

Reversing the Veil

by HermioneWeasley1972

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

Notes: Beta thanks and other notes will be added after the reveal. The usual disclaimers apply (not mine, no money).

The war was finally over. The dead were mourned and buried, and the celebrations were finally winding down. It had been two months since the final battle, and the Trio had more than a month until they were to return to Hogwarts for their final year of school. Headmistress McGonagall had decided that school would begin in October that year instead of September to allow the students time to recover from the battle and to spend time with their families.

"Feels weird, doesn't it?" Harry asked, breaking the silence as the three sat outside at the Burrow.

Hermione looked up from her new Defence book and nodded at Harry. "It certainly does. No Horcruxes to find, no Dark Wizards to track down. I think I almost forgot what it was like to be just a normal witch. I think the last time I was a normal witch was back in our first year, for about a month or so."

"Yeah, before we fought that troll in the girls' bathroom," Ron piped up, unwrapping a Chocolate Frog.

"I thought you had all of those Chocolate Frog cards, Ron." Hermione shook her head and smiled.

"Hey, I still like chocolate. 'Sides, they have been coming out with some new ones. Here, Harry, I think you would like to have this one," Ron said, handing it to him.

Harry looked at the card and placed it in his pocket, then stood up and went over to the pond, gazing down into the water.

Hermione watched him walk away and then turned to Ron. "Who was on that card, Ron?"

"His dad. I thought he'd want to have it."

"Didn't you think that maybe it would make him feel bad? How would you have felt if someone handed you a card with Fred's picture on it?"

Harry stood near the pond, looking out at the water. He knew that Ron had meant well, but he couldn't possibly understand what it was like to lose a parent. It was true that Fred had been killed in the battle, but he still had a family. He still had five brothers, a sister, and two parents. And even though Harry thought of the Weasleys as his family, they could never replace his real parents.

He took the Wizard card out of his pocket and looked at it, smiling as his father waved at him from his picture. His father looked so much like him, especially now that he was older. He saw the writing underneath his father's picture, but he couldn't read it. Not now.

Feeling a hand on his shoulder, he turned to see Ron and Hermione standing behind him.

"I'm sorry, mate. I wasn't thinking when I gave you that."

"It's okay, Ron. I know that you meant well, and I'm glad that you gave it to me. I just didn't expect it, that's all." Harry looked at the card once more before putting it back in his pocket.

"Think Mum's calling us for lunch. We better head in," Ron said, making his way toward the house.

"Some things never change," Hermione said with a laugh.

"So, on the 15th of September, there will be a special ceremony to award the Order of Merlin, First Class, to Mr. Harry Potter, the wizard who is responsible for taking down Voldemort, formerly known as He Who Must Not Be Named."

Harry stopped eating and looked at the wireless. They were giving **him** the Order of Merlin? What about all the people who had died? He had done nothing special.

"Excuse me, please," he said, standing up from the table and going upstairs. Once he reached the room that the Weasleys had given him, he laid on the bed with his hands behind his head. How was he going to go to that ceremony and accept that award when so many of his friends had died during the battle?

Once he heard Ron and Hermione's footsteps outside the door, he had come up with a plan. He wasn't going to be there for the ceremony, if his plan worked.

There was a knock at the door, and the door cracked open a bit.

"Can we come in, Harry?" Hermione asked, poking her head in.

"Sure, come on in." Sitting up on the bed, Harry watched his friends enter the room and smiled at them. "You know, I've been thinking about something. I never properly thanked the two of you for all the help that you gave me over the years. How about the three of us take a trip somewhere? We can go have some fun together before we go back to Hogwarts."

"This doesn't have anything to do with what we heard on the wireless, does it?" Hermione asked, sitting down on the bed beside him.

"I don't want to be here and accept a nice award when so many people have died. I don't deserve it. Besides, don't the two of you want to go and do something normal for once?"

"It sounds good to me," Ron said, swallowing the bit of food he still had in his mouth.

The rest of the afternoon was spent talking and planning, trying to decide where the three of them were going to go. Little did they know that they were in for another adventure.

And here's the prompt followed:

Coping in the Aftermath

a. Many people were affected by Voldemort — his followers,

his victims, etc. After the war is over, how are they

dealing? After all, for people like Harry, Ginny, the

trio, and especially the Malfoys, he was a huge part of

their lives. How are they dealing with his demise and

are there any repercussions?

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

The next few days were a flurry of activity. There was a lot of discussion on where they should go, and finally Hermione suggested going to the States. She had read about some of the magical history that was there and had always found it fascinating. Eager to get on their way, Ron and Harry agreed.

It wasn't too long before the three of them were packed and ready to go, with their international Portkeys sitting on the table in front of them. The Portkeys were set to activate that evening at 7pm, and they would be arriving in Salem, Massachusetts at 2pm. The Portkeys hadn't been easy to get and had required some ingenuity on Hermione's part, but she been able to convince the Ministry that she was going there with two of her other friends and not Harry Potter.

"The three of you just got back from the Horcrux hunt. You just battled Voldemort. Don't you think you should rest up and get ready for school?"

Ron looked at his mother and then at his two friends. They had heard the same words over and over again at least five times a day ever since they had announced their plans to take a trip. "Mum, we've been resting for the past three months. Don'tcha think we deserve to have some fun? Look at Harry. He hasn't had a day of fun in his life."

Molly's expression had softened when he'd mentioned Harry, as it almost always did. "But the three of you are so young..."

"Mum, we're full grown! For Merlin's sake, we have gone out and fought the darkest wizard of all time. We're not -" Ron stopped before he finished his argument and thought better of it due to a look from Hermione, "going to get ourselves in trouble or anything. We promise."

Molly crossed her arms over her chest. "You're not going to get into trouble? And how exactly do you plan to keep that promise? You are going to a foreign country, and you won't know anyone there. For all you know there could be another wizard like Voldemort there. And how exactly are you going to handle the hotel situations?"

"Mum!" Ron's face was bright red, as well as the tips of his ears.

"Well, I know how you and Hermione have been getting closer," Molly said plainly. "Did your father have that talk with you?"

"Years ago." He looked at Hermione and then back at his mother. "OK, Mum, you got us. Hermione and I are really taking this trip to elope, and Harry's going along because he's going to be my best man."

"Ron!" Hermione exclaimed in horror.

Finally, Harry could stay quiet no longer. "Hermione will have her own hotel room." Harry thought this rather unnecessary considering that for ten months the three of them had been sharing a tent, seeing each other in their pajamas and all, but he didn't say anything.

That seemed to put Molly at ease, but the three of them knew that she still wasn't happy about the situation. Checking to make sure that all of them had packed what they had needed and that Ron had money with him, her fussing over them lasted nearly until the Portkeys activated.

"Make sure that you owl me the moment you get there so that I know that you arrived, and make sure that you bundle up..."

"Mum! We're going to the States, not Antarctica!"

"Mrs. Weasley, we have packed clothes for any possible climate. But it's almost time for the Portkeys to activate, and if we miss them, we may not be able to get more."

"Okay," Molly said, giving them each a hug and watching them pick up their Portkeys. "Remember to bring your sister back something!"

At precisely 7pm, the three of them disappeared.

Hermione had never liked the sensation that Portkeys caused, but she knew that for long distances such as international travel they were the most efficient. Upon landing, she tumbled to the ground and waited for Ron and Harry. Seeing Ron falling toward her, she swiftly got out of his way just as he hit the ground with Harry landing soon after.

