

# Vampire Hunting

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THE HOGWARTS VAMPIRE CHRONICLES: Part II  
Catching a runaway vampire is harder than it seems. Especially when she doesn't want to be found.

## Prologue

*Chapter 1 of 3*

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### Prologue

The moonlight filtered through the trees and a brittle wind blew through her hair as she ran with all she was worth. She could hear them behind her, trackers—hunters from the Ministry. The word had made it to Diagon Alley, and they knew she was out. She dug in her heels, feeling the hard earth give way beneath the power of her muscles. She wished there was some way for her to cover her tracks without alerting them, but sound carried too far in this wooden silence. She wouldn't risk it. She'd had her reasons when she ran from Hogwarts, and she'd be damned if they made her go back.

Faces flashed before her eyes as she darted through the close-growing trees. She had little need to look where she was going. Her reflexes were too quick, too perfect to allow her to make a stupid mistake. She snorted quietly at the thought. Stupid mistakes? She'd made plenty of those in the last few weeks. Running away from Hogwarts without so much as a thought to where she would go. Leaving everything—and everyone—she'd ever loved behind her. Going into the damned dungeon alone, without her wand, and stumbling into the clutches of a vampire. A vampire she'd trusted with her life on more than one occasion before that fateful night.

A serene, handsome face filled her vision, causing her eyes to burn with unshed tears. A pair of crystal blue eyes stared out of a gentle, chiseled face. His brown hair flopped over his forehead, and his full, pink, pouting lips curved upwards in a smile. She could hear his voice in her head as clearly as if he were running next to her. She could smell the intoxicatingly male scent that rolled off him. She could taste the sweetness of his seventeen-year-old blood on her tongue.

She choked back a pained cry as she pushed off from a weathered boulder and jumped into the limbs of a nearby pine. Using only her arms, she pulled herself into the topmost boughs and waited silently as the trackers passed only a mile or so away. She breathed deeply of the crisp air and stared up into the full moon. It was hanging low in the sky. Dawn was approaching quickly, and she needed to find a place to hide until night fell once more.

Not minding her balance, she danced to the end of the limb on which she sat and stepped off the side. The fraction of a second of weightlessness made her smile as the wind rushed through her curls and whipped past her face. She landed lightly on the balls of her feet, flexing her knees to absorb most of the impact. There was no helping the impression three inches deep in the cold ground. If the trackers were careful, her footsteps would be easy to haunt.

A sudden fire burned through her throat, and she doubled over against the base of the pine. She couldn't remember the last time she'd fed. Well, actually, she could. But it wasn't a time she wanted to remember. The last blood she had tasted was blood she'd never wanted to take. But she would have to feed soon, or else the trackers would find more than footsteps. They would find her.

It was hours later when she found the hovel hidden in a deep fissure in a hillside. It was barely big enough for her to squeeze in while lying on her side, but a little pushing and digging made a comfortable bubble deep in the heart of the hill. She sat hunched over, dirt clinging to her and tiny rivulets of blood dripping from the edges of her

mouth. The few rats and squirrels she had found were enough to slake her thirst, though they didn't taste well. She had fed on human blood—albeit from a pouch—since she was born into this new life. Animal blood did not have the same flavor, and she didn't like it.

She closed her eyes when the world around her began to tint emerald. She wanted to be with those she loved. She wanted to go back to her old life, before she had been reborn. But she knew that there was no going back. She couldn't go back to Hogwarts now that everyone knew what she was. She would be a vampire for eternity.

Twilight was a welcome sight as she crawled out of her hiding place. Thirst was beginning to burn through her throat once more, but the thought of more animal blood was enough to turn her stomach. She couldn't—wouldn't—take a life, not the way hers had been taken. She would have to find another way to feed. Until then, all she could do was run as far and as fast as she could during the night. It wouldn't do to be seen during the day.

She was more conscious of her steps now. Although she ran so quickly that she would have been little more than a blur to anyone who would look, she reigned in the power of her muscles. Her footsteps no longer left impressions inches deep in the hard ground. She had to get away from the trackers. She had to get away from everyone before she turned into the worst of demons.

Taking a deep breath of the crisp, clean night air, Hermione Granger disappeared into the heavy woods before her. She would run until her body gave out. Or until she reached the far edges of the North. Whichever came first.

## Getting Answers

### Chapter 2 of 3

THE HOGWARTS VAMPIRE CHRONICLES: Part II Catching a runaway vampire isn't easy. Especially if she doesn't want to be found.

