

# And Two Must Love

*by Drivelicious*

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## Chapter 1

*Chapter 1 of 14*

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"We are going to die, Harry. There's no way out of this!" Hermione was sobbing into Harry's shirt, clinging to him uncomfortably. They were in the Room of Requirement trying to make plans for the battle that seemed inevitable. The DA members who were still in school looked at the hysterical girl in shock. They were not used to seeing the Head Girl lose control of her emotions.

Ron tried to pull Hermione away from Harry so that the meeting could continue. "Come on, Hermione, let's just go over what we've talked about. It may not be as bad as you think," Ron told her.

"I'm sorry," Hermione sniffed, looking at the faces of her friends. "I was just overwhelmed for a moment there. I'm fine." She turned to look at Harry. "I'm sorry about your shirt."

Harry just nodded and gave Hermione a half smile. If truth be known, he felt the same way she did. He really felt that this was it, his time to die. He didn't plan to live through the next twenty-four hours, and it was hard for a seventeen-year-old boy to take.

They had anticipated the final battle last summer. After Professor Dumbledore had been killed, all signs pointed at a summer war. The leader of the Order of the Phoenix was dead, and they were all so broken and lost it would have been the perfect time to attack. Voldemort had other plans though, and now all intelligence was leading them to tomorrow. The day when he and most of his friends would die.

There were not very many students left at Hogwarts. There were no first years at all; McGonagall deferred the enrollment of all new students. The parents of the older children had made their own decisions about whether their children could come back. It was only the seventh-year students, with most of them being of age and able to make their own decisions, who had a nearly full enrollment. The DA started meeting again, officially this time, opening to other students third year and above. They even had their very own faculty adviser.

Professor Snape had returned to Hogwarts, and the Order, a slightly different man. He had never been arrested for the death of Dumbledore, and using a Pensieve, the Order was able to see the vow he had taken. Dumbledore would have died within the month anyway, there was nothing that could have been done. Forgiveness was given, even by Harry, but Snape had yet to forgive himself. He took up the job as adviser to the DA as a sort of penance. Even though he would never admit it, Harry was glad to have the extra help. He was good at defense, but Snape was better.

The remaining DA members huddled around Harry, looking over the plans one more time, although it wasn't needed. They all knew what to do, what was coming, and that they would most likely lose. Through Snape's spying, he informed them all of the danger they were in. He didn't expect to live either.

After almost everyone left, Harry and Hermione stayed to pack everything up. Ron had left with Ginny to go back to Gryffindor tower so they could have some family time. The entire Weasley family was staying in a room near the tower so they could spend one more night together.

They were silent as they moved around the room. Hermione ran her hands along the walls, thanking the building for protecting them for so long. She was an adult now, and her best childhood memories were of this school, her two best friends, and her family. Tomorrow that could all be gone. She would either lose her friends, her school, or her own life. At least her family was safe in Australia, unaware of any of this.

She finally sat down on the floor, propping up against one of the cushions they practiced with. It had a few scorch marks but was still comfortable. She felt that if she could just stay in that room and keep Harry there with her, they would both be safe. Sure they would be abandoning the Wizarding world at a crucial time, but they would be alive.

Harry sat down next to Hermione and leaned his head on her shoulder. "You mean more to me than almost anyone in this life. I just want you to know that," he whispered.

"I feel the same about you. That's why I was so upset earlier."

"I don't want to die, Hermione. I want to finish school, get a great job, marry Ginny, have lots of kids, and be normal."

"I want that, too. Well, I don't want to marry Ginny, but I want that, too," Hermione sighed. "You should go be with Ginny tonight. She'll need you."

"I can't. I love her too much to be with her tonight. I know that makes no sense, but if I'm with her, I'm going to cry, lose focus, and I won't stand a chance."

"Can we stay here then?" Hermione asked. "Just stay in this room together and say goodbye."

"I wouldn't want to be anywhere else." Harry leaned over and pressed a chaste kiss to her lips.

"Will you do me a favor, Harry?"

"Anything."

"This is going to sound really odd, but I don't want to die a virgin. I want you to make love to me."

Harry was stunned by her words. "It's not that I'm not flattered, but I can't. I'm in love with someone else."

"I'm not looking for a relationship, Harry. I don't love you in a romantic way. I just want to feel something else tonight besides sorrow and worry."

"Wouldn't you rather ask Ron?"

"You are the only one I trust. Please, Harry?"

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

\*Three Months Later\*

Hermione and Harry sat in the Room of Requirement. They were very much alive. The battle intelligence had been wrong, the Death Eaters had turned on themselves and the minor skirmish at the gates of Hogwarts was almost a joke. The war wasn't over. There would be a final battle. The prophecy told him that much. They still weren't safe. They still faced death.

The two friends were sitting close and grasping each other's hands. Hermione felt that if Harry let go, she'd just dissolve into a million pieces. She was barely hanging on. Harry felt much the same way, but he was resolved to do what he had to do. He was about to give up the one thing he wanted most in this world.

Severus Snape sat across from the couple on an uncomfortable chair. He glared at his least favorite student and the know-it-all who followed him around. They looked nervous and pale. He hoped they didn't have some odd disease that required an unknown potion. He had no patience for things like that.

"Are you two just going to sit there shaking, or are you going to tell me why you called me to this drab room. I am a busy man. I do not have all day," Snape said, using the most bored voice he could muster. In reality, he was curious as to why they would ask him to meet with them. They loathed him as much as he loathed them.

"We wanted to ask you a question," Harry spoke up. At the professor's nod to go ahead, he continued, "I understand that part of the oath that Death Eaters take is a stipulation to protect the children of other Death Eaters. Under this stipulation, no harm can come to the child of a Death Eater at the hand of another or Voldemort himself. Is this correct?"

Snape narrowed his eyes as he looked at Harry. Harry reacted by sitting up straighter, but Hermione turned a little green, looking quite nauseous.

"Yes, that is part of the oath. It expires when the child comes of age. Are you plotting against Draco again?"

"No! Not at all." Harry ran his hands through his hair unsure of how to continue.

"Why would you ask such a thing?" Severus asked, his curiosity peaked.

"We want you to claim our baby," Hermione whispered. "I'm pregnant with Harry's child, and we need your help to protect it."

Snape had not expecting that. The idea that Potter would cheat on his girlfriend to get Hermione pregnant was a bit hilarious really. Potter was a do-gooder, he wouldn't cheat on Ginny.

"Would you care to explain how that happened?" Snape said, fighting back a smirk.

"Do you remember back in January when we thought the end was near? That night, the DA met to go over last minute plans. After everyone left, Hermione and I stayed to talk. We decided that we didn't want to die virgins, and, well, now she's pregnant," Harry said.

"My lesson on contraceptive potion was forgotten, Miss Granger?" Snape asked.

"It wasn't exactly predetermined, so I didn't have any with me. Besides, we both thought we would die, so it wouldn't matter anyway," Hermione huffed. She hated for her intelligence to be challenged.

"Professor, we wouldn't be asking for your help if we didn't think this was our only option. Obviously, if word got out that I was going to have a child, the danger to Hermione and the baby would be greater than ever. With your status as a Death Eater, you could claim the baby as your own and protect them both. We've been trying to figure out what to do for the last month, and you are our only option," Harry explained as calmly as he could.

"I see. Did you not consider the fact that I would surely lose my job if people were to think I impregnated a student? The Head Girl no less? Nobody would believe I would touch Miss Granger," Snape told them, sitting forward and glaring.

"Technically, Hermione isn't a student, you know that," Harry answered.

"You know I took my NEWTs before Christmas. I'm not listed as a student, I'm an apprentice. I know it will be hard for you to admit that you touched me, a Muggleborn, but I'm sure that it can be explained."

"I couldn't care less about blood status, but the Dark Lord does. He'd have a hard time believing it." He sat back wondering if this was possible at all. He was surprised at himself for even considering helping the brats, but he knew he was most likely the only hope they had for this baby to be born. "As for your status as a student, I suppose you are correct. If, and that's a big if, I were to agree to help you, what happens after Potter kills the Dark Lord? Assuming you get lucky, of course."

"If we all survive, nothing would change. Hermione is prepared to raise the baby alone, one way or another. I can't be a father to this child. There's too much at stake. It would destroy Ginny, and the baby would still be in danger. There will still be people trying to kill me for months after Voldemort is defeated, you know that. Any children I have need to be born through marriage, years from now, for them to be accepted into this world and stand a chance at a normal life. I will support Hermione financially through my inheritance, but nobody can ever know that it's my child." Harry let go of Hermione and started pacing the cold room. "It kills me, but I have to give this child up."

"We're not asking you to be a father, Professor Snape. We just need you to claim the baby and allow him or her to have your name. You don't need to be responsible for me, or the child, at any point," Hermione pleaded.

At Snape's continued silence, Harry spoke up again, "You don't have to decide right now. We've got a little while before the pregnancy is obvious, so if you could answer before then, that would be great. We'll continue to try to come up with other options."

"Does anyone else know about this? This plan of yours, or the pregnancy?" Snape finally asked.

"Madame Pomfrey and Professor McGonagall both know I'm pregnant. The Headmistress knows that Harry is the father; she has been helping us come up with this plan."

"And your friends? Does Mr. Weasley know?"

"Nobody else knows," Harry answered.

"You'll be a target after the baby is born. You won't be protected, only the child." Snape turned toward Hermione.

"I know, and I will do what needs to be done at that point. I am more concerned for my baby."

"You are willing to endure the humiliation from your friends that will come from carrying my child?"

"I'll deal with it. Whatever story we come up with will be accepted, I'm sure."

Snape sat quietly for a long time. He was processing the information, weighing the responsibilities. At least his name would live on, through this child, even if his bloodline didn't. It wouldn't hurt his reputation in the slightest, and he was sure he could convince Voldemort that he had used Hermione to get closer to Harry. It could work.

"Fine," he answered.

"Fine? Fine what?" Hermione asked.

"I'll do it. I'll claim that baby; give it a shot at life. I don't promise anything more."

"Thank you, Professor!" Harry walked over to shake the man's hand.

"Thank me later, Potter, after it works." He shook the outstretched hand.

Hermione walked up to him, smiling the widest smile he'd ever seen directed at him. "Thank you. This means so much," Hermione whispered behind tears.

"Now, let's get our story straight." The three sat down to discuss the finer details of their momentous lie.

## Chapter 2

### *Chapter 2 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Hermione was at the four-month mark of pregnancy. Her morning sickness was gone and there was a definite bulge in her belly. If anyone were to see her in tighter clothes, they would think she'd been overeating. Nobody would suspect she was pregnant yet. She had been able to hide her morning sickness fairly well. It helped that she wasn't actually going to classes. She was spending each month working with a different professor.

She was enjoying her job as an "apprentice." She'd spent the worst month of morning sickness working with Madame Pomfrey and was quite thankful to have her around. She learned a great deal and was skilled at patching up basic Quidditch injuries, although Madame Pomfrey had been teaching her more advanced healing spells, which she suspected might be needed in the near future.

Now that it was May and the weather had improved, she was out in the greenhouses with Professor Sprout. They were working on a form of Devil's Snare that could be carried and thrown like a Muggle grenade. So far, it was a huge failure, but they had a lot of fun trying it out. Starting in June, she would be working with the Headmistress herself, organizing things for the next year and trying to get the welcome letters sent out to new students. Professor McGonagall refused to have another year without first years. No matter the outcome of the war, the students would be allowed to come.

On her way out to the greenhouses, she thought about their upcoming reveal. She would be showing soon, and even if she weren't, the story would have to be told. If they stood a chance of having anyone believe them, things would have to be made public and Hermione would need to spend some time publicly with Professor Snape. If key people didn't believe their story, it would all be for nothing.

As she walked carefully to avoid mud puddles, she saw Professor Snape heading her way. She stopped when he got closer and it became obvious he wanted to talk to her.

"Good morning, Miss Granger," he greeted.

"Good morning, Professor."

"I thought I might walk you to the greenhouses this morning."

"Really? Why?"

"I think it's appropriate for us to start being seen together, that is if you still want to do this. I also need to talk to you privately if you don't mind."

"Okay. Of course. Did you want to go to your office?"

"No, that will not be necessary. Let's go over by the lake shall we?"

As Hermione walked toward the lake beside Professor Snape, she realized how odd it was. They had never been comfortable around each other; he frightened her on many levels and she knew she annoyed him to no end. It was only this child that she was carrying, and his unbelievable agreement to help, that had brought them to this. They could not be considered friends, but allies in a fight.

"Is everything all right, Professor?" Hermione asked as they settled on a bench. Snape's robes were wrapped tightly around him as he sat with a good foot of space between them. He was clearly uncomfortable being near her in a casual setting.

"I was called to a meeting with the Dark Lord last night. I told him about your pregnancy."

"What? I thought we agreed to wait until. . ." She was cut off by his stern look.

"We could not wait. He was targeting you directly. I had to tell him to invoke the protection over you. Word will be getting out, either through Draco or one of the other Slytherin traitors. I should have told you last night, but I wasn't feeling well."

"What did you tell them, and what did he do?"

Severus glanced out at the lake as he shared the night's events with her.

*"Young Malfoy, how easy would it be to get Potter's mudblood alone?" Voldemort hissed at Draco.*

*"Not very. She's constantly surrounded by staff or students. She moves between duties alone but only in the light of day. She is Head Girl, but never does rounds alone. She does have her own room so I suppose that would be where she would be most vulnerable, but it would be hard to gain access."*

*"I want to weaken Potter. I want his friends taken or dead, so that he is all alone. It is up to you to gain access to her room. McNair! We'll need a Portkey so Mr. Malfoy can bring the girl to me."*

*"Excuse me, sir," Snape interrupted.*

*"Yes, Severus?" Voldemort turned his evil eyes toward Snape.*

*"I must ask you to leave Miss Granger alone for at least a few months," Snape kept his head down as he answered. He knew he was risking his own life by going against Voldemort, but he had agreed to this, and he could only hope that he could pull it off.*

*"Severus? What is this? You defy me?" Voldemort asked, his voice sickeningly sweet.*

*"No, Master. I only ask that protection be given to Miss Granger, as she is carrying my child." He lifted his face when he heard the sounds of surprise around the room.*

*"The Mudblood is carrying your child?" Lucius Malfoy asked, his amusement not hidden.*

*"Did you rape her?" Voldemort asked, becoming interested in the new development.*

*"No, Master. She came to me willingly. I admit I shouldn't have touched her, but I couldn't refuse a willing woman in my bed, especially one that could ultimately help us defeat Potter. I ask that you protect my child as we agreed in our oath. As the child is not yet born, Granger must not be harmed. After the child is born and healthy, you may do as you wish; I'll even deliver her to you myself. I just ask that the Snape name be allowed to carry on."*

*"I see. Severus, you surprise me. I agree that a warm willing woman is desirable, but the Mudblood? Potter's bitch?"*

*"I'm sorry, sir." Snape was hanging his head again, trying to keep his mind shut. He had planned to come up with artificial memories, but wasn't prepared.*

*"Very well, Severus. As soon as the child is born, the little whore will be brought to me." Voldemort turned then to look around the room. "No harm is to come to the Mudblood. Not in any form. Young Malfoy, this includes you and your propensity to tease. We want Severus to have a healthy child. Let's continue with other plans."*

"That was it? He took it pretty well," Hermione said after listening to his story.

"As well as he ever takes things. I'm a tad concerned about his easy acceptance, but we'll deal with that later." Severus looked out over the lake. He was glad that his teaching robes hid the burns covering his body. Voldemort decided he should be cleansed after touching a Mudblood, and several acidic spells had been thrown his way. He was so thankful for Madame Pomfrey. He didn't know how many times she had helped him. He was in a lot of pain and would probably carry scars, but he would heal enough to keep going. He was beginning to despise his double life.

"Are you all right, Professor?" She was concerned after his period of silence.

"I'm fine, but you should start calling me Severus if we are to be thought of as lovers."

The word lover gave Hermione chills as it slipped off his tongue. They weren't lovers of course, but she would have to convince people they were. "Then you should call me Hermione."

"Very well, Hermione." Her name didn't flow easily for him, but he managed to get it out. "The Headmistress requests a meeting with the both of us and Potter in two hours. I'll leave it to you to get the message to him." He stood up and started walking away, forgetting his original plans to walk her to the greenhouses.

"I'll be there, Severus," she called out.

Hermione continued on her path to the greenhouses and worked for an hour on some new seedlings. She had a short period of time between regular classes where she could find Harry and give him the message, so she headed back to the castle. As she walked up the stairs to the third floor, she noticed that she was getting stares and there was a great deal of whispering behind her back. She knew what that meant. Draco had started talking.

As she headed down the corridor, she saw Harry, Ron and Ginny huddled together. She hadn't been seen, so she slipped into an alcove and quickly wrote a note telling Harry about the meeting. She wasn't sure if they had heard the news, but she couldn't arouse any suspicion in Harry's direction. Ginny was pretty observant, and Hermione was worried the most about trying to deceive her. She took a deep breath and headed towards her friends.

"Hi!" she announced.

"Hermione! Um. . . I thought you'd be in the greenhouses. . . Um. . . We were just talking about you," Ron stuttered. Obviously they had heard.

"Hermione, I think we should have a talk," Ginny said, giving her best Molly Weasley glare.

"Sure, I have a few minutes." She quickly slipped the paper into Harry's hand and followed Ginny down the hall and into an empty classroom.

"What's going on, Ginny?"

"I think you should know that Malfoy is spreading awful rumors about you," Ginny said, grabbing Hermione's hands.

"What? Not again. What is it about this time?" Hermione hoped her acting skills were up to par.

"You might want to sit down." Ginny placed her hands on Hermione's shoulders and pushed her down into a chair.

"Ginny, what is going on? You're worrying me."

"You should be worried. There is a rumor going around school, and from what I hear, it came from Malfoy, so I'm sure it isn't true, but it's about you."

"Uh oh," Hermione said. "What is it?"

"People are saying you are pregnant." She looked at Hermione, waiting for a reaction. "Pregnant with Snape's child!"

"Oh, that," Hermione stood and walked over by the teacher's desk. "I was hoping that wouldn't be public, yet."

"Yet? What? You don't mean it's true?" Ginny looked at her friend carefully. There was a flash of sorrow that crossed her face, but it was replaced with resignation. "You are having a baby with Snape?"

"Ginny, I wanted to tell you, but I couldn't. We were hoping to wait until school was out before it became public."

"I don't believe you. You're just playing a game right? You wouldn't have sex with Snape!"

"It just happened, Ginny. We were working closely together with things for the Order, and well, one thing led to another."

"When did this happen? Are you in love with him?"

"No! I don't love him, we aren't even a couple, it's not like that! We only had sex once. Remember back in January, when we thought we were going to die? I was extremely emotional if you remember. I found myself alone with Severus, told him I didn't want to die a virgin, and well, now I'm not a virgin anymore." She was amazed at how easily the lie came out. It was critical that Ginny believe her. She would spread the story faster than anyone.

"Wow. You are having a baby? That's amazing," Ginny finally smiled.

"I know, it really is," Hermione smiled back. "Do you want to see something?" At Ginny's nod, she took off her outer robes and draped them over the desk. Her shirt was already un-tucked since it was more comfortable that way and she lifted it up to show off her belly.

"Oh my gosh! Look at that. You've got a little bump!" Ginny cooed. "Can I touch?" At Hermione's agreement, she ran her hand over the slightly round belly. "When are you due? What are you going to do? Is it a boy or a girl?"

"Well, I'm due in late October. I just found out that I'm having a girl. As for what I'm going to do, I'm not sure. I'm keeping the baby, of course, but I don't know if I'm going to try to get an apartment and set up a home, or stay here at Hogwarts. Professor McGonagall has agreed to let me stay and apprentice. I haven't decided what to do."

"You could live at the Burrow, too, I'm sure Mum would let you, and she'd help with the baby. What about Snape? Does he know?"

"Oh, he knows. He's been pretty calm about the whole thing, actually. He's shown no interest in wanting to be a father at all. I don't care; it was just a one time thing. He is treating me a little nicer though."

"Typical," Ginny huffed. "So how did Malfoy find out?"

"I just saw Severus and he said that he was called to a meeting with You-Know-Who last night, and they were targeting me. In order to protect me and the baby, he had to tell everyone that I was pregnant. I'm well protected now, at least until the baby is born. Death Eaters are sworn not to harm the children of their own."

"People are going to start asking questions, you know. The rumors are flying."

"I know, that's all right. It's about time for me to stop hiding. I'm not embarrassed." The two girls talked some more, and then Hermione left to go to her meeting with the Headmistress. Harry was already waiting and a few minutes later, Snape breezed in, his robes billowing behind him.

They discussed the meeting from the night before, and Harry was filled in on the changes to their plans. Hermione kept looking at Harry and could see that he was very troubled by something. She could see that he wanted to say something but he was biting his tongue. She knew she could get it out of him when they were alone. As the meeting was coming to a close, Hermione remembered to tell everyone that she had talked to Ginny.

"Oh! I almost forgot. Ginny cornered me about the rumors, so I told her everything well the fabricated everything. You can be sure that word will get out. Harry, you are going to have to do a good acting job," she told her friend.

"Why couldn't you have told her that I already knew? We're best friends, it would make sense if I knew," Harry argued.

"Not really, Harry. Ginny's my best female friend, so it would only be natural that I went to her first. Plus, Ron would lose his mind if he thought you knew and he didn't."

"He's going to lose his mind anyway, but you're right. I'll do my best to act surprised, scandalized, and whatever else I need to do," Harry agreed.

"How are you feeling, Miss Granger?" Professor McGonagall asked. "Is everything going as planned with the pregnancy?"

"Yes, Madame Pomfrey says everything looks good."

"Do you need new clothes yet? I can arrange a shopping trip for you, if needed."

"It's getting tight, but I can still fit in my school robes. Look!" Feeling very bold, she shrugged off her outer robes and for the second time that day, exposing her stomach. McGonagall cooed in much the way Ginny had, while Snape turned red and walked out the door, muttering about being late for class. Harry's reaction was one of awe. He didn't say a word, but came up to Hermione and placed his hands on her stomach. He looked in her eyes and she could have sworn she saw a tear. She never noticed

when the Headmistress left the room.

"Wow," he finally whispered. "There's a baby in there. It finally seems real."

"Harry, I know this is hard for you. Do you want to back out? It's not too late. I could just disappear, go stay with family in America until after the war. You could still be this baby's father." She searched his eyes and saw the emotions play out. She saw hope and then resolve.