"Gonna need to practice that some, I reckon. 'Course, I never thought we were gonna get out of the house, what with Mum giving us the third degree. Can you believe she actually thought we were going to have sex?"

"Yeah, it's not like we weren't all living together in that tent on the Horcrux hunt."

"But she figured that we were more responsible then because of us helping you, Harry. Now we don't have anything else important to do, so she figures we're going to let our raging hormones take over," Hermione said, rolling her eyes.

"Hey, who says we don't have anything important to do? I say we have something very important to do. We're going to go have some fun!" Ron said with a grin as he got to his feet, then bent down to help Hermione to her feet as Harry got up.

"That sounds important to me," Harry said with a grin.

As they made their way toward the hotel, the three of them looked around in wonder at the beautiful foliage. The leaves on the trees were just starting to turn colours and they were treated to a sight that they didn't see often in London – a clear blue sky unmarred by smog.

"S'pose we could take in a Quidditch match while we're here?" Ron asked Harry, who then turned to Hermione. To their surprise, she smiled.

"We should make a schedule of all we want to do. Of course, since there is a lot of history here, I want to take in some of the culture. We will make sure that we do everything that we want to do. We should spend half of our time here and half of our time in Louisiana."

"Right then. Let's get to the hotel and get settled, and then we'll see what there is to see and do here."

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 11

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The three of them made their way down Essex Street in Salem, each of them taking in the different sights along the street. Hermione's eyes, of course, were planted on the many historic places along the way while Ron and Harry were more interested in the shops and, in Ron's case, the restaurants.

"We should keep our eyes open for our inn. It's located right here on Essex Street," Harry said, looking at the numbers on the signposts.

"What's the number, Harry?" Hermione asked, looking around at the numbers as well.

"Erm, it was 331, I believe." He consulted a piece of paper that he held in his hand. "Yeah, 331."

"There it is," Hermione said once they had gone down the road a bit more. "Harry, it looks beautiful!"

His cheeks turning crimson, Harry smiled. "Yeah, well, I wanted us to stay someplace nice. Come on, Ron." Harry looked around for Ron, not seeing him nearby. "Where'd Ron go?"

Hermione turned around and looked, shielding her eyes from the sunlight. "There he is," she said, pointing at a tall figure in the distance who had stopped outside a window. "Think he found a sweet shop?"

"Probably." Harry grinned at her as they walked together back to where Ron stood. But to their surprise, he hadn't stopped at a sweet shop or a restaurant. He had stopped to read a sign on a window.

"Shame we didn't come next month. They have a lot of wicked stuff for Halloween, looks like."

Harry and Hermione read the sign as well. It did look as if Salem put a lot of emphasis on Halloween.

"Maybe next year we can come back for Halloween," Hermione said with a smile. "It does look like a lot of fun. Now come on, we found the place where we are staying."

Fifteen minutes later they were back at the Salem Inn and checking into their two rooms.

"You don't have to worry about hiding your wands and magic here," the woman at the desk told them. "We are a magical establishment, and we cater only to magical community. In fact, the Muggles can't even see our building." She took the money from Harry and had them sign the registration book. "Your rooms are on the second floor, side by side and connected by two doors. If you go out of our rear door, you will find yourself on Enchanter's Way. There you will find any potion ingredients or other items that you will need from the magical community. There is also a branch of Gringotts where you can change your wizarding money to Muggle American money if you want to."

"Thank you," Hermione said with a smile.

"Here are the spells which are specific to your rooms," she said, handing them each a piece of paper. "They constantly change with guests, so the guests who stayed there before you cannot enter your rooms. And if you need anything, there are sashes in your room that you can pull to summon the house-elves. If you take that elevator over there, it will take you to your floor."

"Thank you again. We'll go get settled in now," Harry said before exchanging a look with Ron.

Before Hermione could comment on the house-elves, Harry and Ron hurried her to the elevator and pushed the button for the second floor.

"You know, you didn't have to do that," Hermione said, rolling her eyes and crossing her arms over her chest.

"What?" Ron said innocently, giving Harry a sidelong glance. "What did we do?"

"You busted me off before I could say anything about the slavery of house-elves, that's what. Aren't you going to ever let me live that down? ~~It~~^{It} was four years ago, you know."

"Tell you what, Hermione. We'll let you live that down when you stop bugging us so much about playing Wizard's Chess instead of studying," Harry teased.

"That's not fair. Okay, I won't say another word about it on our vacation. But when we get to Hogwarts, all bets are off." Hermione tried to look stern, but joined Ron and Harry who had burst out laughing.

By the time the doors opened on their floor, the three of them had tears rolling down their cheeks from laughing so hard. They were laughing so hard that they had to wait to calm down because they weren't able to cast the spells to get into their rooms.

"You know," Hermione said, catching her breath, "that felt really good. I can't remember the last time the three of us laughed like that."

With that sober thought, the laughter quickly died down in the hall, and Hermione reached into her beaded purse to get the rucksacks. Once everyone had their luggage, she cast the entrance spell to her room and unpacked her own bag. She didn't know how her parents had done it when they were traveling, but she was glad that she didn't need to carry a heavy suitcase around.

Several minutes later, a knock came from the adjoining room when she was putting the finishing touches on her hair and makeup. She knew that the feelings that she had for Ron had been buried during the Horcrux hunt and the aftermath, but they were beginning to resurface and she wanted to look her best.

When she opened the door, she was greeted by the smiling, eager faces of her friends..

"So, are we headed for Enchanter's Way?" she asked, fully knowing the answer.

"Course we are," Ron said with a grin. "Maybe they carry some great Quidditch stuff there, or maybe they have ice cream..."

"Or maybe they have a good bookstore," Hermione retorted. Spying something on the table in her room, she read the pamphlet, which was titled 'A Visitor's Guide to Enchanter's Way'. "Well, here is a pamphlet, and it lists all of the stores on it."

"Enchanter's Way, here we come!"

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

Disclaimer: Not mine, no money.

Hermione walked with Ron and Harry out onto Enchanter's Way. Her friends seemed just as immediately impressed by the display and organization of the shops as she was. To her, it felt like the first time she'd stepped onto Diagon Alley.

"Welcome to Enchanter's Way," a witch said as they entered the street. "I was told that there would be three new people coming to visit us. Here are maps of the street and coupons for each of you. The coupons can be used for twenty percent off your purchase at any of our stores."

"Thank you," Hermione replied with a smile. "Okay, let's see. I know you two are going to want to go to 'An Itch for Quidditch.' How about I go to 'There's No Place like Tomes' and meet you at 'How Sweet It Is' in half an hour?"

"Alright," Harry said.

Ron grinned at Hermione. "Leave it to you to choose the two stores that we will spend the most time in."

"I didn't spend all that time with you two in Diagon Alley for nothing. Okay, half an hour," Hermione said, setting her watch. "See you then!"

Knowing that her time was limited, Hermione hurried down Enchanter's Way and was soon entering the shop. A smile crept over her face as she saw that the layout of the shop was similar to a library.

"Welcome to my shop," the witch behind the counter said to her. "Please take your time and look around, and be sure to ask me if you need any help."

Looking through the shop, Hermione knew that this was where her coupon was going to be used. There were so many different spells and so much information that she wouldn't have known about if she hadn't come to the States.

She was browsing the history section when she heard someone come up behind her.

"You aren't from around here, are you?" the shopkeeper asked her.

"No, I'm here on holiday with my two friends. We're from the United Kingdom."

"I've always wanted to go there. Didn't you guys have some trouble with that dark wizard there a few months ago?"

