

Eight Years

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Chapter 1

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The battle was raging, and Hermione was fighting for her life. She had no idea that just seconds ago, her beloved headmaster had been killed. She had no idea that Harry was about to go chasing after Snape with thoughts of killing him in his head. She had no idea that Bill had been mauled by a werewolf. She had no idea if anyone would survive. All she could think of was that she could stop all of this. If there had more warning, it could have ended before it had begun, and nobody would be fighting; nobody would be dying. She knew that it was wrong to abuse time, but it had worked before, and she had to take a chance.

Hermione rushed into an alcove, pulled the time-turner that she wore as jewelry out of her robes and gave it a turn. She anticipated going back only a couple of hours, but at that precise moment, a curse was shot at her, and she was sent flying into the wall behind her, hitting her head and losing consciousness. The time-turner continued to spin, now out of her control.

"Ow!" Hermione whined as she sat up against the wall. She had finally awoke from the blast and was rubbing her head where she had a nice bump. Relieved that she was in fact still alive, she tucked the time-turner into her robes and went searching for someone who could send the alert to the Order of the Phoenix and stop the attack that she assumed would be happening in only a matter of hours. She glanced at her watch and noticed that it was getting close to dinner time. She started to head down to the Great Hall, hoping to find Professor McGonagall or Professor Dumbledore. At the very least, she needed to find Ron and Harry. She knew that Harry would be going away with Dumbledore, but she hoped that they hadn't left yet.

She was lost in thought as she walked, but at one point, she noticed that she was getting a few stares from people she didn't recognize. She thought that she knew everyone by sight at this point, but she didn't take the time to stop and think about why there were so many strangers. Bursting into the Great Hall, she looked around and found the room nearly empty. It was still a little early for dinner, so she headed out into the courtyard to see if she could find anyone who could help. With a sigh of relief, she saw a tall boy with red hair who could only be Ron.

"Ron! Ron! Come with me; we've got to find Harry!" she yelled as she ran across the lawn. She didn't notice all the odd looks she was getting from the little groups of people enjoying the early evening. She started to get frustrated that Ron didn't answer her and made a mental note to yell at him about that later. Finally reaching the red-head, she grabbed him by the arm. "Ron! Hurry, we've got to find . . ."

Her words were silenced when the boy turned around and was not Ron. He was a Weasley all right, but this was the eldest. She found herself looking up at a much younger version of Bill Weasley.

"Now, who are you?" he asked as he looked at the strange girl. "I'm not Ron, but I do have a younger brother by that name."

"Oh, I'm sorry; from behind, you looked like a friend of mine," Hermione stammered as she took a few steps back. She looked around and realized that, other than Bill, she didn't recognize a single person. Even the people with Bill, all in Gryffindor robes, were strangers to her. She wasn't completely sure what was going on, but she was

beginning to get an idea. Her head started to ache, and she pressed her hand to the bump that seemed to be growing there as her stomach twisted.

"Hey, you don't look so well. Are you all right?" Bill asked as he stepped forward to put a steadying hand on her shoulder. He looked helplessly at his friends who only shrugged and looked confused. Hermione started to sway at that point, and she vaguely felt Bill pick her up, remembering nothing after that.

"What are you going to do with her?" Bill's friend Kevin asked.

"I suppose I should take to the hospital wing," Bill told his friends as he turned and walked toward the entrance, still carrying the petite girl in his arms. He wasn't sure who she was, but he knew she wasn't well.

"Did you have to knock a girl out to get her in your arms?" a voice asked from behind him. Bill turned to look at his brother Charlie.

"Idiot. She's obviously not feeling well, and I'm taking her to the hospital wing," Bill answered.

"She's got a huge bump on her head. Who is she?" Bill shifted Hermione to look at her head, and sure enough, she had a large bump and dried blood in her hair. That would cause the odd behavior, but it didn't answer his question about who she was.

