

Her Secret Admirer

by articc621

Hermione begins to receive notes from her secret admirer. As the Masquerade Ball draws closer, she hopes to find out his identity.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 5

Hermione begins to receive notes from her secret admirer. As the Masquerade Ball draws closer, she hopes to find out his identity.

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Chapter One

"I wonder what Dumbledore has to say," Ginny said, taking a seat next to Hermione. It was lunch time and everyone was gathered in the Great Hall to eat. Hermione looked up at Ginny, somewhat surprised the girl wasn't sitting next to Dean Thomas. Maybe the two of them were having a row?

"Why would Professor Dumbledore say something?" Hermione inquired. "He doesn't usually make speeches during dinner."

"Parvati and Lavender said they heard that he had an announcement of some sort to make!" Ginny gushed excitedly. "They didn't know what, but they seemed rather excited."

"And you just caught some of their excitement?" Hermione asked, amused at Ginny's eagerness.

"Of course!" Ginny grinned. "Lavender said..."

"Can we not talk about Lavender?" Hermione cut her off, sending her a pleading look. With all the drama going on between her and Ron, she was quite sick of hearing about the blonde.

Ginny frowned. "You know, I don't think Ron even likes her that much. I'm sure if you just told him you were jealous, he'd break it off with her."

Hermione's face flushed. "Ginny, I'm not jealous! I do not like Ron like that, contrary to popular belief. He's my best friend... kissing him would be like kissing my brother." The thought of her kissing Ron made her stomach turn slightly.

The redhead looked at her skeptically. "Then why all the drama?"

"Because Lavender is the one starting it," Hermione huffed. "She thinks I'm in love with Ron and has made it her personal goal to make my life miserable. I'm so sick of her. Ronald is only my friend."

"But you're not in love with Ron?" Ginny clarified.

"No, I do love Ron but I am not in love with him. He knows that... which is why I cannot stand that he is letting Lavender talk trash about me. Friends don't do that to each other."

"I'm sorry," Ginny said. "I really thought you liked him... I mean, we all did."

"Yes, well, no," Hermione repeated. She stood, gathering her things. "I need to go, though; I have Potions."

Ginny nodded. "I'll see you later. Try not to let Ron get you down too much."

Hermione sighed, but nodded. "I'll try not to punch him or Lavender in the face."

A wicked grin appeared on Ginny's face. "Well, if you do, wait 'til I'm around to see it!"

Hermione laughed and said her good-byes. She made her way down to the dungeon, wishing she had grabbed her cloak. She always forgot how cold it would get down there.

"Hermione!"

She turned and saw Harry and Ron trying to catch up with her. She stopped and waited for them.

"Why didn't you sit with us at lunch?" Ron asked.

Harry and Hermione looked at him in disbelief. Hermione shook her head. "I had some reading to do," she mumbled. *More like your bitchy girlfriend won't let me.* She cringed when she saw Ron was wearing his locket from Lavender. He hadn't taken it off since Christmas.

Just then, Malfoy and a flock of Slytherins just walked by. Unfortunately, it seemed Malfoy noticed the locket as well.

"What in Merlin's name is that, Weasley?" Malfoy sneered. As he peered closer, he let out a laugh. "A necklace? Weasley's wearing a necklace!" He laughed again, a few of the other Slytherins joining him.

"Leave him alone!" Harry snapped, pulling out his wand.

Hermione rolled her eyes. While Malfoy had no right to tease Ron, she knew he was only doing it to get a rise out of them. Harry always played into it, pulling his wand out. This was how accidents always happened.

"What are you going to do, Potter? Curse me?" Malfoy laughed once more. "I'd like to see you try."

"Yeah, I am," Harry said, tightening his grip on his wand. He pointed it at Malfoy, a menacing look on his face.

"You don't have the nerve," Malfoy taunted.

Harry gave in, casting a spell. It was deflected by none other than Professor Snape.

"What is the meaning of this?" he hissed, his dark eyes sweeping over the gathered students. "Hexing students in the hallway, Mr. Potter? Detention, Mr. Potter. My office tonight at eight."

"He didn't do anything!" Ron protested. "It was all Malfoy, that slimy git."

"Detention, Mr. Weasley for arguing with a teacher and name calling," Snape sneered.

"But it's true!" Ron sputtered.

"He's lying, Professor Snape," Malfoy said. "I did nothing; look, I don't even have my wand out."

"It's true, Professor," Pansy pressed. "Potter hexed him without provocation."

"Liar!" Harry snarled. "They're lying!"

Snape narrowed his eyes. "What happened, Miss Granger? The truth."

Hermione shifted, hating that she was put on the spot. "It's true, sir. Malfoy didn't have his wand out." She cast her gaze to the floor. She heard Ron's hiss and knew Harry was probably looking at her in disbelief.