"Yes, you could say that," Hermione answered ruefully.

"Fortunately we never had anything like that happen here," the witch said, knocking on the door jam. "By the way, I'm Abigail," the witch said, holding out her hand.

"I'm Hermione." After shaking the witch's hand, she glanced at her watch and her eyes opened wide. "I told my friends that I would meet them in five minutes. I'll take these books now and come back again later."

"Please do," Abigail replied. When she rang up the order, she handed her back her coupon. "Save it for the next time you come in."

Harry and Ron were waiting at the door of 'How Sweet It Is' when she got there. Ron had a new broom, and Harry was tossing a new Snitch as she approached.

"Nice broom, Ron," Hermione said with a smile. "Is that all you bought, Harry?"

"Actually, I got a Quidditch set. It's being sent to the room," Harry replied.

"Yeah, now we can have a proper game of Quidditch," Ron said with a grin. "And with this new broom, our team is going to be unstoppable this year." Suddenly, Ron's face fell, and Hermione put her arm around him. She knew that he was thinking of his brother.

"Fred would have been proud of you, Ron." Reaching up, she gave him a tender kiss on the cheek and a small smile.

Out of the corner of her eye, Hermione saw Harry watching them closely with sadness in his eyes.

Pulling away from Hermione, Ron looked pleased, but embarrassed at the same time. "Let's go see what kind of sweets they have in here."

They found that 'How Sweet It Is' was a shop very much like Honeydukes back in Hogsmeade, but with different types of candy.

"Hey, Ron, look! They have things like our Chocolate Frogs," Harry said, holding up one of the wrapped foil packets.

"Feels kinda heavy, doesn't it?" Ron said, taking one. "Fudge Eagles," he read on the wrapper. "With a collectable coin inside."

"Those are one of our best sellers," the wizard who owned the shop stated. "Everyone seems to love collecting the coins. Where are you from?"

"We're from the United Kingdom. We have Chocolate Frogs there with Famous Wizard cards inside. Here, think I gotta couple with me," Ron said, reaching into his pocket and showing them to the shopkeeper.

"Cool! Think the owner of your candy store might be interested in doing some trading?" the shopkeeper asked, looking at the cards that Ron had given him. "By the way, I'm Drew."

"Don't know. Maybe," Ron replied with a shrug.

"You have a lot of these cards at home?" Drew asked, handing the cards back to him.

Hermione chuckled. "Thousands, more than likely."

"Yeah," Harry agreed, remembering when he had met Ron on the train during their first year.

"If you would be willing to sell me your spare cards, I'll make you a good deal on them."

"Yeah, that would be great!" Ron couldn't keep the excitement from his voice.

"Here are a couple of my cards. Take them with you, and give one to the owner of your candy shop. If you can convince them to carry some of my stuff, I might send you some compensation for that as well."

"Great!" Ron grinned and shook Drew's hand.

The three of them left a few minutes later, each carrying a bag of Fudge Eagles and assorted other sweets.

"Where to now?" Harry asked, looking up and down Enchanter's Way.

"Why don't we just walk along and see what there is to see? We can go in the shops that look interesting."

As they made their way down Enchanter's Way, they went into 'Robe -n- Hood,' 'Boiling Mad,' and the apothecary. But as they came out of the apothecary, Hermione and Harry saw Ron standing in front of a shop.

The shop was a joke shop known as 'Guffaw.'

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

Ron stood there for a moment, simply looking at the door to the shop. Harry and Hermione could both see that he was conflicted as to whether or not he wanted to go in. Finally, he turned.

"Think I'll come back here another time. Let's go look around and see what else is here."

Turning to walk down the way, Ron didn't see his two friends exchanging a look. They were seeing a side of him that they normally didn't see.

Ron was laying on his bed in the room he shared with Harry, his hands clasped behind his head. It was seven p.m. here, but it was midnight back in the United Kingdom, so they had decided that they were going to cut their first day short and then head out early the next day.

Harry was snoring softly in his bed, but Ron couldn't settle down. His mind kept going back to that shop, Guffaw. He had felt funny going into it when the other two were with him, but maybe it was still open now. Getting up quietly from his bed, Ron scribbled a quick note on the paper provided.

Going out. Back soon.

Grabbing his money bag from the bedside table, he quietly slipped out the door. A few minutes later, he found himself in Enchanter's Way and standing outside of Guffaw. The shop was still open, and he wasn't sure if he was happy or disappointed. On the one hand, he wanted to go in. On the other hand, he wished it had been closed.

"Oi, Ronald! We already know how long it takes you to make a move on a witch. Don't be tellin' me it'll take ya as long to make a move on a ruddy shop, mate."

Ron looked around, half expecting to see Fred, but of course he wasn't there. But he also knew that's exactly what Fred would have said had he been there. Taking a deep breath, Ron pushed the door open and heard the merry tinkle of the bell as the door opened.

"Ron Weasley!" a familiar voice called out to him.

Ron turned and looked, and his mouth dropped open as he recognized the grinning face of Lee Jordan.

"Lee! What are you doing here?" Ron went over to his friend, shook his hand, and slapped him on the shoulder with his other hand.

Lee did the same to Ron. "I'm helping out my cousin with the shop. Mike, I'm taking my break now. This is Ron Weasley."

"Weasley? You any relation to..."

"He's their brother, Mike," Lee said, casting a meaningful glance at his cousin.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Ron. And I'm very sorry about your brother," Mike said, giving him a sad look.

"Erm, thanks," Ron replied, not really knowing what to say.

"Let me show you around, Ron." Lee pulled him away from his cousin's gaze and down one of the aisles.

"So Mike knows all about the Last Battle and Voldemort?"

"Oh, yeah, but he's known about Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes for years. Have a look." Lee pointed to the products on either side of the aisle.

Ron gaped as he saw that the aisle was filled with products that his brothers and Lee had invented.

"I see your brothers never told you that they were also selling their products in the States. Then again, Mike only opened Guffaw about two years ago. When I heard he was opening, I told the twins, and well, the rest is history." Lee looked around the shop. "Not real busy. Why don't we go back to the work room, and we can get caught up?"

A few minutes later, they were in the back room. Lee had his feet up on the work table, and he handed Ron a bottle with a volcano on the front of it.

"This is Lavabeer. Kinda like Firewhiskey back home. So, how are you doing, mate?" Lee opened up his own bottle and looked at Ron.

Ron took a swig of his own drink to kill time. The taste of the drink was not unpleasant; it was hot like Firewhiskey was but had an interesting flavour. "Doing okay, I guess. The three of us decided we needed some time away before going back to Hogwarts."

"Harry and Hermione are here too?" Lee took a swig of his own bottle and looked interested.

"Yeah, they're back at the hotel. I just needed to, I dunno, take some time for myself." Ron downplayed what he was feeling, but he wasn't fooling Lee.

"I know you gotta miss him, Ron. The three of you were so close. Fred was a great wizard, and I miss him a lot, too." Lee didn't look serious very often, but Ron could tell that he meant what he said. "To Fred," Lee said, raising his bottle.

Ron raised his as well. Just then, they heard someone clearing his throat.

"Well, now, are we having a tea party back here or what?" Mike grinned at the two of them and knocked Lee's feet off the table. "Damn, I guess it's not working."

"Nah, I just didn't put my feet in the right place."

"What are you talking about?" Ron asked curiously.

"Put your feet up here, Ron," Mike said, pointing to a spot on the table.

Ron did as he was told and soon he heard...