"I have no idea who she is, but I've got to get her to Madam Pomfrey. Can you please go see if you can find Professor Dumbledore or Professor McGonagall? She's wearing Gryffindor colors, so I assume she's in our house."

"I've never seen her in the common room before, but I'll see who I can find." Charlie headed off to find a teacher, and Bill continued on his way. Looking down at her, he realized she was actually quite pretty, and he didn't entirely mind having a pretty girl in his arms. He'd rather they be conscious, but that was only a minor problem. As he arrived in the hospital wing, he walked over to the nearest bed and put her down, careful to tilt her head so she wouldn't put pressure on her wound.

"Madam Pomfrey?" he called as he walked toward her office. It was quiet in there today. He knew that after the Quidditch game on Sunday, it would be full. He fully expected to be visiting Charlie there in a few days. The healer came out of her office, always a bit alarmed when a student came looking for her. She was relieved to see that it was Bill, and he appeared to be healthy.

"Hello, Mr. Weasley. What can I help you with?"

"I brought you a patient. She fainted and has a huge lump on the back of her head." Madam Pomfrey hurried over to Hermione and took a look at her.

"Who is she? I don't recognize her."

"I don't either, but she clearly needs help. I sent Charlie to look for Professor Dumbledore or Professor McGonagall."

"I'll take it from here; you go on to dinner." Madam Pomfrey tried to shoo him out.

"I'll stay; I feel responsible," Bill answered. He was Head Boy after all, and he took that job very seriously.

"Go on to dinner, Bill. You can come back later," Professor Dumbledore said from the doorway. Bill was aware that he had just been ordered away and left for dinner, vowing to check on the mystery girl as soon as he could.

After the door closed behind Bill, Professor Dumbledore walked up to the unconscious girl.

"Do you recognize her, Albus?" Madam Pomfrey asked.

"No, I don't, and I know all of our students. Is she going to be all right?"

"Give me a few minutes to examine her, and I'll let you know." Madam Pomfrey closed the curtains around Hermione's bed and went about her job, checking for other wounds and placing healing spells on her head. After removing her robes, she saw the time-turner around her neck. Removing that, she noticed some residual marks from a curse that the poor girl had been hit with. She healed her as best she could, knowing that sleep would be the best thing for her. Once she had her dressed in a hospital gown, she made sure she was comfortable and left her to sleep.

"Well, Poppy?" Albus asked, clearly concerned and curious.

"It seems that she was hit by a curse, most likely sometime in the last hour. From the marks on her chest, it seems that it was the work of a nasty bit of dark magic. I haven't seen anything like that since the days when You-Know-Who was in power. She's got scars across her abdomen, but they look several months old and are healed. She also has a large lump on her head that I relieved with a spell. She should be fine."

"Did she have any identification?"

"None, but I did find this." Madam Pomfrey held up the time-turner and handed it to Albus.

"A time-turner? This could explain a lot. I wonder if she's from the past or the future? If this curse that she was hit with is in fact the work of the Dark Lord or his followers, let's hope she's from the past."

Madam Pomfrey brought her hand to her mouth in worry. "What if he's back? If she is from the future, could this mean that he's back?"

"I hope not, Poppy. I hope not. Her time-turner looks broken." He turned it over in his hand and tried to decide what to do. "It will be interesting to talk to the young woman when she wakes up. Keep her here and keep everyone except Mr. Weasley away from her. I don't think I need to tell you that secrecy is vital until we know more. Alert me when she wakes up."

"Of course, Albus." Madam Pomfrey closed the privacy curtains again and settled in to keep a close eye on her patient. True to his word, Bill came back after dinner to find that his mystery girl was sleeping and looked to be comfortable.

"Has she woken up?" Bill asked.

"No, she's barely moved, but I expect that she's just exhausted. She'll wake in the morning, I'm sure."

"I'll come back in the morning then," Bill promised and headed out to study for his upcoming N.E.W.T.s.