

A Dragon's Fire

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Hermione helps her daughter through a terrible experience and deals with it in a way she deems necessary.

A Parent's Ire

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Not my characters. I'm just borrowing some of JKR's characters for a little story.

Thanks go to ladyinthecloak for giving this a read through.

This story isn't very pleasant. I am dealing with a very touchy subject that I find is glossed over far too much in fanfiction these days (usually as something that just happens and is accepted). Not in this story. You've been warned.

Hermione waved as her daughter clutched Charlie's robes tightly, white faced, while the dragon lifted into the air. Charlie had been visiting the Burrow for a week and had been fascinating all the children with tales of dragons and what he did with them. Even the adults were mesmerized when he spoke. After what Harry had gone through during the Triwizard Tournament back in their fourth year, Hermione had no intention of getting close to the beasts again, though she enjoyed reading about them.

She'd been so lucky with things in life so far. She and Ron had parted amicably, him ending up with Luna Lovegood and her with Severus Snape. Harry had married Ginny, of course, as everyone had expected. And as fate would have it, their children had become fast friends, hers treating the Burrow as a second home sometimes.

So when Charlie had invited her daughter, Elizabeth, and Harry's oldest boy, James, on an overnight trip to a local dragon gathering, she'd agreed, albeit reluctantly. Hermione had been reassured that it was perfectly safe, though, and since Severus seemed to approve, obviously not wanting to disappoint Elizabeth, she'd had no choice.

"I can't believe she's going off overnight," Hermione said softly, still waving at Elizabeth and Charlie.

"She'll be fine," Severus said. "Besides, this will give us a night alone." He grinned and wriggled his eyebrows.

"Yes, but now that James has turned sick, I hate that she's going alone. What if she doesn't have anyone else her age to talk to while Charlie's busy?"

"I'm sure there will be plenty of other fourteen-year-old children there."

"I suppose." She arched an eyebrow. "And I see you've arranged for Samael to sleep over at Ron's with their kids, eh? You, my husband, are a naughty man."

She gazed back up into the sky, realizing the dragon was nothing more than a speck in the distance now. "I hope no Muggles see them."

"They'll only see a bird. Weren't you listening about his Anti-Muggle Charms?"

"No, I suppose not. Let's see Samael off and then go take advantage of our night alone."

"Certainly."

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Hermione knew that something wasn't quite right the moment she set eyes on Elizabeth. "What's wrong?" she asked, trying to pull her into her arms.

"Nothing. Just want to go home."

Her daughter's eyes wouldn't meet hers, and Hermione immediately felt uneasy. She gazed at Charlie, a hand still on Elizabeth's shoulder. "What's wrong with her, Charlie?"

He grinned broadly. "Had a bit of a scare with Jasper on the way back. I think she'll be okay after she rests up a bit." Charlie reached out to pat Elizabeth on the shoulder, which caused the girl to tense up. "Won't you, squirt?"

"Yeah. Can we go, Mum?"

"Of course. Thanks, Charlie."

"No problem. Looking forward to seeing you next time. I'll be going back to Romania in the morning."

"I'll extend that to Severus." She turned and guided Elizabeth out to the Apparition point and Side-Along Apparated her to their home. Before she let go of her, she asked once again, "What's wrong?"

"I said nothing!" Elizabeth snapped and then tore away from Hermione's grip and ran into their house.

Perplexed, Hermione followed her inside, meeting Severus' gaze. He seemed as surprised as she. "Did you talk to her?" she asked.

"She didn't give me the chance. Something amiss?"

"That's what I'm going to find out."

"Well, she went straight upstairs, into her room I suspect...oh, no, there's the shower."

"You don't suppose anything... happened, do you?"

He tilted his head sideways. "Like what, Hermione?"

"Oh, it's nothing, just me worrying. Charlie said they had a scare with Jasper on the way home, and she did look pretty filthy. We'll just wait her out and see if she'll talk to us. She's probably feeling foolish for being afraid."

Though she'd said these words to her husband, she wasn't quite comforted by them. Elizabeth had never acted this way before, and she was one the bravest girls Hermione had ever seen. Having a near mishap on a dragon would have been something she'd have enjoyed; Hermione was certain of that.

Had someone attacked her there? Had she been hurt? It was possible that she didn't want to let them know, else she'd be afraid that they'd not allow her any other overnight privileges. *I'm going to find out one way or another*, Hermione thought determinedly.

"I'll just go see if she needs any help with her hair."

She missed Severus' scrutinizing gaze as she left the room.

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"Elizabeth? It's Mum. Mind if I come in?"

"I'm in the shower, Mum."

"I know. I just want to get something from the shelves."

"All right."

She gazed at her daughter's silhouette and froze. Elizabeth was huddled under the hot spray, not moving. "I lied," she admitted. "I want to talk to you."

"Not now, Mum. I won't be long."

"You're not even bathing," she said, opening the curtain from the other end to look inside.