"GET YOUR FEET OFF THE TABLE!!"

Ron nearly jumped a foot in the air and landed on the floor while Mike and Lee burst out laughing.

"Mum would love one of these," Ron said, picking himself up off of the floor.

"I'll send you one when they are perfected. Now, is there anything you would like? We have to close up shop soon, but I hope you'll come back before you leave. Bring Harry and Hermione too."

A few minutes later, Ron was heading back to the hotel, a bag of products in his hand. The visit had been nice, but it had also made him sad. It made him miss Fred that much more. For the first time since Harry had suggested the trip, he wondered if it hadn't been a mistake. Maybe he shouldn't have left so soon after Fred's death. He stopped at the post office in Enchanter's Way and decided to send a note to his family.

Mum and Dad,

Just wanted to let you know we arrived safely. Don't know when this will arrive, but didn't want you to worry.

Ron

He'd never really been one to express his feelings, but a lot had changed in the past year. He paid his money and watched as the pigeon flew off with his note on his leg. When the pigeon was out of sight, he continued down Enchanter's Way.

Just before he entered their hotel, the light of the lamps caught the strands of a spider's web dropping down in front of him. Even though he still didn't like spiders, he knew that there were much worse things that he could face. The death of a family member was one of them.

He'd face a whole army of spiders if it would only bring his brother back.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

"Good morning," the witch at the desk greeted Hermione as she got off of the elevator. "I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself yesterday. My name is Meghan."

"I'm Hermione. My friends and I had a great time in Enchanter's Way yesterday. I was wondering if you can give me any information about the history of magic in Salem? I know that there is a lot of information in the Salem Witchcraft Museum, but I was wondering if there was something that showed that time from the magical point of view."

"Actually, there is information in the Salem Witchcraft Museum from our point of view; you just need to have the password to enter the proper area. The password is Morgana. Speak that name and you will be given entrance to the restricted area of the museum. The people who run the Muggle part of the museum are Muggles, but they have knowledge of our world. All of the employees are married to a witch or wizard, or they are a Squib."

"Morgana," Hermione repeated. "I will remember that. Thank you for the information. There is one more thing that I wanted to ask you about because I know that Ron and Harry are going to want to go. When is the next Quidditch match?"

"There is actually a match tomorrow. If the three of you would like to go, the Quidditch Express leaves from Enchanter's Way at two pm. It's the trolley that goes directly to the Quidditch field and back. We sell tickets here at the inn or they can be purchased in Enchanter's Way. I know that they still have seats available."

"I know that they are going to want to see that match, so I am certain we will be back to buy those tickets. Goodbye for now," Hermione said, giving Meghan a smile.

A few minutes later she was back in her room, applying makeup and brushing out her hair. Her hair was as it usually was, long, curly, and unmanageable. She had silently cursed it for most of her life because it was one of the banes of her existence. She didn't consider herself a vain witch, but she did want to look nice. So she had brought a supply of Sleekeazy's Hair Potion with her on the trip. A quick application of the potion made her hair manageable enough that she could put it in a French braid.

Glancing at her watch, she saw that it was nine o'clock in the morning, and it was her opinion that it was quite time for her friends to get up. With a grin, she opened the door that adjoined their rooms and flicked her wand at the curtains, which opened and allowed the bright autumn sunlight to filter in.

"Time to wake up!" she called out cheerfully.

Ron jumped about a foot in the air, revealing that he wore nothing but a pair of pajama bottoms.

"Blimey, Hermione, don't you knock?" he chided her, turning red and pulling the sheets back over his form.

With a roll of her eyes, Hermione glanced over at Harry's bed, which was unoccupied. "Really, Ron, we *did* live all together in a tent for all those months last year. Besides, you look cute in your pajama bottoms."

"Yeah, well, just because we lived together doesn't mean I want... I do?" Ron's face turned even redder as he tried not to look pleased. A moment of embarrassed silence passed before he continued. "Er, I like your hair like that."

"Thanks. Sometimes I think it would be easier if I got it cut."

Ron looked as if he wanted to say something, but then Harry came out of the bathroom, fully dressed, with his hair wet from his shower.

"Bout time you woke up, Ron," Harry said with a grin.

"Hey, just 'cause you conked out early last night doesn't mean I did!" Ron threw his pillow at Harry, hitting him square in the face.

Of course, Harry retaliated and threw the pillow back at him. Soon the two were throwing pillows so hard that the room was full of feathers. It went on for several minutes before an ear piercing whistle was heard and the two combatants stopped to look at their third friend.

"Are you two going to act like ten-year-olds for the rest of the day, or are we actually going to go do something?" Hermione asked, her hands on her hips.

Ron and Harry glanced at one another.

"You know, Ron, she's right. We *should* act more our age."

"I believe you are right, mate," Ron replied, grinning at Harry. "Boys our age would not just be throwing the pillows at each other, would they?"

"Nope, not when there is a *girl* in the room."

Hermione screamed as the two boys charged at her, buffeting her with their pillows.

"Oh, now, that's not fair!" Hermione giggled. "I don't have one! *Accio pillow!*" She pointed her wand through her open door and the pillow from her bed zoomed across the room to her. "You two are in so much trouble!" There was a wild glint in her eyes as she started beating them with her own pillow.

Several minutes later, the three of them were collapsed on the floor in the midst of a pile of feathers, laughing and breathing heavily. No one said anything, but simply enjoyed the moment.

Finally, Hermione stood up and groaned at her reflection in the mirror.

"Now come on, you gotta admit that was fun," Ron said in response to Hermione's reaction.

"It *was* fun, but now I have to redo my hair!" Hermione said with a roll of her eyes as she headed back to her room. "And just for that, we're going to check out some of the history of Salem today!"

The groans of the boys followed her until she closed the door that joined their rooms.

Nearly an hour later, the three set off, bound for the historical part of Salem. Hermione was obviously the most eager of the three while her two companions look slightly less enthusiastic.

"Least you coulda done was to let us go get some breakfast first," Ron grumbled as his stomach reminded him that he hadn't eaten for over twelve hours.

"Well, if you had gotten up earlier and hadn't had a lie-in, then started a pillow fight so I had to redo my hair, we would have gotten something to eat and then gone to the museum."

"But a museum! You know Harry and I don't care for that sort of thing," Ron complained, looking at Harry for support. "Besides, I thought you agreed we could go to a Quidditch game."

Harry put his hands up in front of him, clearly choosing to stay out of the argument.

Hermione didn't reply for a moment or two, but finally said, "It just so happens, Ron, that there ~~is~~ is a Quidditch game tomorrow that I will be happy to go to with the two of you. That is, of course, if you two don't grumble too much about going to the museum today." Hermione looked smug as Ron quickly shut up. "Now, Meghan at our hotel told me that in order to get to the magical part of the museum we have to say Morgana. That is the password to let the staff know that we are a part of the magical community. All of the workers there are either married to a witch or wizard or they are Squibs, so they are aware of the magical world."

When they arrived at the Salem Witch Museum, Ron and Harry headed right for the magical part of the museum while Hermione browsed the Muggle area. When she joined them at last, she found them engrossed in a discussion with one of the tour guides. Joining them, she smirked self-righteously.

"You see, history doesn't have to be boring. Maybe this will help you to have some appreciation for what people went through years ago."

"Alright, alright, you have made your point. History doesn't have to be boring. Fact is, this is even kinda interesting," Ron said grudgingly.