"No. You wouldn't be safe anywhere. This is our only chance, especially since you are being targeted now. I'll love this baby from afar. It will have to be enough." He stepped back and dropped his hands. "I'll have children with Ginny someday, and if not, I'll be a great Uncle Harry to this little girl."

"I'm sorry, Harry."

"Don't be. You gave me a great gift that night." He cleared his throat, trying to regain composure. "You need to tell Ron. I'll leave first and I'll be in the common room. We'll go someplace private to talk." He took one more glance at her stomach and headed out the door.

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"What? That slimy, greasy, asshole touched you? I'm going to kill him! How could you let him? Did he rape you?" Ron was ranting at the top of his lungs, and Hermione was very glad that she had cast a Silencing charm. The common room had been empty, except for Ron and Harry, when Hermione arrived. She'd pulled them through the entrance to her private Head Girl's rooms, and proceeded to tell them her story. Harry reacted like Harry would if it had been the truth. He threw out a few pointed jabs and then fell silent, glaring at Hermione as best he could. Predictable Ron had lost his mind. He had been screeching for five minutes now, while Hermione sat on her chair looking as calm as possible.

"Ronald, calm down." She had repeated those words several times already and he hadn't stopped. Finally, she raised her wand, shot a Stinging Hex at him and waited for him to react.

"And you should. . . Hey! What'd you do that for?" he asked as he checked out his smoldering shoulder.

"To get you to shut up. To answer your questions, it just happened, Ron. No more thought went into it. I hadn't been lusting after him, as you so sweetly put it. He didn't rape me; it was only once, and that's it. End of story. I'm having a baby."

"Harry! Say something!" Ron turned to his friend for help.

"I have nothing to say to her." Harry got up then and left the room. He was about to start laughing and he couldn't give himself away. Hermione had been so matter of fact about it.

"Wait till my mum hears about this!" Ron said as he followed Harry out of the room.

Hermione sighed as she sunk further into her chair. She knew these reactions would be coming, but she hated the idea of rehashing everything over and over and over again. She also dreaded the thought that Molly would hear about this. She wasn't her mother, but she was close enough at this point and she wouldn't be happy. She felt worse for Snape though. When Molly got a hold of him, he'd be lucky if he could ever procreate for real.

A few minutes later, there was a knock on her door. Opening it up, she found Lavender and Parvati looking apprehensive. "Can we talk to you?" Lavender asked.

Hermione let them in and sighed quietly. Here it comes. "Sure, come on in."

"We heard about your little problem," Parvati said quietly.

"Ginny told us it was true, and after seeing Ron burst out of here, I thought it must be. Is it?" Lavender asked. "Did you have sex with Snape?" Parvati started giggling as Lavender asked.

"Yes, it's true. Just once though; we thought we were going to die and I didn't want to die a virgin. He was there and now I'm pregnant," Hermione shrugged, already tired of telling the story.

"How was he? I mean, he's so mysterious. Was he good at it? At sex?" Lavender leaned forward on the bed and looked at Hermione. She hadn't quite prepared herself for answering those questions, and she didn't have any real answers. Her night with Harry had started out pretty awkward, he had no clue what he was doing and poked around quite a bit. She had to tell him where to put his penis, and that had taken some of the romance out of it. They'd had sex three times that night and he had the hang of it by the end, so she decided to focus on that.

"It was very good. It hurt of course, but he was gentle and sweet, really. He knew he was taking my virginity and he took that seriously. It was nice," she answered truthfully, only talking about Harry, and not Snape.

"How big is it? His you know. Is it big? I don't think Ron's is very big," Lavender said, while Parvati looked shocked.

"You've seen Ron's thing? You told me you were a virgin!" Parvati told her.

"I am, but I've touched him and stuff. He is my boyfriend." Lavender looked back at Hermione. "So is he big?"

"Uh, I don't know," Hermione stammered. "I've got nothing to compare it to. Seemed pretty big to me, I didn't think it would fit," she started laughing then, and all three girls started giggling. The talk continued for a while, and Hermione was surprised to realize that she was actually enjoying it. She'd never been much for the girl talk, spending all her time with the boys, but all of a sudden, a non-virginal, pregnant Hermione was seen as a feminine counterpart. She did feel very feminine for the first time in her life. Her larger breasts and her slightly rounded stomach gave her much needed curves. She thought she might actually have some actual cleavage soon.

When she finally slipped into sleep that night, it was with a clear mind. Everything was going as planned. So far.

## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 of 14

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

After breakfast on a Saturday morning, Hermione was called to the Headmistress' office. When she arrived, Professor Snape was already in attendance, looking like he'd been put through hell. His hair was messy, his face was flushed, and she thought there was a scorched mark on his robe. He wouldn't even look at her as she came in the room.

"Miss Granger, thank you for coming. How are things going now that word is out?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"Pretty well. I've gotten a few off looks and a few snide remarks, but most people are very curious. It helps that I'm Head Girl; if they think badly of me, they aren't saying anything."

"And Draco Malfoy? Has he been harassing you?" Snape asked, still looking at the floor.

"Not at all. He's been ignoring me, which is fine with me. I don't think I've even seen him look at me."

"Good." The Headmistress nodded. "Professor, do you have any questions? If not, you are free to go. I'm sorry about this morning." Professor McGonagall looked over at Severus with a hint of a smile on her face. Snape nodded, glared, and headed for the door.

"What happened? He looked awful," Hermione asked after the door closed behind him.

"Well, you have a visitor and she came to see him first. Shall we go down to the gates? You are going on an outing today."

"An outing? What's going on?"

"You'll see. Come along, dear."

The two walked together down the stairs and out the large doors. They headed towards the gates that led to Hogsmeade where she saw someone standing and waiting. Someone with red hair. She now understood why Snape looked the way he did. It was Molly Weasley.

"Have fun, dear!" McGonagall called out as she pushed Hermione toward Molly. "See you for dinner." With a wave, the Headmistress hurried away, obviously not wanting to face Molly either.

"Hello, Mrs. Weasley," Hermione called out weakly. She wasn't sure what to expect. She only hoped she'd have mercy on a pregnant woman.

"Oh, Hermione! You poor dear, pregnant at this time in your life!" Molly grabbed her into a strong hug and squeezed and rocked as she talked. "You poor baby! You're just a child. That horrible Severus Snape should be castrated! Taking advantage of a young girl. Just a baby!"

Hermione pulled out of her embrace. "Really, don't blame Severus. I pushed him into everything. He's been wonderful about the whole thing."

"Is he going to marry you, then?" Molly asked.

"Marry me? No! It was only one night. Marriage is the furthest thing from our minds."

"Well, we'll see about that. Come along." Molly started hurrying towards Hogsmeade.

"Where are we going? Mrs. Weasley? What's going on?" She rushed to catch up with her.

"We are going shopping, dear. You are going to need maternity clothes very soon, and it won't be safe for you to be out and about much longer. Quickly now, we've got a lot to do today. We have an appointment at Madame Malkin's in twenty minutes. We need to get to a Floo."

"Mrs. Weasley, I don't have any money with me; we'll need to stop by Gringotts."

"Nonsense! You are not paying for anything. Severus gave me plenty of money to spend on you. It's his fault you need new clothes after all," Molly said as she continued to rush along. She finally noticed that Hermione had stopped and turned around to give her a motherly glare. "What's wrong, dear?"

"I can't take his money. This isn't his fault at all. I must insist you give that money back."

"Let's spend it first, and then you can talk to him about it. I didn't ask him for the money; he just handed it to me. It was his choice."

"He gave you the money on his own?" Hermione couldn't believe what she'd just heard. Why would he do that? She knew he was trying to keep up appearances, but it wasn't his responsibility. With a sigh, she started walking again. She'd pay him back eventually, but for now she didn't have time to process it as Molly was hurrying ahead.

When the two women arrived at Diagon Alley, they made their way to the dress shop. Madame Malkin was waiting and escorted them into a private fitting room in the back.

"Take off your clothes, dear. Bra and knickers only," Madame Malkin told Hermione as she gathered some fabric.

"I'm not really sure I am comfortable disrobing in front of other people," Hermione told Molly and Madame Malkin, clutching her robes tight around her body.

"Nonsense! Miss Granger, in order to fit you properly you must disrobe. Besides, when you are pregnant, all modesty goes out the window."

"That's for sure," Molly agreed. "When I had the twins, I was completely naked in front of my three older boys, Arthur, and the healer from St. Mungo's. They had to bring her to me; I was so far along I couldn't even Floo to the hospital."

"Why were you naked?" Hermione asked as she started removing her clothing.

"I couldn't stand any clothes touching me. It was unbearable. You'll see," Molly told her.

After stalling as long as she could, Hermione removed the last of her clothes and stood in only her undergarments. Molly, like most of the other females she encountered, had to touch her stomach and admire the little pooch that seemed to get bigger every day.

"You only have a few weeks left to wear school uniforms. How are they fitting?" Madame Malkin asked as she walked around Hermione.

"They still fit pretty well. The shirts are fine, but the skirts and pants are a little tight in the waistband. Not uncomfortable yet, but they are getting there."

"And your casual clothes?"

"My jeans are getting uncomfortable."

"I'm going to give you a simple Muggle device that I discovered while shopping in London. It's a simple button extender. Really marvelous things that don't require any spells. You'll be out of school before you are too big. As for your casual clothes, you'll have to go to Muggle London for those. Molly can take you there next." Madame Malkin stood back and looked at Hermione.

She paused a moment and then held out her wand. "I'm going to cast a spell now that will feel a bit odd. It's perfectly safe, but you are going to expand to the largest size you will reach during this pregnancy. Most women who are pregnant for the first time find it a bit jarring, but just relax. Your bra and panties will expand with the spell. Ready?"

"Um, ok, I guess so." Hermione wasn't sure what to think, but all of a sudden she felt herself expanding. Her stomach was jetting out in front of her and her breasts were growing quite large. She looked in the mirror and didn't recognize her own body. Her hips were wider, her thighs heavier, and even her face looked pudgy. Her stomach was huge! She knew she'd get big, but she had no idea. She felt unbalanced and awkward, and she hadn't even moved yet. "Oh my! I'm so fat!"

"No, it's not fat, it's a new life," Molly tried to comfort her. "Just think that soon you'll be able to feel the baby moving around."

"I have felt a few flutterings. This won't hurt the baby, will it?" She couldn't help but rub a hand over her newly expanded stomach. It was so bizarre.

"Not at all, it's just an illusion really. It feels real, but nothing has actually changed in your body. Let me get the rest of these measurements before the spell wears off." Madame Malkin got to work while Hermione continued to admire her body. Molly was talking about all the changes she'd go through, but she was only half listening. She felt such love for this baby all of a sudden. More than she'd felt before. It was like a rush of emotion had grabbed her and pulled her under. She wanted this baby more than anything in her life. She felt she could give up anything to have a chance to hold her child in her arms. She was so intent on her thoughts that she didn't even realize she was crying. It wasn't until Molly put her arms around her that she realized her emotions were on display for everyone and her body had gone back to normal.

"What is it, dear? What's wrong?" Molly soothed, pushing her hair from her face and rubbing her shoulder.

"I just really want this baby to live. I want to hold my child and know that he or she has a future," Hermione sniffed.

"Of course, you do. You are already a mother and want the best for your baby. Now, let's finish picking out material and go get you some lunch. Crying takes a lot out of a woman."

Molly and Madame Malkin left the dressing room so Hermione could get dressed in privacy. She sat down on a bench, holding her blouse in her hands. Her mind was swimming. Even though the plan was in place and had been executed without any problems, she somehow wondered if something would go wrong. Already Severus had put his life in danger. She had seen the burns he had received from Voldemort when he hadn't known she was looking. His sleeve had been pulled up while Madame Pomfrey had treated him, and he hadn't realized she was in the room. She'd heard him talk about the other burns as well. Molly had attacked him, mostly verbally she hoped; although he did have that scorch mark. She knew that the Board of Governors had met to discuss his position as a professor. It was only her non-student status that had saved him. She'd expected to be the one attacked, but she had been pretty well left alone. She wasn't sure she could continue to let him lie about this.

On the other hand, she didn't want to hurt Harry either. Ginny would never forgive them, and their lives would immediately be in danger. She could lie and say that Snape was covering for an unknown father, a one night stand during holidays. She could claim to be farther along than she was and just disappear. She felt very unsettled. Her first stop would be Severus. She wanted to pay him back for the clothes and talk to him about whether it was worth it. She didn't want him to suffer because of her. He wasn't at fault. She hurried to get dressed and joined Molly who was busy looking at material and patterns. Paperwork was signed and Hermione was assured that her new clothes would be delivered to Hogwarts in various sizes in the upcoming weeks.

After leaving the dress shop, Molly treated Hermione to lunch before heading to the twin's shop. Fred and George made several jokes about her getting "knocked up", and begged her to try out some new products. Molly rescued her, and they headed into Muggle London to buy some maternity jeans and undergarments. Hermione was quite embarrassed talking with Molly about nursing bras, but she had joined the ranks of motherhood and had to get over it. As they arrived back at the gates of Hogwarts, Hermione grabbed Molly and hung on.

"Thank you, Mrs. Weasley. Thank you for doing my mother's job. I hope someday she can meet her grandchild, but until then, thank you for taking her place even if that wasn't your intention."

"Silly little girl." Molly whispered, her throat tightening with emotion. "You are my daughter in my heart, and I have every intention of mothering you like I have all these years. I've been through six pregnancies, so you can come to me for anything. I've experienced it all. Even being a young mother. I was only 19 when Bill was born, just like you will be with this little one. Owl me if you need anything at all." She pulled away and watched as Hermione walked onto the grounds.

Hermione headed toward her room to drop off the few packages that couldn't be owled and then went straight to the dungeons. She hoped to catch Severus before dinner. She took a deep breath before knocking on his door, ignoring the looks from the passing Slytherins. They were leering at her, and she assumed they thought she was visiting her lover.

Snape opened the door to his office to find a flustered looking Hermione. "Come in," he said, pulling the door wide open. He glared at the students outside and shut the door behind him. It didn't matter what anyone thought at this point. "Can I help you, Miss Granger?" he asked as he settled himself back behind his desk.

"You are supposed to call me Hermione," she scolded.

"Quite true. What do you need, Hermione?"

"I didn't get a chance to get to the bank, but I wanted to let you know I will pay you back for the clothes I purchased today. It was very generous of you, but you are not responsible and I can't accept it."

"Nonsense. I have more money than I will ever be able to spend. It's a gift, Miss Gra . . . Hermione. Take it as one. Besides, it looks better that way. Nobody would question me paying for your maternity wear. I assume you got what you needed?"

"Yes, I did, but you didn't have to do that," Hermione argued.

"I didn't have to do anything, but I wanted to. It also got Molly Weasley off of my back. She stopped hexing me after she realized I was trying to take responsibility."

"I'm still not convinced that I won't pay you back, but I will thank you for your generosity." At his nod, she continued, "I never anticipated what you would go through because of me. I know Voldemort must have hurt you because I saw you in Madame Pomfrey's office. I expected the Board of Governors to meet with you, but I didn't expect them to be so harsh. Molly was also out of hand. If you want to back out, I'll go to America. My cousins would take me in; I would be safe. You don't have to do this."

"Sit down, Hermione," Snape sighed. He watched her sink into the leather chair and moved around his desk to sit in the chair facing her. He leaned forward, trying to come up with the best thing to say. "When you and Potter came to me, my first thought was of horror. Why would I want to help you out at the expense of my so called life? Quickly, I realized that you didn't have another choice. You were right to come to me. I am not the only one who could do this, but I am the only one who would. Yes, this has turned into something more than I expected, but I can handle it. Molly gave me a tongue lashing and some Stinging hexes were sent my way, but I understood why she did it. She loves you." He sat back, hoping he conveyed what he meant to say.

Hermione was moved by his words, but was still not convinced she was doing the right thing. "But your burns? You can't . . ." She was cut off by Severus raising his hand.

"Really Hermione, I've had worse. I don't know how you ever managed to find out about them in the first place. All of your concerns are nonsense. You shouldn't worry. I do have some questions for you, however."

"Of course, ask me anything."

"What will you do after school ends? Do you have a home to go to?"

"I've got a few options. I can't go back to my parents' home because they are still in Australia and the house has been closed up for the time being. Professor McGonagall



has agreed to allow me to stay here and continue to apprentice with her. Harry has offered me Grimmauld Place, but I can't imagine being there alone since he plans on going to the Burrow. Mrs. Weasley will let me stay, but with both Harry and Ginny there, it might get awkward. I've also thought that maybe I should just rent a flat in London. My only concern is making sure the baby is safe, and I don't know if I'll feel safe on my own. My best option is to stay here, so I suppose that's my choice. I'll feel safe here."

"I'd like to pose another option to you."

"All right, but I think my mind is made up."

"Because the Wizarding community already believes that we are lovers -- and I know people do not believe we only had relations once like you have been telling everyone - I would like to invite you to come to my home in Spinner's End. It's a fairly large home, you would have privacy, and it is one of the safest places on earth. Unplottable to those who have not been there and heavily warded against those who have. I know people are coming before they do. I know it seems improper, but I assure you I would stay out of your way. I'm more concerned about making sure our story holds up and that the child is born safely. I can also protect you after the baby is born if you are in my home."

"The baby is due in October, you will be back teaching by then. Would I stay there alone?"

"If you wish, or you may come back to Hogwarts with me and take up the Headmistress on her offer to stay here. I can protect you as easily here as there, but it is important that we retain a connection of some sort."

"That's very generous of you. If I were to come, I would insist on paying you some rent."

"Hermione, did I not mention I didn't need your money? You are a bright girl, surely you can remember a conversation from ten minutes ago."

"I didn't forget Professor. I'm just not looking for charity."

"I'm not offering charity. I'm offering you a home should you want it. If you don't, that is fine as well, but I won't have you paying rent to me. It's insulting." Snape got up from the chair and moved back behind the desk. His gentle demeanor was gone, and he was back to being the hard professor Hermione was used to.

"I'll think about it. Thank you, sir." Hermione got up and quickly left the office, not at all sure she wanted to spend her summer in a dark, dank home that she imagined Spinner's End to be. She'd need to talk to the Headmistress again and maybe even Mrs. Weasley to help her make her decision.

As she walked up from the dungeons, she saw Ron, Harry, and Ginny waiting by the doors to the Great Hall. She gave them a wave and hoped she would be welcome to join them. Ron had ignored her for days and Harry was forced to follow suit.

"Hi, Hermione. I just want to say . . . Um . . . I'm sorry I treated you badly. I really am. I've missed you," Ron apologized.

"Thank you, Ron. I've missed you too." Hermione gave him a genuine smile and turned her attention to Harry who had cleared his throat.

"I'm sorry too, Hermione. I didn't mean to react the way I did. You are my best friend and I should have offered you support, instead of treating you so badly. I promise I'll be here for you from now on," Harry told her.

"Thank you, Harry. That means a lot. Let's go eat; I'm starving!" The four friends went into the Great Hall to enjoy a good meal together.

Later that night, Ginny, Lavender, and Parvati sat in Hermione's room and talked. Hermione finally brought up the offer that Snape had proposed. "He wants me to come live with him this summer," she said shyly.

"What? You are going to live with Snape?" Lavender asked.

"Well, I don't know for sure. I haven't decided. It wouldn't be living with him exactly."

"He won't be there?" asked Parvati.

"Yes, he'll be there, but I'll have my own room and space, and I'll never have to see him."

"It's very romantic," sighed Lavender. "You should do it. You could spend the whole summer in your lover's arms."

"He's not my lover! It was just once," Hermione tried to argue.

"Once was enough to tie you to him forever, though. You should marry him," Lavender told her.

"You sound like Mrs. Weasley! I'm not marrying him; we aren't even friends."

"Yeah, you are more than friends," Ginny giggled.

Hermione couldn't help the blush that crept across her cheeks. Seeing her blush set the girls giggling once again. Just thinking of herself and Snape doing what they were thinking made her feel all warm inside. It must be hormones, she thought. There was no way she would ever dream of having sex with Snape, even though he had surprised her with his kindness earlier and was better looking than she first thought.

"Look at her! She's smiling at the thought!" Parvati exclaimed.

"I am not!" Hermione protested, but then she realized that she had been smiling. It was one of those stupid smiles, too. Hormones. She knew that pregnant women occasionally felt a rush of hormones. That's what it was. That's all it could be.

## Chapter 4

### *Chapter 4 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Disclaimer: I don't make a profit for my writing; it's all for fun.

Thanks so much to my wonderful new beta, SeverusLovesUs! She's awesome!

The last week of school was very busy for everyone. The seventh years celebrated freely, as many of them never thought they'd live to see the end of school. The tests were complete, and the classes that remained were a free for all. The students played games, talked, flirted, and generally caused chaos, but strangely, the professors didn't care. They didn't think they'd live to see the end of another school year either. It was the light before the dark. Nobody doubted that this summer would be hard. They were still living in fear, but they all took a moment to celebrate. The older students had a bond that could not be broken, and there were tears and laughter as they prepared to go their separate ways.

Hermione had finally decided, after a lot of thought, to go home with Professor Snape over the summer. She didn't really like the idea of being in the empty castle, even with the few professors that stayed. She would like to be in a home, even if she was alone with her thoughts for the majority of the time. She longed to be with the Weasleys but knew it would kill Harry to be so close to her growing stomach and not be able to express his feelings. He came to her in private to talk to her about the baby, but he kept his feelings hidden from everyone else, showing indifference at best. She promised him that they would meet over the summer when the baby was big enough to feel move. She felt movement every day but it was slight and couldn't be felt by anyone else.

She was currently packing her room and trying to hold back tears. It had hit her suddenly that she didn't know what her future held for the first time in her life. Her predictable path had been detoured because of one foolish night. It was a night she'd never regret, but it had changed everything. Her immediate plans were to stay through the leaving ceremony that was occurring in a few days and then accompany Snape to his home. She left out the few things she would need for the next three days and followed Snape's instructions to call for a house-elf named Pip. Apparently, Pip was a free elf and one of two who continued to serve Snape out of family loyalty. She had a feeling they might be her only companions this summer.

Pip arrived and, with a snap of his fingers, all of Hermione's belongings that she had packed were gone. They would be waiting for her in her room at her home for the summer. She still didn't know what to expect from Snape's home. She envisioned a dark, dungeon-like home and made mental plans to try and make her room as friendly as it could get. She didn't know what she would do with all that time on her hands. She had agreed to help the Order with research. Over the past year, they had managed to destroy all but two Horcruxes. There was only Nagini and the mystery Horcrux left. The mystery wasn't so much a mystery to her anymore. Hermione thought she knew where it was. She was afraid to say anything to the others, but she was fairly positive that Harry was the seventh Horcrux. It made the most sense and explained his link to Voldemort.