"Very well," Snape said. "Detention for Mr. Potter and Mr. Weasley tonight. The rest of you, into my classroom." He stormed inside.

"I can't believe you, Hermione!" Harry said, shaking his head.

"I couldn't lie to him, Harry," Hermione cried. "It's true! Malfoy didn't even have his wand out to curse you."

"But he would have if I hesitated," Harry countered.

She shook her head. "You don't know that."

Harry turned and walked away from her. Ron followed, bumping into Hermione angrily, causing her books to fall to the floor. Sputtering in anger, Hermione bent down to pick them up and saw someone already did. She stood looking into the grey eyes of Draco Malfoy.

"Here," Malfoy said, thrusting the books towards her. "And thanks."

She didn't say anything; she just took the books and turned away. Taking her seat next to Neville, she did her best to ignore the angry looks from Ron and Harry.

The rest of the day passed by in a blur. Charms was a pain, seeing as Harry and her were partners yet he refused to speak to her. She did nothing wrong and stood firm in her belief. She ate dinner with Ginny, who was disappointed that Dumbledore had yet to make his "special announcement."

As Hermione curled up in her bed, she opened her Charms book to do some reading. A small, folded piece of paper fell out. Curious, she picked it up and opened it. Her eyes widened in Hermione.

To the lovely Hermione,

As I am sitting here writing this letter, I am sure you are fast asleep in your bed. It seems that all my thoughts of you come late at night when I have no one to distract me. Yes, when I sit here in the dark, thoughts of you consume me. You're beautiful, did you know that? I bet you don't. You carry yourself with this wonderful innocence... I'm

sure you have no idea how truly beautiful you are. Well, let me be the one to tell you. You're more beautiful than all the stars in the sky. You're more beautiful than the sight of a rose blossoming for the first time. Your beauty is like a rose, yet fairer in many ways.

I hope I haven't scared you off, yet, Hermione, for my words are bolder on people than they could ever be in person. There are too many obstacles between us for it to be real... but I could not resist writing to you. I was filled with a burning passion... I simply had to tell you what I thought of you.

I think you're wonderful, Hermione. The little moments that I see you during the day mean much more to me than they should. I hope I haven't frightened you... It was never my intention. Take care, sweet one.

Until next time, your secret admirer.

Hermione re-read the letter at least a dozen times. She wasn't sure what to make of it. She felt somewhat uncomfortable by it, but at the same time, she was flattered. Someone thought she was beautiful. A smile touched her lips.

But who? Who could have slipped the note into her Charms book? Maybe someone did it as she was turning in her homework? Or maybe someone did it during dinner?

Hermione was determined to find out. She just had to know who wrote to her. The words were so sweet.

"I need to find out who this is," she quietly said. Tucking the note beneath her pillow, she laid there for a few hours, thinking of who the person was until sleep claimed her. Hermione's dreams were filled of the mysterious secret admirer.

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 5

Hermione begins to receive notes from her secret admirer. As the Masquerade Ball draws closer, she hopes to find out his identity.

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Chapter Two

The next day, Hermione sat down with Ginny for breakfast. The redhead looked glum, so Hermione decided she would share her news with her. Maybe a little gossip would cheer Ginny right up?

"So, guess what!" Hermione said, smiling cheerfully.

Ginny looked up from her porridge. "What?" she asked, curious about Hermione's cheery attitude.

"So, I opened up my Charms book last night and a letter fell out," Hermione whispered, leaning forward so only Ginny would hear.

Ginny's brown eyes widened. "What?" she hissed, grabbing Hermione's arm and pulling her even closer. "What kind of letter?"

A blush crept across Hermione's face. "A love letter."

"A love letter! From who? Was it for you?" Ginny exclaimed in a whisper.

"Of course it was!" Hermione whispered back excitedly. "It had my name on it and everything."

Ginny let out a small squeal of delight, gaining a few stares.

Hermione quickly shushed her. "Don't tell anyone ... especially Harry and Ron," she pleaded.

"Of course not," Ginny promised. "So who was it from?"

"I don't know," Hermione said. She frowned. She had spent most of the night lying in bed trying to figure out who could have written her the note. She truly had no idea. "It just said from my secret admirer."

"This is so exciting," Ginny pressed. "I wonder who it is. Do you have any guesses?"

Hermione shook her head.

Ginny frowned. "Really? No idea at all."

Hermione gave a dejected shrug. "No idea." She frowned. "Maybe it's just Lavender playing a mean joke on me."

"No!" Ginny hissed. "I don't think she'd stoop that low."

Hermione arched her eyebrow. "She can be pretty vindictive."

"No, don't think like that. Is it so hard for you to believe that someone likes you?" Ginny asked, getting a little flustered at Hermione not seeing how beautiful she really was.

"Yes," Hermione admitted.

