

Time's Treasure: Converging Timelines

by debjunk

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 12

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Disclaimer: Certainly not mine. My pocketbook is empty.

A/N: Hi everyone! This is a sequel to Time's Treasure... sort of. It's the tale of what happened to the "other" Hermione when our Hermione returned from her Time-Turner trip. If you're not familiar with Time's Treasure, this story stands on its own, and most of what happened in TT that is pertinent to this story will be explained in forthcoming chapters. Of course, if you'd like to read that one before beginning this one, who am I to stop you? Happy adventures! Many thanks to slytherinlaurel, the best beta a girl could find, who beta'd several of these chapters.

Hermione Granger woke to a loud sound. A small crone figurine sat on her nightstand, screeching on top of her lungs. "Time to get up! Time to get up!"

Hermione groaned and silenced the crone-alarm with a non-verbal spell. It was morning once again. They seemed to creep up quickly, taking more and more of her sleeping time. Or so it seemed.

Bounding out of bed, she ran into the shower and cleaned up. She hurried about her routine. She was supposed to meet Severus and make Remus' Wolfsbane Potion this morning. She didn't want to be late. Friend or not, Severus was a stickler for punctuality.

Fully dressed and ready to go, Hermione left her room and made her way to Severus' Potions laboratory. She opened the door and entered, smiling cheerfully.

"Good Morning, Severus!" she said happily to the man who was bent over the cauldron, concentrating so hard, his eyebrows were knit together and sweat was dripping off his nose. He pulled back to wipe it away, so it wouldn't contaminate the potion he was working on. After clearing his face, he scowled at Hermione. Hermione frowned back at him.

"To what do I owe this displeasure, Professor Granger?" he asked curtly.

Hermione studied him. Severus didn't usually snap like this. Perhaps he'd been up all night and was surly.

"I'm here to start on the potion, of course," she explained.

Severus huffed. "I don't recall asking you to come down here and start any potion, Granger. Isn't it bad enough that I have to suffer your presence every Wednesday?"

Hermione gave Severus a puzzled look. "Severus, we just spoke last night about me starting up the Wolfsbane for this month."

Severus looked at her as if she'd lost her mind. "Why on earth would I have you brewing Wolfsbane? Do you realize how touchy that potion is? Besides, whatever would we need it for?"

Hermione was shocked by his belittling of her talents. He'd always been so very positive about her abilities. He'd encouraged her to become a Potions mistress, and he was always remarking that her talent was close to his own.

"Severus," she said softly. "We need to make it for Remus."

Severus' eyes shot up to hers. He frowned. "That's not funny," he snapped.

"What's funny about making a potion for Remus?"

Severus dropped his stirrer beside his cauldron. In a few short steps he was nose to nose with Hermione. "How long has Remus been dead now?" he demanded. "Four years?"

Hermione gave him a shocked look. "What are you on about, Severus? We just had lunch with him last week!"

Severus pulled back and studied Hermione. "Hermione, Remus was killed in the war. You know that."

"No he wasn't! For Merlin's sake, Severus! Tonks was killed, but he survived."

Severus stared at Hermione. "You really believe what you're saying, don't you?" he asked. His voice was a bit less gruff at this new question.

"Of course I do! That's what happened."

"Hermione, you need to go see Poppy. You're hallucinating," he said dryly. "You must have been cooped up here in the castle for too long. Both Remus and Tonks were killed. Their little boy is being raised by his grandmother."

Hermione narrowed her eyes at Severus. "I don't know what you're on about, Severus. If this is some sort of joke, it's really not funny. It's not like you to say something so cruel. Now cut it out, and let's get on with the potion making." She tried to walk past him, but his hand surrounded her arm in a vise-like grip.

"Granger, there is no Remus Lupin. You will leave now and figure out what's wrong with your head!"

"Severus, you're hurting me! Stop it!"

He grimaced at her as he turned her around and pushed her toward the door. "And stop calling me Severus!"

Hermione found herself in the hall with the door slammed behind her. She turned to go back in, but found the wards sealed against her. She knocked, but Severus did not answer.

What's going on here? Why was Severus so... so... horrid? And how could he say that Remus is dead? What a cruel thing to say. It had been hard enough to lose Tonks in the war.

She stared at the door, chewing her lip. What should she do now?

Maybe Harry can shed some light on this?

She hurried to the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom. She smiled as she saw Harry, his back to her, waving his wand. He was evidently practicing the spell for the day's lesson. She wandered up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder. He turned to see who it was, and Hermione gave a startled squeal.

The man before her wasn't Harry Potter. No, from the back it looked like Harry, but this man, although he had Harry's dark hair, was certainly not Harry Potter. This man had blue eyes instead of green. He was remarkably handsome and rugged, but he was no Harry Potter.

Hermione looked around in puzzlement. "Excuse me, I'm looking for Harry Potter."

"Well, Hermione, he wasn't scheduled to visit today. I don't know where you'll find him."

"Excuse me," Hermione asked curiously. "Do I know you?"

The man laughed. "Hermione, I knew you had a well developed sense of humor, but really! I'm practically your best friend at Hogwarts."

Hermione's head tilted curiously as she regarded the dark stranger before her. "I think I would remember if we were friends," she muttered.

The man looked her up and down. "Is everything all right, Hermione?"

Hermione looked to him crossly. "No, everything is not all right! Severus is ranting on about Remus Lupin being dead, Harry isn't here, when he's supposed to be the DADA professor, and a complete stranger..." she motioned to the man, "claims that we're good friends."

"Hermione, Remus Lupin *is* dead. Harry doesn't work here. I'm Jacob Perry. I've worked here for two years, and you were the first person to welcome me here. Surely you remember, Hermione?"

Hermione stared at the man before her. "Are you friends with Severus? Is this some kind of elaborate joke he's pulling on me? If it is, I don't think it's funny at all."

Jacob regarded her with worry. "Maybe we should visit Poppy."

Hermione threw her hands up in the air. "Fine! Let's go visit Poppy. Maybe we can get some answers!"

She was surprised to feel Jacob Perry's hand guiding her arm as they moved out of the room and through the halls. Before long, they'd entered the infirmary.

"Poppy?" Jacob called out.

The mediwitch bustled out of her office and smiled brightly at Hermione and Jacob.

"What can I do for you two this morning?" she asked.

"Hermione claims to not know who I am," Jacob explained.

Poppy led her to a bed as Jacob continued. "She also swears that Remus Lupin is alive, and that Harry Potter is the DADA teacher."

Poppy gave Jacob a concerned look, and then turned her attention to Hermione. She began waving her wand around her to get diagnostics.

"Just tell him, Poppy! Remus was just here last week. Severus and I had lunch with him!"

She looked to Poppy and saw the confused look in her eyes.

"Don't you believe me? You speak with him all the time."

"Hermione, Remus is dead. He died in the war."

Fear gripped Hermione. What was going on? How could a man she'd just spoken to recently have been dead for years? Her head spun. *I need to speak with someone else. Someone who can answer my questions.*

"I need to speak with Dumbledore," she told Poppy.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 2

Albus Dumbledore walked through the infirmary and stopped at the bed where Hermione Granger sat. She was surrounded by Poppy Pomfrey and Jacob Perry. He nodded to the three of them, but addressed Hermione.

"Poppy says you are having some hallucinations?"

Hermione growled under her breath. "I am not! I just remember things a little differently than everyone else does."

Dumbledore's eyebrows shot up. "When did this start happening?"

"This morning, sir, when I woke up. I went to visit Severus, and he snapped at me for being there, telling me that Remus Lupin is dead and has been since the war. Then I came to speak with Harry and this man was there, telling me much the same thing and assuring me that Harry did not teach here. What's going on, Headmaster?"

Albus stared at Hermione for a minute, and then turned to Poppy and Jacob. "Would you excuse us for a few minutes? I need to ask Hermione some personal questions."

Poppy and Jacob nodded. "I'll just go back to my classroom," Jacob said. "Please let me know when you find out anything, or if there's something I can do." He turned and left, as Poppy retired to her office.

Albus settled himself into a chair next to the bed and looked up at Hermione.

"What's the last thing you remember yesterday?" he asked Hermione.

"Well, I spoke with Severus about brewing the Wolfsbane Potion for Remus. He told me to come by in the morning, and I could start."

"Professor Granger, Wolfsbane Potion is usually only brewed by highly advanced Potions masters. Why would Severus ask you to take on that task?"

"Headmaster, I am a Potions master. I finished my studies almost a year ago."

Albus' eyes widened. "Who was your master, Professor Granger."

Hermione looked exasperated. "Severus was! I studied with Severus for two years. I received my mastership after that, and I've been a part time brewer with him ever since. I teach Arithmancy."

"What do you know of Lucius Malfoy?" Albus answered.

She rolled her eyes. "The man is a megalomaniac. He's the Minister of Magic. He's made so many strict laws that the people are suffering. He taxes everyone highly. He's a power hungry zealot."

"What are his feelings on Muggle-borns, Hermione?"

She shrugged. "I have no idea. I know he was a Death Eater, so he probably doesn't like us much, but I've actually never heard him speak out against us."

Albus folded his hands together and stared at them for a while. Hermione cleared her throat after a long silence.

"Um, Professor? What's going on?"

Albus slowly looked up. His eyes were troubled. "Hermione, do you remember the conversation we had in my office about three days ago?"

"Sir, we never had a conversation in your office."

Albus sighed heavily. "What have I done?"

"Sir?"

"Three days ago, Hermione, we met, and I gave you a Time-Turner. I advised you to travel back in time to try and change Lucius Malfoy. You see, in this reality, Lucius hates Muggle-borns. He has been assassinating them ever since he took over office."

"That's not how I remember it, sir."

Albus held his hand up. "I think I might know why that is. Please let me finish explaining." Hermione nodded. "You see, Hermione, you did travel back. Evidently, you must

have been successful, because the world you remember is a bit different than this world."

