

Changes

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The Letter

Chapter 1 of 1

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Chapter 1: The Letter

Hermione sat on her bed, deep in thought. The letter in her hands was something she had never expected, but it contained an opportunity too good to pass up. Still, her mind was full of hesitations, what ifs – she was afraid of the repercussions that answering would bring. She folded the letter and, placing it on her bedside table, decided to try to get some sleep and deal with everything in the morning.

After a restless night she woke up and went to the kitchen for breakfast, pondering what to do next. She knew that she would have to respond to the letter, and the sooner the better, but she was worried and couldn't help postponing it.

After a quick shower, Hermione sat down to write her reply. After a while, she crumpled the parchment and threw it away, as if it had offended her deeply. A couple of hours, several discarded parchments and a broken quill later, she was at last satisfied with her answer. It was a yes, consequences be damned, because there was no way she could let an opportunity as good as this one pass right under her nose. She sent the reply with her little owl, Lira, and went to work with a better mood than she had in ages. She knew the step she had taken this morning could be dangerous, but lately her life had been so dull that almost any change was welcome. Her current work at the Ministry was, for lack of better expression, like being stuck in a hole. It was bureaucratic and repetitive. Her possibilities of change were near to nothing because despite being a war hero, she lacked the connections that having a magical family brings to a person. Harry, well, he was "the Chosen One", and Ron had practically all his family there, but Hermione only could show her own abilities, and she refused to let her fame open some of the closed doors, or to call favours. So as it was said earlier, she was completely stuck.

After a long day at work, she arrived home and had just begun to prepare her dinner when a peck at her window startled her. It was the answer, and it simply said:

Welcome to our team, Miss Granger.

We are sure that you won't be disappointed with your new job. We have already made arrangements with your former employer so that you can start tomorrow.

Enclosed with this letter you will find a Portkey that will lead you to your new workplace next week at eight o'clock.

Looking forward to meeting you,

Andreas Laurent Sr.

Chief of the Researching and Recruitment Team

A week later, Hermione's life was anything but dull. She had told her friends about her change of work, but without going into detail. This had them in an uproar about what kind of job it was, if it was legal (Hermione snorted at the idea), or if it was dangerous... As expected, Harry had been the most reasonable, after a bit of discussion. Seeing that his best friend was determined about her secrecy, he let it go more or less, only making her promise that she would eventually tell him. Ginny was insanely curious, and Ron, well, Ron was another story altogether.

He was livid about not knowing every little detail. It seemed that since dating her after the war, he believed that he had some kind of right to know everything about her life, even if Hermione was a private person and was not ready to share information about her new job yet. After much yelling and a very unpleasant evening, Hermione Disappeared to her flat, warding it against visitors and swearing that she wouldn't give up her privacy until she was good and ready. Seated in the windowsill of her living room, her favourite place in her flat to read, or simply to think, she still could recall some of the words that Ron had thrown to her:

"How can you, Hermione, after all this time, keep something as important as this from us?! We are your friends, almost your family, and you are betraying our confidence with your reserve!!!"

"Ron, you are overreacting and you know it--"

"Overreacting!! I'm worried about your safety!!!"

"Shall I remind you that I'm a more than capable witch, Ronald Bilius Weasley," was her answer, almost a hiss, she was so furious. They kept arguing for a bit before she left The Burrow to go home.

Still, she received a very graphic Howler from Ron the next day with her morning post and a very concerned letter from Molly Weasley, which made her even more sure that she had made the right decision – what would her friends have thought if they knew that she was now working for Draco Malfoy?

Her first week at work ran very well. She was given the task of working with an ancient wooden box, which wasn't even classified because before her arrival none of the staff had been able to touch it. But when they presented it to her, she could manipulate it without trouble and was trying to figure out its magical properties. For now, the only effect that it had was a low thrumming on the pads of her fingers and a sensation of peace with the world. It was a very strange item. The box was very old and it was small. It had delicate vegetable carvings on the lid, but it they changed from day to day, so one could see the flowers blossoming, and Hermione was sure that with enough time, she could see some of the plants dying and another growing. The report that arrived with it stated that it was at least from the late eighth century, and it had belonged to an ancient pureblood family – the Lancasters – whose line had been extinguished at least two centuries ago. After five days working with the box without any tangible result, Hermione decided to get more information about them in order to better understand the kind of magic she was dealing with. So far, all she could tell was that it was ancient and very powerful, but she was puzzled because in all her years she had never seen a magical object so strange and so mysterious. It was as if the box was waiting for something to happen before it allowed her to open it, and Hermione had been unable to make it happen.

After a long day at the Ministry of Magic searching for records about the Lancaster family (which had required a special pass), she had more questions than answers. The Lancasters had disappeared two centuries ago, but the records didn't state the date of death of the last member. It was as if they had simply vanished, and Hermione was determined to discover the reason. She checked other extinguished pureblood families' records, and in every case there was a certificate with the date of the death of the last member. So what had happened with the last Lancaster? It was a challenge for her mind, and after so long stuck in a boring job, she felt delighted at doing something interesting and fulfilling. Her life seemed to have changed for the better, and the first week of her new job was proving to be interesting to say the least.