"Well, that's absurd. You're gorgeous, Hermione." Ginny gave Hermione a quick hug. "Don't ever think otherwise, okay?"

Hermione nodded. The two of them stood, knowing it was time to go to class. "Were you all right earlier?" Hermione asked as they made their way into the halls.

Ginny gave a shrug. "Dean and I had a row earlier, big surprise there."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Ginny shook her head. "Not at all. He's just being an arse for no reason."

Hermione was quiet. "Well, this is my stop. I'll see you later." The two of them lingered outside of the classroom door.

"Bye!" Ginny said, hugging Hermione before continuing down the hallway.

Stepping into the Transfiguration classroom, Hermione saw she was the first one there. She was usually early for all her classes so it wasn't too out of the ordinary. However, what was out of the ordinary was the small piece of paper at her usual seat.

Walking over, Hermione looked at the paper. It was blank. "Weird," she muttered. Picking up the paper, she gasped when words started to appear. A smile appeared on her face when she realized it was from her secret admirer once more.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries

And look upon myself and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,

Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,

Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,

With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,

Haply I think on thee, and then my state,

Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings

That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Hermione sighed. Whoever her admirer was, he was obviously a fan of Shakespeare. The sonnet he quoted was one of her favorites, but she couldn't help but wonder why he specifically picked that one. There was a certain sense of darkness there that intrigued Hermione. She needed to find out who her admirer was.

The rest of the class filed in, and Hermione frowned when she realized Harry and Ron weren't going to sit with her. She looked at them with a forlorn expression on her face. Neville noticed and took the vacant seat next to her.

"They'll get over it, Hermione," Neville said apologetically. He had heard what had happened from Seamus and Dean. They had witnessed Hermione sticking up for a Slytherin and word had spread like wildfire.

Hermione frowned. "I can't believe they've allowed it to go this far." Many of the other Gryffindors were giving her dirty looks. "I'm some sort of pariah simply because I wouldn't lie to Professor Snape." She shook her head. "Ridiculous."

Professor McGonagall entered the room and class began. They were learning how to transfigure their hair into different colors, lengths, or styles. It was harder than she had anticipated it to be.

Neville and she practiced together. Neville had tried very hard to change his hair color but ended up failing.

"It looks a little lighter," Hermione said, trying to make him feel better.

He shrugged. "Let's see what you can do."

Hermione closed her eyes and imagined her hair as blonde. A small "whoa" from Neville alerted her to her success. "How does it look?" she asked, reaching from the mirror.

"Your hair is very blonde," he said. His eyes flicked to something behind her.

"What?" Hermione asked, turning her head to see what he was looking at. She glanced backwards and found a pair of grey eyes looking at her. Her brown eyes widened in surprise. "Why is Malfoy staring at me?" she whispered.

Neville laughed. "Well, your hair is the same color as his. That might be why."

She found herself smiling. Malfoy quickly tore his gaze away, returning his attention to Pansy. Hermione turned back around in her seat and looked to Neville. "Why don't you practice some more?" she suggested after she turned her hair brown once more.

"All right," Neville replied. The two of them spent the rest of the class practicing the charm some more.

Once class ended, Hermione and Neville made their way towards the Great Hall. Since Transfiguration was a double period, it was now time for dinner.

"You know, I'm surprised you're not wearing a paper bag over your face," a shrill voice called out.

Hermione stopped, turning around. Neville paused beside her.

Lavender stood with her hands on her hips, drawing the attention of some of the other students. Even the Slytherins stopped and stared.

"So why did you betray your fellow Gryffindors?" Lavender asked. "Are you whoring yourself around with a Slytherin?"

Hermione's face burned with anger and embarrassment. How dare she stand there and say those things?

"That's it, isn't it? You're a traitor and a whore?" Lavender smirked, enjoying the public shaming of Hermione.

"You have no idea what you're talking about, Lavender!" Hermione retorted with a glare. "None of that is remotely true."

"Of course it is!" Lavender said, laughing. "So, which one is it? Crabbe? Goyle? Or maybe Parkinson is more in your taste."

"None of them!" Hermione shrieked. "I'm not sleeping with anyone!"

"Lavender, that's enough," Neville said, stepping in. "There's no need for this. Back off."

"She's a slut! First Ron, now the Slytherins. No shame, huh, Hermione? Who's next? Professors? Perhaps Professor Snape?" Lavender taunted. Hermione heard the whispers forming around her.

"That's how she gets her good grades." someone spoke in a loud whisper.

Hermione, unable to take anymore, turn and ran down the hallway. She ran until her lungs grew heavy, and then she slowed into a walk. Not wanting anyone to see her cry, she wandered about the halls aimlessly. She just needed some alone time.