Hermione opened her mouth, as if she were about to ask a question, but then closed it again.

"I think that you changed things so much that you separated your time line from this one. I believe there are now two universes with similar history. Probably, the original Hermione returned to what she thought was her time last night. When that happened, she threw you out of your own timeline and took your place. You took her place in this reality."

Hermione's mouth dropped open. "What are you saying, Professor?"

He gazed at her sadly. "I'm sorry, Hermione. The reality you remember no longer exists for you. I have neither idea nor inkling as to how to return you to it. You have been transferred to this reality, where Remus Lupin is dead, Harry Potter does not work at Hogwarts, and Lucius Malfoy is a Muggle-born murderer."

Hermione's face turned ashen. "Albus, what else has changed?"

"I don't know, Hermione. I don't know. It will probably take you a while to realize what has happened and what hasn't in this reality."

Tears threatened to fall from Hermione's eyes. "So, everything I remember... the people, events... they're all gone?"

"They're probably still here, Hermione. Maybe they haven't changed either. I just don't know."

Hermione turned her head and stared out the window. "How have I survived if Lucius is out to kill all Muggle-borns?"

"You haven't left the castle in a year."

Her head snapped back to Albus. "How have I survived?"

Albus chuckled. "You are a very resourceful witch. Your friends Harry and Ron have visited you weekly."

Hermione's stomach clenched. "What is my relationship with them? With Ron specifically?"

"You are all good friends."

Hermione frowned. "Forgive my forwardness, but did we date in this timeline?"

"Hermione, you must ask me anything that's on your mind, no matter how personal. It is the only way you will learn what of your memories coincide with this timeline." He sighed and turned his thumbs in his lap. "You did date Mr. Weasley for a short time a few years ago."

"I dated him for three years in my reality. We only broke up about six months ago." She looked into Albus' eyes. "What do I do, Headmaster?"

"Please, Hermione, as I've told your counterpart repeatedly, call me Albus."

"Albus, how am I going to adjust to all of this?"

"Hermione," he said kindly. "You will do it. It will take some time, but you will do it."

"What do I tell people when I say something that has nothing to do with this reality?"

Albus stroked his beard, deep in thought. "I suppose we should be honest with everyone. We'll explain that there's been an accident with a Time-Turner, and you are here from another reality."

"Yes, that should go over famously."

Albus shrugged. "There's nothing anyone can do. We'll just all have to adjust along with you. Actually, Hermione, you may have some insights on what we can do about our current situation with Malfoy."

Hermione nodded absently. Her mind had drifted to Severus. "What about Professor Snape?"

Albus gazed at her curiously. "What about him?"

"He seemed so... so... angry when I saw him earlier. Is he always like that?"

"Was Severus a spy in your timeline?"

Hermione nodded.

"He was here too. He had to separate himself from everybody for years. He likes to keep to himself, and he's grown a hard outer shell."

Hermione thought about her Severus. He had to live a secretive life, but he'd gone out of his way to establish friendships during that time, and even more since the war had ended. She felt a pang of sadness at the thought that this Severus didn't have that same support.

"My Severus was a bit more comfortable in his skin, I would say," she explained.

"Maybe you can help our Severus loosen up a bit, then, Hermione."

She shrugged.

"Albus, what do I need to know about this timeline?"

"I suppose I'll start with the war. We can work forwards and backwards from there. In this reality, Voldemort was defeated."

Hermione nodded in agreement. "Harry did it in my reality while Severus held the crowd back."

Albus' eyebrows rose. "In this timeline, Severus was attacked by Voldemort's snake, Nagini. He almost died. You saved him, actually, by dousing him in Dittany and bringing Poppy to his aid. He owes you a life debt."

Something stirred within Hermione. She was uncertain whether she liked being owed a life debt by Severus.

"Who else died, sir?"

He listed all who lost their lives.

"There is a plaque at the entryway of all of the fallen."

"There's one in my timeline too, although some of those names are not listed."

Albus looked around him. "It seems, Hermione, that you are not ill at all. Perhaps we should take this conversation elsewhere?"

"Oh, please, could we? The infirmary always depresses me."

They both rose and left the room behind them.

Over an hour later, Hermione emerged from the Headmaster's office feeling like she'd just run into a cement wall. So much was different in this timeline, how would she ever cope? From the simple fact that she'd only dated Ron for six months to Lucius Malfoy having a blood vendetta against Muggle-borns, she felt totally lost. Well, she'd probably be lost for a while, and with Albus' blessing, she was going to let her friends know just what happened and what she needed from them.

She went to her room and pulled out a parchment. She scribbled a note to Harry and soon her owl had set off to deliver it. She didn't have to wait long to see Harry's head in her fireplace.

"What is it, Hermione?" Harry asked through the flames.

"Harry, I need to speak with you and Ron. Do you have any time to visit today, perchance?"

"We can come by now, Hermione. We're both here today, working on some new apprehension techniques."

Hermione smiled gratefully. "I would really appreciate that."

"We'll come through in a minute," Harry said before disappearing from the flames.

Within five minutes, both Harry and Ron were standing in her sitting area. Hermione gave a little start as she gazed at Ron. She was over him in her time, but his jealousy of her while they were together still made her stomach turn.

"What's wrong, Hermione?" Ron asked. "You look a bit upset."

"You two should probably sit down. This will take a while to explain." Hermione motioned for them to sit on the couch as she took a seat across from them. She eyed her surroundings. The room was exactly the same as her own. The Hermione of this reality had the same tastes as she did. The walls were still a lovely green, and the furniture was still black leather. That gave her a little bit of assurance that things could eventually be all right for her.

Both men took seats next to each other and looked to Hermione. She gave them looks of apprehension. "Something's happened," she began. "Dumbledore asked me to go back in the past and try to fix this... thing with Malfoy. Evidently, I went. Unfortunately, the person who returned was not the one who left. I'm from a parallel universe to this one. My reality is very different from yours. I've just spent the last hour talking with Albus as he tried to help me understand the things that are different in this world." She bit her lower lip and stared at her two friends. "I'm still Hermione; it's just that I remember things a bit differently than actually happened."

Harry was staring at her oddly. It was Ron who actually spoke first. "Hermione, how did this happen? Can you be switched back?"

"Dumbledore thinks that the original Hermione changed things so much that she just took my place, kicking me out of my rightful timeline. There's no going back. We wouldn't even know where to begin. This is my reality now; the other Hermione will take my place in mine."

The two men stared at her without saying a word. Hermione felt nervous. Would they accept her?

"So, what's different?" Harry finally asked.

Hermione explained that there were a lot of superficial differences, like the fact that Remus was alive in her reality. She told them about Lucius in her timeline. She explained about her relationship with Ron.

"We... you and I, Ron, dated for three years. You were insanely jealous, and I finally couldn't take it any more. We broke up about six months ago."

"Oi, Hermione, I've been dating Luna Lovegood for two years now!"

Hermione smiled wanly. "I know. Albus told me. Don't worry, I'm not looking to rekindle anything with you."

"Hermione, I would never treat you like that. I'm a bit ashamed that another me could be so nasty. I mean, I was jealous of you when we were younger... in school, you know. But that was before we even started dating. I just didn't want you to be with anyone else. When we dated in *this* reality, we realized quickly that we were better suited as friends. We parted amicably, and I think of you as my sister." He looked at her uncomfortably. "I'm thinking of asking Luna to marry me."

Hermione smiled. "That's wonderful, Ron. Really."

"I'm married to Ginny, you know," Harry added.

Hermione's smile grew wider. "I'm glad, Harry. You're married to her in my reality, too." She tilted her head. "Are you friends with Severus?"

Harry coughed abruptly. "Friends? With Snape? That's a laugh! We still hate each other."

Hermione furrowed her brow. "You hate one another? In my world, you are best friends."

Harry laughed. "How on earth would I have ever become friends with Snape?"

"He mentored you, Harry. He taught you defensive spells. He protected you. You are his closest friend."

Harry gazed at Hermione wide-eyed. "Bloody hell," he muttered.

They chatted for a while. She told them of her world, and they filled in gaps that Albus had left in theirs.

"Whatever you need, Hermione, we're here for you!" Harry told her as they got up to leave.

"It's upsetting to think that I'm a prisoner here. Is there any way to defeat Lucius?"

"We're working on that," Ron explained. "The Order is alive and well. We are looking for a way to get to Malfoy without him knowing it."

"Are you talking about assassination?" Hermione asked.

Harry shrugged. "We're not quite sure yet. Something must be done, though. Most Muggle-born wizards have fled the country or are in hiding like you. They deserve to live a normal life like everyone else."

Hermione nodded absently. Harry and Ron hugged her as they prepared to go. "Chin up, Hermione," Ron advised.

"Yeah, we'll rescue you from the castle in no time," Harry added.

Despite the myriad of emotions that were running through her, Hermione couldn't help but laugh. "Thank you, boys, you always cheer me up. And Ron? It's really nice to have your friendship back. Honestly, I've missed you and missed this... for a very long time."

Ron blushed scarlet, and turned away, mumbling something under his breath. Hermione's hand grasped his arm. "Tell Luna everything, and that I'm happy for the both of you."

Ron turned back to her, a smile on his lips. "I will, Hermione. I will."

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 12

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Chapter 3

Hermione stood tentatively outside Severus' door. Her arm was lifted and her hand formed a fist, ready to knock. Now that she was here, she was wondering if this was a good idea. Severus had been a dear friend to her in her reality. She'd even held a secret crush on him for years. However, this was not the Severus she knew, and her first encounter with him had not been pleasant.

She wavered as her hand sat poised in front of the door. Frowning to herself, she shook her head. She was not acting as herself. Hermione Granger did not shy away from possible confrontation. Besides, if she were to be holed up in this castle, she wanted her good friend to be there for her.