She thought Harry knew as well, but he was keeping as quiet as she was. As close as they were and as much as they'd shared, they couldn't bring themselves to talk about the fact that Harry might have to be destroyed in order to defeat Voldemort. Her goal for the summer was to find out a way to extract the part of Voldemort that was in Harry. She could work on that in her free time. It would help if she knew she was doing something. She hoped to be able to make regular visits to the Burrow and to Hogwarts. Even though she was under an oath of protection, the further along in her pregnancy she got, the more danger she physically would be in. She knew that babies could survive if they were born early, and she knew that after that point, she was dispensable in the eyes of Voldemort. If he wanted her dead, all they needed to do was to wait until the baby was strong enough to survive and she would be in danger. Her greatest wish was to be able to raise this baby that she had created with her best friend. Even if he was never able to be a father, she would always know, and that was the sweetest thing of all.

She had a few more duties as Head Girl, so she looked around her nearly empty room and got back to work. She would have plenty of time to dwell on her dark thoughts once she left Hogwarts for Spinner's End. Dressed only in a t-shirt and jeans, she was obviously pregnant. She had nothing to hide anymore; the story had spread around the school so many times that everyone was sick of it. In the span of two days, three other seventh year girls had revealed their pregnancies as well. Apparently, it wasn't uncommon; it was just usually covered up. Hermione's openness allowed the other girls to open up as well. Their boyfriends were a tad more embarrassed, and there had been a few Howlers when parents found out. Hermione fully anticipated that there were going to be some rushed weddings over the summer.

It was a rowdy group of students that she found in the hallways. She only had to stop a few of the younger children who were playing with contraband Weasley products. It seems that Fred and George had sent "care packages" to all of the second years to celebrate the end of school. Hermione didn't really have the heart to punish the students; she just reminded them firmly to goof off in more appropriate places than the moving stairs. She couldn't help but run a hand over her stomach and wonder what kind of trouble her little one would get into. She was the grandchild of a Marauder after all. She allowed herself to think of Severus while she walked. He hadn't been visible much lately, disappearing quickly from meal times, and he wasn't seen in the hallways. He attended classes, meals, and that was it. She wanted to talk to him again, to make sure he was still willing to have her stay, but she never ran into him.

She did run into Harry, who was rushing off to play one last pick-up Quidditch game. He stopped to pat her stomach and told her about the game. All of the seventh-years were invited to play, and Harry laughed, saying that he and Malfoy were playing on the same team for the first time in their lives. They had even agreed to switch off as Seekers so they each got a turn. Hermione hoped this was a step in the right direction for Malfoy and that he would make the right decision in the coming days. Harry seemed extremely happy as he caught up to Ginny and Ron and ran toward the pitch. He was treasuring these last few moments at Hogwarts as much as she was.

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The professors and prefects agreed that there should be a celebration dance after the ceremony on the last day of school. Hermione had spent the morning with Head Boy Michael Corner and the prefects, decorating the Great Hall. The actual ceremony would be held outside in the courtyard and would hopefully be brief as it was a warm day. Hermione put her school robes on for the last time and struggled to get her skirt closed even with the extender. Finally, she used a simple sticking charm and hoped that her outer robes would cover any potential embarrassment.

She hurried into the Gryffindor common room, where it looked like the celebrations had already started. She laughed at everyone's jovial mood as she hurried them outside to start the ceremony.

With tears in her eyes, Headmistress McGonagall stood before the group and wished her leaving students the best of luck in the future. Hermione and Michael gave short speeches, and it was over. Hermione was done with school. Even though she hadn't attended traditional classes for months, she still felt such a loss at the comfort that school held. She was truly an adult. She even had a baby on the way. She knew that school wasn't truly over, she still planned to further her education, and she knew that she would be welcomed back to Hogwarts at any time.

One of the packages that had arrived from Madame Malkin's was a mystery to Hermione. It was a gown, one of the loveliest she had ever seen. It was deep purple with a halter top and an empire waist that allowed for the rest of the dress to flow over her stomach, making it quite easy to wear. She had not picked it out and had not requested a gown. She had anticipated trying to transfigure her old Yule Ball gown into one that would fit. She knew Molly would never have been able to afford this dress and had to wonder who had a hand in it. She had tried to return it but was told it was paid for. She wanted to refuse to wear it, but once she slipped it on, propriety went out the window and she couldn't deny it was perfect for her.

Ginny came in and helped her with her hair and makeup. Both women were lovely when they were dressed and primped. Ginny had an air of sadness about her though, and Hermione knew that she wasn't looking forward to coming back to school without Harry next year.

"Gin? Are you all right? I know this is hard for you."

"I'm fine. I just hate the thought of being here next year without you, Ron, and Harry. And everyone else really. I don't want to dwell on it though. I've got all summer with Harry, and he'll visit on Hogsmeade weekends next year if he . . ." Ginny trailed off. She couldn't bear to face the other possibility, that he might not be alive next year. "Anyway, tonight's a party! Let's go!"

As the girls stepped into the common room, they caused quite a stir. Harry's mouth dropped when he saw his girlfriend in her new gown. Fred and George had bought it for their sister, and it was custom made to fit her like a glove. Hermione didn't think Harry even noticed her once he got a glimpse of Ginny. That was how it should have been anyway. She watched Ron leave the room, hand in hand with Lavender, while Neville escorted Parvati. She looked around the room and realized that she was alone. With a sigh, she started for the door. She almost jumped out of her skin when she felt an arm link with each of hers. Looking side to side, she saw Dean and Seamus grinning at

her.

"We'd be honored to escort our Head Girl to the dance if she'll let us," Dean said with a little bow of his head.

"A gorgeous thing like you can't go in alone. You're a lucky woman getting to walk in with us," Seamus teased.

Hermione felt tears well up in her eyes as she looked at her friends. She loved these boys. All of her Gryffindor classmates meant so much to her. "I'd be honored. Thank you. I just don't know what to say."

"Don't say anything, Hermione. Let's go," Dean said, and the threesome headed out of the portrait hole and down the grand staircase.

Hermione walked into the Great Hall and was blown away by the beauty of the room. It was hard to believe this was the same room where she'd had breakfast that morning. Her escorts accompanied her over to her friends and then went to get some food. There were several comments about her gown, and she couldn't help but appreciate them even though she was embarrassed.

"Would you like to dance, Hermione?" Neville asked, his toes tapping with the music.

"Maybe the next time there's a slow one, Neville. I'm not up for a fast one tonight," she told him. He smiled and nodded, heading off to search for his date or someone else who would be willing to dance. She settled in at a table next to Ron and Lavender and began nibbling on finger sandwiches and drinking pumpkin juice. Ron still refused to dance. Poor Lavender was practically begging, but he held fast. When he left to get some more food, Hermione leaned over to Lavender.

"I can get him to dance with me. I'll get emotional and sentimental on him, and he'll do anything I ask. Once we are out there, you can cut in and get your dance," she told Lavender.

"Really? You think he'll go for it?" Lavender smiled.

"Oh, yes, he'll go for it. I'm pregnant. He knows I'll hex him to next Tuesday if he doesn't do what I want. He's so afraid of me right now I'm like an alien." She laughed.

"If you can do it, I'll be eternally grateful."

"Next slow song. You watch," Hermione said with a grin.

The next song just happened to be a slow song and Hermione started her whining. "Please dance with me, Ron! It's our last chance, our last dance here at Hogwarts. I know you don't like to dance, but it's slow, and you can just hold me and sway. You're my best friend, Ron. I want to dance with my best friend. Please, Ron." She hated the annoying sound of her voice, but she could see him wavering. "Ronald Weasley, get up and dance with me! Now!"

Ron jumped up, keeping an eye on her wand hand and led her out on the dance floor. He held her awkwardly but smiled. "Happy now, 'Mione?"

"Yes, thank you, Ron," she said with a smile as she saw Lavender come up behind Ron.

"May I cut in?" Lavender asked.

"Of course!" Hermione stepped away from Ron and watched as Lavender latched onto the poor boy and forced him to stay on the dance floor. She was heading off the floor when she bumped right into Snape.

"Oh! Professor -- I mean Severus -- I'm so sorry. I was watching Ron and Lavender." She reached up to smooth his jacket down.

"Yes, well be more careful, Hermione. You must protect the child." He looked down at her small hand on his chest. Against his better judgment he took her hand in his and led her back onto the floor. "Would you care to dance?"

"Really? You dance?" Hermione asked. She saw the look on his face and hastily apologized. "I'm sorry. It's just that I don't know you very well, and I wasn't aware you danced." She put her arm around his waist as he did the same.

He pulled her close into his chest. "I don't dance on a regular basis like that fool Longbottom, but I have been required to go to dances on occasion, so, yes, I do dance." He swayed her to the music and held her close. Hermione couldn't help but enjoy having a confident, strong man holding her. It was nice to dance with someone who wasn't counting out loud to the steps.

"Are you ready to leave tomorrow?" he interrupted her thoughts.

"I am. I just have a few things left in my room, but they will easily fit into my small trunk."

"Will you be ready shortly after ten o'clock? I am required to help oversee the children getting on the train, and then I will come back for you. You can call Pip as soon as your trunk is ready to go."

"That's fine. I'll be ready. Are you sure you don't mind me invading your home?" she asked one more time.

"I hardly think an invited guest is invading. It's a large house, and it needs to be lived in," he huffed.

"Severus, do you know anything about the dress I'm wearing?" she asked.

"It's a lovely dress, and it suits you," he said with a hoarse voice, his hold on her stiffening.

"It came with the maternity clothes from Madame Malkin's. I don't remember asking for a gown to be made."

"I sent Madame Malkin a list of clothing you needed, and one of those was a gown. You couldn't wear old dress robes to an event like this."

"Thank you again, Severus," she whispered, laying her cheek against his chest. She felt oddly safe in his arms and was sad when the music ended and an upbeat song came on. He stepped away from her, thanked her for the dance and walked into the crowd. Hermione stood and watched. Once again, the man's kindness was confusing.

Her night was full of dancing and sharing fun times with friends. Her feet were aching, and her body was exhausted when she finally climbed into bed that night. It was her last night in this room, in the Gryffindor Tower, but she wouldn't let herself think that this was her last night in Hogwarts. She told herself that she'd be back.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 of 14

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

After seeing her friends off in the carriages, Hermione held back her tears and headed to her room to gather the last of her belongings. She had hopes of being able to see everyone several times that summer, but it was still bittersweet to say goodbye. She gathered her novel off of her nightstand and stuffed it into a bag with her hairbrush and nightclothes. Everything else had been taken by Pip. Right on time, there was a knock on the outer door to her rooms. She opened it to find Snape waiting.

"Are you ready, Hermione?" he asked as he took her bag and slung it over his shoulder.

"I am." She looked back at her empty room and stepped out beside her former professor. "I can carry my bag; it's not heavy."

"I'm sure you can, but I'm happy to carry it for you. You can concentrate on walking down the stairs without falling."

"Falling? I've never fallen down the stairs!" She laughed. "I tripped going up once, but that was because my robes were too long."

"It just seems that your center of balance may be off with your stomach growing so large," Snape told her, trying to hide the blush at the mention of her pregnancy.

"I seem to be doing all right. Ask me again in four months, and I'll be lucky to walk from a bed to a chair."

"Yes, we'll have to make sure you have a soft landing then, won't we?" He gave her the slightest of smiles. Hermione couldn't believe that her stern professor was actually making a joke, or at least, his idea of one. This man had more personality than she'd know.

"Since you can't Apparate while pregnant, we'll use the Floo in the Headmistress' office. I hesitate to use one in Hogsmeade with security being so high." He walked to the gargoyles.

"Jane Austen," he said. The gargoyles opened at hearing the password, and they ascended the stairs.

"She changed the password again," Hermione muttered, as it was "Charles Dickens" only a month ago.

"She is going to run out of English authors if she's not careful," Snape told her. "She might have to come up with a new theme next year."

"I heard that." Professor McGonagall stood in the doorway to her office. "I happen to like the classics, Severus. I think you might enjoy reading a few novels yourself. May I suggest some?"

Snape glared at her. "I'm perfectly capable of finding reading material, Minerva. Let's go, Hermione. When you get into the fireplace, just say, 'Prince Cottage.'" He walked over toward the fireplace.

"Hermione, do you have everything you need? You let me know if I can do anything." Professor McGonagall hugged Hermione to her tightly.

"I have everything. I'll see you soon. I'll be coming to see Madame Pomfrey every few weeks, and I'll probably need to use your Floo connection."

"Anytime. You take care of yourself and your baby girl." After another goodbye, Hermione stepped into the fireplace and was gone in a flash of green flames.

McGonagall turned toward Snape. "You take care of both of them. Please, Severus. That girl is like my own daughter, and that baby, well, I don't have to tell you how important that baby girl is. If the prophecy . . ."

"Shhh!" Severus cut her off. "Don't speak of it here. It's not safe. I will keep her protected. I promise. No harm will come to Hermione or her child. You have my word." He turned with a flick of his robe and stepped into the fireplace. "Prince Cottage!" he called and was gone.

When he stepped from his fireplace, he found Hermione standing in the middle of his library, her mouth wide open and staring at the books.

"Am I in the right place?" she asked as she turned in a full circle.

"You are in my library. Yes, you are in the right place." He chuckled.

"These are all yours?"

"I suppose they are now. I inherited many of them from family members. Some were gifts from friends. This section over here was given to me by Albus before he . . . well, before I killed him. He told me they needed to be placed in my library and that they were very important. I haven't found any use for them yet, but I followed his request."

"Hmm, Professor Dumbledore didn't do anything without thought, so I'm sure one day they will be useful. This is an amazing collection. I don't suppose you'd allow me to spend time in here on occasion?"

"I fear that if I tried to stop you, you'd find a way anyway," he teased. "Hermione, you are to make yourself at home here. This library is here for your use at any time. The only room I ask that you knock before entering is my Potions lab, and that is for your own safety. I do quite a bit of experimenting here at home that I can't risk at school. Some fumes may not be safe for you or your baby. You are welcome to use the lab for your own experiments as long as it is safe."

"Thank you for your generosity." Hermione was humbled by this library alone; his allowing her free reign of his home was beyond what she had expected.

"Let me show you around." Hermione followed him out of the library into a hallway. There was an old door to her left that didn't seem to fit. "Let's start at the front. This portion of my home is rarely used. It is a front of sorts, the old portion of the house. I receive guests in this part of the house, as it is the only part visible from the street. To most eyes, my home is small, run down and dark. Exactly what they would expect of me." He opened the rickety door, and she walked into a musty, old sitting room. The paint was chipping on the wall, the furniture had seen better days, and the few books lying around were all on the Dark Arts. There was a kitchen off of the sitting room that had an old sink with rust stains and a stove that looked like it would barely heat a pot of water. To the other side of the room was a bathroom in much the same shape as the kitchen and a narrow staircase leading toward what she assumed were the bedrooms.

"This was my childhood home. It was kept up more when my parents were alive, but the house was always old. My old bedroom is up the stairs to the right, and the one on the left was my parent's room. Everyone believes that this is still my home, and I suppose it's a part of it. The door we just walked out of is now a closet if you were to open the door.

Hermione walked over to the door, and sure enough, all she saw were robes hanging and a pair of boots on the floor. She looked over at Snape, and he walked toward her. Leaning close to her ear, he whispered, "The password is 'Wiggenweld.' Don't speak it loudly."

She shivered at his breath on her cheek and whispered the password. The hallway reappeared, and she stepped back into the modern, clean portion of the house. "Why do you keep that as a front? I don't understand."

"It's easier to have people believe that I am hard on my luck and eccentric at best. It ensures my privacy as well. The wards alert me when anyone is approaching from a large distance, and I am able to get to the front of the house, make it look like I'm actually living there, and nobody is the wiser. I spend the school year in the dungeons, so I do not enjoy my home being that dark. Let's continue the tour." He closed the door behind him and led her down the hall. "You've seen the library; the room next to it is a bathroom. Here is the sitting room that I actually use."

Hermione followed him into a brightly lit sitting room with heavy wood furniture and lovely rugs on the floor. Large, comfortable-looking chairs were placed near the fireplace, and a long sofa sat across from it. There were a few more books lining the shelves on the walls, but most contained different objects. Hermione knew most of them would be magical and had to wonder if any of these were in fact dark objects. She knew that his mother was not in line with dark wizards and his father was a Muggle, so anything inherited wouldn't necessarily be dark. She made a mental note to look them over at a later time.

She looked out the French doors into a lovely courtyard with a patio area. The gardens appeared to be well maintained and quite expansive. "Is it safe to walk in your gardens? They are lovely."

"Yes, the property is enclosed by a large wall. You may walk throughout the grounds and be under the protection shield. Just don't go outside the walls." He gestured her away from the doors. "The dining room is through here. You are welcome to take your meals in here or out on the patio, wherever you are most comfortable. I tend to be a bit of a structured man and take my meals at seven, one, and seven again. You are welcome to join me or eat on your own when you desire. I usually have Pip or Mosey bring me tea in the afternoon wherever I am working at the time."

"Mosey? Your other house-elf?"

"Yes, she's a bit shy and let Pip do the work moving you in. I'm sure she'll warm up to you soon. Call either of them if you require anything at all. Let's go into the kitchen."

Hermione followed him into a thoroughly modern kitchen with stainless steel and Muggle appliances. It was much like the kitchen at her parents' home, only more recently updated. "It's so. . . Muggle!" she exclaimed.

Snape chuckled, "My father was a chef and a Muggle. He taught me how to cook in that horrible, little kitchen at the front of the house. I was quite small when . . . well, when things changed. I tried to impress him with my skills and have kept it as a hobby. Cooking is actually related to potions, so that makes sense. I only cook occasionally these days, leaving Mosey to her job, but I like to have the latest and greatest in appliances."

"You keep surprising me, Severus."

"I hope that isn't a bad thing."

"No, not at all. It's quite nice."

"Yes, well, feel free to use the kitchens as you wish. Mosey will prepare your meals, but if you desire to cook yourself, she'll understand that as well. The door there leads to the basement. Down there you will find the laundry facilities, which Pip is in charge of. He'll collect your laundry from a hamper that is in your bedroom. The basement is also where my lab is located. I won't take you down there now, but you won't get lost; it isn't very large. Shall we go upstairs?"

Hermione nodded and trailed after him up the stairs. She came to another long hallway with several doors on each side.

"I use the rooms toward the end of the hall on the right. I have a bedroom, study, and bath. You have the same at the end of the hall on the left. The doors here at the front of the hall are guest rooms. They are currently only used for storage. Follow me."

He led her down the hall and opened the door on the left. She stepped into a tastefully decorated bedroom with plush furnishings. She recognized her books already in a bookshelf, and the wardrobe door was open to reveal her clothes hanging neatly. "This room is so large! I'm happy to take one of the guestrooms."

"Nonsense. You will be here long term; you need your space. This door opens up to a small study. Please set it up to work as you see best. You may transfigure anything you need or let Pip know what you are missing. You, of course, are free to work anywhere else in the house. Do not feel confined to your rooms. Your bath is through that door, and your things should be in place."

"I don't know how to thank you. This is more than I expected."

"It's been a long time since I had another person living in my home. You'll have to excuse me if I am not a good host."

"You've been wonderful. It's a perfect home!" She walked over to him and threw her arms around him. She held him tight as tears flowed down her cheeks. "I'm sorry. I am just overwhelmed," she sniffed.

Snape stood awkwardly before wrapping his arms around her lightly. He was afraid to hold on. He wasn't used to human contact that wasn't at a price, and her exuberance was a bit shocking. Finally, he pulled her off of him and stepped back.

"I'll leave you to get settled and explore. Here is your bag. I will be having lunch at one. If you would like to join me, you can ask me any further questions that might come up. Call for Pip or Mosey if you need anything." He turned without waiting for a response and went into the room across the hall. She didn't see much before the door closed but could tell that his room was overwhelmingly green in color. Slytherin green.

She spent the next two hours rearranging her clothes into her own system, alphabetizing her books by author...separated by subjects, of course...making sure her toiletries were in proper places, and making a list of things she would need the next time she was able to go shopping. A few minutes before lunch, she tiptoed out of her room, worried about making too much noise her first day there. She went down the stairs and found the dining room empty. She wandered into the kitchen where a very nervous house-elf with a purple bow on her head was staring at her.

"Hi, you must be Mosey. I'm Hermione." She held out her hand and leaned over, but Mosey just scurried away. "I don't want to disturb your cooking, but have you seen Severus?"

"Master Snape is on the patio today," she squeaked.

"Thank you, Mosey. Lunch smells wonderful." Hermione picked her way back through the house into the sitting room with the French doors. Severus was sitting on the patio at a small table with a large glass of what looked like lemonade and reading a newspaper. What stopped her in her tracks was that he was wearing a black t-shirt with jeans. She'd never seen his arms before! He looked thin, but strong and very relaxed. It was a very good look for the mysterious man.

She opened the doors and stepped out, smiling as he looked up. "May I join you for lunch?"

"Of course, please sit down." He folded the paper and put it on the floor beside his chair.

"Anything new?" Hermione asked. "In the paper?"

"No. Everything seems to be quiet. I think things are building again. The last meeting with the Dark Lord was quite tense. He was very unhappy. He was talking about things belonging to him being destroyed. He wouldn't explain though." Pip and Mosey arrived, bringing lemonade for Hermione, and plates with sandwiches were placed in front of them.

"You'll have to make a list of things you would like to eat and what you won't eat. They are so used to me, they don't even ask what I'd like for lunch anymore."

"I'm not picky. This looks wonderful. Unusual names for house-elves, aren't they?"

"Yes, I suppose so. They have been with the family for many years, and I never questioned. After my maternal grandmother passed on, they came here and have been with me ever since. I set them free, started paying them, and they've been completely loyal."

"I'm glad they are free."

"I heard about your little campaign."

"It didn't go so well, but I think some people got the message."

"Indeed."

They continued their lunch with easy conversation. Hermione asked questions about the house and mentioned her desire to go shopping for a few things. Snape insisted that the house-elves would get anything she needed and that they would arrange a shopping trip after he met with Voldemort again. He wanted to make sure their agreement was being honored before she went out in public.

Hermione was exhausted from the activities of the previous week and decided to make use of her new bedroom for a much-needed nap. As she lay trying to fall asleep, she thought about how her whole perspective on her teacher had flipped on its head. She liked this new man. A great deal.

