and shorter kimono jacket that had been left out for him. Following tying his thin obi, she kissed him on the chest after slightly opening the cotton yukata before tugging on the kimono flap to close it, making sure it covered her kiss where it radiated like a beacon of her love.

Hermione had the longer yukata on and her husband had to help her with the wrapping and tying of the obi. Slipping on some house slippers they were going to head out when Severus added some flowers from the room's posy to her hair.

"Now, my beautiful Madam Granger-Snape, we are ready to face our family and friends." Holding hands, the couple left their suite and moved out into the main public areas of the house.

YiaYia and Melina were in the central lounge room were they warmly welcomed the couple when they entered. The news of their appearance seemed to spread like wildfire and the couple soon found that the rest of the house party was there to see if they had survived the night.

Madam Sakura was in her element and she bossed everyone around so that they were all seated round the couple. The first wedding present she gave them was a register and it was a list of guests who had given them cash, as per the local tradition. The list named who and how much they had.

Hermione looked at the total column and had to look up at Madam Sakura before asking, "Is that in Yen?" The Nakōdo confirmed that it was and Hermione was quite shocked. The matchmaker took the book from her and then settled into a nearby seat before flipping the page to start another list. Kameko then brought a gift in and Hermione and Severus read the card. While Severus opened the gift, Madam Sakura snagged the card from Hermione to write the name in the book and waited to see what the gift was. It was an electric rice cooker.

This system was followed for present after present, enabling everyone to ooh and aah over the range of gifts. When the gift had been unwrapped and the details noted, Kameko's second in command would take it from the couple and place it on the display table. The matchmaker's ladies had a streamlined production line and they seemed to open the gifts in rapid time, but still spent a reasonable amount of time in their individual appreciation.

Madam Sakura, after completing the list, explained that the couple would have some homework this week in writing their thank you notes. She placed the register on the present display table and then
bustled off to organise the serving of luncheon for everyone.

The family gathered round the large dining room and there was merriment in the party as it was like a very large family gathering. Hélène was seated near her daughter and the mother had a chance to ask a key question, "How are you?"

"Very happy, Mother," was the reply as her daughter smiled.

Seeing the couple tuck into their food there were some ribald comments from the twins and Hermione blushed. As Madam Sakura bustled round to sit with Minerva McGonagall, she stopped by the couple and whispered to them that maybe they should make sure they had their privacy charms up before they had sex. The pair of them blushed and Hermione was sure she was red to her toes. Now they knew who put the clothes out for them.
The couple managed to make it through the luncheon as the rowdy crowd went out of their way to see how often they could get the pair to duck their heads in embarrassment. After the meal, the pair spent time talking with the family while they started their homework under the supervision of Madam Sakura. When their hands were sore she let them off for the rest of the afternoon and they started to explore the grounds of this lovely estate. Sitting in the shade in a little bower, the pair of lovebirds managed to canoodle before there was a deep guffaw of laughter behind them. Hermione recognised that laugh anywhere and put her head down onto Severus chest as she tried to stop her flaming face.

"Charles Weasley, don't forget that I found you inhabiting broom cupboards at school. So leave my wife alone," advised Severus and there was the sudden appearance of the infamous snarky potions professor of old, sounding even more dangerous.

A small hand reached up to gentle the snake that was hissing before it struck. Hermione proceeded to distract her husband with a passionate kiss that took his breath away. Severus held his Mimi close as she snuggled into his chest before turning her head to regard the intruder.

"Hello, Charlie and Viktor," she advised the pair turning her steady, unblinking gaze upon them. Charlie blinked in the shock of seeing her intense, unwavering passion for her husband lingering in her eyes.

"Kitten, you have got him good and I want to know all about the broom cupboards incidents, Severus," the Bulgarian seeker inquired.

The two couples spent time together catching up with what had been happening in the different parts of Europe. When Charlie and Viktor made a move to leave, Severus pulled Hermione up whispering, "We need to make an appearance with them so the tongues will stop tattling," before kissing her on the forehead.

The foursome wandered back into the lounge area where there was a discussion going on about getting a pick-up game of Quidditch going. It did not take much to drag both of the Weasley-Krum's into the excitement. Dan was just thrilled that he was going to finally get to see a game close up. Severus was reluctantly dragged out to make up the numbers.

Hermione suddenly realised that she was facing a coven of women looking for some salacious gossip. YiaYia and Madam Sakura joined her on the couch, flanking her.

"As I told you earlier, Mama-san, you had nothing to worry about. I would say they have a healthy marital relationship that has all three forms of intimacy," asserted Uchi Sakura when the bride refused to provide any details while blushing heavily.

"Uchi, how can you be so sure?" inquired Minerva McGonagall of her old friend with a smile on her face that Hermione understood to mean that Minnie knew about this morning's failure to charm their bedroom.

"Let's just say that in the throes of their passion this morning someone or two forgot to put up the privacy charms," informed the little witch.

There was some outrageous laughter, especially from the older Greek woman beside her. Looking at YiaYia with a slightly confused look Hermione got her explanation, "Just like his great grandparents it seems. Even though my grandson was the creator of the Muffliato spell, he can still get carried
away in the excitement of the moment," she advised before the older woman wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes.

"Damn it, woman! What were you doing if a master spy forgot about potential observers?" Tonks cheekily inquired.

"None of your business. I don't ask or want details of yours, Harry's and Remus' love life activities so don't ask me to share this with you because I won't," said Hermione while staring down the Auror. Looking at her, Tonks saw the raised eyebrow that was a more familiar look on her husband but there was considerable power in the declaration. The witch was only going to tolerate so much ribbing in good humour and this was where the line was drawn in the sand. Hermione had declared it a no-go area and she would defend it to make sure it stayed that way.

Since most of the pilot group for the adapted mobile phone was present for the house party at the Estate, Harry and Hermione with Severus and the Weasley Twins completed user interviews. It was fascinating to see Hermione at work with the technology, as Severus had not seen this side of her mind in school, although he had seen her curiosity with potions. When the wizard found out that she had done the initial prototype while she was his lab technician, the information officer for the order, physical trainer, all round trouble-shooter at headquarters and professional athlete in training, the new husband was floored as to how on earth she managed to have enough time to work on it; this would be something to watch out, to make sure that his wife did not work herself into the ground.