#### 1. Getting Answers

"Cedric Amos Diggory!" cried Madam Pomfrey as Cedric walked determinedly to the doors of the hospital wing. She clutched her wand in one hand and a cup of Blood Replenishing Potion in the other. "Get back here this instant before you bleed to death!"

*Not bloody likely*, Cedric thought ironically as he concentrated on putting one foot in front of the other. The potion had always made him dizzy, and now was no exception. He wasn't sure how much blood he'd lost since Snape slashed open his wrist. The white gauze bandage wrapped around his right forearm bore a crimson stain over his wound, but the salve the matron had covered it with had begun to staunch the blood flow. He wasn't going to bleed to death. He'd just be really lightheaded for a while.

"Really, Mr. Diggory. Don't behave like such a child. Come back here and take your medicine like a good young man," the matron pleaded. She'd stopped trying to catch him. Every step of Cedric's cost her three.

"I'm fine, Madam Pomfrey," Cedric said over his shoulder. His voice was calm, but his insides boiled with hatred. He'd made it back into the castle in enough time to see Snape disappearing into the dungeons, McGonagal at his heels. Harry and Ron had grabbed him by the shoulders and steered him away from the Potions master. They refused to let him go until he had visited the hospital wing.

He stopped at the door and turned, giving the flushed matron a grateful smile. "Really, I feel much better now. I promise to come back if it gives me any trouble." He jerked his head at Harry, who was sitting on the end of a nearby bed. "Help me to my room, Harry?"

Crimson suffused Harry's pale cheeks as he nodded, purposely diverting his gaze from the older witch. "Sure, Ced. Ron's waiting outside to see how you're doing."

Cedric made a show of leaning against Harry's shoulder for support. They began shuffling the rest of the way out the door. "I think Luna's out there, too," Harry whispered, leaning his head close to the older boy's. "She must've thought Ron got hurt as well."

Brown hair fell over his blue eyes as Cedric nodded, his lips set in a grim line. "I won't explain anything in front of her, but I want to see Dumbledore as soon as possible. Before something happens to Hermione out there. No doubt he's already set the Ministry's trackers after her. I could Floo Dad and see if he knows."

"Trackers?" Harry whispered. He'd learned a lot about the Ministry of Magic since he had joined the Wizarding World, but he had never heard about trackers. "What do they do exactly?"

"They're a special brand of Aurors. You know how most Aurors are specifically dark wizard catchers? Well, trackers chase down unmanaged part-human creatures," Cedric replied, leaning against the wall for support. The potion he'd been given was starting to take effect and the lightheadedness was wearing off. "They're not the best of the lot. Half the time they don't bring back their catches alive, and the Ministry doesn't do anything about it."

"Part-human creatures?" Harry mumbled, the color draining from his face. "Why would the Ministry send these trackers after Hermione?"

Cedric looked at the younger wizard with incredulous eyes. "Think about it, Harry. I told you that something was different about Hermione now. What did you see that bastard Snape do when she fainted today? What did he give her?" A painful throb shot through his right arm, and he sank to the floor. He clutched his wrist against his chest tighter, fighting back embarrassing tears.

His tears were not only for the pain that threatened to make his right arm numb, but also for the girl he had lost. He could see Hermione in his thoughts as clearly as if she were standing directly in front of him. *I hope you are okay*, he thought desperately. *Wherever you are, Hermione. I hope you are okay.*

Harry sank onto the floor beside Cedric and stared at the flagged stones between his feet. Someone at Hogwarts had told the Ministry what had happened with Hermione. And now, the Ministry had set loose its trackers...those Aurors who hunted part-humans. Aurors who hunted centaurs, werewolves, warlocks, and vampires. *Vampires?* The word made something in Harry jump in recognition. She couldn't be!

Emerald eyes met blue ones as the two stared at each other in recognition. "Hermione...our Hermione...a...a vampire? How?"

For a moment, Cedric wondered whether or not he should answer. What good would come of making the truth known now? When there was nothing to be done about it. He wondered how Harry would react. Would he go charging down to the dungeons once he knew? Would he cry for Dumbledore's head?

"I'll tell you, Harry, but you have to promise that you won't do anything until we've seen Dumbledore. No excuses, no accidents, and no mistakes. Do you swear?"

The younger wizard put out his left hand and waited until Cedric clasped it with his own. Not releasing his hold, Cedric released his breath and closed his eyes. "Yes, Harry. Our Hermione is a vampire. And do you know how she came to be so? That bastard, that wretch of a demon, *Severus Snape* took her and changed her. He took her life and bound her to him as his undying whore. She had no choice, no ability to break that link until today."