## Chapter 6

### *Chapter 6 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

*Thanks to Severus Loves Us for her awesome beta work! You're my comma hero!*

Severus paced in his Potions lab. He should be working, but it was his first week on summer break, and he just didn't want to. His mind was racing with thoughts of Hermione. He knew that she needed his protection, and that was the only reason she agreed to stay here. He also knew that he was having thoughts he shouldn't be having about the pregnant girl. He couldn't deny that she had grown into a beautiful woman, and he felt so warm when she smiled at him. He was quite surprised by how easy it was to be around her, and he enjoyed when she touched him, even in passing. Dancing with her the night of the ball had caused feelings to stir in him that he didn't want. He was an old man, old enough to be her father. She wasn't his; that baby wasn't his. He knew that she was most likely in love with Harry Potter. He'd just have to enjoy her company while she was here.

They had settled into a comfortable routine together. She usually slept later than he did and ate breakfast alone, but he had got into the habit of joining her for coffee, and they read the *Daily Prophet* together. Lunches were shared on the patio if the weather was nice, and dinner was held in the dining room. They had much in common, and they discussed books, experiments, and people they both knew.

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At the end of their second week together, Hermione was sitting on the sofa in the sitting room staring at her stomach. It was the first time she had felt the baby move on the outside. She had been reading with one hand on her stomach, and all of a sudden, she felt a ripple under her hand.

Severus found her with a strange expression on her face. "Hermione? Are you ill?"

"No, come sit down!" She scooted her legs off the sofa and sat up. After he sat next to her, she grabbed his hand and pressed it against her stomach. "Feel this!"

His first instinct was to pull away at her touch, but he relaxed and let her put his hand on her rounded stomach. He felt something, like a little fluttering, right under her skin. He looked at her in amazement. "Is that the baby?" he asked quietly.

"Yes. It's the first time I've been able to feel her from the outside. It's amazing." She kept her hands over his as his fingers spread across her abdomen.

"It is. It is amazing." He glanced down at her. He was touched beyond belief that she would share this moment with him. He was growing more worried by the day of his growing attachment to Hermione and the baby. He knew it was dangerous, but if there was one thing he had learned from his affection for Lily, it was that he couldn't help his emotions. He had always felt things passionately, and that was exactly why he had a double life. Finally, he pulled his hand away.

"You should let Potter know. He'll want to feel his child move," he said, his voice coming out a little gruffer than he planned.

"I'll see him next weekend when I visit the Burrow. I don't want to arouse Ginny's suspicion."

"Do you love him?" he asked.

"Of course. I love Harry very much, but I'm not in love with him. Is that what you meant?"

"Yes. I just wonder how you can be so accepting of his relationship with Miss Weasley after what you shared."

"I knew he loved Ginny before we had sex; it wasn't a surprise. We needed to feel something physical that night. To be able to forget and connect. It wasn't just sex

because with Harry, it's always something more, but I was never fooled into believing he was in love with me either. We love each other deeply, but we aren't in love. Does that make sense?" Hermione tried to explain as best she could, but she knew she wasn't getting the true feelings correct.

"I think so. I'm just glad you are so at peace with everything."

"I really am. This baby girl is keeping me centered and focused on what I need to do. My research is going well, and I feel positive for the future."

"Good." He nodded as he awkwardly patted her hand.

"May I ask a question?"

"Of course."

"I need a name for my daughter. Was there anyone special in your life that you would name your child after?"

"She's not my daughter, Hermione. That decision is all yours."

"She will carry your last name and the world will think of her as yours. I just thought that if there was a name that meant anything to you, that you would allow her to have, it would be one way to thank you for everything."

"Doesn't Harry have a say in this?" Severus was touched by her offer. He did have a name, one that he'd always planned on naming a daughter. This may be the closest he'd ever get.

"Harry wants to name his daughter Lily, after his mother." She saw Severus flinch at the name. "He should get to do that with the daughter he has with Ginny."

She waited for Severus to say something, and then figuring he didn't have an answer for her, she started to get up to go upstairs. Just as she'd made it to her feet she heard a whisper.

"Callina."

"Callina? That's a lovely name." She sat down again, hoping to hear the story that went with the name. "She was my sister. Only a year younger than I. We did everything together."

Hermione could tell by his use of the past tense that Callina was no longer alive. She'd never heard mention of any siblings and had always assumed he was an only child like she was. "What happened?"

"When I was five years old and Callie was four, we went to visit my grandparents. The Muggle ones. They lived in a busy neighborhood outside of London. We rarely visited. They knew my mother was a witch, and they didn't want their neighbors thinking anything negative. They would come to visit us, but they hated our small home, and they were very uncomfortable by magic. I don't think we'd been to their house in a couple of years. Callie didn't know much about Muggle life since we lived in a wizarding home. We didn't have a car because Father walked to work and Mother used the Floo or Apparated. Callie didn't know the danger. We were playing in the front yard when she ran out into the road and was hit by a car. By the time they got her to a hospital, there was nothing they could do."

Hermione gripped his hand. "Oh, Severus, I'm so sorry. You must have been devastated."

"I was when I finally realized what was happening. I was left with my grandfather while my parents and Grandmum rushed her to the hospital. I knew she was hurt, but I didn't understand. They didn't talk about it after the funeral either. That was when everything changed for my parents. They each blamed themselves and each other, and their marriage was never the same. That's when my father started drinking and Mum shut down."

"I'm sorry you had to go through that, but thank you for sharing." Hermione wiped the tears from her eyes and noticed that Severus didn't show any emotion at all.

"The name has a sad story attached to it. You don't have to use it." He abruptly stood and walked out of the room.

"Well, looks like you have a name, little Callina. Now, to figure out your middle name." Hermione rubbed her belly and smiled.

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Hermione opened her eyes and tried to process what day of the week it was. When she realized it was Saturday, she did her best to jump out of bed. She was terribly excited to see her friends. There was an anniversary party for Molly and Arthur at the Burrow, and Severus had agreed to take her and stay, even though he could think of a million things he'd rather do more. She showered quickly and went down to breakfast, hoping to get some research done before leaving for the party. She ran right into Snape as she turned the corner.

"Oh! I did it again. I'm always running into you."

"You aren't hurt are you?" he asked, concern on his face.

"No! My big belly protected me!" she laughed.

"Indeed. What time do we need to leave?"

"Lunch is at noon. I thought we could arrive around eleven so I could help with the food."

"Fine." Hermione watched his back as he walked down the hall. He was definitely dreading the party. He had grown so comfortable around her and regularly let his guard down. Seeing his stiff walk, she knew he didn't want to go. Harry and Ron would never believe how different this man really was from the professor who had made them miserable for seven years.

A few minutes before eleven, Hermione and Snape stepped into the Floo and went directly to the Headmistress' office at Hogwarts. From there, they would Floo on to the Burrow. Severus had been assured of the baby's safety, but he was becoming increasingly concerned about Hermione and thought going directly to the Burrow would put her in danger. The Dark Lord had been very quiet lately, and he felt that he may have been left in the dark about a few things.

When they arrived at the Burrow, Hermione was quickly embraced by her friends. She barely had a moment to breathe as she was swept into the commotion that was always at the Burrow. Severus stood uncomfortably while Ron glared at him from the other side of the room. Only Harry met his eyes with a nod and a slight smile.

Hermione headed into the kitchen to get away from the noise while Severus followed quickly at her heels. He wasn't used to a boisterous group that he couldn't threaten with detention. He looked around the small kitchen and sighed. Molly deserved better than this, he thought to himself as he watched Molly at the overflowing stove. She was a good woman and had raised good children, well, most of them, he thought with a grimace. Fred and George were not high on his list of favorite students, although, he did think they were quite brilliant.

"Molly? What can I do?" Hermione asked, going up to give her substitute mother a hug.

"Oh, Hermione! How are you?"

"I'm great, Molly, just fine."

Molly gave Severus a sly look. "Are you being well taken care of?"

"Of course! Severus has a lovely home, and I'm very happy there."

"Good, good. All right, maybe you can cut up this fruit for me?" Molly gestured to a table that appeared to be groaning with the weight of the melons. Hermione pulled her hair back in a tie and grabbed a knife. She was shocked when Severus did the same, joining her at the cutting board and helping to slice the fruit. His hands were proficient, and she watched them as they worked. He was dressed more casually than he did when teaching, but she was disappointed to see him a little more formal in a long-sleeved, black shirt and dark slacks.

They worked well together, and Molly was quite impressed with Severus' cooking skills, making several comments. Hermione realized that although he claimed to be able to cook, she hadn't seen him in the kitchen during the few weeks she had spent at his home. Once all the food was ready, the platters were levitated to the tables outside where the Weasley men were some of the first to flock. The group enjoyed their meal, and there were toasts and speeches to the anniversary couple.

As the festivities wound down, there was a decision made to play a game of Quidditch, and Harry surprised everyone by inviting Severus to play. Even more surprising to everyone gathered, he agreed. Hermione watched him walk toward the field carrying a broom. She couldn't take her eyes off of him and felt a stirring of emotion welling up. She blamed it on hormones, but she knew she was beginning to really care for him.

Molly sat beside her on the bench and patted her knee. "You look good, healthy, and happy," Molly told her.

"I am, Molly. I feel . . . Oh, it's hard to describe. Complete, I suppose. I feel whole, purposeful, and optimistic. I think I love being pregnant." She laughed.

"Oh, I do remember those days. I loved it as well, at least the first few. Fred and George seemed to take everything out of me. And they haven't stopped." She chuckled. "Severus is treating you well?"

"He's amazing, Molly! I never knew he could be so kind. He's very generous, thoughtful, and even though he's a bit prickly at times, it's rare that I see that side."

"Has the baby been moving?"

"Oh yes! Severus and I were both able to feel her last week. It was amazing. She's been busy in there." She lazily rubbed her stomach as she talked.

"Has Harry had a chance to feel his daughter move?" Molly asked quietly.

Hermione gasped. She looked at the woman next to her with fear in her eyes. "What are you talking about, Molly? That's just silly. Severus is the father, you know that."

"No, I do not know that. I know the truth. I know it because every time Harry looks at you, he gets that sad, haunted look in his eyes. He stares at your stomach as if it were the most precious thing in the world to him, which I imagine it is. I'm a wise woman, Hermione. I know my children very well, and Harry has been one of my children since I helped him through the platform at King's Cross. My question is, why the lie?"

"Oh, Molly," Hermione cried. "We had to lie; we had to." She took a few deep breaths before continuing. "Harry loves Ginny so much. What happened between us wasn't a mistake, but it was never anything more than trying to feel a connection during a very bad period. He doesn't love me that way, and I don't love him; you have to know he is completely devoted to Ginny."

"So the lie was to protect my daughter from being hurt?"

"In part it was, and also to protect me and the baby. He knew that if Voldemort found out that I was pregnant with Harry's child, I would be in immediate danger. More danger than I am now. If he knew the truth about whose baby it was, there would be no hope. Voldemort would destroy Harry by destroying his child. Harry knew that Death Eaters take an oath to protect each other's children. Severus was the only person we could think of that was in a position to help. We were shocked that he agreed, but now I see a different side of him. He's a very good man, Mrs. Weasley. Please keep our secret. It's not only my life at stake, but my little girl's. And Ginny's. We never meant to betray her."

"When I said Harry was my child, I should have also mentioned that you are as well. You are as much mine as the rest of those kids out there. I will keep your secret. I do understand why you lied, and it makes sense. I appreciate that you are trying to protect my daughter as well, but what are you planning to do when your little girl gets older and wants to know about her father?"

"She'll never know the truth. She can't. Harry already agreed. He'll be a part of her life, but as an uncle, not a father."

"What if your daughter looks like him?"

"We'll have to wait and see. If she has dark hair, that can be explained, but if she has his eyes, it may be that I have to leave England. I hope it doesn't come to that."

"What of Severus? Is he going to be in her life?"

"I suppose it's up to him. She'll have his last name and will be considered a Snape by the public. I haven't really talked to him about what role he'll have or won't have. My guess is that as soon as the danger is gone, he'll send us on our way out of his life, and he can get back to normal."

"Hmmm, we'll see." Molly got up as the men started coming in for cold drinks. Severus joined Hermione on the bench, breathing hard and holding a cold bottle of butterbeer.

"You all right there?" Hermione asked with a smile.

"It's bloody hot out there today! I haven't played Quidditch for a while, and I've decided I'm just much too old for it."

"You aren't old. You just aren't used to the activity. You looked wonderful on that broom though." Hermione instantly regretted her words as she blushed. She was only telling the truth, but she usually held back a bit with him.

Snape looked down at the young woman beside him. She was looking at her hands, and her face was pink. Did she just tell him he looked wonderful? "Thank you," he croaked out. They sat in silence for a while, watching the twins play tricks on poor Ron. Lavender had arrived late, and he was completely embarrassed by his brothers with his girlfriend around.

"Oh! Wow, that was a good one!" Hermione said, brushing her hand over her stomach. "She's awake."

Severus didn't think about what he was doing and immediately put his hand near hers. She moved it to where the baby's feet seemed to be doing a dance, and Severus smiled as he felt the little girl move. The rest of the party guests had heard Hermione exclaim and were all standing silent as they watched the tender moment between the two. Slowly, they approached her so that they too could feel the baby move, and the silence was broken again. Severus watched as Harry excused himself and ran in the house. He may not like the boy, but he didn't want to see him in that much pain either. Someone else was watching Harry's reaction and sighed in sadness.

After the baby stopped moving, and Hermione had a moment without being groped, Ginny pulled her aside.

"I'm worried about Harry," Ginny whispered.

"What's wrong? Are you two having trouble?"

"No, not at all. He's just becoming distant again. I know he's worried about the upcoming battle. I was wondering if you could talk to him? You always seem to have a fresh



perspective on things, and he hasn't talked to you in a while. I saw him go inside earlier. He's probably in his room. Would you mind?"

"Sure, of course, Ginny." Hermione patted Ginny on the arm and headed inside to find Harry. Ginny had just given her the perfect excuse to have some time alone with him.

"Harry? Are you in here?" Hermione asked as she pushed the door open. He was sitting on his bed, staring at the wall. Hermione had seen that look before. She climbed onto the bed next to him and grabbed his hand. "Are you all right?"

"Not really," he muttered. "I thought I could handle this, but I'm beginning to wonder. Seeing Snape feel your...my...baby kick made me a bit nauseous. I've never felt her move."

"You can now. She's moving again."

"Really?" Harry smiled slightly. "Here, put your hand here." Hermione guided him to the right spot and watched his face as he felt his daughter move for the first time.

"That's incredible!"

"I know. It's completely bizarre knowing that there is a life inside of me." Harry gave her a genuine smile and pulled his hand away.

"I'm sorry for acting like a child. I'm jealous, I can't help it."

"You can still stop this all, you know. We still have time."

"No, we are out of time. I can feel Voldemort getting stronger. He's going to make a move soon. Hermione, I'm not going to survive this. You know that, don't you? I'm the Horcrux. I'm the seventh Horcrux. Once we kill Nagini and I am destroyed, the Order can move on to Voldemort."

"No! Harry, I'm working on a plan. I think I know of a way to remove the Horcrux from you without you dying. I just need a little more time. Don't you give up yet!" She grasped his hands.

"I'm not giving up, I'm trying to stay strong, but I'm also being realistic. I'm just telling you that I know. If you can save me, I'll live a life worthy of that, but if you can't, I understand. You and our baby girl will be well taken care of financially. Bill helped me draw up a will. I'm leaving the Black estate to the Weasleys and Remus with specific instructions about how it is to be divided. The money that I inherited from my parents will go to you and the baby. It's enough for you to make a home for her and live comfortably." Tears were running down his face as he said this, and they matched the tears streaming down Hermione's.

"You stop that! You can't talk like that!"

"I told you that I want to live, but I wanted you to know in case I don't. You find a way for me to live, and I promise you I will."

"Promise you'll fight?" Hermione begged.

"With every fiber of my soul, I will fight to see my daughter grow up. I will fight for a lifetime with Ginny. I will fight for my future children and grandchildren." He sobbed into her arms, and the two sat holding tight to each other once more. They pulled away after they heard a knock on the door. Severus peeked in, hoping he wouldn't find them doing anything inappropriate...again.

"Hermione, I'm being called to a meeting." Hermione could see that he was grasping his forearm. "I need to take you home now. I don't feel it's safe for you here anymore tonight. We don't have much time."

Hermione got quickly to her feet, giving Harry a hard hug. "I'll see you soon for your birthday party."

"Thanks for talking to me, Hermione. Professor? Thank you for taking care of them."

With a nod of his head, Snape whisked Hermione down the stairs to the Floo. They arrived in the Headmistress's office, and then without a second to pause, they were back in Spinner's End.

## Chapter 7

### *Chapter 7 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

"My wards have been breached. Someone is coming," Severus warned. He felt the change the moment he set foot in his home. "You must stay in this part of the house. Go up to your room, and stay there, doors locked. Ward the room if you can. I've got to get to the front. Be careful!" He gave her a quick kiss on the top of her head and hurried down the hall.

Hermione was shocked by the affectionate move, but realized he had no idea what he had done. She followed his instructions and hurried upstairs, closing herself in her room. She placed every protective spell she could think of and sat stiffly on her bed, eyes trained on the door and the windows. Her wand was ready. She was prepared to wait.

At some point she dozed off, which infuriated her because she knew she had to be on alert. She could blame that on the baby. She listened to the quiet house, glad that she couldn't detect any sounds of struggle. She thought that surely he had departed for the meeting, and the people who had entered his wards probably came to escort him. It was most likely safe for her to relax. She lowered one set of spells and called for Pip. He arrived in a snap and bowed to her.

"Is Severus back? Has the house been compromised?"

"No, Miss Hermione. Master met some men in the front yard of the old house. They left. Master said for you to stay in your room. He's worried. Is Miss Hermione hungry?"

"I am a little hungry. It is past time for dinner." She had barely gotten her words out when Pip was gone. Minutes later he was back with a platter of food. "Stay here,

Miss. If you need anything, just call."

"Thank you, Pip." Hermione started on her dinner and waited some more.

She had dozed off again when she felt a small hand shaking her awake. "Miss Hermione! Come quick! Master is needing you."

Knowing that Pip was to be trusted, Hermione jumped to her feet and lowered the remaining spells. She hurried down the stairs as quickly as she could, and what she found in the study stopped her in her tracks. She had expected to find a wounded Severus at worst, but instead, she saw him kneeling on the floor cradling a very bloody and broken Draco Malfoy.

"He needs help. He's dying," Severus gasped as he looked at her, tears in his eyes. "You apprenticed with Poppy; can you help?"

Hermione threw all of the old hatred for Draco out the window and called Pip to get some supplies. "Get bandages," she ordered. "I'm going to your lab," she told Severus. She ran down the stone steps and burst into his potions lab. She quickly scanned the shelves. Grabbing what she needed, she rushed back up.

"Lay him flat," she ordered as Severus arranged him on the rug. Draco's arm was bent at an awkward angle, and his breathing was ragged. "Take his shirt off. Where is this blood coming from?" she asked, starting to panic. She got her answer when Draco's shirt was removed. He had a gash across his entire chest, starting at his right shoulder and moving to his left hip. It was deep, and it was deadly. She performed the few diagnostic spells she had learned and could tell that his lung was punctured, probably from broken ribs. She gave him a potion for the pain and another to keep him unconscious.

"I don't know what to do, Severus! I'm not confident in this."

"You have to try; I can't take him anywhere else."

"Can you call for Madam Pomfrey? Can she come to him?"

"Yes, I'll try." He got up and went to the Floo, trying to reach someone at Hogwarts that he trusted. He looked back as Hermione leaned over his godson and was hit by such a wave of affection for her. She didn't hesitate to help the boy who had made her life miserable for seven years.

Hermione was completely focused on what she needed to do. She had to stop the bleeding. A quick suturing spell would fix that, but she wasn't sure what was going on inside, and that was the biggest concern. She knew how to heal broken bones, so she started with the ribs. She felt that if she could put his ribs back together, she could work on his lung. She had managed to stop most of the blood flow, but his pulse was weak. She was just about to try something else when Madam Pomfrey stepped out of the fireplace.

Madam Pomfrey rushed over to kneel on the other side of Draco.

"What have you done already?" she asked Hermione.

"I gave him a pain potion and something to keep him unconscious. I've stopped the external bleeding, but I think there's more internally. I healed his ribs but wasn't sure how to inflate his lung."

"Good work, Miss Granger. I'll take over, but don't go far. I might need your help."

Hermione stood up and moved away from the horror scene in front of her. She went to stand by Severus, and immediately, his arm went around her shoulder and pulled her in toward him. She was desperate for the comfort and held him tightly as they watched. She didn't want Draco to die, despite everything that had happened.

After Madam Pomfrey finished her last healing spell, she sat back and wiped her brow. She looked at Severus. "He should live. He needs a bed and time to rest. We can't move him back to the castle, though."

"He can stay here," Severus told her as he moved out of Hermione's embrace. "We can levitate him to one of the guest rooms upstairs. I'll care for him."

"We'll both care for him," Hermione said softly. "Teach us what to do."

Madam Pomfrey looked at the pair. "Very well, Severus. Help me get him upstairs, and I'll give you instructions. I'll need to check on him daily for a few days, so you'll need to keep your Floo open for me. When I'm here tomorrow, I might as well look you over too, Miss Granger. It will save you a trip later in the week."

"Pip! Mosey!" Severus called. When they appeared, he barked out more orders. "Go open up the guest room on the right. We'll need fresh sheets and blankets on the bed. Open up the windows for fresh air. We'll be bringing Mr. Malfoy up in a few minutes." With a nod, the elves were gone, and Severus helped Madam Pomfrey get Draco into a position for levitation. Hermione picked up his wand and his ruined shirt, casting a cleansing charm on the rug that was soaked with blood. She threw the shirt in the rubble and followed the group upstairs. When she walked into the room, Draco was lying peacefully on the bed.

Severus and Hermione listened carefully to the instructions regarding his care. When Madam Pomfrey finally left, she was satisfied that Draco would be well taken care of. Severus walked her downstairs and came up to find Hermione sitting on the floor outside of Draco's room. Her shirt was covered in blood, and she was staring at her hands and holding Draco's wand. He sighed and sat down beside her, sitting closer than was necessary, but when she leaned her head against his shoulder, he wrapped his arms around her.

"I was so afraid. I didn't know what to do," she cried.

"You were amazing. You saved his life; Poppy said so. If you hadn't stopped the bleeding, he would have been dead before she arrived. You aren't a Healer yet, but you knew enough to save a man's life."