On the whole, the users were very happy with the phone but since they were in Japan there was a suggestion that the model be updated. Mr Kawasaki was quite interested in their project and the adaptations that had been completed to the Aurors', Dragon keepers', Goblin Nation's and Quidditch players' phones. The Japanese Industrialist was highly impressed in Hermione-san when he found out she was the original developer of this product. The quiet man slipped out that he had contacts in the mobile phone manufacturing business and that was when Fred and George went into full business mode. Eventually the Weasley Twins and Mr Kawasaki had a day trip away from the estate.

Hermione and Severus did not really miss the pranksters disappearing for the day, as they enjoyed their own day trip out to experience a formal tea ceremony in the grounds of one of the local shrines. The only downside of their trip out was a Kendoka flock of fans that were gushing over their idol, the Mimi-san, the Scots Kitten-san! It turned out there was a local high school excursion to the shrine and Hermione had been recognised. Hermione made it up to Severus later for the screams of excitement from the high-pitched female teenagers' voices when the autograph recipients realised she was signing her married name, Hermione Granger-Snape.

Phillip, Melina, Anastasia and Harry reviewed the business analysis that had been developed in the Granger residence while Hiroto and Remus played Igo, with Tonks as observing. Grandpère and Grandmère D'Angers, Madam Longbottom, Hélène, YiaYia, Madam Sakura, Kameko and Madam Kawasaki had all wandered down the hill to the town centre to do some shopping. It seemed that there were a couple of new joint ventures being developed that day, as these two groups worked together to develop projects.

Other houseguests had also been out on organised tours so there seemed to great excitement that evening when at dinner in the large banqueting room. Madam Sakura went into organizational overdrive when she learned that there were other projects that seemed to be coming together. That evening an hour after dinner, she called everyone back to the banqueting hall. It was now a business meeting room and everyone had a place with a notepad and a glass of water.
The Weasley twins and Mr Kawasaki set off first and the new demonstration model handsets were handed round. Explaining what they had been up to, they only needed a new business entity for the phone company set-up and they would be in business, once they had decided on a name.

Next up was Melina representing the Snape and Granger family contingent. So they were going to buy the building complex as a joint venture and Phillip Granger with Melina's assistance was going to do the restoration project management. Phoenix Leisure Enterprises were taking over the old inn, turning it into a health and well being centre like 11 Grimmauld Place. Hopefully they were going to have a frequent star training there *hint, hint.* The new bride just laughed and said, "Of course." The old apothecary was going to be renovated and linked to the house next door, where a new experimental engineering workshop was going to be set up. The joined up house was to be the Japanese headquarters for the new joint development project company for the combined families. Phillip, Grandpère, Hiroto and Hermione were going to get their own toy cave that other members of the extended family and friends' network could also use when they were visiting.

Melina would be looking for a Potions Master and other staff to open a new apothecary that was going to be sited in one of the other houses, as there was clearly a gap in the market.

Anastasia was going to open up a new shop in the complex where Kalymnian products were going to be sold. At this stage she did not know if she was going to have one or two storefronts as she needed to do some more research. She had walked round the district and observed that they needed a good local fishmonger. She knew that Alexi and Maria were looking for a new adventure and she was sure she could sell them a change of location for at least a couple of years. If they wanted to, they could bring fish direct from the island fleet very quickly to a market that appreciated top quality fish and the traditional skills associated with the produce. It would need some further investigation into the legal and local suppliers to make sure that the local industry was also supported.

Some of the houses were marked for conversion into holiday apartment lets. New shop fronts where possible were also going to be re-established and they were going to be looking for suitable businesses to invite to have a further presence.

One of the new stores was Hélène's new project: she was opening a design and household goods store. Using the contacts with Madam Sakura and her experience as a homemaker, she was going to stock products from around the world.

It seemed that the new enterprises kicked off some further enterprise networking and the Longbottom Estate would be supplying ingredients and products to several enterprises.

Madam Sakura's scheming from the last World Championship was starting to pay off. Kingsley Shacklebolt had talked to her about engaging her services for himself. The former Auror just did not get the opportunity to date, as his life as the Minister of Magic certainly made it difficult. Even more difficult than when he was a war time Auror.

Added to Kingsley engaging her services the matchmaker was very happy about a recent bit of meddling she had done during the house party. Minerva seemed to be wearing a very happy grin and it appeared that the Hogwarts Transfiguration Professor, Minerva McGonagall, and the Unspeakable, Dan Croaker, were now a couple.
After the hive of activity during the Kawasaki Estate House-party in Ohara, it was with much relief that Severus appeared with a portkey, set to take the couple on to Kalymnos for a stay at Severus’ beachside cottage.

It was an enjoyable couple of weeks from the middle of June and into early July, where the new couple was mainly by themselves but not too far from others if they wanted additional company. There were many smiles when the couple was seen out and about in the local spots. Hermione was enjoying picking up the local Greek dialect but she knew the fun in the sun had to stop soon, as she needed to sort out what she was going to do for the next academic year and Severus needed to decide if he was going back to Hogwarts to teach. They took a portkey up to Ghent for a long weekend in the second weekend in July to visit the university there to get a feel for the local city and the various academic programmes. Again, Hermione was impressed with the facilities and programmes. They started to look at flats in the student quarter of the city and there they found a couple of interesting properties, however, it was still slightly too soon for them select one.

Severus had spoken to his long time colleague Min and she agreed that teaching teenagers was not the right place for him. So sitting on a bench outside a pub looking over the sea canal drinking a fruit beer, Severus thought it would not be a bad place to stay for a couple of years if he could find a decent job locally. His mobile phone went off and much to Severus’ annoyance the device rang again straight after he dismissed the incoming call as it was not a familiar number. At the same time Hermione's phone also rang so obviously someone wanted to speak to them urgently. It was Daichi on his wife’s phone and Hiroto on his. After some settling down of the agitated callers it turned out that both were looking for him. Hermione spoke to Daichi while Hiroto explained why he was calling so urgently. The trial of his potion by the University of Tokyo had confirmed that it was a cure for lycanthropy and Remus had been the first participant in the study who had received the confirmation that he was no longer plagued by the affliction. A total of ten sufferers had been cured in the testing during the last full moon, so there was much excitement in Japan. Daichi informed Hermione about the latest goings-on in the new enterprises and how his several times great aunt had numerous more match searches underway as a result of her wedding. After finishing Hiroto's call, Severus took the phone from Hermione and listened to Daichi. Would he mind staying a couple more days in Ghent and meeting up with some people in the Potions Department of the University?