Gathering her courage, she knocked on the door.

"Enter!" came the voice from the other side.

Hermione stepped through and shut the door behind her. When she turned back, she found Severus' black eyes glinting at her.

"I hope Madam Pomfrey was able to give you something for your hallucinations," he remarked dryly from his seat behind his desk.

Hermione frowned to herself. This wasn't going to be easy. She walked to the desk.

"May I sit?" she asked as she pulled a chair to the desk.

"It seems you are already about to do so."

She settled herself in. "Severus, there's something I need to tell you."

Severus sat back and folded his arms in front of him. He huffed in exasperation. "You do realize that I have a mountain of essays to grade, Professor?"

She sighed. "I can imagine," she commiserated. "Severus, I'm not the person you think I am."

"You mean to say that you're not the insufferable know-it-all that everyone else fawns all over?"

Hermione was taken aback by the sting of his words. How could a man she regarded as her friend be so... caustic?

She cleared her throat before continuing. "When I went to see Poppy, she summoned Albus. He related a request he made of me to go back in time and try to change Lucius Malfoy. I'm not the person he sent back in time. I'm her counterpart from another universe."

Severus arched an eyebrow at her. "You are saying that Albus hoped to change the future by altering the past?"

She nodded. "He thinks that things were changed so much that the other Hermione stayed in my reality, forcing me into this one."

Severus unfolded his arms and leaned forward, studying her intensely. "What does this have to do with me?"

"Well, you are a member of the faculty. Everyone will need to be told eventually."

"So, you just ran down here excitedly to tell me first?"

Hermione's shoulders sagged. "In my reality, Severus, you are one of my closest friends."

Severus scoffed. Then he sputtered. "Friends? You and I?"

"Yes. That's why I came down this morning. You wanted me to start the Wolfsbane."

"I don't believe that I would request a novice to start Wolfsbane no matter what the timeline would be," he snorted.

"I am a Potions mistress."

Severus laughed. He sobered as he realized she was being serious.

"How did that happen?"

Hermione glared at Severus. "You suggested it! You mentored me. You were my master. You told me that I learned quickly. It took two years instead of three, and I've been by your side brewing with you ever since!"

Severus raised an eyebrow at her again. "You have always been a quick study. However, if you wish to work as a mistress with me, you will have to prove yourself."

"Surely, having studied under you would ensure..."

"I know nothing of this other me! How am I to know that he is as exacting as I?"

"He's you, for Merlin's sake! He's a Potions master just like you are!"

"Nonetheless... I find it hard to believe that you are capable of what is needful in a mistress."

Hermione stood. She didn't look at Severus, but turned and went into the lab, her fists clenched at her sides. Storming over to the cauldron shelf, she pulled one down and set it on the table. Severus had meandered in after her, his arms folded behind his back. He watched her as she gathered ingredients, prepped them, and created a potion that was worthy of a Potions mistress.

She worked in silence, not even glancing at Severus. She put everything out of her mind as she concentrated. After half an hour, she looked up at Severus.

"It is ready"

Severus walked over to the cauldron and looked in. He sniffed lightly. "What is this?" he sneered.

Hermione looked to him in pride. "It is a potion of my own making."

"You created this? What does it do? Have you named it?"

"You suggested that I name it the Fortunata Draught."

Severus scoffed. "You mean to say that it predicts the future?"

She nodded. "It is supposed to. I have yet to test it for long term futures. It depends upon the amount of Billywig that's added as to how far into the future it will take you. I have only gone a week ahead thus far."

"And this particular batch?"

Hermione gazed into the cauldron. "I have added more of the Billywig. According to my calculations, this will give the drinker a glimpse of approximately two months into the future."

Severus stepped closer to the cauldron. "How does it work?"

"When you drink it, your mind's eye will see the future for up to a minute."

"In your reality are Professor Trelawney and you... friends?"

"Very funny," Hermione said tartly. She looked up worriedly at Severus. "You were joking, right? I can't stand her in my reality. I would expect the same from any other me that existed."

"You are not her favorite person, nor do you have any warm feelings for her."

Hermione sighed. "Thank heavens!"

Severus got back to the topic at hand. "The previous experiments have worked thus far?"

Hermione nodded.

Severus looked up at her. His eyes narrowed. "Might I try it?"

"I usually don't test it on anyone but myself, that way I know if the future has come to pass as predicted or not."

"Surely, Granger, I would tell you one way or the other."

Hermione pursed her lips. "All right."

She ladled a little into a vial and handed it to Severus. He gazed at the red color before drinking it. Immediately a vision appeared in his head. He was standing in front of Hermione, staring at her intensely. Suddenly, he pulled her to him and kissed her.

"Is this what you want?" he demanded after breaking away from her lips. "Is this who you want in your life? I am not the man you grew up with!"

"Severus! I don't want him. I want you!" she cried and pulled him to her, kissing him passionately.

Severus dropped the vial and it shattered on the floor.

"What have you done?" he spat.

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked nervously. "What did you see?"

"You have set some sort of love potion on me, witch! How dare you?"

"I assure you, Severus, that's not the intent of this potion."

"Silence! You will get out! Now!"

"Severus, please, you have to tell me what you saw!"

He was next to her in a second, his nose touched hers as he glowered at her.

"I want nothing to do with you, Granger. Get out. I will not condone you making a fool of me!"

"Severus, I would never..."

"Get. Out. Now."

Hermione backed up, then spun around and rushed out of the room. Severus glared after her. He turned to the cauldron and angrily lifted a ladle full of the potion. He poured it slowly back into the cauldron, examining it intensely as he did. He repeated the act, this time getting closer so he could sniff the ingredients.

"Nothing in here is related to love potions," he whispered. "What on earth did I just see? If I tested the potion again, would I see the same thing?"

Bringing the ladle to his mouth, he took another sip. His mind became foggy, and once again Hermione Granger was in his arms.

"I would not have dreamed it possible that you could forget him and love me."

Hermione kissed him again. "But I did. And I do."

"Hermione, I am not..."

Her finger came up and silenced him by carefully touching his lips. "I know what you're not. I love you as you are."

The room came back into focus, and he was back in the present. His heart was beating so forcefully, he thought it might explode in his chest. The vision... if that's what you could call it, had been short, but intense. He could still feel her closeness, and the ecstasy that had gone through his body.

"All those nights of secretly longing after her... maybe they weren't a waste after all?"

Severus shook his head. *Utter nonsense. The woman will never see me as anything more than a grumpy, snide, pain in her arse.*

He shook his head again and left the room and the potion behind, along with his dreams of a possible future with Hermione Granger.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 4

Hermione stumbled to her room and slammed the door behind her. She raced into her bedroom and threw herself on the bed. Great tears, which she'd been holding back while she'd raced through the corridors, now streamed down her cheeks unheeded.

"Severus..." she gasped before burying her head in her hands and sobbing aloud.

"He's nothing like you! He's cruel and caustic. He hates me!" Her sobs grew even louder.

"Why did this happen? Why am I stuck in this reality where everything looks the same, but is so very different? Why?"

After a while, she whispered into her pillow, "Will I ever feel comfortable here?"

She put her head down as the tears continued to stream down her face. She cried until her exhaustion overcame her, finally falling into a fitful sleep.

Some time later, there was a knock at her door. Hermione stirred as her consciousness became aware that she had a visitor. She rose and rubbed her eyes as she made her way to the door. When she opened it, she was surprised to see Jacob Perry standing there, looking a bit nervous.

"Um, hi... Hermione," he said.

"Professor Perry, come in." Hermione motioned for him to enter. She led him to the couch and sat next to him.

"I just came from Albus' office. He explained what happened. Is there anything I can do?"

Hermione gave him a wan smile. "Well, I suppose you could tell me something about yourself. In my reality, there is no Jacob Perry... or if there is, I don't know him."

Jacob looked dismayed. "We're best friends, Hermione. I... I'm saddened at the thought that there might be a place where we don't even know one another."

Hermione frowned. "I'm sorry, Professor. I don't know what to say."

"Hermione, I know you don't know me very well, but please call me Jacob. You always used to."

Hermione looked into his eyes and saw sincerity. She smiled and nodded. "Tell me about yourself, Jacob."

"Well, I was born in Devonshire, and I'm twenty-eight years old. I've been teaching Defense for about two years now. I was an Auror before that. I'm happy not to be in the thick of things, and I enjoy having a hand in the training of the wizards of our future."

He shrugged. "That's about it."

"And you're one of my best friends?"

Jacob nodded. "I am pleased to be included in that category. When Harry and Ron come to visit, the four of us usually wind up sharing a meal, and sometimes a game of Quidditch."

"Tell me about us, Jacob. How long have we been friends?" Hermione asked with curiosity.

"Since I started working here, actually. You were the first to shake my hand when I arrived. We sit next to each other for meals and became fast friends the moment we saw one another. I... well; I share your love of knowledge, Hermione. I assume you love to learn like the woman before you?"

Hermione nodded. "I do. What are your interests, Jacob?"

"Obviously, I love to learn new techniques in fighting Dark Magic. You have actually given me many ideas on that. I also am talented in Transfiguration and try to keep up on the latest advancements in that science. I dabble in Arithmancy, but I am no match for you. We do seem to find some things to talk about in the subject. I'm sure you're

just dumbing yourself down when you speak to me about it."

Hermione laughed. Maybe things wouldn't be so bad after all. She might not have Severus' friendship, but the man beside her seemed to be quite nice and intelligent in his own right. She could see herself liking him and becoming fast friends with him.

Jacob's hand found hers. "Hermione, I know you don't know me. I would like to remedy that. Would you like to take a walk around the lake?"

Hermione smiled. "That sounds lovely, Jacob. From what I understand, I'm trapped here. I'm glad I have someone who is willing to spend time with me. I imagine it's a bit boring not being able to leave the castle."