"What happened, Severus?" Hermione looked into his eyes.

"He refused the Dark Mark. He was brought before the Dark Lord by his father, basically handed over into his service." He paused a moment to choose his words. "Voldemort was thrilled. It was initiation night, and a few other former students received their mark. Draco was saved to the end, the crown jewel in Voldemort's collection. He'd been in his service before, testing the waters. He was supposed to kill Dumbledore, as you know. In recent months though, he's been having second thoughts."

"I sensed that something was different about him. He stopped picking on all of us, even Harry those last couple of months."

"You'll have to ask him his reasoning, but I'm very thankful that he refused."

"Can you continue? Your story, I mean. What happened when he refused?"

"When he was brought forward, he was already struggling, unlike his friends. Voldemort was thrilled that Draco would be joining him. He was almost gleeful. Draco had been attending meetings for over a year, but Voldemort waited until he was out of school before asking him to pledge his allegiance to his side, thereby taking the Dark Mark. When the Dark Lord asked him to repeat the oath, he refused. He approached Draco to perform the spell on his arm, and Draco shot off a disarming spell. Voldemort has no patience and pulled a knife out of his robes, and well, you saw the damage. The Dark Lord asked for volunteers to move 'the body' out of his sight, and I made sure to volunteer. We Apparated out to the woods behind Malfoy Manor and left him. A few of the others beat and kicked him, causing his bones to break. They thought he was dead. After the meeting, I went back to where we had left him and brought him here. I didn't know if he was alive or not, but I knew I couldn't leave him out in the elements. I thought I would be burying him in the garden, but he was still breathing." He shuddered at the last words and gave in to a few tears streaking down his

face. "He's my godson; I couldn't leave him."

"Of course you couldn't. You did what you had to do. You did the right thing. He'll be safe here with us." Hermione reached up to brush the tears from his face. "You are a good man, Severus Snape."

Snape's breath hitched when he heard her say those words. That softness, combined with her hands on his cheeks, did him in. Without allowing him time to second guess himself, he leaned towards her, his lips a breath away from hers. He looked at her, waiting for her to push him away, but she didn't. She made the last move and pressed her lips to his. He reached out and ran his fingers through her hair, pulling her closer. Their lips were moving slowly, no rush, no fire, just heat. She reached out with her tongue to taste his lips, and he opened up for her. They explored each other's mouths while their hands wandered, gently and affectionately, over each other. Hermione pulled away to take a deep breath and smiled. Her smile warmed every part of him, and all the apologies he was going to send her way were gone. He apparently had nothing to apologize for.

"Wow," she sighed. "Who knew?"

"Who knew, indeed," he chuckled.

"I'm not going to apologize because that was one bloody fantastic kiss, and I really needed a good kiss," Hermione told him, jabbing him in the shoulder with her pointed finger. "You'd better not apologize either. It wasn't wrong, immoral, against nature, or any other excuse you can come up with."

"I wasn't about to apologize. Well, I was until you smiled at me. I think I was in need of a good kiss myself. As for it being wrong or immoral, the whole world thinks we've shagged, so I doubt a little snog would make anyone think twice."

Their light mood was broken by a moan coming from the open doorway. Severus stood up and helped Hermione to her feet. They cautiously approached the door and walked in. Draco had his eyes open and seemed to be terrified. Because of his injuries, a paralysis spell had been placed on him so he couldn't move.

"Draco? Can you hear me? It's Severus."

"Guh," Draco tried to speak but was having trouble.

"You are fine. You're safe at my house. You've been treated for extensive injuries."

"Hurts," he gasped.

"I'll get you more pain potion. Hermione will stay with you." Severus swept from the room while Draco turned his eyes on Hermione.

"You're going to be just fine, Draco. We are going to get you healthy again; don't worry. You'll stay here with us until you're well."

"Blood!" he gasped, looking at her shirt.

"It's your blood. Do you want to know what's happened?"

"Yes."

"You have a broken arm that should be healing very quickly; it will probably just be a little achy by morning. Your ribs were broken, which punctured one of your lungs. Your ribs are back in place, but they will be sore for a while. Your lung has been healed, although you shouldn't do anything strenuous. You had quite a slice on your chest. It will heal, but you will probably have a scar. Part of your small intestine was cut, which caused a lot of internal bleeding. Madam Pomfrey was able to heal that as well, but your diet will need to be limited for a while. The reason you can't move is because we didn't want you hurting yourself when you woke up. Thrashing about could open your wounds, and we knew you might not know where you were when you woke up. You should rest tonight without moving, and in the morning we'll remove the spell."

"Where?" Draco continued to gasp out one word sentences, but he was getting his point across.

"You're at Severus' home. You can stay with us for as long as you need to. You are safe here."

"You?"

Hermione laughed. "Yes, I suppose it's a bit shocking having me at your bedside telling you I'll help take care of you. It was a bit shocking having you bleeding in the study as well. We'll talk when you are feeling better, but I don't hold any anger towards you, and I hope that one day you can get over your anger at me. We've been through too much over these past seven years, and I just don't have it in me to dislike you anymore. I'm proud of you for standing up to Voldemort." She looked up at the darkened doorway and saw Severus leaning against it.

"She's right," he said as he walked into the room. "I'm proud of you as well. Never regret your decision, Draco. Never look back or second guess. You can only go forward from here. We have a lot to talk about. You need to rest, though. Do you still want the pain potion?"

"Yes. Hurts."

"I'm sure it does." Severus carefully tilted Draco's neck up and poured the potion down his throat. Within minutes, he was relaxed and sleeping again. Snape led Hermione from the room once more.

"You handled him very well. I'm glad that you told him everything that was going on. He'll respect that."

"I have to admit I'm a bit frightened. What if he is here as part of a plot to get to me? I was so focused on healing him that I didn't even think that."

"I thought about it, but he was almost dead, Hermione. He would have been if I hadn't gone back for him. I'll get the truth out of him one way or another."

"I trust you." She reached out and wrapped her arms around him, once again taking comfort in his strength.

"Good. Now, you should go get cleaned up and get some rest. You must be exhausted."

"I'll stay with Draco; he might need something."

"No, you go, I'll stay with him a while and then have Pip and Mosey sit with him. You have to take care of yourself and this baby. She's too important. You are too important." His eyes were soft as he leaned down to brush her lips with another kiss. "Good night, Hermione." He scooted her away from him and toward her door. She walked in, completely in a haze about what had just happened. That simple, little, good night kiss had stirred her more than anything ever had.

# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 of 14

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Hermione took another shower as soon as she woke up. She had showered before bed, but having all that blood on her the night before had caused her to have very frightening dreams, and she still didn't feel clean enough. She dressed quickly and pulled her hair back into a messy bun. Before she left the room, she stopped and thought over all the events of the night before.

Her first thoughts were of Draco. She was concerned over how he had slept, if he was awake, and if he really wanted to kill her. She was so focused on running through the steps she took with the potions and healing spells that she had actually forgotten about her time with Severus. Just yesterday she had been chopping up fruit, admiring his hands. That was before he kissed her. Now everything had the potential to be very different. How different was the big question. Would he kiss her again? Were they dating? Were they a couple? Would he want to do more than kiss her? Where would they have the wedding? She shook her head and smiled at her thoughts. She was getting ahead of herself. She wasn't even sure of her own feelings. She sighed and finally left her room.

Her first stop was to check on Draco. Peeking in the room, Draco appeared to still be in a deep sleep. His body was still, and his breathing was soft. The only sound in the room was the light snores of Severus as he slept uncomfortably in a chair. She knew by the blood that was dried on his robes that he had slept there all night.

She crept close to him and then in a bold move, leaned over to brush her lips over his. She wasn't sure if it was something he would like, but she took a chance. When he didn't respond, she ran her fingers down his cheek and kissed him again. This time he jumped awake, causing her to take a step back.

"Oh, Hermione!" he gasped, realizing where he was. "I must have fallen asleep."

"Obviously." She laughed. "You need to go clean up and take a proper rest. I'll stay here with Draco."

"Is it morning?" He looked over at the windows that were covered by heavy shades.

"It is, and you've been up all night. How is he?"

"He woke once a few hours ago, and I gave him some more pain potion. He seemed to be more settled."

"Good. You go at least take a shower."

"You're okay with him? Don't remove the paralysis spell."

"I'm fine, and I won't." She pushed him to the door. As she turned to take his place in the chair, he grabbed her hand and pulled her toward him. He brought his face to hers and gave her a long, slow kiss. She moaned at the feel of his lips on hers. He pulled away and dropped her hand.

"We haven't discussed what is happening between us yet, but we will," he whispered and left the room. She sighed and smiled as she dropped into the chair. She spent the morning in Draco's room, eventually opening up the window shades for light. Pip brought her breakfast and stood watch while she made regular trips to the bathroom and to pick up books from her room. It was lunchtime before Draco opened his eyes again.

"Granger? Is that you?" he called weakly.

"I'm here." She set her books aside and stood up to walk toward his bed. "Are you in pain?"

"Of course I'm in pain," he snarled. "I've been sliced open by an asshole Dark Lord."

"Well at least you are speaking in complete sentences today." Hermione walked over and looked at his bandages. They appeared to be holding and were still clean. "You don't have to be a prat, you know. I'm only trying to help."

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "It's easier to be a jerk. It's second nature."

"Well, you have an excuse for being in pain, but I sincerely hope we can get past all that old schoolyard rivalry."

"When are you going to let me move?"

"When Severus or Madam Pomfrey give the okay. You still aren't going to be able to move much. It's going to hurt."

"I can handle it. Damn, Granger, you got fat!" he said as she turned to the side to straighten his blanket.

She turned her sharp eyes on him. "I'm pregnant, you idiot. You know that; you spread it around school."

"I know." He smirked. "It was just too juicy to keep quiet. I can't believe you let Uncle Sev knock you up."

"Hmmm, well, it wasn't planned."

"No, I can't imagine it would be. Quite the scandal."

"You should rest. Do you want more pain potion?" Hermione was desperate to change the subject.

"No. I don't want to go back to sleep. I need to ask some questions of Uncle Sev."

"He's still asleep."

"No, he isn't," a deep voice said from the doorway.

"How are you feeling?" he asked as he came to stand by Hermione.

"It bloody hurts, but I'm all right."

"You seem to be breathing easier. Madam Pomfrey will be here in an hour or so. If you can manage to stay awake that long, I'm sure she'll want to talk to you."

"I want to ask you some questions."

"Of course, and then I have some questions for you."

"I'll just go then," Hermione said as she started to walk out the door.

"You can stay," Draco called out. "You probably have questions too."

Hermione walked back in and sat in the chair that Severus had pulled near the bed. He sat at the foot of the bed and looked at his godson.

"How did I survive? The last thing I remember was the Dark Lord coming at me with his blade."

"You were gravely injured, and it was believed that you were dead. I volunteered, along with McNair and Goyle, to move your body from the room. We brought you to the woods behind your home and had to leave you."

"How did I get all of the broken bones?"

"McNair and Goyle decided to hit and kick what they thought was a dead man."

"Bastards," Draco hissed.

"Indeed. I came back for you after the meeting was over and brought you here. You are alive because Hermione was able to stop your bleeding and Poppy was able to come and take over."

"My father? He can't be happy."

"No, he's not. He's destroyed," he said as he looked at Draco's stricken face. "I don't mean physically. He was very angry at you for denying the mark, but when he saw your wounded body on the ground, he nearly lost his mind. When I returned from taking you to the woods, he was sitting in a corner screaming for you. Voldemort seemed to take great joy in this."

"He thinks I'm dead?"

"Yes, and I think it should stay that way for the time being. You are safe here, if you choose to remain. You can send an unmarked owl to your mother, telling her that you are recovering. We'll charm it so that only your mother can read it."

"How long can I stay?"

"You are welcome here as long as you need. You are not a prisoner, but you are not safe out in the world either. You can make that decision on your own."

"Thank you. I have nowhere to go," he choked out while he tried to quench the emotions he felt welling up. "You had questions for me?"

"I do. I'm not sure how you will take this, but I need you to tell me the truth."

"Of course."

"I need to ensure that you are telling the truth by taking a form of Veritaserum. It's a new variation. There is no immunity to it yet, and it works quickly. I don't want to offend you by asking you to do this. If it were just us, I wouldn't ask, but I have Hermione and my daughter to think about."

Hermione was shocked that he would ask Draco to do something so drastic, but when she heard him say "my daughter," she thought her heart would burst out of her chest. It warmed her beyond belief. She still didn't know what their future would be, but he laid claim to her baby in front of someone important to him. It meant something.

"I'll take it. I have no secrets," Draco said.

Severus didn't hesitate; he leaned forward and dropped the serum into his mouth. "It shouldn't take long for it to work. Let's start with a control question. What's your full name?"

"Oh, no, I'm not saying that out loud." Draco laughed. "This stuff doesn't work at all!"

"What's your full name, Draco?" Severus asked again.

"I'm not... Oh, shit. My name is Draco Lancelot Caesar Malfoy. Damn it! Don't you laugh, Granger!"

Hermione tried to hold back her snicker, but failed in hiding her smile. "It's a lovely name, Draco. Very regal."

Snape grinned at her and turned back to Draco. "Why did you refuse the Dark Mark?"

"I didn't want to kill anyone. I didn't want to kill Dumbledore last year, and I didn't want to kill Granger. I don't have it in me. I want to fight against Voldemort, not with him."

"There is a plot to kill Hermione?"

"Yes, we had meetings you weren't invited to. The plan is to take Granger and keep her until they can cut the baby out of her and leave her to die."

Hermione gasped at his words. She grabbed Severus by the arm, and he linked his fingers with hers, holding on tight.

"When is this set to happen?"

"In a few weeks. I'm not sure when. They are going to come to your home, bind you, and take her. The Dark Lord was concerned that your feelings for Granger were too strong and that you wouldn't turn her over like you agreed. You'll get your baby back though. They were not going to harm your baby."

Snape's face was like stone and his voice cold when he continued his questioning. "Are you currently working for Voldemort or any of the Death Eaters?"

"No. Absolutely not."

"Are you in my home as part of a plan to harm Hermione, me, or my child?"

"No! I couldn't do that."

"Are you going to assist your father, the other Death Eaters, or Voldemort in killing Hermione, Harry Potter, or other members of the Order of the Phoenix?"

"No. I want to join the Order, not destroy it. I want to help Potter and the rest of them kill Voldemort."

"While you are in my home, are you going to harm Hermione?"

"No! I've already said that. I don't want her harmed."

Snape looked at Hermione; she was still gripping his hand. "Do you feel secure with him?"

"Yes. He means what he says. He's no threat."

"The potion should wear off in a few moments. It doesn't last long. Draco, thank you for cooperating."

"Can I ask you another question?" Draco asked.

"Of course."

"Why did you save my life? You are a Death Eater, aren't you?"

"I saved your life because you are my godson and a decent young man. I am a Death Eater, as I have the Dark Mark, but I am not one of Voldemort's followers. I hate the bastard. I've been a spy for Dumbledore, and now McGonagall, for many years. I am a member of the Order of the Phoenix. I'm on the right side, Draco. I hope you join me."

"I will, Uncle, I will."

Severus removed the paralysis spell, and Draco's rigid body immediately sagged, causing him to groan in pain.

"A little warning first?" he said through clenched teeth.

"My apologies. Let's get you sitting up. You should try eating a little broth."

Hermione went to the other side of the bed, and the two carefully maneuvered Draco into a sitting position. Severus called for Pip and Mosey to bring him some lunch. As he finished eating, Madam Pomfrey came to check on her patient. She was pleased with his progress, and he was allowed to have his wand again as long as he didn't do any strenuous spells. He promptly fell asleep after they got him back into a comfortable position.

After his exam, it was Hermione's turn. Madam Pomfrey followed her into her room and got her into a resting position on her bed. She took measurements, cast revealing spells, and pronounced both mom and baby healthy. "You stay here. I'll be right back," she told Hermione.

Hermione lay back on her bed, her stomach still exposed, and ran her hand over her child. It was hard to believe that in a little over three months she would be a mother. She was surprised when Madam Pomfrey returned with a nervous Severus.

"All right, we are going to learn a few basic relaxation techniques. Don't worry, it won't take long." She looked between Hermione and Severus, who both looked confused. "Hermione, sit up. Severus, get behind her and put your legs on either side of her."

"What?" they both exclaimed. They may have shared a kiss, but they hadn't shared that much yet.

"Oh, don't be a baby, Severus! You got her pregnant; you can help her through the delivery. Get behind her!" Severus didn't like witches with tempers, and he knew Poppy had a big one. He followed her instructions and climbed onto Hermione's bed, sitting behind her.

"Okay, Hermione, lean back and relax." Hermione tried to do what she asked, but she was anything but relaxed. "When Hermione gets closer to her delivery date, she's going to need to relax. You are going to help her by getting into this position and massaging her arms, her shoulders, and her hips. Hermione, you will tell Severus what you need, and he will do it. If women have to give birth, the men at least have to do what they ask. Do you understand, Severus?"

"Yes, ma'am," he muttered, causing Hermione to chuckle.

"Now, while you are both there, I'm going to let you see your baby. It's a projection of sorts, much like a Muggle sonogram, only better. You'll be able to hear her heartbeat as well." She cast a spell, and a mist rose from Hermione's stomach. The mist formed the shape of a womb, and an image of a baby appeared. She was moving only slightly, but Hermione could make out the fluttering of her fingers and the shape of her face. Severus gasped behind her and placed his hands on her stomach. She linked her fingers with his as they watched the image of the tiny baby. The only sound in the room was the baby's heartbeat, clear and strong.

"The image will last a few more minutes. I'll leave you with it and check on Mr. Malfoy one more time before I leave. I'll be back tomorrow." Hermione and Severus didn't even acknowledge the Healer as she left the room with a smile on her face. That was her favorite spell, and the reactions of parents never disappointed her. The stunned look on Severus' face was enough to keep her smiling and running to tell the Headmistress as soon as she was back at Hogwarts.

Hermione and Severus didn't move, afraid to break the spell. Hermione was enchanted by the image of her daughter. She was beautiful and perfect.

"She looks like you," Severus whispered.

"She's amazing," Hermione whispered back. They watched for a few more minutes before the mist started to swirl and dissipate. When it was over, Hermione sighed in disappointment.

"You'll see her again in a few short months. You'll be able to watch her for as long as you want." His soft words were whispered from close behind her ear. He pulled her hair aside and gently kissed her neck. "I don't know what I'm doing here, Hermione. I just feel so connected to you for some reason."

"I'm the only female around," Hermione said and began to breathe hard as his lips worked their way across her shoulder.

"It's more than that. I don't understand it. I grow more attracted to you every day. You are making me content and very happy, having you here in my home." He turned her head to face his as he leaned in for a kiss. She sighed into him, turning slightly to wrap her arm around his neck and pull him closer. His teeth nibbled at her lower lip, and when she gasped, he plunged his tongue into her mouth, tasting her once again. He couldn't get enough.

Hermione couldn't stop from moaning as his tongue explored her mouth. She turned her body so that she was kneeling in front of him, her mouth never leaving his. When they finally came up for air, she leaned her head on his shoulder and breathed deeply. "You... We... Oh, Severus. I've never felt like this before. Your words, your kisses, you. I don't know how to explain. I had no idea I could feel with my whole being. I want to feel so much more."

Severus froze at her words. He finally realized what he was doing and pulled back. She wanted more than he could give her at the moment, and he had vowed to protect her. If they crossed that line, he didn't think he would ever think clearly again. "It's probably your hormones. Your emotions are all over the place." He started to untangle himself from her and rose from the bed. "That can't happen again."

"Why?" she cried out in frustration.

"Because, Miss Granger, my mind finally started working. I was raised better than that. I can't let my physical needs get in the way of what is going on in the world."

"I'm a sexually frustrated, pregnant woman, and you are just going to leave?" she asked as he walked to the door.

"Yes. I'm sorry," he said as he swept from the room trying to hide his raging erection and the fact that he was falling in love with Hermione Granger.

# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 of 14

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Hermione barely spoke to Severus over the next few days. She was hurt by his complete change in attitude towards her. He had initiated the kiss, and he had been the one to speak those sweet words to her. The child in her wanted to yell at him, "You started it," but she held back and tried to go on with daily activities. She didn't know where she stood anymore. She had hoped that maybe he would want her around for longer than just her pregnancy. She had hoped that maybe he was feeling paternal towards her baby. The longer the silence, the less she had hope.

She was attentive to caring for Draco and was with him when he stood up and walked around the room for the first time since his injuries. He was recovering quickly, thanks to their constant care and his determination. He was still a stubborn prat, even though he didn't hate her anymore.

"Can I go outside?" Draco asked one morning as Hermione helped him put his shirt on.

"If you are up to it, sure. You'll have to walk down the stairs though."

"If I go slowly, I should be able to do it. Will you walk with me?"

"Of course. Let's get your shoes on." Hermione kneeled in front of Draco to slip his shoes on and tie them. She knew he couldn't bend very easily, and if truth be told, she was getting to that point herself.

"Thank you," Draco said with a soft smile. "You've been kinder to me than you should."

"You're right. You made my life miserable for several years." She looked up at his face and smiled. "I think we are past all of that, Draco. You stood up to the Dark Lord, and I know how difficult it must have been." She struggled to get back to her feet. "I think you might be tying my shoes before too long anyway. We'll be even." She laughed.

Carefully and slowly, the pair made their way down the stairs, and Draco got his first look at Severus' home. He still didn't know he was in Spinner's End. He had visited Snape's home before, but it didn't look like this. Severus was letting him assume he was in a different part of England at a second home. She led him toward the study and out into the gardens.

"Do you want to walk or sit?" She could tell by his face that he was already tired from that short walk down the stairs.

"Let's walk for a little, and then I'll sit before I try to get back up those stairs." Hermione nodded and linked her arm through his to give him more support. She guided him around the path, pointing out her favorite features of the beautiful grounds.

Severus watched them from inside the library. He had been skimming a book when he happened to look out the window to see them walking arm in arm. He was hit by a slap of jealousy that almost made him lose his balance. It was only when they passed closer that he realized she was holding him up and that there wasn't any intimacy between them. They were still struggling to become friends. He watched her guide him back toward the shaded patio and settle him into a chair. It was clear that Draco was worn out, but the fresh air was probably good for him. When Hermione sunk into a chair across from Draco, Severus realized that she too was exhausted. She grew bigger every day, and he knew it was taking a toll on her small body.

He put down his book and headed for the kitchen, asking Mosey to bring cold drinks outside. As he walked out the door, he was shocked at the look of anger that came his way from Hermione. He knew he had behaved badly, but he wasn't expecting her reaction.