No problem. Did they seem to have a job offer for Severus? Sitting at the table looking at the canal, Hermione could read that her husband was overwhelmed. Had he just been given a lifeline out of the horror of teaching children, on the same day as having his research confirmed? It appeared that no one would have to fear the bite of a werewolf again. Hermione took him back to their hotel and proceeded to thank him in another manner for being the man he was and for not giving up on his dream of a cure for the disease he feared. It had been his personal nightmare since his 5th year in Hogwarts when a prank by Sirius Black had almost led to Severus being bitten. Severus had forgiven Remus as it would not have been his fault and he would also have been hurt by the incident. If Severus had been bitten, he was pretty sure that the Magical Creature Authorities of the time would have exterminated the Gryffindor Prefect for being a dangerous dark creature.

Meeting up with Daichi at the University of Ghent Rectorate was a bit of a nerve-wracking affair for the couple. Daichi explained that Dirk De Craemer, the Head of the Faculty of Research, had asked him to organise a meeting with Severus when he found out that Daichi knew the Potions Master personally. It appeared that the recent results from the trials at the University of Tokyo had become
widely known in the wider research community, even though it was supposed to be a secret trial. It had only been a couple of days since the confirmation of the results. Daichi took Hermione off on another tour of the facilities while Severus had a meeting with the Head of Research. After the meeting the couple where then taken for a nice lunch at Het Pand, which was a former 12th century Dominican Monastery but now was part of the university campus. The University used this cultural site as a conference centre and it had a lovely private dining room that overlooked the clipped Cloister Garden. While in the dining room Hermione was recognised by a former University of Glasgow Kendoka, who was now part of the faculty at Ghent. It was at this point that Professor De Craemer looked again at the young witch who he had discounted as just being an arranged marriage house witch.

"My wife is the current Ladies' World Champion Kendoka so she is a bit of a celebrity in that sporting community," explained Severus when the Professor looked in amazement at his colleague knowing the discreetly polite young woman. It had not clicked with him that this was the famous muggleborn witch from the Magical War and the brains behind the destruction of Voldemort. It also did not compute that the dainty witch would be a martial artist of some sort.

After the lunch, Daichi took the pair off to look at the university accommodation that was available for staff while Hermione and Severus discussed the job offer that the Head of Research had verbally provided in the meeting. Daichi could see that something was bothering the dark man and he arranged for them to stop at a quiet coffee house where he asked, "What is on your mind, Severus?"

"What is the university's policy about having your wife in your classes as a student? I know that Hermione was interested in coming here for her degree but I am concerned that if I took the position, it would have a negative impact on Hermione. It is her degree and happiness which are most important," explained Severus.

"Duffer! Just having you with me each day makes me happy. Do you want the job? Is it something that interests you?" Hermione asked him.

"It's a good offer. I would have a 50% teaching load and a supported research budget, including lab assistants. The remuneration is good – better than what I received at Hogwarts – and I would still have time to work on my own research ideas. I wouldn't be teaching hormonal teenagers and I would have the weekends and most nights to myself to enjoy the company of my wife," advised Severus with a flirtatious grin at his wife.

"Take the job. The department looks to be big enough to find someone else on the faculty who is qualified to mark my work. You never know you, might not be teaching me. The subjects you get allocated may not be something I am interested in," explained Hermione.

"Hermione is right. The department is big enough to have someone else first and second mark her work if she is in one of your classes. It sounds like a dream job for you, Severus, and Hermione could be happy here doing her degree. They have a big Kendo club and it is not far to London to visit friends and family. You don't have to take University accommodation; we could use our contacts to find a place which you would both like and which would meet your exacting requirements," advised Daichi.

So it seemed that the job and degree situation for Hermione and Severus had easily been sorted out. It was with great pleasure that Severus resigned from Hogwarts before he left the city on their mini break. Minerva as the Deputy Headmistress had got the house elves to pack his former rooms for him and move his personal items to Grimmauld Place, where Harry was going to look after them while they were sorting out their accommodation in Ghent. The Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, was a
little disappointed not to retain the services of his former spy as the school’s Potions Professor but as Minerva explained, as a married man he had a responsibility to be near his wife and she was going to be studying in another country. Young love should not be pulled apart by distance.

The fact that Albus Dumbledore had to find someone in a hurry for the position did not mean anything to his deputy, as she had already booked the time off to attend a couple of conferences and look over her family estates. Minerva was so behind on the amount of leave that she had owing that the goblin accountants for the school had advised Headmaster Dumbledore that penalties would be incurred if she did not take the leave, so he was unable to con his deputy into doing the urgent staff replacement search. It was not her problem and she was quiet happy to leave that problem in his lap when she went off a couple of weeks of vacation.

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Upon their return to Kalymnos, Severus seemed to be enthusiastically happy when he advised his mother that he had accepted a position at the University of Ghent, while Hermione had accepted their offer of an undergraduate place for herself. They had another couple of weeks playing on the island and just pottering round in Severus’ potions lab.

For the first week of August, Harry, Tonks and Remus joined Hermione and Severus for a short visit. Both lovers of the former werewolf and the wizard himself were very emotional in their greeting. Sitting on the veranda near YiaYia’s kitchen drinking Commondaria while watching the sun set one afternoon, Harry informed Hermione that the triad wanted to take the next step and get bonded but they were a little stuck about where and when. The problem they had was that they wanted a small simple family wedding without the rest of the wizarding world poking their noises in.

YiaYia came out and suggested that the trio could get bonded here on Kalymnos or they could have a house party similar to Severus and Hermione, but this time in the Loire with Grandmère and Grandpère D’Angers.
The problem of where and when the triad was going to bond was still not solved by the time they left the island. Severus and Hermione had another week by themselves in the cottage where they packed up Severus' potions' laboratory and relaxed in the sun.

