

# A Member of the Family

by Bambu

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer and Author's Note: The Potterverse, unfortunately, doesn't belong to me. It's the brainchild of JK Rowling, and belongs to her and to whomever she has assigned her rights. However, I've enticed a few characters to play in a situation of my own making, and one I've written in honor of Lady Karelia.

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"Mummy, come quick."

Attuned to her daughter's tone, Hermione abandoned the chamomile she was hanging, and stepped into the sunny garden from her still room cum potions storeroom. "Coming," she called in reply. "What is..."

"MUMMY!"

The shrill cry crossed the boundary into real fear, and heedless of the blossoming Echinacea, Hermione sprinted through her herb beds, pulling her wand from the knot of hair atop her head, brushing the ensuing cascade of frizz from her face. Anxious brown eyes scanned the broad, walled garden for her frightened child.

There, beyond carelessly abandoned toys, near the white trunk of Rose's favorite tree, crouched the elfin brunette with silken hair her mother envied every time she brushed it. Rose's back was to Hermione and one grubby hand pressed against the birch tree, where her fingers gripped its knobby bark.

Wand raised, Hermione cast a detection spell. None of the wards had been tripped, she thought, but then a sound reached her ears, sky-rocketing her own anxiety. It was the snarl of an animal. "Don't move, Rose."

"It's hurt, Mummy. I was trying to help...."

Flicking her wand, Hermione cast a non-verbal *Protego* on her daughter while side-stepping to get a clear look at whatever it was.

A dog.

A large dog.

A large *black* dog.

Spectres of wholly realized nightmares Sirius Black's Animagus form, Remus Lupin morphing into a slavering, feral werewolf, Fenrir Greyback's yellow eyes as he requested Hermione once Bellatrix Lestrange had finished torturing 'the Mudblood' veiled Hermione's sight momentarily. Then, years of training took over, and she returned to the present, and the fact that an injured animal had inexplicably arrived at the bottom of her garden, in the notch of birch tree roots, bleeding on the mushrooms, and endangering her child.

"Back away, Rose," Hermione said calmly.

"But *Mum*."

"Now." There was no softness in the order, and the dog, if that's what it was, raised its head, focusing a pair of black eyes on the curly-headed woman whose wand was pointed unwaveringly at its nose. Hermione absently noted the dreadful tear in the animal's neck, blood sluggishly dripping from the wound, coating the wiry black fur into sticky clumps and dripping onto the thick green lawn.

Now that she was safe, the little girl backed away, a pout on her cherry-stained mouth, but her mother paid no attention to the fact Rose moved only as far as the nearest toppled chair.

Hermione was looking at the dog.

A long moment passed during which woman and dog appraised one another. There was no mistaking the intelligence in those black eyes. With a whisper, Hermione cast a spell first heard when Remus Lupin and Sirius Black forced Ron's rat, Scabbers, to return to his human form.

Nothing happened.

If possible she would have testified under Veritaserum the dog smirked. She cast another spell; one Penny Clearwater, former Ravenclaw and present head of Unspeakable Research, had devised a handful of years before. "*Luna monstro!*"

Silver mist erupted from the end of Hermione's wand, spreading like quicksilver over a flat surface, and settled over the dog. As soon as the magical construct touched its fur, the animal sprang to its feet, a whine of pain keening into the air.

Hermione's eyes widened. She wasn't a tall woman, but the dog's head was practically as high as her breasts. Were Irish wolfhounds black, she wondered fleetingly.

"Mummy!" Rose cried out. "Don't hurt him."

"I have no intention of doing so," Hermione responded, still examining the dog's eyes. There was no distinctive yellow in them, confirming the spell's results. He wasn't some form of werewolf. "But I won't let him hurt us, either."

The dog curled his lip into a canine sneer, revealing yellow teeth, but as if to show that he wasn't a threat, or simply because he was too weakened by blood loss, the taller-than-average animal sank back to the ground, curling into a tight ball.

Then he whimpered.

That was the last straw for both mother and daughter.

"Rose, fetch my emergency kit," Hermione directed before lowering her wand and raising her other hand, open-faced and palm turned upward in a universal gesture of *pace*. Taking a cautious step forward, she asked quietly, "Will you let me help you?"

He snarled softly as if to remind her he had teeth, and an echo from her past called her a dunderhead. She wasn't sure whether she'd actually heard the word with her ears, or it was an exceptionally clear memory, but smiling at the reminder of her long-deceased teacher, she raised her hand and moved toward her unexpected visitor.