"Hello. Draco, it's good to see you up and around."

"Thank you, Uncle Sev. I'm feeling better. Thanks to the both of you and your good care, I'm going to be back to normal in no time." Draco took the glass offered to him by the small house-elf and took a sip. "What are you working on? I saw you through the window, and you looked deep in thought."

"Actually, I was reading a bit on a few herbs that I haven't worked with before. I'm working on a few experimental potions this summer, and I'm using some new ingredients. For me at least."

"Maybe you could allow me to help sometime. I'm not bad at potions. I had a good teacher," he said.

"Maybe you could. I'll gather some books for you to look over. When you are strong enough, you can join me in the lab. I would have loved to have Hermione join me, as she is quite adept at potion-making, but I can't risk her pregnancy should something go wrong." He purposely looked at Hermione, who glared back.

"Well, I've been busy with my own research, anyway. I don't know that we'd work very well together," she said coldly, sipping her drink. She wanted desperately to slip inside and get away from the man, but she didn't want to give him the satisfaction either.

"I think we'd work beautifully together. Eventually we will; I have no doubt. Just not now," Severus said as he continued to stare in her eyes. "It's not the right time."

Draco looked between his godfather and Hermione with an amused expression. He could see that whatever attraction they had had initially was still there; they were just fighting it. He wasn't sure why, as they had already created a child, but he knew that for some reason, they were holding back. He never thought he'd be seeing sparks of a romantic nature flying between Severus and anyone, especially not Granger. With a smile, he broke into their staring contest. "Sev, I'm worn out; would you help me back upstairs? Granger was kind enough to help me down, but going up might be more of a challenge."

"Of course. Hermione, I would like to talk to you a bit more. Would you mind waiting?"

"Sure." She turned her face out toward the garden. She knew his meaning when he said that eventually they'd work beautifully together. She once again let a bit of hope bloom in her heart. She sat quietly while she waited for him to come back and thought back on her history with her former professor. Her first encounter with him had been her first day of Potions. She was eleven years old, almost twelve, and thought she knew everything, even though she'd only known she was a witch for a few short months. He had been terrifying, dark, and mysterious. It had only gotten worse as she had become friends with Harry and Ron. She had now been one of "them," and no matter how smart she was or how good at Potions, she had been associated with his least favorite students.

Harry hadn't helped matters any. He had continuously accused Snape of all manner of foul deeds. Hermione herself had set the man's robes on fire when she thought he was cursing Harry's broom. She'd become less afraid of him as time went on, and they'd managed to show some mutual respect in the classroom.

It had been only this past year, after they had forgiven him for killing Dumbledore, that she saw him in a different light. He was flawed and very human to her. When he had agreed to this act they were playing, she had admired him more than ever, and now, after spending the last month in his home, she considered him a friend.

She wasn't sure when she had started to feel more for him than friendship. It might not have been until he kissed her the first time. She wasn't ready to admit that she was in love with the man, but it wouldn't be too far of a stretch. Hermione turned her head towards the doorway when she heard him approach. He sat in the chair directly across from her and stared at her once again.

"You wanted to talk to me?" she finally asked, breaking the silence.

"Yes," he said as he looked down at the ground. "Your feet are swollen."

"What?" Hermione wasn't expecting that. She looked down, and sure enough, her ankles were swollen. "Another of the wonderful symptoms of being pregnant."

"You should elevate them," he told her. He scooted his chair closer to hers and leaned over to pick up her feet. Laying her legs across his knees, he removed her shoes and began to massage her ankles.

"Oh!" Hermione was surprised by his actions. "Thank you, but you don't have to do that. I can go inside and prop them up on a pillow."

Severus ignored her and continued to rub softly. "I'm sorry I walked out on you the other day."

"I suppose you had a good and noble reason."

"Something like that," he chuckled. "I was scared, Hermione."

"Of what? I'm not going to hurt you."

"Not physically, no, but emotionally, maybe." He saw her confused expression and continued, "I've had a lot of people leave me. People I care about leave. My sister, my father, my mother, Lily, Albus. They are all dead. The only people I truly care about in this world that are still alive are you, Draco, and Minerva."

"So you think that if you allow yourself to feel something more than friendship towards me, I'll die?"

"Well your life is in danger, isn't it? Look at what Voldemort did to Draco! You are a target. You heard what Draco said. I think I can protect you better if you keep your distance."

"You just keep lying to yourself, Severus. You can't turn off emotions, as you well know. I could die just as easily if you hated me than if you loved me. The reason I am pregnant is because I thought I was going to die. I didn't care about the consequences; I just wanted to feel loved for one night. One night of love is more than some people ever get. You are a fool if you are going to give it up."

"What do you want from me?" Severus tried to control his voice.

"I want you to be honest about how you feel about me, and I want you to act on those feelings. I want to know what you envision for our future, assuming we have one. I want to at least be able to share a meal with you like we did. If we can't move forward, let's at least stay friends. I don't want to go back to fearing you."

"I don't know how I feel right now. As for the future, I just want to keep you alive. That's all I can think about right now."

"Can you be my friend?"

"Yes." He leaned forward and grabbed her hands. "I will be your friend. As for more, let's just get through the next few months."

"I'll take what I can get, Severus." She pulled her hands from his and lifted her feet off of his lap. "I'm tired; I'm going to rest before dinner." She leaned down and kissed the top of his head before walking inside. Her heart was heavy, but still that little hope hung on.

## Chapter 10

### *Chapter 10 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

The next two weeks seemed to fly by. Hermione and Severus had adjusted their relationship. They were friendly and enjoyed each other's companionship once again but never took things further. Hermione and Draco spent hours researching and talking. She could actually admit that they were becoming friends. Draco and Severus were bonding as well. They had been close during Draco's childhood, but when he started at Hogwarts, Severus had pulled back so as not to show favoritism. Hermione had walked in on a few late night drinking sessions and was pleased to see both men so happy.

The biggest disappointment for Hermione came with the news that she would not be able to attend Harry's birthday party. She was still in grave danger and would not be protected if she were to leave the house. The only place she was permitted was Hogwarts, and it was there that she was able to meet Harry to give him his birthday present. Severus had purchased it with her very precise instructions.

She Floo'd into the Headmistress's office with Draco and Severus right behind her. Harry had requested a meeting with Draco, and it had to take place at Hogwarts since it wasn't safe for him to leave the house either. Hogwarts was still secure. Draco quickly went with Severus to the hospital wing for what he hoped was his last check-up with Madam Pomfrey. Hermione sat patiently waiting when the Floo activated, and Harry stepped out. They were alone, and she had no problems with throwing her arms around him and holding him as tight as she could.

"Happy Birthday, Harry," she whispered through her tears. She had missed her friends so much.

"Thanks, 'Mione. How are you? How's the baby? You look amazing!" Harry stepped back to look at her.

"I'm good. I'm as happy as I can be without having you, Ron, and everyone else around."



"You feel safe? With Snape and Malfoy?"

"I really do. Severus would protect me with his life; I really believe that. As for Draco, I am enjoying getting to know him. He's smart and talented, and I think he might surprise you if you allow him to work with you. He's going to be an asset." She pulled Harry over to sit down next to her.

"That's what I hope to find out by this meeting. I don't hold much animosity towards him anymore, not after what he went through. Snape told us at the last Order meeting. He told us about the plot against you."

"I wish I could go to those meetings. I don't want to bring up difficult subjects on your birthday, but I need to ask you something."

"Go ahead."

"I want to tell Severus about the Horcruxes. I really think he can help. I'm so close, Harry! I know I'm on the verge of figuring it out. I just need someone to bounce my ideas off of."

Harry looked at his hands. "I don't know, 'Mione. We agreed not to tell anyone. Just you, me, Ron, and Dumbledore."

"Please, Harry. This could change everything," Hermione pleaded.

"You really think it could?"

"I really do." She took his hands in hers. "You deserve a chance to live a life without Voldemort, not die trying to stop him, but live after he's gone. Nobody has deserved to live as much as you."

"If you trust him, you can tell him. Not Malfoy, though."

"Agreed. Okay, now on to other things. Better things." Hermione reached beside her and pulled out a wrapped box. "Happy Birthday!"

"How did you go shopping?" Harry asked, laughing.

"I didn't. I told Severus exactly what to get you, and he did. I hope you like it."

Harry carefully opened the package to find an empty photo album. It was bound in leather and was extremely well-made. On the front was an engraving on a small, gold plaque: "For My Future." On the back, was another plaque that said: "All Our Love, Hermione and Callina."

Hermione watched Harry and saw the confusion etch over his face. "I know it's not exciting like a new broom or anything, but I know how much you treasure your old album with pictures of your parents. I thought maybe a new album for those wonderful memories you'll create would be nice."

"You really think I'm going to have a future?"

"Of course. You have to fill your album."

"Thank you, Hermione. It's great. Callina? Is that her name?" Harry asked as he looked at Hermione questioningly.

"If that's all right with you. Callina was Severus' little sister. She was killed when he was a young boy. I thought about Lily, but I thought you might want to save that name for the little girl you have with Ginny. You need to pick her middle name, though."

"Callina is a pretty name. It's a nice way to honor Snape. I'll get back to you on the middle name," he said, finally smiling.

"Are you sure you are all right with all of this? I don't know how you feel anymore. I can't read you."

"Most of the time I'm fine, but sometimes it really hurts. That's my daughter growing inside of you, and I can't be a part of it. I love her. I'm not telling you this to back out of our agreement. I can tell that Snape is taking good care of you both, but it's going to be hard to keep my distance once she's born."

"You don't have to; you know that. You can be as much a part of her life as you are comfortable with. You make the call, Harry. You're the one with the most to lose."

"Thanks, Hermione. I'll give it some more thought." They relaxed into easy discussion, and before long, Severus and Draco returned.

"I'll just be going back now. You boys have your talk. No hexing, cursing, or killing each other!" she warned as she gave Harry another hug. "Are you going to supervise?" she asked Severus.

"Yes, I am. That was the only way Minerva would let us use her office. She doesn't trust these two," he said with a smirk.

Harry and Draco just grinned at each other. They had both caused their fair share of problems for the professors at this school. Now that they were presumably on the same side, they still weren't to be trusted. Satisfied that her best friend wouldn't kill her newest friend and vice versa, Hermione stepped into the Floo.

Four hours and twenty-three minutes later--Hermione had been counting--Draco and Severus practically crawled out of the fireplace. They were laughing and talking quite loudly. They were drunk.

"Where have you two been? It's been hours! You idiots! Drinking when you are supposed to be working on strategy? You've kept me waiting all this time. I've been worried sick." She was on her feet and waving her finger. Draco hiccupped and looked at her stupidly.

"You're scary. I'm going to bed. Night, Sev!" he called as he climbed the stairs on all fours.

Hermione turned to Severus and glared. He dropped into a chair and grinned. "Come here, darling. I'll tell you all about it."

"Darling? You're drunk."

"I'm a lovable drunk. Come sit on my lap, and talk to me."

"I don't think so." Hermione went across the room and sat on the sofa. "You can tell me from there."

Severus wasn't about to let her get away. Yes, he was drunk, but he also knew he wanted the woman in front of him. He leaned forward in his chair and dropped to his knees. Crawling towards her in what he imagined to be a predatory move, he reached her legs and ran his hands up her calves.

For her part, Hermione sat and stared. She was trying not to laugh, as she assumed he was trying to be sexy. The fact that he was wobbly even on his knees was pretty hilarious. When he grabbed her by her legs, she did giggle. He was adorable with that goofy grin on his face.

"Severus, please, you are drunk and don't know what you are doing. I want to hear about your meeting. Why don't you take a sobering potion and tell me about it."

"I don't want to be sober. If I'm sober, I won't have the courage to do this." He sat up higher on his knees and pulled her lips toward his. His tongue pushed into her mouth and his hands reached for her breasts. Hermione relaxed into his touch because it was what she'd been wanting and kissed him back. When he moved his body over hers, she realized what was happening, why it was happening, and pushed him away.

"What's wrong?" he asked, sitting back.

"I don't want you like this. All drunk and happy. You don't know what you are doing. If you want me, you come to me sober with a clear mind so that I won't worry about you regretting it in the morning. I want a full report tomorrow. Good night." She stomped from the room, leaving him sitting on the floor, completely confused by everything that just happened. Moments later, he passed out cold only to wake a few hours later so he could stumble to his bed.

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The next morning, Hermione made a point of being especially loud as she delivered hangover potion to the sleeping men. If they were going to get so drunk that they couldn't fill her in on what was going on, she certainly wasn't going to be considerate.

She opened the door to Severus' room with a bang. She'd never been in his room before, but she didn't feel bad at all as she pulled open the window shades and yelled out a good morning. The lump under the covers groaned and buried itself deeper.

"Good morning, Severus! It's a glorious summer day, and you are missing half of it." She ripped the covers off of him and only paused a moment to take in his shirtless appearance. She'd never seen his bare back before, and it was a well-sculpted one at that.

A bleary-eyed Severus stared at the crazy woman in his room. "What are you doing in here? Give me back my blankets, and close those shades!"

"Not a chance, 'Darling.' Get your ass out of bed, and come down to breakfast. Drink this first." She handed him the potion and left the room.

She heard him mutter, "Darling?" as she left the room.

Her next stop was Draco's room. Once again, she barged in with a bang and threw open the shades.

"Get up, Malfoy!" She pulled back his covers only to reveal Draco's naked ass. She quickly covered him back up but pulled the pillow out from below his head.

"Get out, Granger, or I'll hex your balls off."

"I don't have balls, Draco. Get your naked ass out of bed and drink this. Get dressed before coming downstairs please." She flipped on the lights and turned the wireless on high volume before leaving the room.

She waited patiently in the dining room, reading the *Prophet* and nibbling her toast. After about ten minutes, she heard them arguing as they came down the stairs. They both stopped talking as they came in to join her, looking as sheepish as she had ever seen them.

"Good morning, Hermione," Severus said as he sat to her right.

"Good morning, Granger," Draco said as he sat on her left.

"Good morning! Glad to see you finally made it down the stairs. Now, while you eat I expect a full report from last night." She smiled at them, unnerving them even more.

"Um, I didn't kill Potter," Draco started. "We had a good talk, some good whiskey, and that's all I remember."

"Okay, Severus, your turn."

"Yes, well the boys had a nice talk and were quite civil to each to each other. Draco will be attending the next Order meeting with me, and it will be determined at the time what his role will be."

"How come Draco gets to go and I don't?" Hermione asked.

"You are in immediate danger. Draco is thought to be dead. Voldemort is getting increasingly angry, and you know he is targeting you. He just can't find you. We can't risk you going anywhere except for Hogwarts."

Hermione knew he was right but hated being out of the loop.

After Draco had excused himself to go work in the lab, Hermione brought up the subject of Horcruxes. Severus was surprised at what she knew, but he wasn't surprised to learn what Voldemort had done. He had long suspected his old master of such horrific deeds. He was pleased to hear of their success and agreed with her ideas to save Harry.

"There are some books in the library, Hermione. Books that mention Horcruxes. They are in the collection that Albus gave me," Severus told her.

"I know. I've already found them. It seems that Professor Dumbledore knew exactly what he was doing when he gave you those books. We've got to find a way to get that part of Voldemort out of Harry."

"It has to be done at the right time. If Voldemort loses a connection with Harry, he'll know and get suspicious. He might start searching for the others, and then he would know the danger he was in," Snape told her.

"Exactly. I think the spell needs to be cast right before he faces Voldemort for the last time. Nagini needs to be out of the picture, and the piece of Voldemort's soul needs to be transferred into something easy to destroy."

"The first thing that comes to mind is a living creature. They can die, as cruel as it may be."

"I've thought of that, but we don't know how an animal might react. We know that Nagini isn't an ordinary snake. It helps that Voldemort is a Parseltongue, but that alone won't keep a snake loyal for long."

"True. The snake is more intelligent than any other of its kind. So an animal is out. Is there an object then?"

"I've thought about using another book. The way Harry destroyed the diary was with a Basilisk fang. If Harry could get back into the chamber, he might be able to get more fangs to use. We destroyed the cup, the diadem, and the locket with the sword of Gryffindor. We could possibly use that for the last Horcrux. The point is, we need something fragile, something easy to destroy with a magical object."

"Any object will do then?"

"Not really. It has to also be accepting of that piece of soul. I know that makes no sense, but I think the object has to have meaning. I'm not sure if it needs to mean something to Harry or Voldemort though."

"My guess is that it should mean something to the Dark Lord," a voice spoke from the doorway. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt or overhear, but I couldn't help it. The old bastard made Horcruxes, did he?" Draco joined them at the table.

"Draco, you weren't supposed to know about this."

"Maybe not, but I do. I can help."

"How can you help?" Severus asked.

"I can help perform the spell, along with you, Sev. Hermione won't be able to; she won't be in any condition to do heavy magic."

"Would you do that? Would you help Harry?" Hermione asked quietly.

"Of course. He's . . . well, he's not so bad. I also have an idea of what you can use to put the soul in."

"What would that be?" Severus asked.

"A photograph."

"A specific one or just a photo in general?" Hermione was skeptical.

"A specific one. The Dark Lord had few, if any, friends while he was a student. He does, however, consider members of my family to be his so-called friends. There is a photo in my father's study of Father with Voldemort, Aunt Bella, Mum, and me as a baby. It was taken right after I was born, and Father told me that Voldemort treasured the picture as a sign of the future. After he tangled with baby Potter, my father found the picture along with other possessions. Father hung it in his study."

"So this is a picture that belonged to Voldemort at one time?"

"Yes. It's a wizarding photograph, so it holds magical properties. I think it would work."

"I do too." Hermione smiled. "That might be exactly what we need. The picture can easily be destroyed. Thank you, Draco."

"Don't thank me yet. I still have to get that picture."

"How are you planning on doing that?"

"I'll contact Mother," Draco said with a smirk. "She's so angry about what happened to me, she'll do anything."

"Gentlemen, let's get to work!" Hermione smiled, feeling hopeful once again. She could have sworn her daughter did a little leap of joy herself.

## Chapter 11

### *Chapter 11 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Before Hermione knew it, August had arrived, and she had hit her seventh month of pregnancy. She was feeling pretty well, although she was definitely moving slower than normal. Draco had made fun of her for waddling a bit. He had become the pesky brother she'd never had. They enjoyed pushing each other's buttons, and they were constantly being reprimanded by Severus, who couldn't seem to allow anyone to have too much fun in his presence these days.

His change in mood was due to school starting again soon. He'd had the best summer in recent memories thanks to his house guests, and he'd done some of the best work of his life. The fact that he'd fallen in love, couldn't tell her, and had to leave her to go back to work was weighing heavily. They hadn't discussed what would happen when he had to return to Hogwarts, but he only had two days to talk to her about it. The staff was due back, and he had to keep his position. He was back in Voldemort's good graces for some unknown reason and was in attendance at most of his gatherings. He had repeatedly told the Dark Lord that he would hand over Hermione as soon as the baby was born, but it was all a lie. There was no way he was going to allow her to be put in danger. He was just glad to be kept in the loop again.

"Hermione?" he called as he walked into the library. "Are you in here?"

"Down here," a soft voice called out. "Behind the sofa."

"Hermione!" Severus rushed behind the couch to find her lying on the floor, a pillow propped under her knees and head and a book balanced on her stomach. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. My back was aching, so I thought that if I were to lie on a hard surface it would help."

"Did it?"

"Yes, it did actually. I'm ready to get up. Can you help me?"

Severus chuckled as he helped her struggle to her feet. She was so petite that her large stomach seemed foreign on her body. She rubbed her back as she stood. "Now I'm just stiff." She waddled over to the sofa and sat down gently.

"Here, let's try what Poppy taught us." Severus leaned back against the side of the sofa and pulled Hermione's arm to get her to scoot back against him. She leaned back and sighed at the touch. He was always so gentle with her, and even though he refused to make love to her, his hands completely turned her on. He massaged her lower back and up through her shoulders. As his hands skimmed her hips, she grabbed them and pulled them over her stomach, linking her fingers with his.

"I can't take much more," Hermione whispered, her voice husky. "You have no idea what you do to me."

"I do know because you do the same to me." His voice was as husky as hers, and he slightly shifted his hips so she could feel the immediate erection he got as soon as she settled into his arms.

"Why aren't we acting on our feelings? I know I'm fat, but I'm still a woman."

"It has nothing to do with how you look, which is amazing by the way. You are more beautiful every day, and I find your body incredibly erotic, but it's just not safe for us."

"I'm safe with you. I feel safe with you."

"When I take you as mine, and I fully intend to, I won't be able to hide my feelings from anyone, let alone hide them from the Dark Lord. If he thinks I've betrayed him by falling in love with you, I won't be able to protect you because I will be dead."

Hermione froze at his words. She tried to turn to face him, but he held her steady. "You love me?" Her voice was shaky as she asked.

"Merlin help me, I do. I tried not to, but I do." Severus leaned forward and pressed his lips to her neck. "You mean the world to me and I can't lose you. I've shut my feelings off for so long, but I've never felt like this. I know you probably don't feel the same about a mean old man, and that's all right."

"Oh, Severus, I do feel the same. At least I think I do. I'm young, but I'm not immature. I've been trying to convince myself otherwise, but it's true. I'm completely in love with you." He allowed her to shift her body this time, and she looked deep into his eyes. "Promise me you will make me yours someday, like you said. Please, Severus."

"You will be mine." He angled his head toward hers and captured her lips in a heated kiss. Lips pressed, hands wandered, and tongues tangled as they showed each other how they felt.

"Oh! My eyes!" Draco stood in the open doorway. "It was bad enough to know you shagged but now snogging? In public? It's just so wrong!"

Hermione started laughing and seconds later, Severus joined her.

"This is hardly public, Draco, and you'd better get used to it." Hermione giggled.

"If you are going to continue to live in our home, you might want to invest in some blinders, son." Severus chuckled.

"Disgusting!" he called as he stomped up the stairs.

Severus didn't notice that Hermione was looking at him strangely until he turned away from the door. "What?"

"You said 'our' home."

"Yes, it's our home, Hermione. If you want it. I know it's isolated right now, but after Voldemort is gone, we'll tear down the front and open it to your friends and family. We'll make a proper home if you want it."

"And the baby?" she whispered, finally bringing up something she had purposely avoided talking about.

"What about her? She'll love growing up here. You'll be a fantastic mother."

"And you? What will you be?" she continued to whisper, her voice seeming too loud for such a delicate conversation.