Anastasia, on hearing back in July that Severus had accepted the position at the University of Ghent, had put the goblins on the case to find a suitable house for the young couple. She knew that they would not cope well with a normal apartment and if they had a house, they would be able to have visitors. The other reason for her interest was that Anastasia had gotten used to seeing her son on a regular basis again.

On the second weekend in August, Anastasia and YiaYia accompanied Severus and Hermione to look over a selection of properties in Ghent. At the third place on their short list of five properties on the first day, Hermione said, "This is it. You don't need to show us any more. When can we complete the paperwork and get the keys?"

The rest of the day saw the completion of the paperwork and the employment of a local magical building contractor to undertake a refurbishment of their home. The Spinner's End house was packed up and the couple advised their contractor about the amount of bookshelves they needed with their combined book collection. The goblins were going to handle the sale of the Northwest England property in the former mill town, as they could make a considerable profit in the redevelopment of the area as a new superstore development.

By the end of the third week of August, Severus and Hermione Granger-Snape had moved in to the new house in the university quarter, even though the elf team of decorators had not yet completed the refurbishment work for the house. During the two weeks before the start of teaching, the couple brought pedal bikes and started to investigate their local area.

On the 1st of September, Severus reported for his induction at the Research Department of the University of Ghent. On this first day the potions master was introduced to his new colleagues and given the keys to his new office and private laboratory area. Hermione was busy in the first year induction week, where she enrolled under her maiden name as she did not want anyone to say she had an unfair advantage thanks to her connection to her now world-famous researcher husband. The petite witch did not see her husband at the university other than side glances when they passed each other in the halls during that first induction week. They pair would lock their bikes up in the morning and would not speak to each other until they unlocked their bikes to ride home. The first couple of weeks in September saw the pair of them having an awful lot of takeaway or fast food microwave meals as they were just that plumb tuckered out.

Grandpapa and Grandmère D'Angers visited them on the second weekend in September to see how they were settling down and if they needed anything as part of their housewarming. Looking at the schedules of the pair and the size of the house, Grandmère made an executive decision where Mémé promptly phoned Harry in London asking how to engage a house elf for the couple. According to her, there was no way that with their busy lives and heavy workloads, they would be able to keep the place easily and they needed an elf to look after them and to make sure that they were not eating crap all the time.

When Grandmère realised that Harry was not much of help she demanded to speak to Kreacher and the two formidable individuals found some sort of common ground. About 10 minutes later a small, housefrau, female elf called Anique appeared in the sitting room where the family were currently located having a pot of tea. Severus was well trained by his own maternal grandmother and great
grandmothers to realise that he was not going to get much of a say in whether he wanted or needed a house elf. Mémé had spoken and the two of them could just toe the maternal party line.

"Kreacher's Missy Mimi Grangey?" inquired the primly dressed lady elf. Severus was sure that her starched apron had hospital corners, it was that stiff.

"I'm Kreacher's Missy but I'm married now. I'm called Missus Granger-Snape now," Hermione advised the house elf.

"I prefer it if you used Madam Granger-Snape," asserted Severus looking at his wife with that well-known look potions professorial look, indicating that this topic was not to broached any further.

"Anique is a distant cousin of Kreacher. Major Domos Kreacher has advised that you need someone to look after the house. He has explained the strange family rules like money for things, and days off. Kreacher is organizing the movement of your things that you have stored in London during the daytime next week. Master Harry has paid Anique's allowance for the first year into my Gringotts account and Anique is here so we can bonds. Master Harry has also given me a mobile phone. Fern showed Anique how to use it and Anique has all your numbers programmed in. If you give Anique your phones now, Anique will programme her number in so you can contact Anique from the university," advised the bossy little lady elf. Once Anique had done the programming of the phones she then left the family to investigate the new home she was now responsible for.

Now that there was a house elf to look after the house, some of the pressure was off Madam Mimi and Professor Severus, as the little elf called them. The Granger-Snapes settled into a comfortable routine where at least one day of the weekend was spent doing some sort of cultural activity like visiting an art gallery or museum. Hermione had become active in the University Kendo Club when they first arrived and she attended training twice a week. Knowing that his wife was going to be at training on those nights, Severus had volunteered to teach the evening modules so that they could meet up and go home together.

Hermione thrived in the academic environment and Severus' research was taking major leaps. At the end of November, the young witch defended her European title in Barcelona and then competed in the Six Nations just before Christmas in Cardiff. The couple seemed to visit somewhere else in Europe for at least one weekend of the month.

Christmas this year was hosted by the D'Angers Grandparents for the blended extended family and friends. The wards of Padfoot Manor loved the adventure of travelling on the train to Paris and then down the Loire Valley. It was wonderful see the blended tradition and there were other friends, including the Weasley-Krumms along with familiar Order of the Phoenix faces like Poppy and Minerva. The Unspeakable Dan Croaker was ever present as Minerva's esquire. That romance was coming along nicely. It was during Christmas morning after the clean up of the wrapping paper when Harry announced that the trio had finally settled on a date of Halloween Samhain for their bonding. The date was selected so that Harry could have a happy association with the date, rather being repeatedly reminded that it was the evening that his parents had died.

The majority of the women who were present at the D'Angers Estate House went into hyperventilating wedding planning mode. Hermione knew she could not really help as she had done it the easy way and sloped off to go for a walk before the lunch in the grounds with her Severus. It was hard to believe that they had already been married for seven months. Yes, there were times were their tempers were frayed but life together was still a wonder for them and they both could not believe their luck on finding their life partner right under their noses.

It should be noted that the two of them had received some ribbing about children from the rest of the family, particularly when the older members reminded the couple about their lapse in silencing
charm at the Ohara house party during the Granger-Snape Honeymoon. Hermione had shut the gossips down rather quickly by pointing out that she was doing a degree and babies were not in her future for a while, as she had a career to establish first. For Christmas, Mémé was given the prepaid service of a couple of house elves to help her maintain the estate in the manner she wanted it to be. Grandmère had given a tearful thank you to her children, grandchildren and honorary grandchildren.

Hermione had given Severus a new set of potions making blades as she had noticed that his personal set of knives were worn from repeated use and sharpening, while the Potions Master had created a complete range of scented products for his wife. There was more of her special blend of soaps, lotions, creams and bath salts that he had created for her pleasure. She had received many books from the rest of the family and she was happy at the thought and care that his gift indicated about her husband.