Jacob gave her a devilish look. "That's where you're wrong, Hermione. Let's do that walk later. I have something to show you."

He rose and extended his hand to her. Hermione grasped it and soon found she was being led through the hallway and up the stairs. Before she knew it, they were standing in front of the Room of Requirement. Jacob released her hand and paced, turning in front of the door three times. He beamed at her as he motioned toward the door.

"Go ahead, open it."

Giving him a curious glance, she reached out and opened the door. Her mouth fell open as they walked into the Hogsmeade candy shop, Honeydukes.

"Jacob, what?"

His smile made her feel immediately at ease. "You know this room can produce anything you need. It recognizes that you need to leave the confines of Hogwarts, so we can produce whatever you want when you would like to escape."

"But I thought this room couldn't produce food."

"Oh, it can't."

Hermione waited for an explanation, but received none.

"Then why, pray tell, is it loaded with candy?"

Jacob grinned. "You are very much like your counterpart, Hermione. I'm glad."

Hermione huffed. "Would you like to explain this?" she asked with a wave of her hand to the candy stock.

Jacob looked to the floor. "I stocked it. It was a surprise for you at Christmas. We'd never made this shop before that because we knew there would be no candy. So, I arranged for Honeydukes to send me all of this and I made the room and set it up. I wasn't sure if it would work. I hoped that the candy would remain in the room when it disappeared and reappeared. I tested it out, and sure enough, the candy came and went with the room." He shrugged. "It really wasn't any big deal."

Hermione looked around the room. Jacob must have bought out the whole store to be able to stock it here in the Room of Requirement. She wandered around and picked up a bag of Fizzing Whizzbies. She eyed the sugar quills. Shaking her head, she turned back to Jacob.

"You did this all for me?"

His sheepish grin made her melt before him. "I did."

"Wow, Jacob. Thank you. It's... it's wonderful."

"My next plan is to get some butterbeer and create the Three Broomsticks."

Hermione shook her head. "No, don't bother. It wouldn't be the same without people in it."

"That's what you said before. I could invite your friends, you know."

Hermione thought on that. *No, this is something special between Jacob and me. Don't ruin it by inviting others.*

"No, Jacob. I'd rather just share this with you. I think the other Hermione would have felt the same way."

Jacob smiled at her and nodded. "That's pretty much what she said too."

"Well, come on. I've got the urge to devour a sugar-quill."

Jacob moved next to her as she got two sugar-quills from the jar. She handed one to Jacob and they ate happily.

Hermione came to dinner in much brighter spirits. Her afternoon with Jacob had lifted her depression and given her hope that she could adjust to this strange, new-yet-familiar world.

Sitting herself in her usual spot next to Severus, she turned and nodded at him. Severus ignored her. Hermione sighed and reached for the potatoes. Just then, Jacob settled into the seat on her other side.

"I am sitting in the right place, right Jacob?" Hermione asked tentatively.

Jacob nodded and grinned at her. "You always sit right next to me."

Hermione's heart fluttered at his smile. They chatted amicably, and she barely noticed when Severus rose and left the Hall. Jacob and she were discussing the students. Hermione had been getting to know the similarities and differences of her students.

"Let's take this conversation up to my room, okay?" she asked Jacob when they were both done.

Jacob smiled and rose, offering his arm for Hermione to take. She grinned, and they were soon making their way out of the Great Hall arm in arm.

Within a few minutes they were settled on Hermione's couch. Hermione had gotten her class lists and was perusing them, looking for names she hadn't already asked Jacob about. Her finger slid down the column of names for her seventh year class.

"Who is Jeanette Crowley?" she asked.

"She is the daughter of Jonathan Crowley."

Hermione raised her head. "I'm not familiar with him."

Jacob's eyes widened. "He's Lucius Malfoy's Undersecretary."

Hermione knitted her brows together. "I've never even heard of a Jonathan Crowley from my world."

"He was a suspected Death Eater. But there was no evidence to convict him. He's very slippery, evidently. His daughter is just as slippery. You'll need to keep an eye out for her."

Hermione chuckled. "I'm not sure what type of chaos she could start up in an Arithmancy class!"

"You'd be surprised. She seems to have it out for you. Your counterpart was constantly complaining about her. Once, she charmed the numbers on her paper to life and made them scurry around the room. It took you half an hour to round them all up."

"Wonderful," she muttered with a frown. "Yet another problem for me in this new world." Hermione huffed.

Jacob rested his hand on hers. "Don't worry. I'm willing to wager that the good things will outweigh the bad."

"I hope you're right."

"Hermione?" Jacob asked tentatively.

"What is it?" she answered with concern.

"Did you have anyone... back there?"

"Anyone?"

"You know... anyone special?"

"Do you mean was I dating anyone?"

Jacob nodded.

"No... no, I wasn't... Jacob."

Jacob nodded and was silent for a few moments. "Well, that's good. It would be terrible to be separated from someone like that." He looked away.

"Yes, yes, it would..."

Jacob stood abruptly. "Well, I should be going."

"Oh, but you just got here!"

He pointed toward the door. "Umm, I have... papers to grade. Yes, papers. Lots to do," he muttered.

Hermione rose too. "Oh, all right. Thank you for your help. I definitely need it."

Jacob gave her a shy smile. "Anytime, Hermione."

Hermione saw him out and then leaned against the door when it closed behind him.

He likes me. Well, he likes the other Hermione. Liked... I mean.

Part of Hermione felt lighthearted by that realization. The other part of her felt downcast.

What about Severus?

Frowning deeply, she continued with her train of thought.

What about him? He's not the Severus you knew.

But you loved that Severus...

She sighed. And I should have told him so. Now I've lost him, and the man who is his counterpart hates me.

Wandering over to the window, she looked out on the grounds. Students were frolicking in the snow, which made Hermione smile. It soon turned to a frown again as she thought of Severus Snape.

There's no point in dwelling on a relationship with Severus. It will never happen. Jacob seems like a good man. I need to get to know him more.

Her mind made up, she turned from the window and settled in to read. Her brave new teaching world started tomorrow. Hopefully it would go well.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 5

Hermione sighed as the last of her students straggled out of the classroom. Her day hadn't been too bad. She had stumbled over some of the assignments, skipping ahead

in some classes, being quite behind in others, despite her studying the current curriculum. The students hadn't really seemed to notice. They'd all treated her normally. That was a relief.

She was startled out of her thoughts by someone clearing their throat. She looked up to find Jacob leaning against the door frame, his arms crossed in front of him.

"Earth to Hermione... Earth to Hermione..."

Hermione giggled. "Sorry, I obviously was somewhere else."

"Come now, I thought you'd given up on returning to that other world of yours," Jacob teased.

"Oh, I was very much in this world, just reliving the recent past."

"Ah, how did it go?" Jacob said as he unfolded his arms and straightened. He crossed the room and stood before her.

She shrugged. "Not as badly as I thought it might. No one gave me any odd looks. Well, that Crowley girl glared at me as if I was the devil incarnate, but she didn't start anything in class."

"Just give her time."

Hermione snickered. "What about you?" Her arms went out at her sides. "How was your day?"

Jacob shrugged. "Uneventful, really. Only two students sent to the infirmary. It was a good day by those standards."

Hermione tried to wipe the smirk off her face, but it brazenly defied her efforts.

"I have an ulterior motive in coming by," Jacob said with a wiggle of his eyebrow.

"What's that?" Hermione asked with a giggle.

"I thought we might take that walk we put off yesterday."

"Why Mr. Perry, that sounds lovely!"

Jacob extended his arm, and Hermione wrapped hers in it. She flicked her wand and her cloak sailed into her hands. He led her out of the classroom and down the hall. Before long, they had escaped the confines of the castle and were headed to the lake. Hermione shivered a bit as they made their way there.

"Ah, it seems that your cloak isn't doing the trick, is it?" Jacob mused. He wrapped his arm around her and pulled her close. Hermione felt a chill go through her that had nothing to do with the cold.

Soon they had reached the pathway that ran alongside the lake. Jacob stopped and the two gazed at the water.

"Do you think we can coax the squid out?" he asked as he turned toward her.

"Hmm, I think we just might." Hermione removed her wand and transfigured a rock into a peanut butter sandwich.

Jacob regarded her curiously.

"The squid is a sucker for peanut butter," she whispered.

Taking a small piece of the sandwich, she threw it into the water. She held the rest of it high above her head. Within a few minutes the drenched piece had disappeared, and a slender tentacle moved toward Hermione. It wrapped itself around the sandwich and soon disappeared back into the lake.

"Ach, I didn't even get a chance to pet it, I was so mesmerized," Jacob mused.

Hermione conjured up another sandwich and repeated the experiment. This time Jacob stroked the tentacle before it disappeared.

"Wow, I've never touched it before," Jacob mused.

Hermione looked to Jacob with a smile. "It's pretty amazing, isn't it?"

He nodded. They began to stroll along the edge of the lake. Jacob extended his arm, and Hermione twined hers with his. She marveled at how nice this felt.

"Tell me about your reality, Hermione. What did you do? Who were your friends with?"

Hermione chuckled mirthlessly. "Believe it or not, Severus Snape was one of my closest friends."

Jacob's eyes widened. "Have you told him that?"

Hermione sighed. "I tried. He really didn't want to hear it."

"Give him some time. He's hard to get to know. Merlin, you've been trying for the three years you've been here. Did he tell you that you help him brew for the infirmary on Wednesday nights?"

Hermione tilted her head, deep in thought. "He might have mentioned it, but I was so flustered about things not being what I expected, I don't think his words really sunk in. Maybe in time when he sees that I am truly the Potions mistress I claim to be, he will be more accepting of me."

"Wait, you're a Potions mistress?"

Hermione looked over at him. "Yes, I am. Severus taught me, actually. It's hard for me to not have his friendship now. I could really use it."

Jacob pressed his hand over hers. "Things will get better, Hermione."