"I never thought I would be a father, and I'm not sure how horribly I'll mess it up, but I will try. I'll be her father, Hermione. I already love her. If in time, Harry wants to take that role, I'll let him, but I'm going to be there for her, as long as I live."

"Oh, Severus!" Hermione threw her arms around his neck and held him tight. "Thank you." Tears were flowing freely, and she hiccupped a little as she sniffled.

"I came in here to find you for another reason, you know. I had no plans of confessing my feelings toward you or our baby."

"I like the way that sounds. 'Our baby.' So what was the real reason you came looking for me?"

"I think you should stay here when I leave. We haven't talked about where you would go, but I don't feel that Hogwarts is safe for you anymore. You can stay here with Draco, and he can come get me at any time. Poppy can come here to deliver Callie when the time comes. I'll be here too, of course."

"I was thinking the same thing. I'm comfortable here; I don't want to move again. I just hate to be away from you."

"I'll check on you every day through the Floo. I'll come home the weekends I'm not on duty, and after this is all over and Voldemort is dead, you and Callie can live with me at the school if you want to."

"If I'm staying here, I'm going to need a few more supplies. I need nappies for the baby, and I should probably get a bassinette or something. Some pretty pink clothes maybe. If you could get some money out of my vault, maybe Molly could go shopping for me?"

"I'm sure she'd be delighted. I do have a surprise for you though. Come upstairs." He took Hermione by the hand and helped her up the stairs. As they came to the beginning of the hallway, he pointed his wand at the doorway that had been locked for a couple of months. Hermione heard the lock click open, and Severus opened the door. As Hermione stepped through, she thought she had stepped into a fantasy. A pink fantasy.

Hermione looked around the room that had been transformed into a nursery. The walls were painted a very soft pink. A large white crib stood in the corner and was filled with dolls of all shapes and sizes. There was a rocking chair padded in pink and a changing table stocked with at least a month's supply of nappies. A bookshelf filled one wall, and in it she quickly recognized children's books that she had loved as a child. On top of the bookshelf was a child's size broom on a glass stand. The closet was open, and in it were rows of pink clothes.

"What . . . ? How . . . ? You did this?" She turned toward the open doorway where Severus had been joined by a grinning Draco.

"I had help from Draco here," Severus admitted. "Molly did the shopping for the clothes, bedding, and blankets. Minerva supplied the books. Draco and I painted and put the furniture together. Harry, Ron, and Ginny sent the little broom. Ginny wanted you to have a proper baby shower, but it just isn't safe. We'll have something after. I hope it's what you wanted."

"It's more than I ever knew I wanted. It's perfect! Everything a little girl could want or need is in this room, including her parents and her Uncle Draco. Thank you both so much. I--I don't know what to say."

"You've said enough." Draco smirked. Hermione punched him on the arm and grabbed him in a fierce hug. He was slightly uncomfortable with her display of affection and pulled back.

Hermione then turned her attention on Severus. She reached up and wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him down to meet her in another kiss, sweet and tender. As he wrapped himself around her, neither heard Draco's words of disgust or his slammed door.

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Hermione woke up in the middle of the night and looked at her clock. It was shortly after midnight. She hadn't been asleep that long and knew she was anxious about Severus going back to work. He was leaving in the morning, and she would be alone with Draco. That didn't worry her; she just knew she was going to miss him. Every time she thought of him and his kisses she had a physical reaction. There was a burn and an ache. She wanted him. She wanted sex. She climbed out of bed and walked to the window, opening it for some cool air to soothe her burning skin.

Realizing that no amount of cool air was going to soothe the ache she was feeling, she quietly left her room. She moved across the hall and opened the door to Severus' room looking at his sleeping form. He looked peaceful. She knew that she had to move now or it might forever be too late. Every separation felt like it could be the last time.

She laughed to herself as she realized that she was apparently quite turned on by high risk situations. She pulled off her t-shirt and stood completely naked. She closed the door behind her with a click that woke the sleeping man.

"What? Hermione, are you all right?" He'd been able to recognize her, but he hadn't quite processed her lack of clothes.

"I want you," she told him. "I need you. Tonight."

"Hermione, are you sleepwalking?" It was then that his eyes adjusted enough to see her body. "Oh, shit," he muttered.

"I'm wide awake." She moved toward him, trying to look seductive at seven months pregnant. She got to the bed and pulled back the blankets. Looking at his tented pajama pants, she smirked. "You're awake too."

"What are you doing? We talked about this." Severus tried to protest but knew that it was futile; his body had reacted as soon as he recognized she was naked. She climbed onto the bed and straddled his thighs. Her movements were awkward, but she was determined to get what she wanted.

"You love me, right?" she asked as she started massaging his rigid cock.

"I do love you, but . . ." His words were stopped by a groan as he responded to her movements.

"And I love you. I want to be with you before you leave for school and I get too big for this. I know this is a bit odd, having our first time together with me seven months pregnant, but I'm going to miss you, and I want something to think about while you're gone." She continued her movements, feeling bolder than she ever had before. Molly was right; pregnancy caused modesty to go right out the window. "I'll leave if you really don't want this."

"Gods, Hermione, I want you so much." He groaned as he sat up to pull her in for a kiss. He ran his hands across her stomach and cupped her heavy breasts. She arched back as he moved his lips over one of her ultra-sensitive nipples. "You are so beautiful."

Hermione moaned in reply. She appreciated his tender caresses and kisses, but she didn't want to wait. "I need you. Now," she insisted as she positioned herself above his cock.

"You have me," he whispered as she lowered herself onto him. He moaned in pleasure as he felt himself slide into her. "You set the pace, love; you're in control."

Hermione barely registered his words as she rocked her hips over him. She felt awkward and clumsy, but completely full and satisfied. She continued to move, trying to take him as deep as she could. Her hands grasped at his shoulders while he held on to her hips.

Eventually, he couldn't stand it anymore and started to move with her. He thought he could be passive, allowing her to do what was comfortable, but he was shattered the moment she started moving. He'd never mixed sex and love before, and his mind was gone. It wasn't long before she went over the edge, arching her back and tightening around him. She screamed out his name as she came and brought him with her. He pumped into her quickly before emptying himself on a moan. She stayed straddling him while she caught her breath and finally dared to look him in the eyes.

"I'm sorry. I know you wanted to wait."

"Never be sorry for this, my love. I could have protested a bit louder. Besides, it was amazing and perfect. Come. Lay down with me." He scooted over, allowing her to climb off and lay down next to him. He spooned into her back and reached an arm over to rest on her belly. With a bit of wandless magic, the blankets covered them, and he pulled her tight.

"No regrets?"

"None. I love you, Hermione."

"I love you too." They had just settled into each other's arms when the bedroom door burst open. With wide eyes, they looked at an extremely angry Draco Malfoy.

"Two words," he hissed. "Silencing charms!" The door closed once more, and they were engulfed in darkness. Both were silent for a few moments before they started to giggle, which turned into laughter and eventually just smiles as they fell asleep.

## Chapter 12

### *Chapter 12 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Severus stepped out of his fireplace on a Saturday morning in the middle of September. He had the weekend free of duties and had come home to see Hermione and celebrate her birthday a little early. He had his arms full of gifts for his witch and sighed as he let them drop onto the table.

"Hermione? Draco?" He knew he was expected, and he had hoped for a better greeting.

"Severus? You're early!" Hermione came down the stairs as quickly as her body would let her. She envisioned herself jumping into his arms but, instead, could only waddle. "I thought you had to supervise detention this morning!"

Severus pulled her into his arms and kissed her gently on her soft lips. "I got out of it. I couldn't wait to see you." He stepped back and looked at Hermione.

"What? What are you looking at?"

"You got bigger? A lot bigger. It's only been three weeks!"

"Hey, no picking on me. I'm very vulnerable at the moment." She pouted as she eased onto the sofa. "Blame it all on Callie; she's a growing girl."

"So are you, apparently." Severus chuckled as she threw a pillow at him.

"I get enough fat jokes from Draco; I don't need them from you. Mosey has decided that she likes me and has been feeding me very well. It's not permanent," she huffed.

"Mosey has decided she likes you because I informed her that you are the Lady of the house. You are no longer considered a house guest in her eyes. I'm sorry I made those comments. You look amazing, but I was just shocked at the changes."

"This should be it for belly growth. According to all the books, I shouldn't get any bigger. I'll just get more miserable."

Severus joined her on the sofa and pulled her to lean against him. "I am so happy to be here with you; I can't even describe it. Those idiot students get dumber every year. I need some intelligent conversation."

Draco joined the couple for lunch as they ate birthday cake and Hermione opened her gifts. It wasn't quite her birthday, but Severus wouldn't be home again until early October. They had a nice afternoon, content to be together and catch up on each other's lives.

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"How are things going with Voldemort?" Hermione asked, putting away her gifts before bed.

"The Dark Lord is getting restless. He's not going to wait much longer. He's focusing on Harry now. He hasn't mentioned you for a while. I don't know if that's good or bad. I'm not saying you are safe because you aren't. Any opportunity the Death Eaters get to bring you to the Dark Lord, they will take. No doubt about that. I wish I knew how to better protect you." He sighed as he sat down on her bed.

"Better protect me? Severus, you've done everything you could, and I'm safe. You've given me a home, and you've given me love. Nobody would have, could have, done more. You've done your part."

"I feel like there is more I could do. I don't know what that might be, but I'm worried about you."

"Don't worry about me. Sleep in here with me tonight please? I'm not up for anything spectacular, but if you could just be close that would be a nice change."

"Spectacular will have to wait, but of course I'll stay with you. I love you, Hermione."

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Sunday afternoon, Severus arrived back in McGonagall's office. She was sitting at her desk and appeared to be waiting for him.

"Sit down, Severus. We need to talk," she said, pointing toward a chair. As he sat, she cast a privacy charm. "I don't trust the portraits to hear what we are about to discuss."

"The prophecy?" Severus asked.

"That's part of it. How is Miss Granger?"

"Hermione is doing quite well. Physically she's tired, but she seems to be happy and healthy."

"That's good to hear. What is she doing with her time?"

"Reading, of course. She's read every book on pregnancy available, wizarding and Muggle. She's working on some research projects as well. I'm sure she's a bit bored, but she's been productive."

"And her plan after the baby is born? Your plans?" McGonagall lifted an eyebrow and glared.

"She'll stay at my home after Callina is born. She's safe there."

"You didn't really answer my question. What are your plans regarding the child?"

"I will raise her as my own. If Potter wants to be involved, he can be, but she will be my daughter."

"And your plans regarding Miss Granger?"

"Minerva, what are you getting at?" Severus was becoming frustrated. It was one thing to share his feelings with the woman that he loved; it was quite another to share them with his superior, even if he counted her as a friend.

"Your relationship with Hermione, of course! Severus, I'm not daft. I could see the sparkle in your eye when you returned from summer holiday. You came back to work a happy man."

"It's not any of your business, Minerva, but just to get you off my back, I'll answer. Yes, I plan to pursue a relationship with Hermione. We've grown close."

"Good. That's what I was hoping to hear. You deserve happiness. Now, onto other business. Have you told her about the prophecy?"

"No. I don't plan to either. She doesn't need to know about it."

"I'm not sure about that. If we have interpreted it correctly, you will be placing your life in direct danger. She'll want to know why."

"If I don't survive, you can tell her. If I do survive, I'll tell her. The point is we'll tell her after it's all over, one way or another. I don't want her knowing that Callina has anything to do with the Dark Lord. She'll put too much emotion into it. She needs to remain detached from the situation as much as possible."

"If you think that's best. I'll leave it to you." McGonagall sighed.

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By the end of September, Hermione was grumpy and bored. "Talk to me, Draco! There's nothing to do!"

"Nothing to do? You can't tell me you've read all those books in the library."

"Of course I haven't, you idiot! It's too uncomfortable to read. My back is aching, and I can't sit still." Hermione was pacing the study while Draco attempted to read.

"Go for a walk then."

"If you haven't noticed, it's raining," Hermione snapped. She felt as if she could crawl out of her skin. Everything felt off.

"Oh, yes, I suppose it is. Go knit some booties or something, whatever it is that you pregnant birds do."

"Knit? You want me to knit? I haven't heard from Severus today, and you expect me to knit? You're an asshole, Draco Malfoy."

"You are a hormonal bitch, Hermione Granger."

Just as Hermione was about to retort to his insults, the fireplace lit up with a green light. Hermione expected Severus, but instead it was Harry's face in the flames. "Malfoy!" he called out.

Draco jumped to his feet and kneeled by the fire. "What's wrong, Potter?"

"It's time. Voldemort is advancing on the castle. If you are going to help me get the piece of the bastard out of me, we need you now."

"I'm on my way." He grabbed the photo from between two books on the mantle and looked at Hermione. "Will you be all right? I hate to leave you alone."

Hermione didn't answer, focusing on the fireplace. "Harry? Where's Severus?"

"I don't know, Hermione. Draco might have to do this alone. I've got to go. Come on, Malfoy." Harry's head disappeared.

"Stay here, Hermione," Draco ordered and then was gone in a flash of light.

Hermione had every intention of following orders. She was one month away from her due date and was not up to any heavy magic. She couldn't go traipsing the castle looking for Severus. She needed to just sit and wait. The men would be home soon. It could all be over tonight. Tomorrow she might be able to walk down the street, out of hiding. She had only been sitting for five seconds before the Gryffindor in her came out and she stepped into the fireplace.

The Headmistress' office was empty. She looked immediately for the sword of Gryffindor and saw that it wasn't in its place. She hoped that Harry had thought to take it with him after leaving the office. She went to the window and could see flashes of light from the windows below.

Wand in hand, she crept out of the office and down the stairs. About halfway down, she knew she was in trouble. Her backache and restlessness was explained as her water broke. Doing her best to ignore it for now, she continued on her way to find Severus and Harry, praying that they would be together and alive. She headed for the Room of Requirement first, thinking that might be a gathering place for the DA. It was empty. She tried to stop and listen for the sounds of battle, but it was eerily silent up on the seventh floor. Climbing slowly down the stairs, trying to ignore the contractions that she was now able to identify, she headed for the nearest classroom. The room was empty. She knew she needed to sit for a moment. Even the strongest woman couldn't completely ignore contractions.

It was there, sitting on a desk, that she realized what was really happening. Her baby was coming. It was early, but the baby should be healthy. She was alone, and she had no idea where anyone was. Reality smacked her, and she knew she was fooling herself if she thought she could fight like this. The pain was extreme, coming every few minutes, much faster than she expected. She knew it might be hours yet, but it didn't mean she was fit for battle. Taking a deep breath, she decided to go to the hospital wing. Even if she was alone in there, she could lay down if needed. Someone would eventually come to help her.

She headed for the door when she heard a voice that sent chills through her bones. The voice was coming from the hallway, so she made her way to the back of the room and tried to shrink behind the large teacher's chair.

"Miss Granger," called a voice. "I've been waiting ages to properly meet you." She peered around the chair and saw evil incarnate. Voldemort himself was gliding toward her, his eyes glowing red and his grotesque face forming a twisted smile.

Hermione tried to hold as still as she could as another contraction hit. She had her wand at the ready. Just as she was about to yell out the killing curse, her wand flew out of her hand and the chair sailed across the room.

"There you are! Pretty little thing for a Mudblood whore." His words were cruel, but the sing-song voice made them worse. "I can see why Severus was so anxious to get you into his bed. Only he hasn't, has he? You see, I've seen the truth, and that child you are carrying belongs to Harry Potter, doesn't it? That changes everything, really. Well, almost everything. You were going to die anyway; now your baby will die with you."

Hermione crawled backwards into a corner, trying to hide her eyes from his evil face. She was shaking from the effort it took to keep quiet during her pain. She knew she was going to die.

"Please, it's Severus' baby. Please, let my baby be born," she said through gritted teeth. Her body convulsed as another contraction hit; they were coming much too fast.

"I see that will be soon. It looks painful. Maybe I'll let you go through labor and let you watch me kill your child."

"No! Please! Kill me, but let my baby live."

Voldemort hissed at her words. That damn mothering instinct again. He'd heard those words before from that Potter woman. He wasn't going to let something as insignificant as love get in his way this time.

"They are all dead, you know. All those precious friends of yours are dead and bleeding all over the castle. Harry is dead. Severus is dead. Those simpleton Weasleys are all dead. Even that damn, young Malfoy is dead, even though I thought I killed him months ago."

Hermione heard his words but felt they weren't true. She somehow knew that Harry was still alive. So was Severus. She felt death in the castle, but she knew it wasn't her loved ones who were dead.

Voldemort sat on a desk appearing like he was trying to decide what to do. Hermione panted as she worked through the pain and yet couldn't give up, couldn't give in. Love wasn't insignificant like Voldemort thought. It was more powerful than anything in this world.

"I love my baby," she said quietly. "She's loved by so many. Severus loves her, Harry loves her, and Ron loves her. Professor McGonagall loves this baby. She's precious and innocent and very loved. Even Draco loves this baby. You should see the nursery he helped Severus put together. I can't wait to rock my little girl in the rocking chair. We'll have a party to welcome her to the world. I'm sure that all of my friends and family will be there to show us their love." Hermione continued to talk, telling Voldemort all the plans she had for her child. She had nothing to lose; she thought if she could keep him from killing her, there might be a chance. She watched as he cringed every time the word love was mentioned. It seemed to be actually painful for him to hear the word.

"I told you they are all dead," he hissed. "It's your turn now. You and your bastard child will die." Voldemort held his wand out and glared at the woman shaking in fear and pain.

Hermione was suddenly thrown backwards by a magical force. She tried to look through the mist and saw what looked like Harry and Severus running into the room. They circled around Voldemort who was laughing evilly.

"Here you go trying to ruin my fun." He turned to Harry. "I almost had her convinced that you were dead. Now, who's the real daddy? Who's going to try to protect the Mudblood?"

"We both will," Severus said through clenched teeth. "And you will be the one to die."

"I cannot die! You see, I've ensured that I will never die. I'll be restored every time. "

"Because of your Horcruxes?" Harry asked.

"What?" Voldemort actually looked surprised. "What do you know about Horcruxes?"

"I know what it's like to destroy them. Let's see, I destroyed your diary in my second year. Dumbledore took out the ring. We've managed to destroy the cup, diadem, and locket. Nagini was just killed in a spectacular move by Neville. That just leaves me."

"How did you. . ." Voldemort trailed off with an actual look of fear in his eyes.

"I'm free of you now too. Can't you tell? Snape and Draco provided some wonderful spell work, all thought up by Hermione. Now that part of you is gone too." Harry's voice was cold. From her place on the floor, Hermione could see the power in his eyes.

Voldemort spun back on Hermione and yelled the killing curse. Hermione heard Severus and Harry yell out at the same time as they moved in front of her. There was a flash of light that temporarily blinded her. She could feel extreme magic in the room, and the floor shook below her. She was sobbing and could hear noise in the room but couldn't see anything. It took a few moments before her vision returned, and during the darkness, she realized that Severus and Harry had sacrificed themselves for her.

## Chapter 13

### *Chapter 13 of 14*

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

When the darkness lifted, Hermione looked around the room. She wasn't sure what she would see. She wasn't sure she wanted to see anything at all. The first thing she was able to focus on was Voldemort. His pale, twisted body was hanging over one of the student desks. His eyes were open, but he wasn't seeing anything. Voldemort was dead. It should have brought relief but only brought panic as she looked for the two men she loved the most.

Severus was lying on the floor to her left, and she sobbed in relief when she saw him move. He was struggling to sit up and looked like he was in pain. Harry was sitting up toward the back of the room, massaging his shoulder but very much alive. It was over, and the men she loved were alive.

"Harry? Severus?" she cried weakly.

Harry looked over at her with a smile on his face like she'd never seen before. The haunted look that always clouded his eyes was gone. His scar that had been so bright and noticeable these past years had faded to a dull shadow across his forehead.

"Mione!" he called out. "It's over!" He rushed over to her and grasped her hand.

"What are you doing here?" Severus asked in a hoarse voice. "You were to stay home." Even as he scolded her, he was getting to his feet and moving toward her. He choked back a sob as he kneeled down to pull her into his arms. "You're alive."

"I'm alive. You're alive," Hermione said as she pulled him down for a light kiss. "I'm also in labor."

"What?" both men gasped in unison.

"The baby is coming soon. I need Molly or Madam Pomfrey. I need to get to the hospital wing."

"How long have you been in labor, love?" Severus asked.

"I don't know. My water broke about an hour ago, but I think the stress is making this go faster." Her voice cracked as another contraction started.

"Help me get her up; she can't have the baby here. With him." Harry gestured toward Voldemort's broken body.

With a nod, Severus stood up, and they pulled Hermione to her feet. Supporting her on each side, they practically carried her the rest of the way to the hospital wing. Madam Pomfrey looked up as they barged into the room. She had been treating Fred, who had sustained serious injuries after part of the castle fell on him. Molly was hovering over her son, but as soon as she saw Hermione, she went into mid-wife mode.

"Her water broke, Molly. She needs help," Harry explained.

"Get her on that bed over there," Madam Pomfrey called. "Molly, can you get her ready?"

"Of course!" Molly rushed to Hermione's side as the men helped her settle on the bed. "Now, both of you out. I need to get her changed." Molly closed the curtains around the bed and started removing Hermione's clothing, helping her into a light gown.

"Let's see how far along you are." She put a light blanket over Hermione to protect her modesty and checked on the progress of labor.

"Poppy! You'd better get in here; we don't have long!"

"What?" Hermione's voice was shaky. "Already?"

"Yes, dear, your daughter is coming. Do you want anyone with you, Hermione? Harry or Severus?"

"They can both be here, but only if they want to," she groaned in answer. "I don't want either to be uncomfortable."

Leaving Hermione with Poppy, Molly stepped out of the cubicle and went out to the hallway where the men were waiting. "The baby is coming quickly. She's under too much stress. I think she'd like one or both of you to be with her, but she wants you to be comfortable, so you decide and hurry in. Before I go back, I need to know something. Is it over?"

Harry smiled at Molly and pulled her into a hug. "He's gone. It's over." With a watery smile, she hurried back in the room, and both men stood there listening to Hermione groan as the door remained open.

A few more injured were brought in as Harry and Severus stood there. The reality of war would have to be faced, but not yet, not now. "You can go if you want, Harry," Severus told the young man. "You have every right to be there."

"Are you taking the job, Professor?" Harry asked. "Are you going to be more than just a name to that baby?"

"I plan to be her step-father. I'll help Hermione raise her, if you allow me."



"Then you should go too. Both of Callina's fathers should be there at her birth. Hermione needs you."

Harry walked into the infirmary, his head high and confidence in his step.