Hermione competed again in the Scottish Championships in the New Year before they portkeyed back to Ghent to knuckle down into the second semester of the year after January exam period. Severus returned to marking and the editing of a couple of journal articles while Hermione studied for her exams and then moved onto the second semester timetable as a first year student. There was an interview for the campus paper where her Kendo achievements in the last couple of months were addressed. The young witch was getting a name on campus as Hermione Granger, the bright young first year who was also an international Kendoka star. By the exams in May Mimi was ready for the summer break. The Granger-Snape’s had deferred their celebration of their wedding anniversary until they were finished with the academic year, as it fell smack bang in the middle of the two end of year exam weeks.

Severus was also ready for a break, as he wanted to blow the cobwebs out of his brain as his current research project had hit a wall. There was exam invigilation, marking and tidying up of loose ends. For the June end of year Departmental barbecue it was made clear by the Head of Research that both Snapes needed to attend and so they did. Finally June had arrived and now they had time just to be a couple. At the barbecue Hermione wore her Madam Granger-Snape dutiful housewife face and many members of the faculty who did not know her, just checked her off mentally as a supportive wife who was likely to be just a lowly plebe that they could easily ignore in the greasy pole of academic politics. Many did not click that Madam Granger Snape was the famous muggleborn English witch who was one part of the Golden Trio that had defeated the Dark Lord three years ago. Even those lecturing and tutoring staff that had the pleasure of teaching the first year did not make an immediate association. Severus Snape, her husband, was more famous to this group of academics for his werewolf cure rather than his past as double agent in the magical war.

After the last of the academic boards at the start of June, the couple were on their own routine and did not have any specific individuals to whom they were responsible. There was a quick flight to Kalymnos to spend two weeks in the beach cottage and visiting the extended family. They did not make it to Japan at all this year, however, Phillip and Hélène had visited them several times during the year. The Granger-Snapes got into a routine from their base in Ghent where they had three intense days during the week in their lab space and three days exploring wherever they were. The other day of the week was the optional use day. This day could be used in travel or just lazing round the house, whatever they wanted.

Hermione’s old friends in London asked her to complete a couple of Unspeakable jobs as part of their travels and the Granger-Snapes did not mind, as it helped pay for their extensive travelling. As part of the travelling, Severus had the opportunity to meet potions ingredient suppliers and meet up with other researchers, so he found mental simulation from their travelling adventures. The couple also travelled and attended a couple of different conferences. There were visitors to Ghent and visits with their family, extended family and many friends around Europe. Their life was developing a pleasant routine.
Suddenly it was September. The start of the academic year had rolled round again and it was the second year of Hermione's degree. In the first semester she could not believe her luck: she got Severus for one of her elective modules. Oh well, they kept it professional at university and in the teaching environment. Some of her fellow students complained about the stern teaching style of the tall, dark and famous Professor to their peers but as Hermione pointed out in her study group, the professor just needed them to concentrate on their individual cauldrons as potion brewing was a high risk and dangerous subject.

Amongst the student population, most had not twigged that Professor Snape was the spouse of Hermione Granger. If they did, they kept this information to themselves as obviously Hermione wanted to earn her degree on her own merits.

Miss Granger seemed to know quite a number of the faculty fairly well but that was to be expected as she was one of the top students and she seemed to haunt the student lab facilities. It was not until October that their peaceful little bubble started to burst.

Professor Snape announced that he would be away for two weeks attending a family event, setting some self-directed study, which could be completed under the supervision of the lab technician in their normal session time. Coincidentally, Hermione notified her study partners and assignment groups that she had to go and be a bridesmaid in her brother's wedding and so would be away at the same length of time as the Professor.

The triad's binding in the Loire was a simple harvest hand fasting that had a comfortable house party, where Severus and Hermione stood up as their witness and supporters for the binding. There were fun and games in the bringing in the last of the wine grape harvest. Everyone commented on the lovely time the family had for the get-together. Hélène and Phillip provided some gossip that Kingsley was seeing a lovely Japanese witch. Madam Sakura had struck again! The Japanese contingent at the family wedding was most pleased to be there and part of this eclectic family. Severus' Uncle Alexi and Aunt Maria were also there as friends of one of the groom's honorary parents, the Grangers.

Coming back to Ghent on the Friday the couple were spotted having a curry together in their local curry house by one of Severus' third year dissertation supervision students. Unfortunately this same male student had made a play for Mimi in the main library and had not taken his knock back well. Hermione had repeatedly informed him that she was not interested and just knuckled down to do her own work. The obnoxious third year did not even twig that she was off the market due to an engagement ring and wedding band. Hermione had never hidden her relationship status and most would check for these markers before pushing their luck in asking out an attached witch.

When the Severus and Hermione appeared on campus on the Monday after their return from the Loire Hermione felt that something was wrong as the pair of them locked their bikes up outside the lab building. Hermione noted by lunchtime that there was something definitely going on and she appeared to be the centre of all the whispers. There were some off kilter dynamics in her study partners and assignment group working relationships but the true cause was never openly laid on the table to the witch, so Hermione was still unaware of the course. By the Thursday of the second week of November Severus and Hermione found that they were the front cover headline article subject in the magical campus student paper and the non-magical campus paper as well. The pair was facing an allegation that there was an inappropriate relationship between a student and a lecturer in the faculty. They were specifically named and shamed, along with photos of them outside their home.

Strangers who had nothing to do with the Potions or Research Department were confronting Hermione. The studious witch could not use the university library in peace without someone coming by to give her a piece of his or her mind. When the story broke in the local non-magical paper, the
**Ghent Chronicle**, it got worse for Hermione as she was confronted in the local shops by women who called her the worse type of strumpet who was doing a ‘lay for an A’. There was no peace for the couple as they were hounded in the streets and had to bunker down in their house or in Severus' lab at work. Both of them received howlers along with non-magical hate letters that were sent to both their home and to the university.