"The three of you should visit the Witch Dungeon Museum, as well as other places. It will really give you an idea of what it was like to be accused of witchcraft back in the 17th century." The woman gave them a brochure that listed all of the places of interest that they might enjoy.

"Thank you," Hermione said, taking the brochure and looking at Ron and Harry imploringly.

"I'm all for it," Harry said with a grin. "After all, we have a Quidditch match to go to tomorrow and I'm not missing it."

Harry and Hermione looked at Ron.

"We can go on one condition."

"What's that, Ron?" Hermione asked impatiently.

"Let's go get something to eat first. I'm starved!"

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

"This should be a good match. Both the Finches and the All-Stars are having good seasons."

"That Maximus Brankovitch III sure keeps his opponents on their toes."

"Quidditch is in his blood. His dad was a Seeker, as well as his grandfather."

"Yeah, and he's passing it to his son. Word is that Maximus Brankovitch IV is going out for his team this year."

"No big surprise there."

Harry listened with great interest to the conversation going on around him. He recognized the name of Maximus Brankovitch, of course, from the book *Quidditch Through the Ages*. The fact that Maximus' father and grandfather had also played Quidditch made him think of his own father and how nice it would have been to play Quidditch with his dad.

Suddenly, he realized that Ron had spoken to him. "What was that? Sorry, must have missed it."

"Oh, I was just saying that this is comparing Maximus to Viktor Krum." Ron rolled his eyes and started wadding up the brochure, but then Harry held out his hand.

"Well, you used to idolize him," Harry said with a shrug, looking at the brochure that Ron handed him.

"Used to," Ron said loudly. "Then I found out what he was really like." He cast a glance at Hermione, who appeared to be engrossed in her book and didn't respond. "Wonder how long it takes to get to the stadium?"

"Won't be long now," said a man across the aisle. "Maybe another ten minutes or so. Is this your first time going to see the Fitchburg Finches?"

"Yeah. We're from the United Kingdom and we're here on holiday. I'm Ron Weasley, this is Hermione Granger," he said, pointing to Hermione, "and this is Harry..."

"Harry Potter!" the man reached across and shook Harry's hand, then shook the hand of Ron and Hermione as well. "But, of course, I know all about you. Those who follow the Quidditch world as closely as I do know your name. Youngest player in your school in a century, weren't you?"

Harry grinned, glad to be remembered for something other than being the Boy Who Lived or the Boy who Defeated Voldemort. "Erm, yes, I have been playing Quidditch since my first year at Hogwarts."

"I'm Patrick O'Donnell. I have a box seat in the stands. Would you three like to sit with me?"

"Yeah, that would be great, thanks!" Harry replied, looking at his friends, who nodded.

A few minutes later, the trolley pulled up in front of the Quidditch stadium, which was enormous and arguably as large as the one that had been used for the championship.

"This way," Patrick said, leading them to his box and offering them seats. "Are you hungry? You three are my guests; anything you want to eat or drink is on me."

"You sure?" Harry asked, incredulous. "I don't mind paying, and I am sure my friends don't either."

"Positive. Now, what do you want?" Patrick asked with a smile.

It wasn't long before the four of them were sitting, enjoying hotdogs, nachos and beer.

"Are the three of you here long?" Patrick asked after taking a swig of beer.

"About a week and a half, then we are going to New Orleans," Hermione said with a smile.

"Are you enjoying Salem?"

"Yes, it's great. Enchanter's Way reminds us of our own Diagon Alley back home, and even the history is kinda interesting," Ron said after he had finished eating some nachos.

Harry was about to say that he was glad that they were able to have fun and not have to worry about Voldemort, but he didn't want to bring that up. "It's cool to see another culture in the Wizarding world."

"I agree. Most of the influence that we have gotten is from the European area," Hermione interjected.

Just then, the referee entered the stadium and announced the teams. First came the Sweetwater All-Stars and then came the Fitchburg Finches. It was obvious that Brankovitch was a favourite from the cheer that went through the crowd. The Fitchburg Finches wore uniforms that were black with the picture of a bird on the front, and the All-Stars wore uniforms that were a blue with a shooting star on the front.

The game started, and it was incredible. It had been so many years since the World Quidditch match that the three of them had almost forgotten how exciting it was, but even Hermione got into the spirit. The score was tied up when Brankovitch caught the Snitch and a cheer went up through the crowd.

"That was a wicked game!" Ron said, standing up and cheering. He glanced over at Hermione, who was cheering in spite of herself. "So, you enjoyed that, did you?"

Hermione nodded. "As much as you enjoyed the museum," she said with a self-satisfied look.

Harry hardly noticed the exchange between his two friends. He was thinking about what Patrick had just said to him.

"So, will you join me for dinner?" Patrick asked, looking at him.

Harry glanced at his friends. Ron now had his arm around Hermione and they seemed to be in their own world. "I don't think they are gonna miss me. Okay, I'll join you."

"Great. Why don't I meet you at the entrance to Enchanter's Way at seven?"

"That sounds good."

Later, when the three of them were back in their hotel, they sat talking about their afternoon.

"That was a great game, wasn't it?" Harry said, lying back on his bed with his hands behind his head. He had been trying to figure out how he was going to tell his friends about going out with Patrick.

"Yeah. That Patrick was something else, wasn't he? I mean, asking us to sit in his box and everything. We had a great view of the game."

"Speaking of Patrick," Harry said, knowing that it was the time to tell them since Ron had brought him up, "he asked me to have dinner with him. Do you guys mind?"

Hermione looked at Harry and smiled. "I don't mind."

Ron looked at Harry and then at Hermione. "No, reckon I don't mind either."

"Well, I'm supposed to meet him in half an hour so I'd better go get ready." Harry grabbed a clean set of robes from his rucksack and headed into the bathroom. Once he stood under the spray of the shower, he found himself surprised at Ron's response. He had half expected Ron to argue. Maybe he was doing the two of them a favour by giving them a chance to be alone together. Who knew what the evening would bring?

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

"I think I'm going to go take a shower, too," Hermione said, standing up and stretching. "I feel rather dusty from the stadium."

Ron watched as she walked through the door that connected their rooms and thought that a shower would feel good too. While he waited for Harry to get out of the bathroom, he flipped through the souvenir book he'd picked up about the Finches.

"Don't know how long I'll be."

Ron looked up as Harry came into the room and shrugged. "Take all the time you want."

"Where'd Hermione go?" Harry asked, looking around.

"Taking a shower." Ron closed the book and stood up.

"Guess I'll see you guys later then." Harry started for the door, paused for just a moment, and then made his way through the door.

Gathering up some clean robes, Ron made his way into the bathroom. As the shower ran over his body, he thought about the match that he'd seen. But his mind kept wandering to the witch in the next room.

Shaking his head to clear it, he quickly finished taking his shower and got dried and dressed. He sat down on his bed and continued looking through the book he'd gotten at the stadium. Every once in a while, however, he'd look up at the connecting room.

"Oi! Li'l bro! Ya know, that pretty little witch you been swoonin' over the past few years is gonna take it as a bad sign. You've all been done with MoldieVoldie for how long?"

The voice came from everywhere and yet nowhere, and he'd recognize it in a heartbeat. "Fred?" Ron breathed, sitting up straight.

"All I know is it's been a while, and for all *you've* shown her you want her, she's gonna s'pose you wanna be just friends forever. Nothin' more. That what you want?"

Ron heard someone say a soft "no," and then realized it was him. He shivered and looked around, realizing the voice was starting to make him feel a bit creeped-out. But the worst thing about the voice was... it was right.

