

Nursery Rhymes

by Aling

A one-shot that explores how Hermione might have reacted to motherhood if the epilogue wasn't so happy-go-lucky.

Chapter 1

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Author's Notes: *I definitely don't own Harry Potter, nor am I making any profit from writing this story. The lullaby at the end of the story comes from 'Lost Lyrics of an Old Nursery Rhyme' at www.rhymes.org.uk/. No copyright infringement is intended. Moreover, I have no personal or professional experience with postpartum depression, and I do not mean to offend or belittle those who have suffered from it. Lastly, I do not condone Hermione's actions. Much thanks go to my wonderful friend TeahPup who beta'ed this for me.*

Hermione Granger hated children. Well, perhaps that was a bit harsh. But she certainly had better things to do with her time than breastfeeding and changing diapers. For Merlin's sake, she was the brightest witch of her age. In her highly esteemed opinion, that should have exempted her from having to endure labor pains and all talk of the newest wizarding baby toys.

She would have opted to have an abortion, except that Ronald and his family would have thrown a hissy fit, courtesy of Molly's antiquated ways. In the worst-case scenario, they would have severed all ties with her. And that just wasn't an option. If she and her husband were to part ways, Harry would undoubtedly side with Ron, as he was always wont to do, and then whom would Hermione turn to for solace?

So, she had no other choice, really, once she forgot the Contraception Charm that *one goddamn time* (she had an inkling that Ron had purposely distracted her, the git), and she was forced to carry to term. Thus, beautiful baby Rose came into the world—a gooey, crying, **demanding** little parasite. The others—the delivery room was a sea of redheads interspersed with the occasional mop of brown or black hair—all cooed over her, remarking on how tiny her toes and fingers were, how she had Ron's nose and Hermione's eyes. *She's a goddamn wrinkled roly-poly*, Hermione thought to herself. How they could discern any resemblance was truly a mystery.

Theoretically, Hermione knew she was supposed to feel some sort of attachment to her child. But she felt nothing other than overwhelming fatigue and hopelessness. Her friends, family, and colleagues expected her to stay at home to care for her newborn—*gods, all the expectations*—but she had no desire to even go near her. For when she looked into her baby's tiny pinprick pupils, she only saw loss—the loss of her identity as an independent woman, the loss of her career, and the loss of what had once promised to be a bright future.

At night, Hermione would cry for hours, sequestering herself in the master bathroom to block out the infant's high-pitched wailing. Then, when all her tears had been exhausted, she would go to the crib and yell at Rose to *shut the fuck up* before casting a wandless *Silencio* on her. Honestly, how the hell was she supposed to get any sleep with the damn baby crying like that? How the hell did she even have the lung capacity for that level of noise?

She could see that everyone was worried about her. Even Ron, usually a clueless, bumbling idiot when it came to women's emotions, knew something was wrong and tried to engage her in stilted conversation. Her mother urged her to see a Muggle doctor specializing in "this sort of thing"; Hermione ignored her. She knew how to take care of herself, thank you very much.

Eventually, she started fantasizing. Oh, how *easy* it would be to smother the brat in her sleep. She would make it look like an accident—*it could happen to anyone*—and play the role of the devastated mother, and everything would be right again.

At other times, she had visions of letting her drown in the bathtub. *Oh, Ron, I just went to answer the Floo, and when I came back...*

Perhaps that was too risky, though. Yes, it was much less suspicious for the baby to die in her sleep.

After the third week of sleepless nights, Hermione made her decision.

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Lying in bed next to Ron—*they hadn't had a good fuck since the goddamned baby*, Hermione absently noted—she quietly got out from under the covers and tiptoed to the door.

Hermione softly padded down the hallway to the nursery. Rose was sleeping peacefully in her antique wooden crib. Some people might have noted that she looked positively angelic in that moment, cherubic if they wanted to be slightly more creative. Hermione never was one for sentimentality.

She picked up a small embroidered pillow in a hideous shade of pink that reminded her of that awful Umbridge woman—a gift from her mother-in-law, of course—and slowly, almost reverently, brought it down towards Rose's chubby face.

As she held the pillow over Rose's nose and mouth, increasing the pressure when the infant started to squirm, Hermione hummed an old lullaby her own mother used to sing to her as a babe.

*"Baby dear, good night, good night.*

*Doggie lies in slumber deep;*

*Hush-a-bye, my treasure bright,*

*Pussy, too, is fast asleep.*

*Don't you wake them! If you do,*

*Pups will bark, and Puss will mew.*

*Go to sleep, and never fear,*

*Mother will call when morning's near."*

As the infant's twitching slowly subsided, the witch could feel a heavy weight gradually being lifted from her chest, and a warm sense of peace enveloped her for the first time in months.

At last, Rose stilled, and Hermione smiled.