The radio talkback programmes both on the university and local commercial station had an in-depth discussion of the allegation. On the Monday of the third week of November the university released a press release advising that there was no inappropriate relationship going on between a student and an academic member of staff in the Potions/Chemistry Department as the University Department was fully aware that the specific individuals identified had been married to each other since before either of them joined the University of Ghent. It had been ten days since their return from the wedding when the official press release statement identified that it was Madam Granger-Snape's decision to enrol under her maiden name to earn her degree, as she was aware that there could be some individuals who would try to curry favour with her husband by their treatment of her, due to his fame for recent world renowned discoveries. The academic policy for an intimate relationship between a module lecturer and a student registered for the module was clearly laid out. The University stated all the specific details, including that the Dean was identified as Madam Granger-Snape's first marker and the Associate Dean her nominated second marker for all work that was related to her husband’s module.

Anastasia had employed a goblin lawyer services to assist the couple in their fight against the public smear campaign that had occurred due to the unsubstantiated claims of a snubbed third year student suitor. Severus' second year brewing module on that second Monday of the rumours, four days after the papers' headlines got the full wrath of the former Death Eater Professor and many of the bad gossips in the class found themselves at the end of one of his infamous Hogwarts-style verbal tongue lashings. Basically he tore strips off everyone in the classroom and Hermione just weathered the storm without batting an eyelid, as she had experienced even worse when he was her school professor and she was the focus of his temper.

During the whole stressful shambles of the allegations, Hermione battled through with the comfort that she had the support of her husband's arms holding her each night. That grit and determination which she was known for was called upon. Those who were true to her stayed in her study partners and assignment groups and others who were not loyal to the witch ditched her. Hermione just kept her head down and continued to work hard.

The last laugh for Severus was that the third year student who had made the allegations had to face an academic disciplinary committee meeting in the first week of December and he found that he got his marching orders from the University for his attempt to discredit the famous Professor and for the continual harassment of the second year married student who happened to be the Professor's wife. It was a lovely early Christmas present for the couple but the whole experience was one they could have done without.

The downside of all this was that the negative emotions bled into Hermione's Kendoka practice and she lost her European Ladies Title. Mimi performance in the Six Nations was not great either but she was quite successful. Hermione was really just looking forward to Christmas in Japan, seeing Melina and Hiroto and her parents, Hélène and Phillip. The couple needed time away from Ghent and the whole hothouse environment created by the third year student’s allegations. The break with Severus cousins and her parents was a great recharging of their batteries for the couple. The distance from the event enabled both of them to gain better perspective on the situation. Amongst the holiday break Severus had received an owl offer from Headmaster Dumbledore for him to come back as Hogwarts Potion Professor. That offer wasn’t responded to since it wasn’t made in person.
Just before the January exam period, Hermione competed in the Scottish Championships and retained her title for yet another year. During all the stressful period of the allegations in Semester One, Hermione and Severus had worked on a couple of academic papers together since they could not go out and about easily in Ghent without attracting unwanted attention. An early Christmas present for the couple was the advice that their papers had been accepted and were to be published in several journals that next January.
After The Storm

The couple continued to collaborate in the potions laboratory and Hermione was developing her own research project as part of her preparation for her dissertation. The young witch did some further consultations for the Weasley twins to develop a couple of new products. With the Easter break the couple was able to visit Japan and Hermione competed in the Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo Tournament where she reclaimed her title. Phillip and Hélène walked them through the restoration project in Kyoto and the Granger-Snapes had to make some decorating decisions. Anique found the travelling experience with her family to be interesting and enjoyable. While in Japan for the two weeks, Hermione caught up with Harry and the two of them did a little hit-wizard job on a side trip to Seoul for two days, where they picked up a former Death Eater who was attempting to set up a new movement in South East Asia.

There was the mandatory attendance at a Madam Sakura Cherry Viewing Party in Kyoto, where they watched her work her magic on another couple of sets of couples. There was time for the Granger-Snapes just to be themselves and to soak away their troubles in the hot spring baths. There was a visit to University of Tokyo and a further joint organization research project was set up and it looked like that they had a lead for the Cruciatus exposure cure. The development and testing had a long way to go before it could be applied to people like Neville Longbottom's parents but there was hope for the future there.

Returning to Ghent for the rest of the second semester Hermione kept her head down and continued to focus on her studies. Both campus newspapers were required to pay damages to Madam Granger-Snape, which she promptly donated to the local magical hospital facility along, with the printing of an apology and story retraction. The local Belgian Aurors' office had charged several individuals over the hate mail and Hermione showed no mercy by demanding that all concerned were charged. No, this young Madam was not going to allow people to think that she was a pushover.

It was similar situation for the local non-magical paper, as the Ghent Chronicle also had to pay damages and write a retraction for their earlier story where they had alleged misconduct. The Ghent police also found that they had a specific workload increase due to the resource requirements require for dealing with the hate mail generated from the local paper's story. As a side effect, the local prosecutor also sued the paper for the costs of dealing with the hate mail and the non magical agency managed to recover most of the annual budget for the whole prosecutors' office.

By May, Hermione had an individual authored charms journal article published but she did not notify Severus of her triumph straight away. This year they were able to celebrate their wedding anniversary on the day it fell, as by the 23rd of May Hermione had finished her exams for the year. Part of the present she gave her husband in their celebration of their second wedding anniversary was a copy of the charms journal that included a special dedication to her beloved husband.

The couple attended the departmental end of year barbecue and Hermione noted that those who had ignored her or treated her like she was irrelevant last year now seemed to be currying her favour with the hope that they could tack onto Severus' coat tails. God, she hated the greasy pole of academic office politics.

This summer Hermione and Severus decamped with Anique to Kalymnos for the whole of the summer break. Before they left Ghent for the island, Anique had sternly informed the Granger-Snapes that she wanted to have little elflings and she would like them to take another elf called Iri into the household. Iri's family was originally from the Bavarian Elf Colony and he was a most welcome addition to the Granger-Snape household when it was found he was a wonderful curry and
spice cook. Now they had a house elf that was familiar with their favourite type of cuisine: spicy. The potions lab at the beach cottage was turned back into a serious research environment. There were visitors to their hideaway but most recognised that the couple were busy this summer doing the research for Hermione's third year dissertation and Severus' on-going joint project with the University of Tokyo.