Eventually, Hermione made her way back to the dorm. Everyone was still at dinner so she was able to slip into bed without being noticed. As she was about to close the curtains, she froze. There was a single rose on her nightstand. A small note was attached.

Don't let what Lavender said bother you... You're worth so much more than that.

Hermione smiled but she couldn't help but wonder how her secret admirer managed to get into her dorm. Maybe a girl brought it up? Or maybe it was a house-elf? She was hitting a dead end in her conclusions.

Bringing the rose to her nose, she sniffed it. Its sweet smell calmed her nerves. Her admirer was right. She shouldn't let what Lavender said bother her.

She knew none of it was true and that was all that mattered. Eventually, Hermione drifted to sleep feeling better about herself.

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 of 5

Hermione begins to receive notes from her secret admirer. As the Masquerade Ball draws closer, she hopes to find out his identity.

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Chapter 3

A few days passed without Hermione receiving any notes. She tried not to think too much on it, but she couldn't help herself. She wondered what happened with her admirer. Did he lose interest? Was someone just toying with her all along?

Hermione did her best to focus on her studies but found her thoughts kept drifting. Feeling dejected, she leaned forward and rested her head on her half-written essay. There wasn't any use writing when she couldn't stay properly focused.

"Hermione?"

Looking up, she saw Harry standing there. She arched her brow at him, wondering what he wanted. Harry and Ron were still treating her rudely, and it was getting on her nerves.

"Can I sit here?" Harry asked, shuffling his feet.

Hermione silently nodded. Harry took the seat next to her. "So, what are you doing?"

"Homework," she replied.

He nodded, licking his lips. Silence fell between them. "So," Harry began again. Hermione looked at him expectantly. He took a deep breath. "I'm sorry."

Hermione closed her eyes, trying to collect herself. She took in a deep breath before meeting his green eyes. "You're sorry? After all that you've done that's all you have to say?"

"I was an idiot, I know," Harry quickly said. "I shouldn't have treated you that way. You were right... Malfoy never threatened us." He lowered his eyes, looking ashamed of himself. "I shouldn't have put you on the spot like that."

"No, you shouldn't have." Hermione sighed. "You know me better than that, Harry. I would never lie to a teacher."

"I know you wouldn't." Harry looked at her. "I shouldn't have even asked you to."

"No." Hermione pursed her lips. "The whole situation has been embarrassing for me. Everywhere I go I have people staring at me. Gryffindors think I'm a traitor and Slytherins think I'm a whore!" She lowered her voice a bit. "Do you know I've had people come up to me and ask me out? They think I'm some sort of easy lay!"

"Lavender said those things, not me," Harry protested.

"Well, she's Ron's girlfriend, and you two made no move to stop her from speaking to me like that. It's disrespectful, and I won't have my two supposed best friends treating me like that."

"You're right," Harry said. "Lavender shouldn't have said those things. She's taken this business too far."

"She has," Hermione agreed. "I don't even like Ron like that. She's creating drama for no reason."

"I'll have Ron speak to her," Harry replied. "But are we okay? I don't want to fight anymore."

Pausing for a second, Hermione nodded. She gave Harry a quick hug. "Everything between us is good."

He grinned. "Good. Now, why don't we head to dinner?"

"Is it that time already?" Hermione asked. She let out a small groan. "I've barely gotten anywhere with my essay."

"What's been distracting you? You usually can focus no problem."

She stood, gathering her things and putting them into her bag. "I've just had stuff on my mind, nothing to worry about."

Harry looked skeptical but nodded. The two of them went to the Great Hall for dinner, taking a seat near Ginny. The redhead blushed at Harry but quickly concealed it. Hermione smirked, knowing that Ginny still had a crush on Harry despite dating Dean.

About halfway through dinner, Professor Dumbledore stood and gathered everyone's attention. Ginny nudged Hermione excitedly.

"Attention students, I have an announcement to make," Professor Dumbledore said, a smile appearing on his face. "As the Muggle holiday of Carnival, or Mardi Gras as American and French Muggles call it, is approaching, the professors and I have decided that to hold a Masquerade ball."

An excitement murmur broke out among the students. Ginny let out a small squeal of excitement. She grasped Hermione's hand tightly. Hermione couldn't help but smile; the excitement was contagious.

"The Ball will be held next Sunday, so Saturday will be a free day. Students will be allowed to leave school to purchase clothing, whether it be at Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley, or any other location. Chaperones are required if a student will be off school property, so keep that in mind when writing to your parents or others." He paused, gazing out at the student body. "That will be all."

Everyone began talking at once. Hermione felt a headache coming on from all the commotion.

"Hermione, how exciting!" Ginny gushed. "I wonder if your secret admirer will ask you to be his date."

Hermione blushed. "No, I don't think so."