"How did she break free? How do you know all this, Ced?" The blackened pupils of Harry's emerald eyes were dilated in fear. The boy before him did not seem the same as he had this morning. The smile, the joy had disappeared. In its place was a grimace of pain and hatred. Harry doubted if the old Cedric Diggory would ever come back.

"How do I know?" Something like a sadistic chuckle escaped from his throat. "The bastard told me himself that he changed her. The rest didn't take too much to figure out. As for breaking free? I suppose you have me to blame...thank?...for that. Something about my blood."

Cedric rubbed absently at the bandage around his wrist and forearm. He still couldn't figure out what it was that enraged Hermione so much when she awoke to find herself feeding on his blood. He pushed himself up from the floor and started down the hallway to the Headmaster's office. "And I'll be damned if Dumbledore doesn't tell me the whole fucking truth. I'll have his head if he doesn't."

The stone gargoyle that blocked the entrance to the Headmaster's study was standing off to the side. Something like liquid silver flowed like fog down the spiraling staircase. Frigid air wafted from the top of the stairs, making their breath appear in tiny clouds before their faces. Cedric stood perfectly still, staring up into the winding blackness, Harry and Ron on either side of him. His wand was clutched uncomfortably in his left hand, and his pulse pounded uncontrollably in his ears.

"What do you think?" Ron said from his right. His wand was pointed towards the gaping entrance. The color had drained from his face, and a thin sheen of sweat coated his forehead. "Are we going up or not?"

Ron cast a look behind Cedric's back at Harry. They exchanged a quick, nervous glance. No matter what adventures they'd been on, Ron had always followed *Harry*. It felt strange to follow someone else into the relative unknown. It looked as if Harry was nervous as well. Whether that was due to being out of command or worry about what they would find, Ron didn't know.

Cedric squared his shoulders and placed a determined foot on the bottom step. His trainer slipped through the silvery substance that coated the stone. He pressed his left hand against the wall, feeling the handle of his wand bite into his palm. "We go, but be careful. Whatever this is on the stairs is slick."

Ron followed behind him, steadying himself with his empty hand against the wall. It was difficult, trying to keep his balance, look where he was stepping, and keep his wand trained on the opening above him. He could hear Harry bringing up the rear, his trainers squeaking through the substance on the floor.

"Wait!" Harry exclaimed from the end of the line. Turning, Ron saw that Harry had dropped to all fours on the stairs. He was staring with intense interest at the wisps of silvery substance beneath his fingers. His green eyes grew wide as he looked back up at his friend. "They're memories! Dumbledore's memories by the looks of them. See. This one here," he prodded a silver rivulet with the tip of his wand, "is from when he saw Voldemort coming out of Professor Dippet's office after Moaning Myrtle was attacked. Dumbledore kept these in a Pensieve. Why are they on the floor?"

Cedric felt as if a slab of cold iron had settled in his stomach. Something was most definitely not right.

Dumbledore lay sprawled on the floor of his office, his head and shoulders propped against his cabinet. His Pensieve lay smashed and empty by his left hand. Silver threads streaked his hair, and blood stained ribbons down his beard. It trickled from the corners of his mouth, and oozed from his nose and ears. His chest rose and fell with a gurgling sound as the life slowly seeped out of him. Once keen eyes were fixed on the looming figure that towered over him.

"I am sorry, my friend," the old man managed, his breathing a labored gurgle.

The figure moved closer, placing one foot on either side of the body and squatted so that his face was level with his victim's. "I warned you, you pitiful fool. I told you to leave us alone. She hurt no one! Our deal goes unbroken, you bastard. For our part at least."

Dumbledore breathed heavily and forced his dry throat to swallow. "You exposed her, Severus. The entire school saw..." He coughed heavily, clots of bright red blood staining his lips. "...had no...no other choice. The trackers...trackers will...find her."

"Pray, for their sake, that they do not," Snape sneered, his voice coming out as a low growl. He placed his hands gently on either side of the old man's head. "I'm sorry to say that prayers will no longer help you, Dumbledore. My wrath has been wrought." With that, he jerked his arms in opposite directions. The pale blue eyes of Albus Dumbledore went wide before their light died with the sickening crunch and pop of blood shredding muscle and nerve.

Severus stood, wiping the blood and silver substance from his hands. He walked away from the body of Albus Dumbledore, staring out into the watery light of afternoon from the window. "You cannot say I didn't warn you, Albus. It is your own fault that you have died. Now I suppose I must leave as well." He glanced around the destroyed office, taking in the shocked faces of those Headmasters and Headmistresses who still lingered in their portraits. "One of you spying harpies will have run off to the Ministry, already, hmm? It doesn't matter. I will be long gone before they begin their search."