She smiled wanly and nodded. "I really can't thank you enough, Jacob, for your friendship."

He grinned widely at her. "See, this reality isn't all bad."

His enthusiasm caused Hermione to guffaw. She nodded.

"What else do I need to know about you?" Jacob asked.

"Well, a lot of things I did I also did here. Many of the differences revolve around Malfoy. I was pretty active in trying to get him out of office in my reality. Here I guess I'm just a prisoner."

"Not just a prisoner, Hermione. Harry, Ron, and I always brainstorm with you. Your ideas have been pretty invaluable to the cause, despite your inability to go into the outside world. You suggested using Percy to get close to him." Jacob gave a small laugh. "That man and his boot licking would make anyone believe they had him squarely in their pocket. He's discovered some very damning things and is close to finding a way to take out Lucius."

Hermione nodded. "Hopefully, he will be taken care of soon."

"Yes. I'm sure you're already itching to leave the castle."

Hermione nodded. "There's one other major difference between my counterpart and myself that I've noted thus far."

"What is that?"

Hermione looked to Jacob. "In my reality, I dated Ron for three years. We've only been apart for about six months. He was very jealous, not like this Ron. He was quite mentally abusive in his jealousy, I'm afraid."

Jacob stopped and turned to her. "Are you all right, then?"

She smiled thinly and nodded her head. "Yes, of course. I became all right the day I decided I had taken enough from him and broke it off. I was a fool to let it go on for so long."

Jacob's hands came up and rested on her arms. "Hermione Granger is no fool in any reality."

Hermione felt a jolt run through her body at his touch and his words. How could she be so attracted to him in such a short time? What was it about this man?

"I didn't tell you one thing about me, Hermione," Jacob said softly.

"What is that?" she asked.

"The other Hermione... I have had a crush on her for a very long time."

Hermione's eyebrows rose. "Did she like you too?"

"I don't know. I never got up the courage to ask. I'm regretting that now. I'm afraid I've missed my opportunity."

Hermione stared into his eyes. "Maybe you've been given a second chance?"

He smiled then. "Maybe..."

"I should tell you something, though."

He stepped closer to her and brushed her hair with his hands. "What is it?"

"I have had a crush myself, for years."

His hand stopped. "Anyone I know?"

She frowned. "Severus."

His hand fell, and he took a step back.

"Severus Snape?"

"I told you, Jacob, he's so very different in my reality."

"So, how do you feel about this Snape?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. He's mean and rude. I can't see him ever liking anyone like that, especially me. And I'm not incredibly fond of him in this reality."

There was pain in Jacob's eyes. Hermione saw it and a pang of guilt shot through her.

"Look, Jacob. I find you incredibly attractive, and I've enjoyed our company. Maybe I've enjoyed it a little too much."

"What do you mean?"

"Despite our only knowing each other for about two days, I find myself drawn to you. Maybe, like I said before, this is a second chance for you... for both of us."

"What about Snape?"

She shook her head and shrugged. "What about him? There's nothing there."

Jacob stepped back to her side. His hand cupped her cheek. "You're sure?"

"I am."

He leaned down then and kissed her reverently. She responded to him and enjoyed his lips upon hers. A brief flash of Severus ran through her mind, but she pushed it away. Her Severus was gone. Her new future was standing in front of her. She sighed and accepted it. This man holding her was incredibly handsome and kind. She found she was attracted to him. Why couldn't this work?

Throwing herself into him, she kissed him with fervor. After a while they pulled apart.

"You don't know how long I've wanted to do that," Jacob said.

"Jacob, I'm not that Hermione. Are you sure you can differentiate between us? Will this work?"

He shrugged. "I know you're not the other Hermione. But you are so much like her. I want to try and make this work. I think as we get to know one another our previous thoughts of others will disappear."

"I think I would like that," Hermione admitted.

Jacob's smile made her heart feel light.

"I would like that too." He descended to her lips, and they enjoyed each other once again.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 6

Hermione knocked on Severus' door after dinner. The days had flown by, and it was Wednesday, the day the other Hermione helped Severus brew. She hoped that through this simple exercise she'd be able to get Severus to warm up to her.

He appeared in his doorway and frowned intensely. "I thought with the disappearance of your counterpart that I would be saved these infernal visits."

Hermione was shocked at his greeting. He hadn't said a word to her all week, even though she'd sat right next to him for meals. Her curiosity getting the better of her, she'd grilled the faculty on his mannerisms and behaviors. She should have been expecting his greeting, but still, it jarred her.

Buck up, Hermione. This isn't the friend you used to know. He's probably very suspicious of you. Don't let him get to you, or he'll win.

She squared her shoulders and strode past him, not letting on how he'd disturbed her.

"Really, Severus, there's no need to be rude. When I found out that we brewed together, I thought it would be a good way for us to become reacquainted. Besides, as a Potions mistress, I can brew more complex things and help you even more."

Severus rolled his eyes. "Perhaps I don't want to become reacquainted with you."

She turned and looked him straight in the eye. "You need help brewing. I am a Potions mistress. It seems you're stuck with me. Now, what would you like me to get started on?"

"Burn paste," Severus answered distastefully.

"Really, Severus, I can..."

"If you want to help, you will need to prove yourself."

"I thought I did that the other day."

Severus narrowed his eyes. "That display meant nothing."

She turned to him, her hands on her hips. "The fact that I created that potion means nothing to you? Do you have some complex about giving out compliments? Can't you just say that I did a good job?"

Severus took three large steps and was now within inches of Hermione. "You are the same kudos-seeking harpy that your counterpart was."

Hermione's insides knotted up. The man was intolerable. Why was she even here?

She looked into his eyes. Severus' eyes. Her Severus' eyes. A pang of loneliness ran through her. She missed him so. She felt the tears coming, but fought them back. Her response to him was spoken softly.

"Severus, I know that deep down in you there is someone who does not need to scream, rant, and rave at every turn. You can't be so very different from the man I knew. I just would like to be friends."

Fury ran through Severus' face. Hermione took a step back.

"You don't know me. You know nothing of me! I am not that soft idiot you called a friend."

"He is not an idiot! He's the bravest, kindest man I know!"

"Kind? How can he be me and be kind in the same breath?"

"He didn't let the war control him. He controlled the war. And this thing you had for Lily... he didn't."

"How dare you! You go behind my back and dig up all sorts of things about me? You say you want to be my friend, yet you dig up all the dirt you can on me?"

"Severus, I just wanted to know more about you! You certainly weren't forthcoming!"

"Get out."

"No."

"I said get out."

She folded her arms and looked directly into his eyes. Defiance showed in her face. "Why do you insist on throwing someone out when you can't think of anything rational to say?"

"Leave. Now."

"I am here to help you, Severus. That's what I will do." She turned from him, removed a cauldron from the shelf, and collected the ingredients for Burn Paste. In a few minutes she'd set to brewing.

Severus glared at her while she got ready. Hermione ignored him. She went about her tasks and was soon stirring. She'd always found stirring to be incredibly comforting. After a little while, her anger diminished and she looked up. Severus had removed himself to the corner of the lab and was brewing himself. She caught him raising his

head and glowering at her. She shook her head. The man was a menace.

Severus stared at Granger as she readied herself for brewing. His anger roiled within him.

How dare she! Stupid chit of a girl. Who does she think she is, storming in here and going about as if this were her lab?

It took him a while to control the urge to stalk over to her and strangle her right where she stood. He glared at her, but she didn't look up at him. Finally, he wheeled around and went to the corner of the lab, where he had started his own brew. Luckily, it was just the right time for a long stirring session. It was also lucky that he only needed to set a timer, and not count the number of stirs for this particular wound healer. With a wave of his wand, a timer appeared, set for ten minutes. He lifted his stirrer and dipped it into the yellow liquid. He began to stir as his mind went back to the scene that had just unfolded.

Digging things up about me. Who does she think she is?

He glanced up at her and frowned as he saw her stare and shake her head. He turned back to staring into the cauldron as he fumed more. Peeking up through his hair, he found she was still looking at him. The look in her eyes caught him by surprise. If he were to describe it, he could only call it concern.

Why would she ever be concerned about me? She doesn't even know me.

Another peek from under his hair found Hermione now looking sad. She ducked her head and stirred her Burn Paste vigorously.

I am the biggest git there ever was. She comes down here to help me, and I rip her bloody head off. It's a miracle she didn't just hex me where I stood. What is my problem, anyway?

A sudden flash from the vision he'd seen several days before came before his eyes.

Despite how nice that would be, it is impossible.

He glanced back at her. She was chopping fluxweed furiously. He feared she would mutilate it if she weren't careful.

"Granger, for a Potions mistress, your chopping technique is quite erratic," he murmured.

She glared at him. Grasping the knife a little harder, she carefully sliced the rest of the fluxweed before looking up at him smugly as she dropped it into the brew. Severus arched an eyebrow at her. Immediately her look softened, and then hardened again.

I wonder what she just thought of. Him probably. Mr. Perfect-me. Well, I'm not him. Never will be. She'll just have to learn to deal with me.

The time elapsed, and Severus removed his rod from the cauldron. Hermione also finished and removed her stirrer. She began to pour the paste into containers.

"What else would you have me do, Severus?"

"You may make a Boil-cure potion."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Come now, that's a first-year potion, for Merlin's sake."

Severus' head snapped up. "Did you want to help me or not, Granger?"

She narrowed her eyes at him. "I do want to help, Severus, it's just that I'd thought you'd might like to use my expertise and brewing capabilities to brew something more challenging. Please, call me Hermione."

He stalked over to her. "Granger, this is my lab. Your counterpart understood that. Why can't you? You think that because you consider yourself some sort of Potions master that you can run willy-nilly creating whatever you'd like? You must first prove yourself before I let you roam free in here."

She motioned to her Burn Paste. "Did you want to examine my work, Severus?"