"But it'll be a masked ball! If he wants to keep his identity secret, he'd be able to." A dreamy look appeared on Ginny's face. "Shall I write Mum and ask her to chaperone us?"

Hermione nodded. "That sounds good." She noticed Harry was frowning. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"I don't think my ideal date would want to go with me."

"I've got to tell Dean!" Ginny said, standing up. She said good-bye to the two of them and disappeared from sight.

"Yeah, she's definitely not interested," Harry muttered.

Hermione shook her head. "Just ask Ginny."

He paled. "How did you know it was her? Is it really that obvious?" He shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"I just know," Hermione replied, shrugging. "Dean and her aren't serious. You should ask her."

"Maybe I will," he muttered.

After dinner, Hermione made her way back to her dorm. Luckily, Lavender didn't say anything to her as she passed, but Ron did offer her a small smile which she returned. Her stomach did a small flip when she noticed a package on her bed. There was a small note attached. She quickly read it.

Hermione,

I was wondering if you would be my date for the ball? I know we barely know each other which is why I've given you a gift. Open it now before you read any further.

Hermione took the package and carefully unwrapped it. It was a leather-bound diary. She looked back to her note.

This is a two way journal. Whatever you write will appear in my journal and vice versa. I thought we could use this to get to know each other more. I can't tell you my name... not just yet. I hope you will give me a chance. I'll have you know I'm a very good dancer; I took lessons as a child. But I digress. This journal is for you, but please don't feel pressured to write in it. I would never want to make you feel uncomfortable. Either way, I hope you have a splendid evening.

- Your secret admirer

Hermione took a deep breath. Before really even thinking about it, she grabbed her quill and dipped it in ink. Opening the diary, she wrote in it.

I'd be happy to go with you to the ball.

She had decided that for once in her life, she would do something risky. She wanted to know who her admirer was, and this could be the only chance she would get. She couldn't pass this up.

Moments later, words appeared beneath hers. *Really? You'll go with me?*

Yes, I will, she replied.

Wonderful, I look forward to it. I will be wearing blue.

Hermione pursed her lips. Was her admirer from Ravenclaw?

Symbolic of your house? She asked.

No, afraid not.

Any hints you can give me about yourself?

Miss Granger, I won't be giving away my identity so soon.

She smiled. Sorry, sir, for I was only curious. I don't mind waiting.

They say good things come to those who wait.

We'll see.

Indeed.

Hermione grinned. This was fun. Her admirer was teasing with her... flirting even. But it was getting late and she needed to work on her essay.

As fun as this is, I must go, Hermione wrote. I must finish my Charms essay.

Good luck. Sweet dreams, Hermione.

Goodnight.

She closed the book and got to work on her essay.

Chapter Four

Chapter 4 of 5

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Chapter 4

The next few days flew by in a frenzy. Hermione found she was spending almost all of her free time talking to her admirer. She had learned a few things about him but not enough to figure out his identity. For example, she knew he was born in June and he was an only child. His parents spoiled him rotten, giving him anything and everything he could possibly want. For his second birthday, he received a broom and was taught to fly.

Hermione also learned that he was clever as he was always making witty comebacks whenever she said something sassy. His best class was Potions and he struggled in Herbology. He liked to read in his free time.

Although Hermione had only communicated with her admirer through writing, she found that she was starting to have feelings for him. Her heart raced whenever she opened her journal and saw a message from him. Sometimes, she would spend minutes just to think of a perfect response to say. It was silly, of course, but she couldn't help herself. It had been so long since a guy had made her feel special. She could only pray that she wouldn't be disappointed in the end.

"Ready for shopping?" Ginny asked, appearing next to Hermione.

"Yes. I want to get something blue," she said, smiling.

"Is that what your admirer is wearing? Blue?"

Hermione nodded. "Have you decided who you were going to the ball with?"

Ginny frowned. She was in a pickle as both Harry and Dean asked her to the ball. She felt pressured to go with Dean because he was sort of her boyfriend, but at the same time, she wanted to go with Harry. She had liked him for so long but was afraid of actually going with him. She didn't want to hurt Dean in the process.

"I don't know," she eventually answered with a sigh. "If I pick one, I hurt the other. Either way I go, someone is going to get hurt."

"You'll make the right choice," Hermione smiled as they moved towards the courtyard. "So where are we going shopping?"

"Well," Ginny smiled. "Fleur is actually picking us up and taking us shopping in France."

Hermione came to a stop, looking at her friend with a bewildered expression on her face. "I'm sorry, did you just say France?"

"Yes!" Ginny squealed, clapping her hands excitedly. "We're going shopping in wizarding Paris! I'm so excited."

Hermione couldn't help but laugh. "Oh Merlin, that's insane!"

"I know," Ginny gushed. "I can't believe it. Mum said it was all Fleur's idea."