He searched the horizon, looking for Hermione without truly expecting to see her. She was young, and her strength had not yet waned. She would already be far away from Hogwarts. He only hoped that she would be careful, that she would take care of herself. He would be joining her as a fugitive soon. The Ministry would not take kindly to the murder of a hero of the Wizarding World.

It would have eased his worries if he could communicate with her. But she had been true to her word. Whether it was on purpose or just a byproduct of her anger, Hermione had successfully closed her mind to him. He could not talk with her. He could not project his thoughts or desires into her brain. She was now completely alone, and it troubled him more than he would have admitted because it was by her own choice.

The Headmaster's door was hanging in the frame by a single hinge. The great doorknocker had been pulled cleanly out of the wood. It lay in a mangled heap off to the side of the threshold. Cedric stared into the quiet room with a feeling of dread in his chest. The wet fog rolled over their feet and the silver substance of memory slid beneath them. He pointed his wand out ahead of him, trying desperately to keep his hand from shaking.

Ron gasped behind him when he saw the state of the door. "What the bloody hell happened?" he whispered, smart enough to understand the need for quiet. "Looks like Fluffy got loose in Dumbledore's office!"

Harry cast his eyes over Cedric, who was standing rigidly in the doorway. "It was him, wasn't it, Ced? Snape did this."

There was no answer, just a sharp tensing of the muscles across Cedric's back. His grip on his wand tightened, and he took that first firm step into the ruins of the office. It was as he had suspected. Perhaps it was less so. Dumbledore was not torn into pieces or covered with the puncture wounds of an attacking vampire. No. He lay crookedly on the floor. His head turned at an odd angle, indicating that his neck had been broken. Blood and memory were spilling out his mouth, nose, and ears. The desk had been upended and smashed. Fawkes sat on his perch in the corner, gazing at his master's body with melancholy eyes.

Harry and Ron peered over Cedric's broad shoulders. They gasped at the chaos before their eyes. Dumbledore, the great Albus Dumbledore, lay dead and broken on the floor. There was no mercy in the death, only the actions of a vengeful thing devoid of compassion.

The window stood open, the afternoon light pouring over the grizzly sight. The window banged lightly against the stone wall as the wind blew the curtains. Snape could not have been gone long. He must have heard them coming up the stairs and jumped from the window. Cedric repressed the disappointed thought that the fall would not have killed the bastard.

Harry stepped around him and went to Dumbledore's side. He pressed his fingers against the horribly snapped neck and wrists of the body. There was no pulse to be found. He was fighting back tears. Here was the only real father figure...apart from Sirius...he'd ever known. Now he was dead, and Harry was alone at Hogwarts once

more.

"Go get McGonagal, Ron. Tell her to call the Ministry and that something's happened to the Headmaster," Cedric said over his shoulder, keeping his blue eyes trained on Harry. He could hear the redhead bounding down the stairs, his trainers squeaking on the slippery floor.

Cedric turned to the cabinets and kicked them with all his might. "FUCK! SHIT! DAMN IT!" he yelled, punctuating each curse with a violent kick. He dropped with a violent thud to his knees. "The bastard's done away with the only person who could tell us the truth. Damn him!"

## On the Run

*Chapter 3 of 3*

THE HOGWARTS VAMPIRE CHRONICLES: Part II. Catching a rogue vampire is harder than it looks. Especially if she doesn't want to be found.

Hermione swam, faster and longer than she'd ever thought possible. It was both amazing and frightening to know what she was capable of with this new form. Much of her was dazzled by how strong she felt, but just as much was disgusted by her thirst for blood and her flight from everything she'd ever loved. Oh how badly she wanted to go back!

She was outside the old city of Calais before she realized where she was. Water streamed from her clothes as she climbed from the sea and onto an empty dock. Night had fallen hours ago, so there was little danger in giving herself away by sunlight. But it was still conspicuous for a young woman to be standing on an abandoned dock at night soaking wet.

*I'll just steal a few clothes,* she thought, making her way toward the city proper. Hermione wrung out her hair and kept to the deeper shadows to avoid drawing any more attention.

It was easier than she thought to tear the lock from a shop door. A little voice in her thoughts reminded her to be quick. Even if she hadn't broken a window, the silent alarm would go off if the store had motion detectors. She would have to be fast and less than picky. Find clothes that somewhat fit and were dry... that was the only objective.