He glared at her before looking into her cauldron. The remaining dregs of paste clung to the sides and bottom of it. He dipped his finger into it and rubbed it between his fingers. He brought it to his nose and sniffed it.

"Satisfactory," he muttered.

"My Severus always said my Burn paste was better than his."

"Well, I'm not your Severus, am I?" he sneered.

Her face fell. Severus felt a twinge in his heart. He chased it away.

"No... no, you're not," she said finally, tears welling up in her eyes.

Wonderful, Git, you've made her cry.

His look softened. "Granger... Hermione..." He paused for a long while, just looking into her sad eyes. Clearing his throat, he finally found his voice. "Thank you for your help."

Turning, he stalked back to his cauldron without another word. He added chopped salamander parts and took his stirrer and began once again to stir. He was so absorbed, he didn't notice Hermione come up right beside him.

"Where did you get that stirrer?" she asked.

He started at her closeness and turned to glare at her. He then looked to his stirrer. It was made of crystal, the end carved into a cobra's head. He smirked at it.

"A friend gave it to me."

"Who?"

"No one you know..."

"My Severus would never tell me who gave me his either. It was someone special, though. I could tell. I wonder if it was the same person."

Severus regarded her carefully. She seemed to be sincere.

"You said he didn't have a thing for Lily."

Hermione met his eyes. "No, he didn't."

"Then his probably came from someone else."

"Lily gave that to you?" Hermione asked, looking slightly amazed. "I thought you two had a falling out."

"She gave this to me right afterward. She said she'd bought it for my birthday, but since we were no longer friends, she just gave it to me. It has always brought mixed feelings when I think about its origins."

"Does it make you sad when you use it?"

Severus gave Hermione a sideways glance before his gaze returned to the rod.

"Sometimes," he sighed. "I wish it had come to me under different circumstances, but the thought that Lily once cared for me enough to give me such a gift is... comforting."

Realizing he'd said more than he'd wished, he placed the rod down on the table. The silly thing was making him sentimental and loosening his lips. He turned to Hermione.

"I suppose that you could brew a transfiguring antidote, if you'd like."

He immediately regretted his words because the smile on Hermione's face was too much for him to bear. His heart leapt uncontrollably that she could bestow him with such a look. Then he regretted that she didn't look at him like that all the time. He watched her as she scurried over to the supplies closet and got what she needed. He was going soft, that was the only reasonable answer. Why else would a smile from that woman make his heart leap into his throat?

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 7

Severus emerged from the greenhouses; his pockets stuffed with Potions ingredients. Pomona had been carefully cultivating wormwood for him, and the plants had finally matured enough to be harvested. With this harvest he would be able to brew up quite a large batch of Draught of Living Death. Although not used much, he liked to keep a small store. His stores had been somewhat depleted, and those that remained had been on his shelf for a very long time. It was time to restock.

Absorbed in his thoughts, he walked along absently. That was why he was startled to hear a greeting from somewhere close in front of him. His head snapped up and he saw an unfathomable sight.

Jacob Perry and Hermione Granger were arm in arm only a few meters in front of him. Jacob had called out the greeting, but Severus ignored it as he took in the couple before him. Yes, there was no doubt that these two were a couple. They were arm in arm with one another, and Granger was smiling brightly. Severus scowled at the sight, but nodded to them as he hurried past them.

She's been here all of what? Five days? And she's hooked up with Perry? The woman wastes no time, does she?

He snuck a glance behind him, only to rue his actions. Granger and Perry were kissing. Severus' stomach turned in knots. His hopes for something with Granger evidently folly, he turned around and quickened his pace.

I was foolish to put credence into that potion of hers. Utter nonsense. Why would she want me when she could have that man? He's practically perfect.

Severus was surprised at his dismay. Evidently, he'd come to care for Hermione more than even he had been willing to admit. He sighed. It seemed that he would never find someone who could possibly care for him.

Harry and Ron gazed across the table at Hermione and Jacob. Ron grinned at the couple, who were holding hands. They had just told their two friends of their relationship.

"That's brilliant!" Harry finally said.

"Yeah," Ron concurred. "We were hoping you two would get together a long time ago."

Hermione frowned. "That was a different Hermione, guys."

"Yes, but we still hoped," Harry continued. "You two are perfect for each other."

"You really think so?" Hermione asked.

Both men nodded.

Hermione broke into a huge grin. "Thanks. I must admit, my transition has been a bit easier with him, even if it's only been a few days."

"So, what else is going on?" Ron asked.

"I wanted to throw something out as an option for us with Malfoy," Hermione began.

"Go on," Harry encouraged.

"As you know, I'm a Potions mistress. I've been working on a potion that can predict the future. It's not perfected yet, but I've tested it to work up to a week in the future successfully. Maybe we can use it to find a solution as to how to capture him."

"How will we know if it works right?" Ron asked. "And how far into the future can we look?"

"I wouldn't go farther than two months at this time. I just haven't had enough tests to prove that it will work farther into the future than that."

"Can you control what part of the future you'll see? I mean, is there any guarantee that we'll see something about Malfoy?"

Hermione frowned. "No, there's not. I've found it's quite random at this point."

"Do you have a way to concentrate the visions to be centered on a certain subject and timeframe?"

"That's my ultimate goal. Thus far, that hasn't worked. The last test... the week long one... showed me this meeting, actually. It was the conversation we just had about Jacob and me." She shrugged and looked down. "Maybe I'm being a little too pushy about this."

Harry shook his head. "No, it's an excellent idea. We just need to wait a little longer. We need proof that it will work in a six-month block, and that we'd be able to concentrate on a specific time. Also, we need to be able to concentrate it to only show what we want." He looked to Hermione. "How long do you think you'll need to perfect it?"

"Well, I'll need at least two months. I'll have to test the validity of the stronger potion. Hopefully in that time I can narrow the scope of the visions."

"All right," Harry said. "We'll leave that in your capable hands. As for other news, Percy thinks we might be able to infiltrate a party that Malfoy plans of having in four months. It's to celebrate his coming into office. He plans on having it at the Manor. His defenses will be low, and it will be the best opportunity to attack."

"Do you really think his security will be low?" Jacob asked. "I would think he would beef up security because of the exposure in his home."

"Percy says he's counting on the wards to keep any low-life from getting in," Ron explained.

"So, how do we get in?" Jacob asked. "We would definitely be categorized as low-lives to Lucius Malfoy."

"Percy, of course, has the guest list," Ron explained. "We'll choose some obscure people on the guest list to kidnap, then we'll Polyjuice ourselves to resemble them. Once we're all there, we'll attack Malfoy. He'll never know what hit him."

"It sounds risky," Hermione mused.

"It will be, but it's the best chance we have right now," Harry said.

Hermione nodded absently. "I want in on this," she said finally, looking at Harry with determination.

"Hermione..."

"Don't Hermione me. I am stuck here, unable to contribute anything but ideas. I want to be involved. If I'm Polyjuiced, no one will know who I am. I will be just as effective as any of you."

Harry met her gaze. She held her breath as she watched her friend debate everything in his mind. Finally he nodded. She sighed in relief.

"You're the most stubborn woman I've ever met, you know?" Harry chided.

"That's why you love me so!" Hermione agreed with a grin.

Hermione knocked on Severus' door.

"Enter!"

She opened the door and smiled at Severus. He glowered right back at her.

So this is how he will be today. All right. I can handle it.

She put on a happy face as she walked over to his desk and pulled up a chair in front of it.

"Good afternoon, Severus. How are you today?"

Severus scowled. "What do you want, Granger?"

"It's Hermione." She looked at him, daring him to say something other than her name.

Silence ensued for several minutes. Severus stared at her, and she stared right back. She thought she caught something other than animosity in his eyes, but it was only a fleeting something, gone before she had time to marvel at it for long.

After what seemed like an eternity, he spoke. "Hermione... what do you want?" he growled.

Hermione couldn't help herself. She laughed. Severus' glare was murderous, but that made her laugh even harder. After she'd calmed herself, she deigned to give him an explanation.

"You know, all that snarl is quite humorous, Severus."

He gave her an incredulous look.

"It's like you're some bloody one-dimensional character in a bad novel." She leaned forward and looked directly into his eyes. "I know there's more to you than the grouch you show to everyone else. I've seen it, Severus Snape. I don't know why you are the way you are, but it grows tiresome after a while. It would be nice to see the real you for a change."

Severus rose to his feet and slammed his hands on his desk. "This is the real me, you daft excuse for an educator."

Hermione shook her head. "No, it's not. I refuse to believe that this is all there is to you." She rose herself and moved in toward Severus. "I've seen your better part, Severus. Don't forget that."

He shrunk back from her, but in an instant, he'd regained his dourness. "The man you knew is not me! I am not kind, nor am I best friends with anybody. Wake up! We are two different people." Despite his terse words, his voice had not risen one iota. If anything, it got softer and more menacing.

Hermione shook her head. "You're wrong, Severus. There's more of him in you than you know. If you'd just let someone in, I think you would see that."

"What did you come here for, *Hermione*?"

She stared at him for a while, willing him to change before her eyes. Deep within her, she knew that wasn't possible. Maybe in time, though.

She sat back down. Severus straightened and lowered himself back into his chair, all the time giving her a wary look.

"I need to know what you saw when you took that potion, Severus," she explained.

Severus shook his head. "That is private."

Hermione moved to the front of her chair. "I'm not trying to pry, honestly. I think this potion can help us against Malfoy, but I need to test its accuracy."

"I will not tell you what I saw."

"Please, Severus. You said something about a love potion. Did you see something romantic?"

Severus stood abruptly. "That is enough. I will not tell you anything."

"Severus, how can I test the potion if I don't know what you saw?"

Severus gave her a smug look. "I'll tell you what. If what I saw comes to pass, which I highly doubt it will, I will tell you immediately. You can't do anything until that time comes anyway, correct?"