"That's nice of her," Hermione said. Not watching where she was going, she walked right into someone. "Sorry!" she cried, stumbling backwards, someone caught her by the shoulders steadying her. She looked up and saw Malfoy holding her.

Malfoy's grey eyes widened dropping his hands quickly. "It's fine," he murmured, and before Hermione could say anything else, he walked away.

"I wonder what that was about," Ginny snickered. "Did you see his face?"

"Yeah." Hermione glanced over her shoulder, trying to find Malfoy. "I wonder why he looked so nervous."

Ginny shrugged. "Oh, there's Fleur!" Taking Hermione's hand, she dragged her over to the eager blonde.

Fleur hugged them both, kissing each of their cheeks. "I've already signed you both out," she said.

"Fleur, you're English is practically perfect!"

Fleur blushed. "Well, Bill is a very good teacher." She looked them both over. "Got everything? Our Portkey will go off in a few moments." She produced a small book. Hermione and Ginny nodded. The three of them touch it and were whisked away seconds later.

They appeared in a small alleyway.

"Here we are. This is France's wizarding version of the Champs-Élysées." Fleur began to lead them down the street.

Hermione looked around with wide eyes. There was music playing in the shoppes. Bright colours were everywhere giving the street a vibrant look. Wizards and witches speaking rapid French were walking past them.

"It's beautiful," she whispered in awe.

"It is," Ginny agreed. "Oh, this is so exciting!" She walked over to a shoppe and peered inside.

"Come along," Fleur said. "There is the perfect boutique up ahead."

Hermione and Ginny quickly followed her. Fleur lead them to the small shoppe. "Maria!" Fleur called out. "I know the shoppe owner. She'll give you two good prices."

A blonde woman appeared from the back. "Fleur, darling!" The two embraced, and Fleur began to speak in French.

Hermione looked around, noticing many different gowns on the racks. Fleur had literally brought them to the perfect store.

"Try on what you like," Maria said in English. "There are dressing rooms in the back."

Ginny instantly went to a red gown. "Oh, I love this!" She took it and held it up to her body.

"Try it on," Hermione said as Ginny made her way to the dressing room. She began to peruse the racks. There were many different gowns but she wanted to find the perfect one.

"What are you looking for?" Fleur asked, appearing by her side. Fleur had taken notice that Hermione was still looking at a dress as Ginny was already in a dressing room.

"Something blue," Hermione answered. There were plenty of blue dresses, but none were catching her eye.

"I saw something earlier," she disappeared into the racks only to return moments later. "How about this?"

Hermione could only nod. "That's the dress." She just knew it without even trying it on that it was perfect. She would save it as a surprise for everyone.

Hermione purchased her dress and mask and waited for Ginny to decide. In the end, Ginny picked a light pink strapless tulle ball gown. The sweetheart bodice had crystals that caused her to sparkle when she moved. Her mask was white with feathers on the side.

After grabbing a bite to eat, the three of them headed back to Hogwarts. Fleur bid good-bye to the girls, promising that they would get together again soon.

As Hermione and Ginny walked back to Gryffindor Tower, Ginny asked if she would write to her admirer tonight.

"I don't think so," Hermione responded. "I think I'd rather wait to just meet him in person tomorrow."

Ginny smiled. "I hope he's lovely. I can tell you really like him."

"You don't think I'm foolish, do you?" Hermione asked, slightly panicked.

"No!" Ginny immediately protested. "Absolutely not! Think about it, it's sort of like that online dating thing Muggles do."

She bit her lip. "But what if it's someone like Goyle?"

Ginny laughed. "I don't think Goyle has the brains to pull off something like that."

Hermione laughed as well. "I suppose you're right."

"Well, we'll find out tomorrow." The two of them entered the Common Room. "You go ahead, Hermione. I think I'm going to tell Harry I'll go to the ball with him."

Hermione gave her an encouraging smile. "I'll see you tomorrow. Meet you both in the Common Room?"

"Of course." Ginny hugged her good-bye. Taking her things, Hermione made her way upstairs where she quickly fell asleep.

Chapter Five

Chapter 5 of 5

Hermione begins to receive notes from her secret admirer. As the Masquerade Ball draws closer, she hopes to find out his identity.

A/N: A huge thanks to JenniferLupinBlack for being my alpha and to Craftsman for being my fabulous beta. I appreciate all the reviews and favorites. It means a lot to me, and I hope you all enjoy the final chapter of this story.

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Chapter 5

The day of the ball flew by quickly, and before anyone knew it, it was time to start getting ready. All the girls were in their dorm rooms getting dressed, doing each other's hair and make-up. That morning, Hermione awoke to a blue and black corsage on her bedside table. A note was attached that said to meet by the punchbowl at six o'clock, promptly after the ball started.