Putting the book down, he picked up the map of Enchanter's Way, looking for restaurants. He found one that looked halfway decent, glanced in the mirror to check his hair, and took a deep breath. He could almost hear Fred jibing him and, using that, made himself stand up and knock on the door.

When the door opened, Hermione stood there, looking at him curiously. "Hi, Ron. Did you need something?"

"Erm, I was wondering..." He looked deep into her brown eyes and nearly regretted it, since that almost always made his confidence go by way of Brazil or something. But he got his head together with a quick boot from his memory of Fred and continued, "... if you want to go out to dinner with me."

Hermione looked at him for a moment, and he wondered if she was going to say no. Finally she gave him a smile. "I'd like that. Did you have a place in mind?"

"Well, I saw a place listed that I thought you'd like. It's called Capt.'s Waterfront Grill & Club. They have fish and steak, and stuff like that. I know how you like fish. It's right off of Enchanter's Way."

"Alright. Let me go get changed, and I'll be ready to go."

Ron checked out the information about the restaurant and decided that he probably should wear robes that were a bit nicer than the ones he'd put on after his shower. Going to his rucksack, he pulled out the robes that he'd packed for just this kind of thing. Remembering the de-wrinkling charm his mum had taught him, he quickly straightened out his robes and changed into them.

A knock came at the door not too long after he'd changed his robes, and he opened it to find Hermione standing there before him. Her hair was pulled back and off her neck, and she was dressed in blue dress robes. Her feet were in shoes that made her look taller, and he realized it was because she was in heels.

"You look... amazing." Ron smiled at her and put his arms around her. "Do you have a jacket that you want to wear? It might be kinda cool outside."

"You look very nice too," Hermione told him, returning his smile. "Yes, maybe I should get a jacket."

Fifteen minutes later, they were being shown to a table on Capt's Topside & Deck.

"My name is Miguel, and I will be your server tonight. Can I bring you something to drink while you are looking over our menu?" the waiter asked.

"I would like a glass of Cristalino," Hermione said, looking over the wine list.

"Very good, ma'am, and for you, sir?"

"I'll take a pint of Bass Ale, thanks."

The waiter left, and they opened their menus.

"What do you think you'll have?" Ron asked, looking over his own menu. "I'm thinking about the Filet Mignon."

Hermione considered the menu. "I think I'm going to have a cup of the New England Clam Chowder and the Capt's Lobster Risotto." She closed her menu and looked around. "This is a really nice place, Ron. I'm glad we came here."

"Thought you'd enjoy it. I mean, we haven't had much chance to go out, and it might feel kinda weird to come here when it's the three of us." Ron could feel his ears burning at her compliment and knew that they were turning red.

The waiter returned with their drinks and took their orders.

"This trip has been enjoyable so far, hasn't it?" Hermione asked Ron, taking a sip of her wine.

"Yeah. It's been great to get out and have some fun. 'Course, all too soon we're going to have to go back to real life and Hogwarts." He took a swig of his ale. "Thought about what you are going to do after we finish up at Hogwarts?"

"I have had a few ideas, but nothing concrete yet. It all depends on how I do on my NEWTs, I guess. Although with the trip we are taking, I am thinking that working in the Department of International Magical Cooperation might be interesting. What about you?"

"Dunno. Reckon if Harry is still going to be an Auror, I might still do that. Would be kinda cool for the two of us to do that together. 'Course, after offing You Know Who, he might not wanna do that anymore."

Hermione didn't have a chance to reply to him because just then their dinners were brought to their table. Ron felt his stomach grumble at the sight and smell of the delicious food. Even Hermione's food looked good, even though he'd never eat anything with fish in it.

The food was some of the best he'd ever tasted, and by the look on Hermione's face, he could tell that she was enjoying it as well. When they were through with their dinners, Ron looked over the dessert menu.

"Want to try one of those Sticky Toffee Puddings?"

"I don't think I could eat a whole one myself. I'll just take a bite or two of yours," she replied, finishing her glass of wine.

After dinner, the two of them took a walk along the wharf, holding hands and just enjoying being together.

"This was a lovely evening, Ron. Thank you," Hermione said, turning to face him as they stopped by the water.

"You're welcome." He laid his hand along her cheek and gently tilted her head up to meet his as he leaned down to kiss her.

A short time later, Ron opened the door to his room, a large smile on his face. He stopped short when he saw that Harry had already returned and then glanced at his watch. It was almost 11 o'clock!

Noticing that Harry seemed quiet, he said, "Sorry I didn't leave a note. Thought we'd be back before you were."

"S'ok."

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah. Just got a lot on my mind," Harry said, flipping through a book absent-mindedly.

"Want to talk about it?" Ron sat down on his bed and looked over at his friend.

"Patrick O'Donnell is the owner of a professional Quidditch team. He wants me to play professional Quidditch."

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

Hermione made her way down Enchanter's Way, doing her final shopping before they left for their next destination later that day. Their time in Salem had been uneventful, thankfully. The three of them didn't know what it was like to be able to enjoy themselves and to go and do things without having to worry about being killed by Death Eaters.

Harry still had not made his decision about whether or not he wanted to play professional Quidditch. Hermione knew that Ron really wanted to be an Auror, but she had to give him credit – Ron wasn't pressing him to make a decision.

Hermione's own thoughts about Harry playing Quidditch were divided. She knew that Harry had probably seen enough battle and darkness for a lifetime and deserved to do what he liked with his life. On the other hand, she also knew that Harry could do so much more with his life. Would he be happy playing Quidditch?

Hermione thought back to the discussion the three of them had had the morning after the Quidditch match.

"So, he wants me to play professional Quidditch. He is starting up a team for Pennsylvania, and they will be the Philadelphia Centennials," Harry said over breakfast.

"What about your schooling?" Hermione asked, taking a bite of her scrambled eggs.

"People do alright without finishing their schooling," Ron interjected, then quickly took a drink of coffee. His face turned red as the hot liquid scalded his throat, and he then quickly followed it with a drink of water.

"I haven't made a decision yet. But he did say that if I choose to go on with my schooling, that when I get out of school, I can join the team."

That had been the end of the discussion between the three of them. But, for herself, it was always in the back of her mind.

Another thing that had been on her mind since the night that she and Ron had gone out together was Ron himself. She could see how the war had changed him. To the normal person, Ron looked exactly the same. But to her and Harry, they could see something had changed. There were times when he would be pensive or he would simply go off on his own. He'd never done that before, not that she remembered, but she knew that the war had affected everyone. They each had their own way of dealing with it.

"Good afternoon, Hermione," Abigail greeted her cheerfully as she walked into There's No Place Like Tome.

"Good afternoon, Abigail. Have the books I ordered come in?" Hermione asked, going to the counter.

"Yes, they have. Here you are." Abigail handed her two books that she had ordered: Medicinal Plants of the United States and The United States – A History of Magic.

"Thanks. Do you accept overseas orders? My friends and I are leaving later today, and I would really like to purchase more books from you in the future."

"Of course I do. Let me give you one of our catalogs." Abigail reached behind the counter, but Hermione held her hand up to ask her to wait.

"I'm going to go look around once more, and I'll get a catalog when I check out." Hermione gave Abigail a smile, placed her books back on the counter, and made her way through the shop. By the time she was finished with looking through the shelves with which she had become so familiar, she had added three spell books and a potions book.

When she took her selections to the cash register, Abigail looked at her titles with interest.