The Ministry was at the front doors of Hogwarts faster than one could say Quidditch. Three senior Aurors and a handful of trackers had arrived in the entrance hall within moments of being Flooed by Professor McGonagal. The new headmistress was more than a little dismayed at the events of the last twenty-four hours as she explained them in greater detail to her guests.

"Miss Granger has run off and so has Professor Snape. And yes," she huffed, holding one hand out in front of her to stop the questions. "They are both vampires, Miss Granger having more recently come into the lifestyle. And on top of it all, Headmaster Dumbledore is dead."

"Have you any idea who could have broken the headmaster's neck?" asked the most senior Auror, a hard-looking Scottish man by the name of McHonneh.

McGonagal rolled her eyes and turned to sweep up the stairs toward the second floor. "Well, it's obvious, isn't it? Why else would Severus Snape flee Hogwarts? After all, Dumbledore sent the trackers after his mate."

The Great Hall was quiet as most of the students filed in. Few really knew what happened, but most could understand that it was bad. Professor Flitwick had draped the windows in black cloths bearing the school crest and Dumbledore's chair had been moved to a place of honor on the dais.

Cedric sat between Ron and Harry at the Gryffindor table, and neither McGonagal or Sprout would make a move to send him to his own table. His blue eyes were glassy and distant. He couldn't forget what he'd seen in the Head's office or who had made it look that way.

"D'you think she'll tell what really happened?" Ron asked as the teachers began to gather at the front of the hall.

"No. But it doesn't matter. The entire school saw Herm-" Cedric's voice cracked and tears made his eyes sparkle like glass. "Saw what she did. They'll figure it out."

Harry pushed a glass of pumpkin juice toward the older boy. "People have been saying Snape was a -- you-know-what forever. Now they've just got proof."

"And the trackers are here. They'll find him then stick him in the sun to burn up as punishment for what he did." Ron nodded his head firmly, as if his statement settled the matter.

Cedric brushed his bronze locks from his face and rubbed his fingers at his temples. A dull throb had begun over his left eye as the new Headmistress of Hogwarts got up to speak.

"My dear students, we have suffered a great loss today. Our beloved headmaster, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, has died." She paused as a collective gasp ran through the hall. Several of the older girls began to sob. "Professore Dumbledore was murdered by someone at this very school. The Ministry would have me lie to you. To tell you he went peacefully on his own into the great beyond. But that is not so. He was murdered by Severus Snape."

The Slytherin table stood in defiance. One or two of the younger students yelled out in fury. Their Head of House would do no such thing! The older students simply squared their shoulders and filed from the room, Draco Malfoy at their head.

Night turned into day turned into night. He had long ago forgotten what it felt like to be on the run. But now he had something to seek and something from which to run. The trackers would be after him as soon as Potter and his friends reported Dumbledore's body. And Hermione would be far ahead, looking to put as much distance between them as she could.

And so, Severus Snape ran with the speed of a man with hellhounds on his heels. He had to find Hermione before the trackers did. Before she lost herself to the bloodlust of the curse he'd laid upon her.

But most of all... he had to find her because he loved her enough to stop the stars in the sky.

As the sun came up, Hermione stuffed her wet clothes in a garbage can and tied her hair up in a thick elastic. She had to find a hiding place quickly or risk being spotted. And that just couldn't happen.

For an instant, she wished she could feel her maker's arms around her once again. She longed for the warm darkness of his presence in her mind. It felt as if it'd been so

much longer than a few days.

*Oh, Severus,* she thought, feeling an ache spread through her stomach. She'd felt the call to Cedric's blood, but she loved her maker. It was a love she couldn't understand and that she couldn't explain. But it was a love she wished she had right then.

It was lonely running from everything and everyone. Now she missed them more than she could say.

"Severus," she whispered as she crawled beneath a crumbling bridge as the sun climbed high in the sky.

It was barely discernible. A soft sigh on the breath of the wind. The rustle of an insect's wings during a torrential downpour. The whisper of a small child in a crowded room of screaming adults.

Yet he heard it.

The sound of her voice was water to his parched heart. There was just an inkling of her in the recesses of his mind, but it was enough.

Snape grasped onto the lilting music of Hermione's thoughts. It was more than he dared to hope for. She was alive. She was well, and she wanted him.

His legs kicked up as he put on a burst of speed to follow her. She could be found, she could be kept safe from the instincts raging inside her.

"I'm coming," he shouted to the waves crashing against the shores he raced toward. He could only hope she would open her mind enough to hear him.