She checked herself over in the mirror, pleased with her appearance. Her dress was a strapless gown that had a tiered skirt. It was a dark teal, with ribbons of black tulle appearing beneath each tier. On the bodice, there were black flowers surrounded by small crystals. She wore her hair half up and half down, so that some of her brown curls covered her shoulder.

The final accessory to her beautiful gown was her all black mask. The delicate mask swirled around her eyes, forming butterfly wings on the side. The whole outfit gave her a fairytale look. After putting on some lipstick, Hermione hurried to the Common Room where she was meeting Harry and Ginny. Ron and Lavender had already left for the party, for which Hermione was relieved.

"Hermione, you look like a fairy princess!" Ginny gushed, looking over her friend. "All you need are some black wings, and you'd be perfect."

Harry smiled and nodded in agreement, looking at his best friend. "You do look lovely, Hermione."

She blushed. "You clean up nicely too, Harry," Hermione said, looking between the couple. "The two of you look perfect." Ginny looked at Harry with a blush.

They did look perfect together; Ginny was wearing the pink gown while Harry wore a black suit. His masque was blue, making his green eyes more vibrant. She grinned when she saw that the two of them were holding hands.

"Ready to go?" Harry asked.

Hermione nodded. Butterflies swirled around her stomach, making her feel like she would be sick.

Ginny looked at Hermione and sensed her hesitation. "Come on," she said firmly, linking her arm with Hermione's leading her to the portrait hole. "You're going to meet your prince charming tonight; there's no way I'd ever let you back out of this."

"What prince charming?" Harry asked, his protective behavior shining through. The two of them were like siblings, even though they fought quite a bit.

"Hermione's been receiving letters from a secret admirer the past two weeks or so. She's fallen head over heels for him, and they're going to meet tonight," Ginny explained.

Harry's brows shot up in surprise. "Really? Wow, Hermione, that's really..."

"Oh, shut it," Hermione said, cutting him off. She knew he would probably go on to say not to do it, but she really didn't need to hear it. "I don't want to talk about it. I'm nervous enough as it is, and I don't need you two making it worse."

Harry smirked, giving a shrug. "Whatever you say, Hermione. I just want to make sure you're okay."

The three of them walked down to the Great Hall, which had been transformed into the perfect ballroom. The ceiling had turned itself gold, with candles floating in the air. The walls of the room sparkled, with lights adorning the drapes that had magically appeared. Pillars stood along the side, and with the drapes, they created small alcoves.

The ball was already in swing. Couples were dancing around the room and the laughter echoed off the walls. No one was recognizable. Everyone was dressed up elegantly, masks adorning every face.

Looking up to the Head Table, Hermione recognized the long blond hair of Lucius Malfoy. He was sitting with Professor Snape, and the two appeared to be having a deep discussion.

"What's he doing here?" Harry asked.

Hermione shrugged. "He is on the school board. Maybe the other members are here as well."

"Well, it's six o'clock, Hermione. Time to go meet your lover," Ginny said, beaming. "Have fun. Don't do anything I wouldn't do." Tossing a wink at Hermione, she quickly grabbed Harry and dragged him out to the dance floor.

Hermione took a deep breath to try and steady her racing heart. Summoning her Gryffindor courage, she made her way to the punch bowl. There was no one wearing blue over there, but she waited. She watched the others dancing, hoping that she would have her turn on the dance floor soon enough.

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate", a voice spoke out behind her.

She quickly turned around, knowing at once that it was her secret admirer. He was wearing a suit that was so dark blue it almost seemed black. His mask was simple, reminding her very much of Zorro's mask. Her eyes widened a fraction when she saw his steel grey eyes.

Her admirer grinned. "You do look lovely, Hermione."

His voice did it. She knew at once it was Malfoy. Her thoughts whirled with the revelation. Draco Malfoy was her secret admirer!

"You look handsome yourself," she replied, her throat going dry. He did look handsome. His suit was tailored perfectly, showing off his physic beneath.

"Would you care to dance?" Malfoy held out his hand.

She nodded, accepting it. As he led her onto the dance floor, her heart raced. If it wasn't for his tight grip on her waist, Hermione was quite sure she would have stumbled. He twirled her around with ease, oblivious to the inner turmoil of her thoughts.

"You were right," Hermione said, making conversation. "You are a good dancer."

"Years of practice," he replied. He dipped her low, peering into her brown eyes. "I've never had a partner as good as you, however."

She blushed. "I'm not very good," she protested.

"Nonsense. You're a good partner. You're allowing me to lead without fighting for dominance." He leaned close, his breath tickling her ear. "We mesh together well."

Hermione laughed nervously. "So it would seem."

He peered at her, his face centimeters from hers. For a moment, she thought the two of them would kiss. Surprisingly, she wasn't that disturbed by the thought. She wanted that kiss, even if it was from Draco Malfoy. The boy she knew from the journal was different from the boy she knew in front of her. But perhaps not. She didn't know Draco Malfoy all that well to begin with.