Elizabeth looked up in shock. "Mum!"

Without thinking, Hermione snatched a towel from the rack, climbed into the bath and moved to sit across from Elizabeth, ignoring the hot jets of water raining down on them. Slowly, she took the towel and spread it over her daughter's balled up body.

"I want you to know that I love you, Elizabeth, and you mean more to me than life itself. When I saw your face today, your stance, I knew something had happened." She tried to smile comfortingly. "You can tell me the truth. Please. I won't judge you."

Sucking in a deep breath, her daughter opened her mouth to speak but looked away instead, exhaling. Her hands trembled slightly as she clutched the soaked towel closer to her body. Finally, she said, "There wasn't anything wrong with Jasper, Mum."

Hermione nodded. "I thought not." She waited patiently until the trembling girl spoke again.

"Please don't tell Daddy. He'll be so mad at me."

"Mad at you? I doubt that, honey."

"Promise me, Mum. I won't say anything unless you swear."

"I swear it then. This will be between us. I won't tell him."

"After everything happened... the bonfire and stories, it was time for us to go to sleep." She bit her lip and finally lifted her eyes to meet Hermione's. "I had to sleep in the same tent as him, and it's not a normal kind of tent, Mum. It was a plain Muggle tent, and it was so cold. He said..."

Hermione swallowed thickly, afraid to hear what her daughter would say next but suspected she already knew. She tried to show no emotion in her face as she nodded and said, "Go on."

"He said we had to share a sleeping bag, that our fire wouldn't be enough, but body heat would." She let a sob go then and rocked herself slightly. "I believed him. I've read about that already, body heat being..."

Afraid to do anything that might stop her daughter's story, Hermione remained silent and didn't move to embrace her as she longed to. She could feel the shame and disgust radiating from her daughter and hated that something like this could happen to someone she loved...by someone else she also loved!

"Mum, he touched me, everywhere. Said he wanted to show me how to kiss so I'd know what to expect from the boys at Hogwarts now that I was old enough to be dating. He made me... he made me touch..."

This time when her daughter broke down in tears, Hermione couldn't stay away. She slid over and held her tightly, rocking her and saying soothing words in her ear, not caring that they were both soaked through with hot water.

"How stupid I was," Elizabeth said later. "I never thought to ask him about any warming charms or anything. I was so afraid, Mum, and he said that I couldn't tell anyone, else it would spilt the family up."

"I'm glad you told me."

"Do you hate me?"

"Of course not! You've done nothing wrong. He took advantage of you, baby. He took advantage of our trust. If anything, this is my fault. I should have never let you go there alone or be in that position."

"But you didn't know! I never would have thought..."

"Nor I."

"Am... am I still a virgin?" Elizabeth asked. "He didn't, you know, put it in."

"Yes, baby, and even if you weren't, it wouldn't be your fault or matter to me." Hermione hugged her fiercely. "I'm going to kill him."

"No, Mum! Grandma and Grandpa Weasley will hate me! I won't be a part of their family anymore! Nooo!"

"He's got to answer for this. I don't care what the Weasleys say!"

"But I do," Elizabeth pleaded. "He told me this would happen. I shouldn't have said anything. I just want it to go away. I just want to forget about it!"

Hermione was in a predicament. What could she do that would be best for her daughter? Just knowing that this happened broke her heart. She'd give anything to take her daughter's pain away.

"Mum, he told me that this happens a lot. He said that you and Uncle Harry and Uncle Ron used to camp and did these kinds of things all the time."

"What?!" Hermione asked incredulously.

Elizabeth nodded. "You even told me yourself that for most of a year you lived in a tent with them."

Frowning, Hermione said honestly, "He lied to you, honey. Neither Ron nor Harry ever stepped over the line. Charlie is just a sick bastard who took advantage of a young girl in his care. He's used lies and threats to bully you into doing those things and to be afraid that anyone might find out."

"I *don't* want anyone to know! I feel so filthy," Elizabeth wailed. "He'll be gone tomorrow, and I won't ever have to look at him again. That's all I want, for this to be over. Please."

Hermione nodded, turned off the spray, and held her daughter while she sobbed. When they became cold, she helped Elizabeth out of the bath, dried her hair and body for her, and dressed her in warm pyjamas before walking her to bed.

"I'll tell your father that you need a nap, all right?"

"Thanks, Mum," Elizabeth said, hugging her mother tightly. "I'm glad you're here for me. I felt so alone."

"We'll work through this. I promise."

When Hermione returned downstairs, Severus stood at the fireplace, waiting impatiently. "Well?"

"Ah, just... some female issues. Don't worry about it."

"Indeed? Why are you trembling then? And..."

"I'm not," she said defensively. "Oh, good Lord, my clothes are wet. I need to change."

"Why would you have showered with your clothes?"

"I didn't shower, Severus. I just got wet helping Elizabeth with... her hair. I'll be back down shortly."