Hermione nodded reluctantly.

"Then we have an agreement?" Severus asked.

"I suppose I have no choice."

He smiled. The smile wasn't a pleasant sight.

She rose from her seat. "Always the Slytherin, aren't you?"

His grin widened.

"Fine. Please let me know when the vision comes to pass."

"Don't worry," he said sarcastically. "You'll be the first to know."

Hermione held the vial in her hand. The red potion almost glimmered at her. She'd prepared another batch of the Fortune Telling Draught. She really had no choice but to try it herself. If Severus decided not to tell her anything, she would at least know that this brew worked and she could extrapolate from there. She was used to testing the potion herself, she would do so again. With a sigh, she gulped down the entire vial.

The room became cloudy. She was still in her room, but on the other side of it. She faced Jacob. He was frowning at her.

"I'm sorry, Jacob. I just don't feel what I should feel for you," she said sadly.

"You're sure you don't want to give us a little longer?" he asked sadly.

"I've been trying to feel that way, honestly, but it just isn't there."

Jacob looked down and tapped his foot. "It's Snape, isn't it?"

The room solidified around her again, and she returned to the present.

What? Of all the horrible places to end a vision! What was that all about? Why will I break up with Jacob? I enjoy his company too much to just let him go. Did he say something about Snape?

Hermione shook her head vigorously. Two months... She would have two months with Jacob and then break up with him. Could the vision be true? If the potion was working like it had before, then yes, it was absolutely true. But she wouldn't know for sure for two months.

Now what do I do? I'm going to break up with Jacob, so do I keep going out with him now? Do I try to outguess myself for the next two months?

Suddenly, the wisdom of creating such a potion didn't seem very wise at all.

Maybe this isn't something I should continue developing. In the wrong hands, people could change what is to happen. Or they could become so paranoid they'd drive themselves crazy.

She gazed at the small vials of potion in a line at the back of the counter.

These could be our answer to overthrowing Malfoy, though. I'll just have to continue. Once we're done, I'll decide whether to proceed with this potion.

She retreated to her bedroom and got ready for bed. After a little while she'd slipped underneath the covers. She sighed as the smooth sheets and fluffy comforter settled upon her. Wrapped in such warmth it wasn't long before she'd fallen fast asleep.

She was in the lab, brewing with Severus. Her Severus. He wandered over to her and smiled as he gazed into her cauldron.

"It looks perfect, Hermione, just like always."

Hermione giggled a little. "Thank you, Severus, but really, you don't have to gush over it. I can see that it needs a little more salamander legs."

His hand rested comfortably on her shoulder. "Allow me..." He reached around her and took a few legs and dropped them into the cauldron. She glanced at him and muttered 'thank you' before beginning to stir. Within a few minutes, the potion was the perfect shade of lavender. She removed the stirrer and turned toward Severus.

"Hermione..." Severus said softly.

"Yes, Severus?" Hermione asked, a bit puzzled by the softness in his voice.

"There's something I've wanted to do for a while."

"What's that?"

His hands came up and caressed her arms. He looked down at them and followed his hands as they moved up and down. Finally he looked back up at her. Slowly, his lips came closer to hers until they were kissing. A thrill went through Hermione. All too soon they had pulled apart.

"Hermione, will you be mine?"

She opened her mouth to answer and...

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Hermione's eyes opened slowly. She could almost feel Severus' lips still on hers. Reaching up, she circled her mouth with her fingers. Tears sprang up in her eyes. He was gone forever. In his place was the nasty man that hated everyone. Oh, how she missed him. How she wished that the dream she'd just had really had happened. But then her disappearance would be doubly hard to bear.

Jacob suddenly came to mind. When she thought of him, she didn't feel the same way she did when she thought of Severus. Could that be why she'd seen what she did in her vision? Would she go about forever holding a candle for a man who didn't even exist in this world?

Well, he existed. There just was no way that he'd ever think about her like that!

## Chapter 8

*Chapter 8 of 12*

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

### Chapter 8

Several weeks had gone by, and Hermione found herself once again in Severus' Potions lab. She couldn't remember the last time he'd said more than five words to her. She had resigned herself to working silently while there.

That's why she looked up in shock when Severus approached her.

"Tell me more about my other self," he demanded.

"What... what do you want to know?"

"Why do you think I was so different?"

Hermione looked away. "I'm not quite sure. You both had similar experiences from the war, I think." She looked back to him. "Maybe you should tell me of your experiences."

Severus scowled.

"Come now. How am I supposed to know what's different if you don't tell me?"

"Fine." He glared at her again.

"Severus," Hermione asked tentatively. "Why are you bringing this up right now?"

"Let's just say I'm curious, all right?" he snapped.

Hermione frowned deeply at him. "Fine. You joined Voldemort as a Death Eater at a young age. Dumbledore recruited you to be a spy. You told me that you had been close to joining on your own, but someone had convinced you not to do so. You found it ironic that Dumbledore asked you to spy after that."

"Wait a minute." Severus looked up at her curiously. "I didn't join the Death Eaters on my own, then turn against them right before Lily's death?"

She shook her head, eyeing Severus the whole while. "You were a spy from the start."

"Is Lily dead in your universe?"

Hermione nodded her head. "She was killed by Voldemort."

"How can that be, I was the one who heard the prophecy about Potter."

Hermione's eyebrow rose. "Lucius Malfoy heard it in my timeline. I don't even think you had a part to play in that. My gosh, Severus, you heard the prophecy? You must have felt horrible to have been the one who alerted Voldemort about your friend."

Severus grumbled and stalked away. Hermione gazed after him, puzzled by his odd behavior. Following him, she laid her hand on his arm.

"Severus?"

He shook her off.

"Do you think that was the difference?" she asked quietly.

His head was bowed and he said nothing.

"Severus, Lucius didn't know who was meant in the prophecy. Did you?"

He shook his head.

"Then you can't blame yourself."

She balked at the silence from him. Reaching out, she tried to turn him. He wouldn't move. She placed her hand on his back instead.

"He was a psychopath, Severus. There was nothing you could have done. It's not your fault."

Severus pulled away and stalked out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

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Severus stalked down the hallway. He'd been foolish to ask the chit about his other self. He had been curious since she'd arrived... so curious that he'd been losing sleep, wondering if his life could have possibly been like the other Severus'. He couldn't imagine what the difference could have been. Now he knew.

No love for Lily, no heard prophecy, and no stigma of having been a Death Eater. It was very different to be a spy from day one. No wonder the man was so nice. Perfect, if what Granger had said was true.

Someone had convinced his other self not to become a Death Eater. Well, where had that someone been in his youth?

He stormed to his room and slammed the door behind him too. He didn't notice that the door bounced open again with the force he'd put into slamming it.

*What would it have been like to not carry the guilt of killing Lily around with me all those years? I would be Mr. Perfect too!*

He stalked over to his desk and looked down at the picture that was placed on it. The photo he'd taken from Grimmauld place looked back at him. Lily spotted him and waved before turning her gaze back to her missing son, who had been torn away and left on the floor to rot as far as Severus cared.

He picked up the picture and stroked Lily's hair. She smiled at him again. He shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Lily. I never meant to hurt you." The tears he could never control when thinking of her began to fall. He closed his eyes and turned his head away from the photograph.

"I wish I had been smarter, and stronger, and better. Why couldn't I have been like him?"

"Because you had your own path to walk," a voice said from behind him.

He wheeled around to find Granger standing close to him.

"How did you..."

She motioned toward the door. "You left the door open. I knocked, but you didn't hear me."

"Did it occur to you that I might have been ignoring you?"

She reached up and wiped a tear from his eye. "No, it didn't."

Severus flinched away from her. Who did she think she was, trying to comfort him?

"Leave me, I wish to be alone."

"You always wish to be alone, Severus. It's time you weren't... alone."

"I am not your soft-hearted Severus. I do not need you or anyone else to be my friend!"

Hermione seemed as if she were about to say something, but then she closed her mouth. "All right. I want you to know, though, that I am your friend, whether you want me to be or not. I will always be here if you want to talk more about this."

His eyes met hers. He expected to see guile in them. Expected her words to just be platitudes and her heart to not be in the things she'd just said. However, when he looked into her eyes, he saw sincerity. He marveled at it.

"Why do you care?" he asked quietly. "I have been nothing but rude to you ever since you got here?"

Hermione huffed. "I'm glad you noticed," she chastised. Softening, she continued. "Severus, you were my friend in another universe. *A dear friend.* I've cherished my friendship with you in that world. I know you're not that Severus, but I miss my friend." Tears were forming unbidden in her eyes. "I would have done anything for that Severus Snape. Anything. I'm not saying that we can have that strong of a relationship. I'm sure you wouldn't want that. But I would like to call you my friend and be treated like a friend as well. This whole transition has been difficult for me. I've missed being able to confide in you."

Severus stared at her incredulously. "I am no confidant, Hermione," he said distastefully.

She nodded and looked down. "I know. I know you're not him. I know that. Couldn't we just start over and maybe be civil to one another? Couldn't you respect me for my abilities instead of berating me at every turn?" A stray tear fell down her cheek. "Couldn't you just try?"

Severus sighed. He stared into Hermione's eyes again and saw her hurt. He'd been horrid to her. He needed to change that behavior.

"I will try... Hermione."

She nodded slowly. He wondered if she believed him at all. Before he could say another word, she'd turned and was heading for the door. "I'll leave you alone. Remember, I am your friend and am willing to listen to you whenever you need it."

He stared after her as she left the room. Who was this woman? He was nasty to her, and she just came back for more. And she insisted on being his friend. Why? Her explanations seemed credible enough, but why him? Had she really been that close to his counterpart? Did she really want to be that close to him? Had her trip between realities left her senseless?

Glancing back at the portrait of Lily, he remembered Hermione's words. They were words he'd told himself over and over again. The Dark Lord had been a psychopath. It hadn't been his fault. But he'd never truly believed them. He hadn't believed them when they came from Dumbledore either.