Lowering his head at her approach, the dog whined in pain.

Hermione's touch was gentle. His fur was bristly and coarse, and he was warm. Too warm, she thought, and cast a fever-reducing charm on his body. Thankfully, most healing spells weren't species-specific. His eyes closed and he sighed. Hot breath gusted from his nostrils, causing her flesh to pimple, and Hermione said, "I think I'm going to call you Severus."

His head jerked up, his eyes snapped open. Deep, black, and unfathomable. And then he growled.

Hermione leaned back, bringing her wand to bear, but the growl turned into another whine, and he shifted weight, placing his massive head on her knee as if in apology. "Not Severus then."

Rose returned at that moment, carrying the emergency kit, and chattering with her little brother, whom she had woken from a nap. "And when Mummy fixes him," she said, "he's going to be our dog."

"Puppy!" Hugo enunciated as only a five-year old could. "We have a puppy."

"Not a puppy, silly. A dog." Rose had badgered her father for months about getting a dog, especially after her best friend, Alexis Thomas, had received a puppy for her birthday. Unhappily for Rose and Hugo, Ron's position had been implacable. "He's hurt, of course, but when he's all better, he'll sleep in my room, and..."

"I want him to sleep with me," Hugo said, and then to trump his sister, he declared, "He can sleep ~~on~~ my bed."

Hermione concentrated while casting antiseptic, *Episkey*, and suturing spells, but she raised her voice as the children drew near. "He won't be sleeping on anyone's bed; and until he's had a bath..." black eyes shifted from watching the approach of the children to her face "...the professor, here, won't be allowed in the house."

"Perfesser? Is that his name, Mummy?" the little boy asked, his curly red hair tousled about his brow, his sleepy eyes blinking to clear the last of his nap from his consciousness.

"Pro-fess-or," Rose corrected. "Say it properly, Hugo."

Hermione hooked the tip of her holly wand (one Ron had bought after Rose's birth, when the wand of her childhood no longer seemed to work as well) and knotted the last suture closing the dog's wound. She then accepted the emergency kit from Rose, and quickly located and removed two vials from the basket she kept in her still room. "I don't know, Hugo," she answered her son's question. "He might not stay with us once he's healed, but if he does, the choice of name should be up to him, don't you think?"

Rose snorted. "How can we ask him? He's a dog; he can't talk." The black head rose from Hermione's newly soiled skirt, and he made a sound unlike any dog Hermione had ever heard. He scoffed.

The young girl flushed deep red. "Sorry, Professor, I should know better than to assume. Right, Mummy?"

Hermione cleaned her hands with a silent *Tergeo* before wrapping the dog's neck with a clean white bandage. The slender band of white reminded her forcefully of

Professor Snape's teaching robes. The collar of his shirt had often been the only relief in an otherwise monochromatic palette of clothing. "If he has no objections, I think Professor is a fine name for him."

She blinked rapidly against a sudden melancholy and an upwelling of tears.

Hugo stepped closer, succeeding where his sister had failed, and touched the new member of their family (regardless of any future objections by his father). "Do you like it? Professor?" he lisped over the properly enunciated name.

Rose leaned against her mother and sighed. "He isn't very lovely, is he?"

Hermione almost laughed at the sneer on Professor's lips. Could a dog's mouth really move that way? When she met the too-intelligent black eyes, Hermione said softly, "Sometimes a noble heart is concealed by less than pretty packaging."

"He's grand," Hugo declared. "Can he play now?"

"Only very gently, son. Certainly not before he's had some medicine and a bath, but I'll help with that." She smoothed the long fringe out of the dog's eyes. "May we call you Professor?"

A thump of a long tail was her answer.

The children gamboled around the yard, their exuberance erupting in cheers and shouts of delight, and Hermione tipped a Blood Replenishing Potion down Professor's obligingly open mouth. "Thank you," she said, and offered him a Booster Potion. "Now for that bath."

He sneezed, but rose to his feet and followed her toward the well.

Shrieks of laughter and an occasional canine yip could be heard as children, woman, and new acquisition proceeded to get wet, soapy, and clean. But when Professor entered the cottage's kitchen, he didn't follow the children to their rooms. Instead, he climbed the stairs, entered Hermione and Ron's bedroom, and curled up on the rug on the left side of the bed. Hermione's side.

In the years to come through tribulations, childhood illnesses, and a divorce Professor remained Hermione's constant companion, never truly happy unless he was by her side.

And after the divorce, Professor was allowed *on* the bed.

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