"Are you sure that you want to buy these books? They are textbooks for the American Academy of Magic. They are normally purchased by ten-year-olds who are getting ready to go there."

"Yes, I want to buy them. I am trying to get a better understanding of the Wizarding world in the United States. Incidentally, where is the American Academy of Magic?" Hermione asked as Abigail finished ringing up her purchases and gave her the total.

"It's in New Orleans. Here's a brochure about it," Abigail said, handing her a brochure and taking the money that Hermione handed her.

"That's where we are going next. I think it would be interesting to see." She stuck out her hand and shook Abigail's. "It was nice meeting you, Abigail. Thank you for all your help."

"You're welcome, Hermione. I'm sorry that you can't stay longer; I have enjoyed getting to know you." Abigail handed her a voucher. "Here, take this. You can use it on your next order."

"Thank you, Abigail. I will certainly be keeping in touch with you and be ordering more books from you in the future. Maybe someday you can come visit me in the United Kingdom."

"I'd like that."

When Hermione got back to the hotel, she knocked on the joining door between hers and the boys' room.

"Come on in!"

Harry and Ron were each on their own bed, sorting through the purchases that they had made.

"Hey, Hermione," Harry said, noticing her bag. "Been back to the bookstore?"

"Yes, I wanted to see if my books had come in. Did you guys know that there's a magic school in New Orleans? I bought some of their textbooks."

"Textbooks?" Ron asks in disbelief. "Hermione, you come all the way to America — *on vacation* — and one of the first ruddy things you do is go out and buy textbooks? There'll be no exams on how to get back into the UK, ya know."

Hermione tried not to roll her eyes at him but was unsuccessful. "For your information, Ron, I didn't know they were textbooks when I picked them up. They looked interesting, and even Abigail was surprised. She told me that they were textbooks and asked if I still wanted to get them. We never know how we can learn from other cultures — they may have spells in here that we are going to be able to use."

"I have trouble enough getting all the spells from our culture under control, much less adding on another," Ron said dryly. "Besides, what if you get some of the incantations crossed up, but only a little. Like you want to levitate something straight up, but instead you levitate sorta sideways and it smacks into the wall? Not bad if it's a book or something, but if it's a glass of pumpkin juice..."

Hermione lifted her eyebrow at him and shook her head. "And what if I find something that can help our country and give us a better way of life? I am not concerned about mixing up spells, considering I have been working with a full schedule since I was in third year, and I did not mix up the spells during that time. Yes, I know I missed a class, but that's why I gave up that insane schedule. Don't worry, I am not going to force you or Harry to learn the spells unless you want to."

"Oh, good," Ron said sarcastically. "All Harry and me have to do is carry the books all the way across America."

"And who was the one who carried your stuff in her beaded pocketbook on the Horcrux hunt?" Hermione asked, putting her bag with her books into her beaded bag.

Ron frowned a moment and looked uncomfortable before turning away and mumbling something under his breath that sounded vaguely like "don't remember."

"And considering the fact that you two *are* wizards who can make things lightweight, I wouldn't complain too much." She looked at her watch and then looked at Harry and Ron. "We have two hours before our Portkey activates. I am going back to my room to pack." She thought about suggesting that they do the same, but decided not to. She thought it might just make things worse.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

"Didn't I warn you guys that it was going to be this hot?" Hermione asked with an air of self-assurance.

"Yeah, you did," Ron replied grudgingly. *Why does she **always** have to be right?* he asked himself. He looked at her, dressed for the hot weather in shorts and a t-shirt, and then looked down at his own jeans. Thinking quickly, he did a severing charm on the bottom of his pants so that his jeans were short and came to just above the knee.

"Good idea, mate," Harry said, doing the same thing. "Hard to believe how hot it is here." Harry swiped his hand across his forehead to get the sweat off. "Glad we don't have too far to go for our hotel."

"Where are we staying, Harry?" Hermione asked, shifting her bag on her shoulder.

"We're going to the Prince Conti French Quarter Hotel," Harry replied, giving Hermione a smile.

"The one that was built in the 18th century?"

"That's the one," Harry answered.

"Ah, so is this place old and dusty as in old and dusty?" Ron asked. "Or is it old and dusty and called 'charming and remodeled to look antiquated' so we have to pay triple the price to stay there?"

Hermione looked at him and rolled her eyes. "It's old, yes, but it's not terribly expensive."

"Besides, Ron, that's my worry," Harry said, looking at him. "Remember? This is my thanks for all the help you two gave me over the years."

Ron wasn't sure why it always made him uneasy when Harry paid for him, but it always had. He reckoned he just liked pulling his own weight, no matter what it was about. "Yeah, well – we woulda done it anyway, ya know. And for my part at least, if I ever get the chance, that money's coming back your way."

"Me too, Harry," Hermione agreed.

Harry opened his mouth, but quickly closed it again.

Ron didn't need to know Divination to realize what his best mate had been planning to say. He could almost hear Harry saying that he had money because his family died and that he had more money than he knew what to do with. *Yeah*, Ron thought, *that's exactly what he'd be sayin'.*

The rest of the short walk to the hotel passed in uncomfortable silence, and it wasn't long before the three of them stood looking up at the massive Prince Conti Hotel. Ron's eyes widened at the look of it. It *had* to be expensive, and he quietly wondered how he was going to ever pay Harry back.

As they entered the hotel, his heart began to sink. Yeah, it was a nice hotel, but he'd be forever paying him back.

Hermione must have noticed the look on his face, because she leaned over to him and said, "Ron, don't worry about it. Just enjoy yourself and have fun."

Easy for you to say, Ron thought to himself, but remained quiet. He knew that her parents were both dentists and that she probably had a lot of money.

After Harry got the three of them checked in, they were shown upstairs to their hotel room, which was a suite.

"There are two bedrooms, so you can have one, Hermione, and Ron and I will take the other one. Yours has a queen-sized bed and ours has two twin beds. I just figured it would make more sense for all of us to stay in the same room."

"Okay. I'll go unpack and let you guys do the same."

Ron went into the other bedroom and chose one of the beds, laying his rucksack on it. He couldn't help looking around at the room while he unpacked. He'd never stayed in a place like this, and he doubted he'd have the chance to again anytime soon. He took Hermione's advice and put on something cooler, since it was so hot outside.

"Wonder where the wizarding shops are here," Harry said, coming into the room and putting his own rucksack on the other bed.

"Dunno. Maybe we can ask at the desk." Ron finished his unpacking and then went out into the common room of the suite where he found Hermione sitting on one of the chairs. He thought he smelled something sweet as he walked into the room and caught a tube that Hermione tossed him.

"Here's some sunscreen if you want to use it."

"Thanks," he said, taking the tube and putting some of the goop over his arms and legs. Finally, he put some on his face.

Harry came out of the bedroom, and Ron tossed him the tube.

"So, where do you want to go?" Hermione asked as Harry put the sunscreen on.

"I was thinkin' we could ask at the desk and find out where the magical shopping area is. Ya know, since we're in the magical part of the hotel," Ron suggested.

The three of them decided that was a good idea and set off for the front desk. As they stepped off of the elevators, they turned to the right and made their way toward the desk.

"Can you tell us where we can find the wizarding community in New Orleans?" Hermione asked the witch at the desk.

"Of course, darlin'. In fact, here's a map for the three of you. It will take you the most direct way. If you have any other questions, feel free to ask me."

"Thank you. We will let you know if we need any more help."

Ron gave Hermione a smile, and they made their way to the door. But just before they left the hotel, they heard a ghostly voice.