She hated lying to her husband, but she'd made a promise that she intended on keeping. Oh, she'd find a way to deal with Charlie Weasley. He'd regret ever preying on her little girl; that was a guarantee. If she told Severus, she knew that he'd do something rash, and it would just end up hurting Elizabeth even more.

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For the rest of the day, her daughter's revelation ate at her. She couldn't stop imagining what the bastard had done, the sly words he'd used, and she couldn't stop seeing poor Elizabeth's face, broken and full of despair. How long would this hurt her child? Would she have sexual problems because of this...being either too frigid or too loose? What would this do to her self-esteem?

Things would have to be addressed further. There had to be someone professional she could speak with who could help her work through her feelings over what had happened. Hermione wasn't sure where to go from there, but she'd talk to Elizabeth the next day. Each time she'd checked on her, she'd been sleeping or hadn't wanted to talk. Hermione had left her in peace.

Severus was completely suspicious, but she felt she'd played his questions off to the best of her ability. When Samael had returned home, it had been easier to stay occupied, but several times that day, she'd felt Severus' eyes upon her, and when she'd gazed at him, she had the vague feeling that he suspected exactly what had happened.

Near midnight, she said, "Time to turn in," stretching and going towards the doorway. "Coming?"

He placed his book beside him and looked at his timepiece. "Shite! I have to go stir the memory elixir, and for the next hour, I'll have to add the last ingredients every two

minutes before it can simmer." Severus winked. "I shall be up after that though, and maybe we can have an encore of last night's performance?"

She tried to smile and said, "*That* performance? With the children home? We'll have to be extra quiet."

"Indeed. Perhaps I'll let you sleep. You seem to need the rest."

"I am tired." On cue, she yawned loudly. "Good grief."

"Rest well, love."

The moment she was upstairs and had closed the door to her room, she stole over to the window and opened it quietly. *Accio broom*," she called softly, flicking her wand. Moments later, her broom zoomed to her outstretched hand. She positioned herself on it awkwardly and flew off into the night, intent on going to the Burrow, hate and anger gripping her heart. When she was far enough away that she was certain Severus wouldn't hear her crack of Apparition, she landed and hid her broom.

*Crack!*

The Burrow loomed just ahead, several stories jutting out haphazardly. The only lights seemed to be shining from the kitchen and the large living area on the first floor. This was the bright spot in her day. There would be no waiting. She would be alone with Charlie, and she'd confront him for what he'd done.

Her hand shook as she pushed open the unlocked kitchen door. There was only silence to greet her, all the Weasleys who lived at home upstairs obviously asleep...as per the family clock. Charlie, she knew, had made a small bed for himself in the living room, preferring that to his 'drafty room,' as he'd told them the week before.

In a stealth mode that her husband would have appreciated, she walked through the kitchen and into the room he'd been using. She paused when she saw that he was sitting on the couch directly in front of her, his head moving slightly.

"Charlie," she said in a voice unlike her own, a rumbling whisper and full of anger, "I know what you did to my little girl. How dare you touch my daughter! You disgust me!" He said nothing. "Face me, you bastard."

Without realizing what she was doing, being driven by something much deeper, she lifted her wand and began to say, *Avada...*"

"No, Hermione!"

*Severus!*

"W-what? Severus!"

"Your wand must stay clean." He took her wand from her and pressed a finger to her lips. "Come," he said, guiding her around to face Charlie.

Her eyes widened as she took in the scene before her. Froth was dripping from Charlie's mouth, and his body shook slightly, his eyes frozen in terror. She looked to her husband's sinister expression, and he lifted a small, empty phial into the lamplight.

"I thought it best if we did things my way," he said darkly.

She nodded and leaned into him as she watched Charlie's last moments. In her mind, she felt justified about what was happening, she felt horrified that she was allowing someone to die, and she felt sadness for losing the person she'd thought Charlie to be. She'd always thought of him as part of the family, as someone she could trust. What a fool she'd been!

Not wanting to see any more, she hid her face in Severus' chest and allowed him to gather her close and guide her outside. They'd taken justice into their own hands. Charlie Weasley would never harm anyone's daughter again. She and Severus had seen to it. It felt liberating. It felt horrible.

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The next morning, Elizabeth gazed at her mother in shock as she read the headline of the *Sunday Prophet* while eating toast. "Charlie Weasley had some sort of seizure and died," she said, her voice a soft whisper.

"I know," Hermione said, placing a hand over her daughter's. "Uncle Ron Flooed us earlier and told us the news. I was going to wait until Samael woke to say anything."

Severus grunted and took a drink from his coffee.

It looked as though Elizabeth wanted to ask something more, but she simply nodded and tossed the paper away, a small sigh of relief leaving her tense form.

SW's Notes: Not a very pleasant story, but it was something I thought of and wanted to get out. What would you do if you were in Hermione's shoes? I keep my son close to me at all times, having experienced this as a child, just to be safe, but if this ever did happen, I don't know that I could stop myself from doing something similar.