

Of Age

by pelespen

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Frustration welled up, nearly smothering her.

Hermione found herself outside, her bare toes threaded in the warm grass. Even at this pitch hour of the evening, the heat lingered. A wet plait of curls clung to her back as she looked up at the night sky, once more finding his star.

It was in these solitary moments she could admit the truth. It wasn't the sweltering stillness of the unseasonable late September heat wave keeping her awake, it was *him*.

It started out innocently enough. After finishing Hogwarts, she had accepted Sirius' invitation to stay the summer at Grimmauld Place while she decided what she was going to do next. But it quickly became apparent that things had changed. The schoolgirl crush she'd once harbored had made way for more mature desires and thoughts that puddled into a deep-seated ache in her belly. She was no longer a child, and she wasn't the only one who noticed.

The heated glances and need-filled silences were nearly unbearable. Both knew that, while she was no longer a child, she was still only seventeen. It acted as a cold wall of glass that separated them all summer.

September came, and everyone made their way to their new destinations: the boys went to Academy, Remus returned to Hogwarts... and Hermione lingered, torturing herself foolishly, waiting for who knows what, while Sirius grew more and more surly, disappearing for evenings on end.

A distant church bell rang the midnight hour. As the twelfth gong faded into the late summer silence, strong cool fingers ran a light path over the curve of her exposed neck, causing her breath to hitch. His other hand snaked around her abdomen, pulling her into him, and the familiar, deep voice she cherished whispered hotly in her ear.

"Happy birthday, Hermione."