"Un changement vient!"

Three sets of eyes turned in the direction of the sound, and they saw a ghostly woman floating down the hall away from them.

Ron looked at Harry, and the two of them looked at Hermione.

"Do you know what that means?" Ron asked, figuring she probably knew.

Hermione's eyes were open wide as she nodded. "A change is coming."

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 11

They find a secret spell that can change everything, but is it worth it?

"Which way do we gotta go?" Ron asked, looking at the map. "We're looking for something called..." Ron squinted as he tried to figure out what it said.

"Voie du Mystique," Hermione said, reading over his shoulder. "It means the Way of the Mystic."

"Why can't they just write that then, instead of writing this jibberish?" Ron asked with a roll of his eyes.

"Ron, it's not gibberish. It's French. You know, the language Fleur speaks? I rather doubt she would appreciate you calling her language gibberish. Come on, it looks like we have to go this way." Hermione started walking in the direction that the map indicated.

Ron hung back a moment, then turned to Harry when she was out of earshot. "How is it that she knows all this stuff? Isn't there one bloody thing that she doesn't know anything about?"

Harry held his hands up. "I'm not going to get involved. Come on, we better go before we lose sight of her." Harry started after Hermione, leaving Ron staring after both of them.

"I give up," he mumbled, then followed his two friends' retreating backs.

When the three of them finally got to Voie du Mystique, they knew that this place was very different from either Diagon Alley or Enchanter's Way. Although there were some shops that carried items that looked harmless enough, most of the shops carried items of dubious legal magical use.

"Blimey, this place looks like it's full of dark magic," Ron said quietly, looking around at the shops. There were shops that he reckoned sold stuff like the ones in Knockturn Alley back in London.

Hermione nodded in agreement. "It might be, or it might just be a different kind of magic than we are used to. They are known for voodoo in New Orleans, and I imagine a lot of the items that the shop sells are geared towards those who practice it."

"Well, there's a Quidditch shop over there," Ron said, pointing. "At least we know they'll have stuff there that we're interested in. And I reckon that you'll want to go to the bookstore?"

"Yes, of course. Let's just say that whoever is done first comes and looks for the other person. Is that fair?" Hermione looked at Ron and Harry and raised her eyebrows.

"Course, we know who is going to be done first, but alright. See you in a while." Ron and Harry walked in the direction of the Quidditch shop, and Hermione headed to the bookstore.

Harry browsed the shelves of books as he and Ron waited for Hermione to finish. As Ron had predicted, they were done in the Quidditch store first. When Harry entered the shop, he was almost immediately drawn to the books on the dark arts. He still hadn't decided whether or not he would be taking the job as a Quidditch player when he finished school, and he was still thinking about becoming an Auror. He figured the more he knew about the different dark arts the better Auror he would be.

He sometimes wondered why it was that he was still interested in defeating the dark arts. After all, he would have thought that having battled dark wizards in one form or another for the past seven years would have been enough. He picked up one of the books off the shelf that was about dark magic detection spells.

"Are you ready, Harry?" Hermione asked, coming up beside him as he walked toward the front of the store. "I know Ron is. He's been ready for the past half an hour."

"Yeah, I'm ready. I think I'll get this one," he said, holding up the book he'd chosen.

"I've found a few that interested me too," Hermione said, indicating her rather ample stack of books she was holding. "Can I see the one you are getting?"

"Sure." Harry handed it to her and saw Ron pacing rather impatiently outside the door.

"I didn't see that one. You go ahead and pay for your book, and I'll be right out." Hermione handed him back his book and disappeared back into the stacks.

Harry shook his head and went to the front to pay for his book. A moment later, Ron came up to him.

"Where's Hermione?" Ron asked, looking around for her.

"Oh, she wanted to go and browse some more. Let's go wait outside for her, shall we?" Harry asked as he paid for his book.

"Yeah, we could do that."

Harry and Ron walked out of the shop, and twenty minutes later Hermione exited the shop, carrying a bulging bag of books. Harry's eyes widened when he saw the bag, but he had enough good sense not to say anything.

"Is there anywhere else that you two want to go?" she asked, shrinking down her bag and putting it in her pocket.

"Why don't we go get something to drink?" Ron said, wiping the sweat off his brow. "I don't know about you two, but I could use something cold."

"Yeah, me too," Harry said, realizing how thirsty he really was.

"I think I see a place up there," Hermione said, looking down the street. "We could try there and see what they have."

As they neared the tavern, Ron looked up and said, "The Frog's Legs Tavern?" Then he quickly added, "Well, I guess it's no worse than the Hog's Head Inn."

After the heat of the day, Harry felt immediate relief when they walked into the tavern. The place was dark and refreshingly cool, but full of strange smells. As it was an off hour, they were able to find a table immediately.

"Welcome to The Frog's Legs Tavern. I'm Chrissy and I'll be your server," a perky waitress said as she sauntered over to their table and handed them each a menu. "Would you like something to drink while you are looking over your menus?"

"We've never been here before," Hermione said, looking over the menu. "What can you suggest that is cold to drink?"

"Oh my gosh, I love your accent! Where are you from?" Chrissy asked, looking at Hermione and giving her a wink.

"Um, we're from London. So, what is good to drink here?" Hermione asked, clearly taken aback.

"Well, there's the Honeybeer, that has a sweet taste to it and it's served cold. But if you like something a little spicier, my favorite is the Cajun Cracker." She smiled at Hermione.

"We'll take three Honeybeers, please," Hermione said, not looking at the waitress. "Thank you."

The waitress walked away from their table, and Harry and Ron exchanged a glance.

"Was that waitress hitting on you, Hermione?" Ron asked, his eyebrows disappearing into his hairline.

Hermione frowned. "It sure seemed that way, didn't it?" She had a strange feeling in her stomach.

"But she's a girl, and so are you," Ron said with confusion in his voice.

"Well noted, Ron," Hermione said, rolling her eyes. "I think I need to set the record straight." She took Ron's hand as Chrissy returned to the table with three bottles. "I apologize for not introducing myself earlier. My name is Hermione, this is Harry, and this is Ron, my boyfriend. We're in the States for holiday."

"It's very nice to meet you," Chrissy replied, looking a little let down. "Did you want to order something to eat? Or do you need some more time?"

"I think we're just going to have the drinks, thank you," Hermione said, wanting to get out of there.

Chrissy tore off the bill and left it on the table.

"Let's pay the bill and take our drinks with us. I notice a lot of people walking around with drinks, so I don't think it will be a problem," Hermione said quietly.

A few minutes later they were walking down the street once again. Harry noticed that Hermione still looked a little uncomfortable, but at least Ron was keeping quiet.

As they walked down the street, Harry noticed a little shop. It was rather non-descript and not very flashy, but something made him want to go into the store.

"Do you mind if we go in here?" he asked, indicating the shop with a tilt of his head.

"Of course not. What kind of shop is it?" Hermione asked, looking toward the shop.

"I think it's just like a junk shop. It might have some interesting stuff in it," Harry said, going inside.

Ron saw Hermione start to follow Harry in, but he placed his hand on her shoulder to stop her. When she turned around, he gave her one of his lopsided grins. "You okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay. I just felt a little strange with the way the waitress was treating me, that's all." She gave him a small smile.

"Just wanted to make sure," he said, giving her a kiss. "So, let's go see what this shop has to offer."

As they walked into the shop, they noticed the shopkeeper handing a book to Harry.

"Here, Mr. Potter. I think that you will find the information in this book very interesting and useful."