Some of Hermione study peers who had supported her side of the equation during the turbulent weeks in November were invited to visit the couple's island retreat. The beach houseguests provided some lively conversation and several ideas were bandied about which would lead to further investigations in the laboratory. A couple of papers were generated from the inspiration and Hermione was steadily working on her first draft of her third year dissertation.

By the end of August it was with great reluctance that the couple packed their potions lab up again. It was the last week of August and they were going to miss the social community life that they had here on the Island.

With the Granger-Snapes return to Ghent, Anique duly announced that she was going to have a little elfling in early December. Hermione and Severus again received some gibing about when they would have similar news. Hermione's Kendoka practice was going well and she was now the local regional champion, thanks to her residence as a student with the University. Hermione was working hard to complete as many modules as possible in Semester One, as she so wanted to be able to defend her World Champion status next July in Santa Clara.

The Scottish representative won at the Europeans in Sofia. It was like being before a home crowd at the Six Nations this time round as the event was held in Angers at the Universite. Poor Jérôme, he was seriously conflicted. Phillip, Hélène and the D'Angers were present, leading the Scots Kitten's cheer squad. Of course Severus was there as her bag holder and personal security advisor. Would you like to go up against a dark tall man who looked like he could kill you with just his glare if you pushed your pen too hard at your favourite Kendoka when trying to get her autograph? Nope, I didn't think so, smart move.

Christmas this year was hosted by the Weasley-Krums in Romania where they presented their new daughter, Emiliana, as a surprise to the rest of the family. The month old infant had struck the jackpot for doting family members. Not only were Viktor's parents there as her number one fans, there was also the Grangers, the D'Angers and all the aunts and uncles that came from everyone else. There were some other babies for the large family to dote over but these were mainly little elflings from the various households.

The various magical business enterprises had been highly successful and when the dual band phone system had been released into the market the previous October, the idea had taken the magical world by storm, providing all the developers and investors with a very nice profit margin. Further products were jointly developed over the Christmas break with the family think tank bouncing a number of ideas around. For New Year's Eve, everyone received a portkey invitation from Minerva to attend a Highland Hogmanay.

The Hogmanay party turned out to include a binding ceremony for the Transfiguration Professor and the Unspeakable. There at the celebration was a silver haired muggle Dame who could knock back firewhiskey with ease. Phillip was in complete awe of the silver haired pixie sized woman. When Harry let it slip that she was the current head of MI6 there was even more admiration. "So the Bond films got it wrong; she doesn't drink bourbon and she wasn't a bean counter."

Mémé set Madam Sakura on to the case of Jeff Coe, since she had been so successful for the Minister of Magic who was getting married in Kyoto during the Cherry Blossom festival next April.
The Scottish Championship was retained and Hermione again defended her Tokushima Prefecture Open Kendo title as part of her preparation for the World Championships being held in Santa Clara. The last six weeks of the second semester in Hermione’s final year were extremely tense as the witch seemed to think her whole academic grade depended on the amount of work she put into her studies at the time.

Hermione Granger had submitted her dissertation back in January so there was no reason for her to go into hyperbolic mode. Severus just brewed calming drafts that he disguised in a number of products, including his personal massage oil and Hermione’s chapstick. It helped that he also had chocolate mint ice cream in the freezer at all times to help with his glum star. A bottle of special scotch was sent to Phillip by his son in law, as thank you, for his lifesaving advice when dealing with a teary stressed out witch.

When Graduation rolled round in June, the witch found that she had attained an Honours Degree with Distinction in Potions, Charms and Transfiguration. As the Dux of her cohort the bright young witch received several attractive offers but the witch rebuffed all thoughts concerning her next career move until after the Kendo World Championships. There was a particularly large graduation party held in the university quarter, reflecting the pride that the Professor had in his Mimi for completing her degree. It was a well attended event with both magical and muggle guests attending from diverse range of walks of life.
The next big event in Severus and Hermione's life was the trip to America when they travelled to Santa Clara for the Kendo World Championships. Again, Mémé and Hélène had gone into action and organised the renting of a large property not far from the three university campuses. The whole blended family was going again. The last couple of weeks since Hermione's graduation had been training, training and then more training.

Upon arriving and visiting Silicon Valley, Hermione bullied Severus, Phillip, Fred and George to go on the Technology Adventure Tour. During the visit to some of the biggest players in the non-magical technology world Hermione could see the sparks of ideas lighting up the four of them. Hermione herself was certainly inspired.

Other activities included visiting Winchester House, which they all found to be a complete hoot. After Hogwarts, the so-called haunted house just did not cut it with them at all. As the stern critics toured through the property they worked out all the tricks that had been used, as well as identifying secret passage entrances where the staff that maintained the tricks entered and exited the various rooms.

It was getting embarrassing for Severus and Hermione when they were strolling alone being a regular couple as she was repeatedly recognised. Apparently there was a strong local chapter of the Scots Kitten fan club. Unfortunately, there was some unpleasantness during the sign-in of competitors, when Hermione observed an old adversary who was apparently a member of the coaching staff for the University of Santa Cruz Kendo Team. It was the former GB Coach, Peter Slattery. Fortunately, the current GB coach Michael Kendal put a word in with several of the International Kendo Association representatives who were there to ensure that the tournament met the requirements to be a valid World Championship and Hermione never saw the horrible man from her past again during her stay.

Michael Kendal was particularly glad to see that Hermione had her minders again and when he was introduced to her husband, he was surprised by the age gap. There was something about this man that was bugging him. The name Severus Snape was familiar and there was some reason why it was so. It really bugged him. When it turned out that he was an academic, the coach asked around his university coaching friends and then it came to him that he was a famous academic. This man had done some research on muscle spasms and the regeneration of injured or torn muscles. Michael was speaking to Mr Kawasaki and expressing his concerns about the student marrying her teacher. When Mr Kawasaki explained that Hermione was just as bright and brilliant as her husband, he had to agree that it was a good match.

After winning the team and individual titles again, Hermione and their Kendoka friends went out to party. During the dinner, Mr Kawasaki managed to have a detailed discussion with Severus about his
latest research project in conjunction with University of Tokyo. The kind businessman had a proposal for Severus, which he proceeded to sound him out about. Organising a time for a later chat in daylight, Severus was left in an extremely thoughtful mood. Hermione noticed it that night and she tried to distract his musing, since they both had been on short rations in the last couple of weeks as per coach’s orders, to ensure that the Kendoka were in the correct aggressive frame of mind.