Severus watched Harry walk away, and at the sound of another scream, he ran into the infirmary and into the cubicle. He should have been slightly more prepared as he got a good look at more of Hermione than he had expected to see. Harry was standing at Hermione's side, holding her hand, so he made his way to the head of the bed and put his arms around her shoulders, letting her lean against him.

"You're doing great," he whispered as he massaged her neck.

"Thank you," she replied. "Thank you for being here with me."

"Always, my love, always." Severus turned toward Molly. "Why isn't Poppy here?"

"She's too busy with the others." She gave Severus a sharp look, urging him to not ask too many questions. "She'll come if needed. If everything goes smoothly, I'll be able to handle it."

"What should I do?" He felt helpless watching Hermione's face twist in pain.

"Just keep doing what you are doing, help her ride out the contraction, and encourage her. She's going to be pushing soon."

"What about me, Molly?" Harry asked nervously.

"The same. Just hold her hand, support her, and be her strength."

"Did you hear that, Hermione? You are going to be a mother soon. We'll be holding our daughter," Severus whispered.

"When can I push?" she asked through gritted teeth.

"How about now?" Molly answered.

The next half hour was a blur for Hermione. She felt like she was completely detached from her body. She felt the pain but never processed it. Her anchor was the firm body at her back, holding her, comforting her, and the strong hand that was holding hers tight. With one last effort, her body tensed, and all she heard was a cry. It wasn't her cry though; it was the cry of her daughter, the most beautiful sound in the world. When Molly placed her baby in her arms for the first time, she saw tears in her eyes as well. Three faces peered at the newborn baby. Little Callina was small but strong. She had jet black hair and Hermione's mouth and nose.

"She's beautiful. You did good," Severus said with awe in his voice.

"She's perfect," Hermione agreed.

Harry took one long look at his daughter, stroked her soft cheek and silently left the room.

"Let me take her and get her cleaned up. I promise I'll bring her right back." Molly stepped forward and cradled the baby in her arms, stepping out of the cubicle so that Madam Pomfrey could check her out. She knew what healthy babies looked like, and this one looked good.

Hermione already missed her daughter. "She's all right, isn't she?"

"She's fine. Molly just needed to clean her up," Severus assured.

Madam Pomfrey came in at that point, causing Hermione to stiffen in alarm. "You've got a healthy little girl. Congratulations to both of you. Severus, I never thought I'd see you a father; it warms the heart. And you made a beautiful child too! Who would have thought?"

"Thanks, Poppy," Severus said dryly as Hermione giggled lightly.

"You need to leave now, Severus." Madam Pomfrey pointed toward the open curtain. "Hermione has a bit more work to do, and you don't need to stick around. Go find Molly and hold your baby girl."

Severus leaned over to kiss Hermione lightly on the lips. "I'm so proud of you."

He did as he was told and stepped into the main room of the infirmary. It was full. He had no idea when he rushed in here that there were so many wounded. There were Healers here that he didn't recognize, and he realized that they must have been brought in from St. Mungo's. He stepped up to the first bed and saw one of the Patil twins. He couldn't figure out which one without house colors on. Her eyes were closed, but she looked like she was going to be all right. Next to her was Professor Flitwick, who had a nasty burn on his stomach. He gave Severus a slight wave before closing his eyes to rest. In the next bed over was Remus Lupin. Tonks was at his side holding his hand. She gave Severus a smile, and that told him that he'd live as well.

He couldn't see into the next few beds as curtains were drawn. Across on the other side was Fred Weasley, who was resting, although his breathing seemed ragged. He couldn't identify the person in the next bed. There was vague recognition, but he couldn't place him. Then his heart stopped as he saw Draco.

He hurried to his side. "Draco? What happened?"

"More broken bones. I got hit by a wall." He tried to chuckle but groaned. "I'll be fine. Father is dead though."

"I know. I saw him. I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I can go home now, to be with Mother. She'll need me." He coughed. "I heard Granger screaming. Your kid come?"

"Yes, we have a daughter. You can see her in the morning. You rest." Severus smoothed the blanket over Draco's lap and stepped away from the bed. He was proud of his godson; he'd helped save the Wizarding world.

Avoiding the next two beds with their closed curtains, he found Molly in the back room. She was diapering the baby girl while singing a quiet song. "How is she?" he asked, startling her for a moment.

"She's perfect, healthy, and strong." Molly smiled. "I know she's not yours, Severus, but I'm glad you are going to make her yours."

"She's mine in every way that counts, Molly."

"Do you want to hold your daughter?"

"I... I think so, but I don't know how." He laughed nervously. "I held Draco as a child, but he was a bit older and more solid than she is."

"She's tougher than she looks. Cradle her in your arms, hold her close and support her head." She placed the baby in his waiting arms. "There, you look just like a proper father. Don't squeeze her, and don't drop her, otherwise you'll be fine."

"Thank you. How is Fred?"

Molly's shoulders drooped. "He's hurt badly, but they say he'll live. It's hard to see one of your own injured. They told me he was dead, you know. They brought me to see his body!" She gave a shudder and bit back tears. "It was the worst moment of my life, and then I saw him breathing. I'm going to go sit with him. The baby will need to eat soon. Poppy will come get you when she's done with Hermione."

Severus was left alone with a newborn baby. She opened her eyes and looked at him. He wasn't sure what she could see, but he saw wisdom in her eyes. "You stopped a dark wizard tonight. Did you know that? You fulfilled a prophecy, all because you were loved. Are loved." His words were soft, and he almost thought there was understanding in her gaze. Their moment ended as Poppy came up to them.

"Severus, Hermione is ready to try to feed the baby. Do you want to bring her in?"

"Of course." He followed Poppy into the curtained area. He smiled at the exhausted woman propped up on the bed. She beamed back at him. "How are you?"

"I've been given a clean bill of health." She reached out her arms for her daughter, and Severus placed the baby lightly into her arms. Hermione didn't seem to have any fear of holding the newborn and immediately pulled her close.

"Poppy told me what to do," she told him as she lowered the blanket, exposing her breast. Severus watched in fascination as she attempted to get the baby to latch on. After a few frustrating minutes, Poppy guided her, and before long, the baby was getting her fill of milk.

"I'll leave the happy family alone for a few minutes. When she's done eating, she will probably sleep. We'll move you to a private room off of my office. It will be safer for you while the castle is cleared." Poppy straightened her robes and swished out of the cubicle.

"I haven't even thought of the others. What's the damage?" Hermione asked, looking at Severus with a worried expression.

"From what I gather, there is extensive damage to the building, but nothing that can't be fixed."

"I meant the people."

"I don't know exactly. There were deaths, many of them Death Eaters, fortunately. I know some students didn't make it, but I don't have the names. The Order is intact. The school lost Professor Grubbly-Plank early in the battle before Harry went for Draco."

"The wounded? I know there are some; I could hear the confusion."

"Fred Weasley is hurt, very badly from what I can tell, but he should live. One of the Patil twins and Professor Flitwick have minor injuries. Draco was hurt again, but it's just a few more broken bones. His father is dead."

"I can't say I'm sorry about Lucius. Draco? Is he going to be all right?"

"He's going to be fine. He'll be moving around in no time."

"The rest of the Weasleys?"

"They are fine. I know Arthur was hexed, but he was up on his feet fighting again before I could blink."

"Good. I'm sorry I didn't stay home," she said as tears formed in her eyes.

"Oh, Hermione, I never really expected you to. You are a Gryffindor and a woman of great courage and ambition. The people you care about the most were in danger. I knew you wouldn't sit idly by. Besides, the prophecy foretold that much."

"Prophecy? What prophecy? What are you talking about?" Hermione shifted slightly trying to sit up without disturbing Callie.

"I'm not the one to explain it to you. It's not mine to tell. In the morning, we'll fill you in."

"You know I won't accept that. What are you talking about? Was there another prophecy?"

Madam Pomfrey came in at that point, interrupting their conversation. Looking down at the now sleeping baby, she declared that it was time to move. She gingerly took the sleeping girl, and Severus scooped up Hermione, doing his best to keep the blanket covering her. They went into the room used for quarantine so that the baby would be in a more sterile and safe environment. Severus held the baby while Madam Pomfrey helped Hermione into a clean nightgown and into bed.

"Poppy? Have you seen Ginny Weasley?" Severus asked.

"I believe she's with her mother and Fred. If she's not at his bedside, she's out in the hall with the rest of her family."

"I'll be back, love," he told Hermione, handing her back her daughter. He left the private room and went looking for the youngest Weasley. He found her in the hall, sitting against the wall, propped up by Harry.

As soon as the family saw him, they started to inquire about Hermione. "She's fine, great actually. The baby is beautiful and healthy. She'll want to see you all in the morning," he told them with a smile. Severus chanced a look at Harry, who gave a nod and a grateful smile.

"Miss Weasley, can you please come with me for a moment? I think it's time you talked to Hermione." He watched as Ginny nodded and climbed to her feet.

"Are you sure?" she whispered.

"Yes. It's time." He led her to the private room and then went back to the hallway to wait while Ginny went in to see Hermione.

"Hermione?" Ginny asked, peeking in the room.

"Ginny! Oh thank Merlin you're all right!"

"Is that her? Is that your little girl?" Ginny walked closer to the bed in awe of the tiny little bundle in Hermione's arms. "Oh, she's perfect, Hermione! You did well!"

"Thanks. Do you want to hold her?" Hermione offered.

"I'd love to, but I'm filthy and bloody. I need to talk to you though. Professor Snape says it's time."

"Time for what? Ginny, is this about the prophecy he muttered about? What's going on?"

"There was a prophecy. About tonight, about what would happen."

"Why do you know about it and I don't?"

"I made it," Ginny whispered, looking at her hands.

"You? How did you do that? What did it say?" Hermione held her daughter closer to her, not sure what all this meant.

"I don't know how. It just happened. I was in detention with Snape, and from what he says, I went rigid, standing straight up and then spoke in a voice that wasn't my own. He recognized it as a prophecy and wrote it down as fast as he could, using a pensieve to get the few words he missed. We looked over it together, but I didn't know what it meant. He seemed to and immediately went to McGonagall. They told me I couldn't tell anyone, and when I figured out it involved you, I was sworn to secrecy until given permission, which I just was."

"Oh, Ginny, what did it say? Do you remember?"

"As a new life begins, evil will fall. One will create. One will shield. And two must love. When evil gains power, the two protect. Only through love can they survive."

"Wow. Cryptic, but powerful."

"Exactly. I didn't understand everything until I found out you were pregnant. When you confirmed it, I knew, somehow, that it was about your baby. From what I hear, it all came true." Ginny fidgeted with her robe. "Harry should come in and spend time with his daughter."

"What? Don't be silly, Ginny. Severus is her father," Hermione said, her heart starting to thump.

"One will create. One will shield. It was obvious Snape wasn't the father as soon as the pieces clicked. He is her father now, of course, but he didn't give her life. I know it was Harry. She's even got his ears." Ginny reached out and brushed her fingers over the baby's soft head. "It took both of them and their intense love for you and their daughter to save you and save the world. She's a hero, this little one."

"Ginny, I'm so sorry. Harry loves you so much. It was just one night."

"I know. Trust me, if I wanted to rage and get mad, I would have months ago. I was hurt at first, but I understood. It was that night that we were saying goodbye, and Harry didn't want to lose focus by being with me, wasn't it? I'm glad he had you. It was right; it had to be."

"Ginny, I don't know what to say. You amaze me."

"You amaze me, so we're even. Will you let me visit her every once in a while?"

"Anytime. Ginny, will you be her godmother?"

"Really?" Ginny smiled wide.

"If you want the job, I don't want it to be awkward for you."

"I'd love the job. I'm going to go get Harry." Ginny bent down to lay a kiss on her goddaughter's head and then kissed Hermione's head as well. She left the room without another word, and Hermione sat stunned by the events.

She wasn't sure why the prophecy was kept from her, but she knew there was a reason, and she'd get it out of Severus soon enough. As her eyes started to drop, there was a light knock on the door.

"Come in," she called.

"Hi," Harry said as he stepped quietly in the room. "Oh, my." He came closer to the bed, and Hermione saw tears in his eyes.

"Come closer. I don't bite, and Callie doesn't have teeth."

Harry walked over to the chair beside the bed and looked at his daughter. "I didn't get a good look at her earlier. She's beautiful."

"You should hold her," Hermione said, and Harry held out his arms to receive the baby.

"We did this?" he asked, amazed at the tiny creature. "How did we manage something so perfect?"

"Did you talk to Ginny?" Hermione asked.

"Yes. She told me about the prophecy. I can't believe she knew this whole time."

"She's something special, Harry. Don't let go of her."

"I won't. As soon as she's out of school, I'll put a ring on her finger. Maybe sooner if Molly agrees not to kill me." He laughed. "So Snape wants the job, huh? He's going to raise little Callie as his own?"

"He wants to help me raise her, but I want you in her life. You know you do too. I've asked Ginny to be her godmother, and she seems to understand. I know there is still a threat out there, but within our little circle, you should be known as her father."

"You'll still let me? I've been a right arse about the whole thing. I was so caught up in the reasons to not be her father that I didn't give any consideration to the reasons to be around for her. How will we make it work?"

"It just will work. We just have to believe that. Severus and I are going to try to have a real relationship, Harry. I'm in love with him."

"He'll be good to you."

"Yes, he will. He'll be good to Callie, and he'll understand your relationship with her." Hermione watched Harry sitting in silence. He finally nodded and smiled. "Harry? She still needs a middle name. That's your job."

"I think her middle name needs to be Ginevra. Callina Ginevra Potter Snape. It's a big name for such a tiny thing."

"It's perfect."

"I agree," a voice called from the doorway. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but, Harry, you are needed. The new Minister of Magic, Kingsley of all people, wants to talk to you." Snape stepped into the room.

"Here, you hold your daughter." Harry handed the baby over to Snape. "Hermione needs to sleep." With a kiss for his baby and one for his best friend, he left the room to go face the future.

"He's right. You sleep while I admire this pretty little girl." Severus settled into the chair while Hermione smiled and closed her eyes. It was a new world that she would face tomorrow. The threat of Voldemort was gone, and she was a mother.

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Almost done. . . Just one more chapter! Thanks for hanging in there with me.

# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 of 14

After one desperate night together, Hermione and Harry create a new life. In order to save their child, they turn to the only person who can help. By giving their baby his name, Severus Snape gains more than he ever expected.

Hermione paced the study, keeping her eye on the fireplace while she bounced a two-month-old Callie in her arms. She had expected Severus to check in and was getting worried. She should be used to his absence by now. He was rarely home, and he often missed checking in with her. If she were the jealous type, she'd think he'd found a mistress, but she knew better. He was busy, he was tired, and he was pulling away from her.

The last two months had sped by in a whirlwind of activity. Hermione's focus was nearly entirely on Callie for the first month. Severus was busy with the reconstruction at Hogwarts. He stayed home with her for only a week after the battle was over and the baby was born. Severus felt like his place was at the school, and it was, she understood that. The school re-opened a month after the battle, with nearly everything ready to go. After the students returned, he threw himself into his teaching, trying to fit in all of the work that the students had missed.

Hermione gave him his time since she was busy herself. She struggled to get into a routine with Callie while also trying to get some sleep. Narcissa Malfoy had moved in shortly after the battle. She refused to live at Malfoy Manor any longer, so Hermione invited her to stay with Severus' approval. She felt very comfortable with the woman, who had proven to be a big help with the baby. Narcissa had saved Hermione's sanity on more than one occasion by giving her just a few minutes' relief to take a shower. Draco was back in the house as well. He'd spent a great deal of time with the Ministry, sharing everything he knew about Voldemort and the other Death Eaters. He would be joining Harry and Ron in the Auror training program in January.

Harry stopped by regularly to see Callie. He wasn't ready to be a full-time father, but Hermione knew that in time he'd grow to have a wonderful relationship with his daughter. When he and Ginny finally had children, he would be an ideal dad.

Right now, Hermione's mind was on Severus. She missed him. She was promised a future with him, and so far he hadn't been a part of it.

"Just go see the git," Draco mumbled, not looking up from his book. "He's probably holed up in the dungeons grading papers, just as miserable as you are."

Hermione turned to her friend and smiled. "Do you really think he's miserable? Not that I want him to be miserable, but it would be nice if he were a little sad that he wasn't with me."

"Hermione, dear, take my son's advice. If you are tired of waiting for him, be assertive. Go after what, or who, you want," Narcissa coached.

"I can't just show up. I've got Callie to think of and . . ." She paused as she thought of her excuses. Callie was the only reason she couldn't leave. There were no known threats against her anymore, and Hogwarts was safe once again.

"I'll watch the kid," Draco volunteered. "She doesn't do anything. Just put her in that basket thing and I'll keep an eye on her."

"Oh, well. Thanks for the offer, Draco, but I . . ."

"Yes, Hermione! Go see him. Draco will watch Callina. I'm sure he'll be quite attentive, and I'll be here if he needs any help. Take as much time as you need," Narcissa urged, giving Hermione a wink. Hermione sighed and smiled. She trusted Narcissa. Things would be all right.

"Fine, thank you for your offer, Draco. I'll take you up on it." She walked up to Draco, pulled the book out of his hands and replaced it with her sleeping daughter. "She should sleep for a few hours, so I'm sure she won't be any problem. Nappies are in her nursery, and there are a few bottles of breast milk in the refrigerator. Mosey knows where everything else is. Contact me if there's any problem. I'll be at Hogwarts." With a smile, she stepped into the fireplace and disappeared.

Draco had a stricken look on his face as he turned to his mother. "Nappies? Breast milk? Help me!"

Narcissa just smiled at her son and thought of how much fun she would have watching him over the next few hours. He'd never forget to use a contraception spell again.

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Hermione was able to Floo directly into Severus' office these days and took advantage of that freedom. The room was empty, so she made her way to the hidden door that held his private rooms. Whispering the password he had confided to her, she pushed open the door.

"Severus? Are you here?" she called.

"Hermione?" Severus walked out of his bedroom, carrying a stack of books. "What's wrong? The baby? Are you all right?" He quickly placed the books on a table and moved to grip Hermione's arms.

"Nothing's wrong. Well, except for the fact that I missed you."

"You missed me? You scared me out of my mind because you missed me?" He pulled his arms away and walked back to his table, picking through his books.

"I didn't think missing someone was a problem. Clearly I was wrong. It's been a month since you've been home. I thought you would be happy to see me."

Severus sighed and ran his hand through his hair. "I am happy to see you, Hermione. Where's Callie?"

"Draco thinks he's babysitting, but she's with Narcissa." She chuckled.

"I'm sorry I didn't check in with you tonight."

"You haven't checked in with me in days. You need to be honest with me, Severus. I know you were pushed into being a father to Callie, and I'm sorry if you felt you were pushed into a relationship with me. I love you, but I don't want to trap you. Say the word and we'll be gone." She watched him for a long moment. His long hands flexed around the book he was holding, and his eyes stayed trained on the floor.

"Okay, I'll be leaving. Give me a few days to find somewhere else to live, and I'll be out of your home. Thank you for all you did. You fulfilled your promise and I'll never forget it." Hermione turned and silently walked toward the door. She was trying to fight back the tears but they were flowing.

"Don't go," his deep voice whispered. "Please don't leave me."

Hermione turned around and looked at Severus. His eyes were on hers now, and they were pleading. "Don't go now, or don't go ever?" she asked.

"Ever. Please don't ever leave me," he said as he took the few steps towards her. "I love you. I love Callie. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, I just don't want you to feel trapped. I haven't been there for you, and I'm sorry. I was overwhelmed with everything, and I didn't know how to cope. I was afraid you wanted a way out of our relationship, and I was trying to give you that time."

"Why would I want a way out? I love you!" she cried.

"But I'm old and cranky. You have your whole life ahead of you. You should get a chance to continue your education, use your brilliant mind."

"And you won't let me do that if we're together? Honestly, I thought we were past that. You aren't that old. You're only cranky when you are hungry and tired, but so is Callie. I do have my whole life ahead of me, but I'd prefer it if you were in that life. I can still go back to school and use my mind even if we are together. Preferably when we are together, as I'll need help with Callie. Please don't do this again. Don't push me away."

"Never again. I'm so sorry, Hermione." He reached out and ran his hands lightly over her cheeks, down her neck and to her shoulder. Pulling her toward him, he met her lips in a soft kiss. "I love you."

"I love you too," she whispered before being consumed again in his touch and in his kiss.

"So how long is Narcissa willing to watch Callie?"

"We've got a few hours," she giggled as he nibbled on her neck.

"Let's make them count."

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"Daddy!"

Severus put down the book he was reading with a sigh. Why his children felt the need to stand in the middle of the house and yell was beyond him.

"I'm in the library, Callie."

"Daddy, Mum said to tell you that the guests are arriving." She stopped and took a deep breath. "Daddy, can you talk to Mum? She said that I couldn't bring a broom to school."

"Well, she's right of course." Severus normally agreed with his wife. It made life easier.

"Daddy! I'm a good flyer and I'm going to learn to fly anyway. Why can't I bring my own broom?" Callie whined, stomping her little foot.

"For one thing, you don't have your own broom. For another, you don't need your own unless you are on the Quidditch team."

"Papa said he'd get me a broom." She was quite persistent, this daughter of his.

"I said I'd get you a broom when you made the team," Harry said as he stepped in from the hallway. "I put a stipulation on that, Callina."

"So if I make the team my first year, I can have a broom?" Callie asked with a little hope in her bright green eyes.

"First years don't make the Quidditch teams, honey." Hermione came in to add to the conversation, followed by Ginny with baby Lily on her hip.

"Papa did," she argued.

"Well, Harry was an exception to every rule," Snape drawled from his place on the couch, picking up Phillip, the youngest of his three children and his only son. "Minerva never should have let a first year play."

"I was not an exception, I was exceptional," Harry teased. "You are a good flyer, Callie, and if you make the team, I promise I will get you a broom, no matter what your parents say."

"Thanks, Papa." She gave him a grin, one reserved only for him. She had both of her fathers wrapped around her finger, and she knew it.

"I don't know why you like to fly anyway." Hermione shuddered at the thought.

"It's in my genes, Mum, that's what Daddy always says."

"That it is." Severus chuckled. "You've got your mother's intelligence and Harry's reckless spirit."

"What do I have from you, Daddy?" Callie snuggled up against her father.

"You have my love. You always have my love."

Author's Note: Thank you so much to all of you who have stuck with me on this story. It's been amazing to read your reviews and they encourage me to keep writing. Thanks to SeverusLovesUs and Olgameisterfunk08 who were fabulous betas!