"Are you all right?" he asked, watching the emotions flash across her face.

Hermione nodded. "Do you think we could maybe get something to drink?"

"Sure, come on." Taking her hand, he led her to the side of the room. Grabbing two glasses of punch, he guided her to one of the small alcoves. There was a window there, overlooking the Hogwarts's grounds. After taking a sip, Hermione confronted him.

"What do you want with me?" she asked. "Is this a joke or something? Some sort of bet?"

His grey eyes flashed with hurt. "No, why would you think that?"

"Because, Draco, you never showed me any interest before," she said, revealing that she knew his identity. "You've never been particularly nice to me either."

He frowned. "How did you know?" He placed his drink on the window sill.

"Your eyes gave you away," she admitted.

"I shouldn't have been so mean to you when we were younger. It's how I was raised, although I know that's no excuse." Draco sighed. "I have my own ideals and beliefs now."

Hermione looked down at the floor. "I'm sorry. It's just, I've grown attached to you... or well, your writings, and I just..."

"Don't want to get hurt," Draco finished for her. "Hermione, I would never hurt you." He moved a bit closer to her. Hermione backed herself up against the wall. "My feelings for you are genuine. Everything I wrote to you was true."

"Really?" Her mouth went dry. His close proximity was making her thoughts scatter.

"Yes, really. You're a beautiful girl. I just couldn't approach you because I thought you hated me. Potter and Weasley don't like me at all, so I didn't want to take that chance," Draco spoke, moving closer to her.

Her eyes darted about frantically. "But I'm a Muggleborn."

"And I don't care," Draco quickly said. "Like I said, that Pureblood nonsense means nothing to me."

"But what about your father?" she asked. "He's here... He might see us."

"Then let him see," Draco said firmly. "I don't care what he says. My mother already knows and approves."

"You told your mother about me?" Hermione asked surprised.

Draco smirked, a laugh escaping his lips. "Yes, I did. She could spot a lovesick teenage boy over the Christmas holiday. I told her everything."

"I don't know what to say," Hermione whispered.

"Don't say anything," Draco responded. He quickly closed the distance between them and pressed his lips to hers. The kiss only lasted seconds but it was enough to leave Hermione wanting more. He went to kiss her again, but she stopped him.

"Take your mask off," she commanded. "I want to see your face."

He nodded, removing his mask. Reaching up, he helped Hermione remove hers as well. Placing them both on the windowsill, along with Hermione's punch, he then returned his attention to the beautiful witch in front of him.

"Does this mean you'll give me a chance?" he whispered, his voice so low she barely heard him.

"Yes."

His eyes lit up.

"It'll be hard, especially with all the Lavender drama going on."

"I don't care about that," Draco responded. "I know she was lying, and your real friends will know she's lying as well. She will stop one way or another." A small smirk appeared on his face.

"I like that idea, although nothing too terrible," Hermione said as Draco let out a laugh. "And you'll have to be nicer to Harry and Ron."

He opened his mouth to protest, but the sight of her arching her brow stopped him. He nodded. "I'll try to be nicer, all right?"

Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck. "I just can't believe it's you. You were the last person I expected," she admitted.

Draco's hands found her waist. He held her close. "Who did you expect?" he asked.

She gave a shrug. "I don't know. Goyle maybe? Or some other student. For a moment, I thought Lavender was pulling a cruel joke. I never really made any guesses."

"Are you disappointed?"

She frowned, hearing the fear of rejection in his voice. "No, of course not." She leaned forward and gently kissed him. "I happen to be very happy with my admirer. It will take some getting used to, but I look forward to it."

Draco grinned and kissed her. His hands tangled themselves in her hair as he slipped his tongue into her mouth. She tightened her arms around his neck, pulling his body closer to hers. Hermione lost herself in the kiss, feeling as if she could kiss him this way for the rest of their lives.

Eventually, Draco pulled away. He leant his forehead against hers, listening as their heavy and erratic breathing evened out. Hermione pulled away slightly, giving him a smile.

"That was nice," she whispered.

Draco grinned. "Yes, it was. Let's do it again sometime." Leaning forward, he gently kissed her cheek. "But for now, I plan on twirling you around that dance floor until your feet ache."

Hermione linked her hand with his. "That sounds lovely, Draco."

After placing their masks back on, the two of them made their way to the dance floor. As he began to dance with her, Hermione caught Ginny's eye. She quickly gave the redhead a thumbs up, causing Ginny to clap excitedly.

Returning her attention to Draco, Hermione rested her head on his shoulder. She had finally found out who her secret admirer was. Ginny was right; the masquerade ball was a good idea. All of the pieces had finally fallen together.

*Quote from William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18.