For the next couple of weeks, the couple travelled around, visiting the different Californian winery regions in the company of the Grangers, Potters, D'Angers, YiaYia and Anastasia. It was a month after the competition when they met up with Madam Sakura and the Kitaguchis.

Hermione managed to get some time to talk privately to the diminutive Japanese witch who was a key individual for guidance in her life, as she could provide a neutral devil’s advocate for Hermione to hash out what she really wanted to do. Madam Sakura was an effective life coach, as it came as part and parcel of matchmaker business. During their discussion, the matchmaker identified that there was something else that was bugging Hermione other than what she had discussed with the woman about how uncertain she was about her next move, career wise.

"Mimi-chan, what else is bothering you? You have several wonderful job offers. You can stay or go from Ghent? If you are interested in moving you would need to discuss it with Severus. You would need to both be on the same page. Why are you stalling, girl? You can tell me," encouraged the kindly woman.

"I am late," was the quiet answer from the younger witch.

"Did you have another appointment... Oh, that kind of late. Have you done a test?" inquired Madam Sakura. "I take it that is a no to a magical test and a yes to a pee stick. How late are we talking here?" probed the grandmothery mannered witch.

"Um, two weeks. I first put it down to the stress of the end of my degree and then the stress of the Wold Championships mucking up my cycle. But I've always been like clockwork. Severus brews specifically for me. I'm on a tailored potion and it's not supposed to be possible," mumbled the highly embarrassed witch, who was glad she had a neutral person to talk to about this.

If she mentioned it to any of the women in the family they would all be planning the next baby shower and she was not sure that she was ready to become a mother just yet.

"Mimi-chan, a pee stick would not pick it up as early as this but I know a special charm, which we can use to check if you are or not. It is better to know because then you can make informed decision," advised the witch.

Madam Sakura was talking in a quiet calming tone because she could see that Hermione was very upset about her situation and highly confused about the potential outcomes. If she was not pregnant, it would been getting her own hopes up, and if she was, well was she ready, and then all the questions like would she be a good mother?

There was a nod and a bite of the lips before she spoke her answer. "Can you please do the charm so we know, Madam Sakura?"

With a wave of her wand in a Japanese character shape they got an answer: positive.

"Congratulations, Hermione-chan. I think you need to take the time to inform Severus and both of you need to have a open and frank discussion. Don't be scared child. He wants children. It was one of the reasons why he wanted to get married. I have seen him looking jealously at the little ones, even with your elfling. Go and talk to him," advised the older woman who could see the heartache
the young witch was working herself up into, due to her confusion and fear.

OoOoOo

Severus had been tossing up the proposal for days from Mr Kawasaki but he had not had a chance to talk to Hermione. The couple kept getting interrupted and Hermione had been distracted in the evening. Severus was worried about Hermione, as she seemed to be wound tighter than a spring. With a bit of organisation, he managed to set an action plan into place.

After hiring a car, he bundled her up with a prepacked bag and then started driving down towards the Californian Central Coast area. Hermione had seemed to shut down on him since she clicked her seat belt.

Whatever was bothering her, she needed to think it out now before she talked to him. Severus had seen this behaviour before when she was at Hogwarts, during the war and over the last two years of marriage.

The signs for Monterey and Carmel were all passed and he followed the directions towards the cottage he had hired for two nights. The pair of them needed to get away from the madhouse of the family get-together. They had gotten used to having their own space. When Severus pulled up at the cabin Hermione blinked a couple of times at him before realising that they had arrived at their destination.

"Anique," Severus called. When the elf popped in he went on, saying, "This is where Madam Mimi and I will be staying for the next couple of days. Can you stock the kitchenette with the things we went on the shopping trip for."

Hermione had sat down on one of the chairs on the veranda that looked out onto the forest with its calming treescape. When Anique had popped back, Severus had sent her back to the rest of the family and then proceeded to open a bottle of Pinot Noir. Bringing a glass over to Hermione she took it from him in autopilot and he sat in the chair positioned next to her. Sitting there he waited, sipping the lovely wine. Severus noticed that she was not drinking it.

"Don't you want some of that Pinot Noir we brought on that winery visit?" he asked, hoping to prod her out of this lethargy.

"Umm," she put the glass down on the small side table. "Severus, it appears that I'm pregnant so there will be no alcohol for me for the next eight months or so."

She did not get a chance to say much more as he had dropped his glass and dived over to pick her up and drag her onto his lap, so that they were sitting together in one chair.

Θεά μου μου δώσατε την πιο υπέροχα νέα. Θα έχουμε ένα μινι σας. Σ 'αγαπώ" he told her, placing a gentle hand on her belly where their child was currently just a collection of cells. (My goddess you have given me the most wonderful news. We are going to have a mini you. I love you.)

Looking up in wonder at his reaction Hermione whispered "Σ 'αγαπώ πάρα πολύ," (I love you too,) before reaching upwards to gently kiss her husband.

After sitting in silence for a while just absorbing the news that they were going to be parents, With a wave of wandless magic the broken glass was cleared away. Gently Severus pushed Hermione off his lap, carefully ensuring that she was standing steady before leading her into the cabin's kitchen.

"We have to feed our baby, so it is nice and healthy," he advised her.
The couple spent the their stay enjoying their quite time together and discussing what their next actions would be. Severus explained Mr Kawasaki's offer and Hermione talked about the employment offers that she had received. Together they developed a plan of action before they returned to the Santa Clara base where the rest of the family were staying.

OoOoOo

It was round the barbecue table in the back garden after dinner on the night they returned to the holiday house when Severus and Hermione announced their news. The family organised a sudden family celebration long into the night. Tucking Hermione up in his arms early the next morning, he watched her sleep while he wondered about where their life was going.

The last three years had been a remarkable journey. Before the end of the war he thought he would never have a chance to have such a good life.

Hermione rolled over in her sleep and he heard her whisper, "Σ 'αγαπώ (S'agapo)," before settling down again into a deep sleep, tucked into his shoulder like the Klimt painting.

OoOoOo

Σ 'αγαπώ (S'agapo) = I love you

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