There was just something about Dumbledore that had set Severus on edge. He always felt he was only a concern to Albus because he was so valuable. He never knew if what Albus said was because he was using him, or because he truly cared. His assertions that he was not responsible for Lily's death had gone unrecognized. He just couldn't trust Dumbledore's words. Besides, he knew that no matter what Albus said, he was guilty.

But hearing those words from Hermione had been different. Why? His heart constricted at the thought of her. His attraction to her had not relented in the few weeks she'd been here. He'd been hoping that because she wasn't the Hermione he'd known, it would be easy to cast her out of his mind, but it hadn't. Part of the reason he'd had no sleep was because he was constantly thinking of her and her relationship with his other self. It was odd to be jealous of a man who didn't exist in this reality, but the truth was... he was incredibly jealous. He wished he could have such a relationship with Hermione.

Maybe he could. She wanted something with him. He doubted it went anywhere past friendship; she had Perry after all. But maybe if he could calm his temper down, he could have some sort of friendship. He hadn't been close to a woman since his friendship with Lily had broken apart. He'd carefully guarded his heart and kept only the most cordial of friendships with the women he knew. Maybe it was time to start anew and give a friendship with Hermione Granger a try.

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*Well, he didn't hex me into oblivion; I suppose that's a good thing.*

Hermione walked down the hallway, deep in thought. She couldn't believe that she'd opened up to Severus as much as she had. He had been so right... he was no confidant. But she'd been struggling and frustrated for so long, it had all just spilled out.

*Maybe something good can come of this. He did say he would try. I truly hope he does. It would be nice to have a little bit of my Severus back.*

*Merlin, Hermione, just stop it! She frowned at her thinking. He's never going to be that Severus Snape. Get over it! Tears formed in her eyes. I need to mourn my loss and move on. He will never be the kindly sort. I need to learn to take him as he is or forget about him completely.*

She continued down the hall, wiping the wetness from her eyes. She needed something to pull her from this miserable funk she was in. A visit to Jacob was definitely in order.

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Not much later, Hermione and Jacob were in the Room of Requirement's version of Honeydukes. Hermione nibbled on a sugar quill, and Jacob was eating a chocolate frog. They were chatting together amicably, and Hermione's mood had lifted considerably.

"So, what was bothering you before?" Jacob asked.

Hermione shook her head. "Nothing, really," she said evasively. "I was just missing things from my old timeline."

Jacob looked at her seriously. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Hermione shook her head. "No. I just came to the realization that there's no going back, and I have to accept things as they are. I think I've been trying to make them the way I remember them." She shrugged. "That's obviously not going to happen."

Jacob put his arm around her. "Isn't there anything in this timeline that is better?"

She turned her head to look at him. His face looked somber. She could tell he was thinking about their relationship.

"Jacob, you are a bright light in this new world of mine. This thing between us is definitely unexpected and much better than my life before." She studied his grin and felt the tension about them ease up.

"I have to admit that Ron is much more pleasant in this world also. It's a relief not to have to worry if he'll be a prat when I see him."

"Speaking of Ron, Harry and he are planning on stopping by again tomorrow."

"Has anything new happened?" Hermione asked with concern.

"I'm not sure. I'm sure you saw in the paper that several Muggle-borns were discovered and executed."

Hermione frowned and nodded. "Jacob, this is just so horrible! Malfoy needs to be stopped soon."

"That's what we're working on, Hermione. This party might be just what we need to take Malfoy into custody and overthrow the Ministry."

Hermione shook her head. "It's very risky. Hopefully it will all work."

"Well, maybe that potion you're working on will help us to know what to do and what not to do."

Hermione frowned as she thought of her vision. Shaking her head, she looked over to Jacob. "I'm hoping it will. We need every advantage we can get."

Hermione giggled as she noted some chocolate smeared at the corner of Jacob's mouth. She leaned into him and licked and kissed the chocolate from his mouth. He turned his head slightly and captured her lips in his. Hermione let him caress her lips with his. When they pulled away, she smiled at him, but her thoughts were troubled.

*Why is it every time he kisses me, I picture Severus instead of him?*

She leaned back into him and tried again. This time the thoughts of Severus were even stronger. The funny thing too, she could tell this image wasn't of her Severus. It was the one who was right now probably in his dungeon, brewing. A shiver went through her as Jacob's lips kissed her, but Severus Snape stood in front of her in her mind's eye.

*This really isn't good... Not good at all.*

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Hermione lay in bed staring at the ceiling. Her thoughts were a muddled jumble and she couldn't get her mind off Severus.

*Why can't I forget about him? He's horrid to me. And Jacob is wonderful. I should be doing cartwheels that someone like him is interested in me. I enjoy his company, I really do. It's only when he kisses me... What's wrong with me? A handsome man is interested in me, and all I can think about is that snark-master who hides away in the dungeons all day. I must truly be daft.*

She shook her head and rolled over onto her side. Fluffing up her pillow, she dropped her head onto it.

*Get some rest, girl. You can't let this keep you up all night.*

Her potion-induced vision came back to her. She closed her eyes and sighed. If this kept up the way it was going, it was no wonder she would break up with Jacob in a few weeks.

*I've never been one to string someone along, continuing in a relationship only because there was nothing better that came around. Maybe I shouldn't have started anything with Jacob right now. I knew...*

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears. She wiped them away.

*What's wrong with me? I'm a mess! I need to stop falling apart whenever I think of my lost Severus.*

*I knew I still had feelings for him. Did I jump into this relationship with Jacob too quickly? I thought I didn't string men along.*

Her hands came up and wound themselves in her hair. She tugged softly and groaned in exasperation.

*I don't know what to do. I'm stuck. Either these stupid visions of Severus go away, or I'm going to need to really sit down and evaluate my relationship with Jacob.*

Hermione scribbled some notes on her parchment, and then wandered over to her cauldron. Not only had Severus eased up in the last few weeks and allowed her to brew things that were more along the lines of her abilities, but he'd let her use his lab for her vision potion also. He'd sneered at her and mumbled something about the potion being a bunch of nonsense, but had grudgingly nodded his head when she'd asked if she could use his lab once a week for research on it.

Usually, Severus would leave her to herself, but on this night, he brewed silently in the corner. Hermione poured some of her potion into a flask and looked it over.

"Maybe more armadillo bile?" she mumbled to herself.

"Pardon?" Severus asked from the corner.

She looked over at him, a bit startled. She'd actually forgotten he was there; she'd been so absorbed in her work.

"Oh, I was just talking to myself about this potion."

Severus placed his stirrer next to his cauldron and wandered over to her.

"You do realize that talking to oneself is a sign of a deranged mind?" he quipped with a smirk.

She gave him a sideways glance. "Then you must be batty as a loon. I hear you yammering over in your corner at least once every Wednesday night."

Although Severus frowned, she could tell he wasn't angry. He actually looked slightly amused.

*Score one for the witch,* she thought.

"What exactly are you trying to accomplish?" Severus asked.

"I'm trying to concentrate the effects of this potion so it can be more specific."

"Why do you need to do that?"

"We're trying to use this to better our chances with Malfoy. If we can direct the visions this potion produces for a specific timeframe and be centered on Malfoy, we might be able to figure out how to bring his regime down."

Severus nodded. "What were you mumbling about, then?"

"I was wondering if more armadillo bile would bring about the desired effect."

Severus shook his head and shifted his body a bit closer to the flask she was holding.

"I don't think that would do the trick. The armadillo might make the vision clearer, but I don't think it would make you able to direct the vision where you wanted it."

Hermione frowned. "I thought as much." She turned the flask in her hand. "What about powdered dragon horn?"

"Possibly... However, I think that would just extend the length of the vision."

She grunted in exasperation. "Severus, I've been working on this for weeks now. I can't come up with anything that will help to concentrate the potions visions."

Severus tapped his finger to his chin. "Have you tried runespoor eggs?"

She nodded. That was the first thing I tried. It actually did nothing but deepen the color."

"I would think it would give you the ability to think about a specific time period."

She shook her head. "It didn't change anything."

"What about ginger, or scarab beetles?" Severus asked as he looked at her.

"The ginger gave me a clearer vision, so I've kept it in the brew. However, I still couldn't direct the vision. As for the scarab beetles, well, they caused the potion to explode."

Severus gave a startled look. "I didn't see any evidence of an explosion. Were you hurt?"

"I burned my hand, but Poppy fixed it up right away." She smiled at him. "I can clean up after myself, Severus. I didn't want you to come to a lab that was a mess."

Severus harrumphed. He stared at the red liquid for a while, obviously deep in thought. Suddenly he snapped his fingers.

"Ah... Jobberknoll feathers! With their memory and truth qualities, they just might be what you're looking for."

Hermione's eyes widened. "Of course! Oh, Severus, I think that just might work!" Her arms wrapped around him subconsciously and before she'd even realized it, she was hugging him. She felt him stiffen, so she began to pull away. She felt his arms go around her and pull her back. She marveled at the simple action.

When they awkwardly separated, Severus looked to the floor.

*Is he blushing?*

"I hope it works. We can use an advantage," he said uncomfortably.

She nodded and looked away, avoiding his gaze, which had returned to her face.

He cleared his throat. "Do you need help preparing the feathers?"

She smiled and looked up at him shyly. "Yes, that would be nice... if you have the time."

"I do," he said as he glanced over at his cauldron. "That needs to sit overnight."

They made their way to Severus' storage closet. Hermione spied the feathers first, up on a high shelf. She pulled the ladder over and climbed up, gathering the jar and slowly descending. She felt Severus' hand on her back as she descended the last few rungs. She turned to him when she'd reached the floor and gave him a curious look.

"The bottom rung sometimes gets tricky and disappears," he explained.

She furrowed her brow. "Hmmm, I've never noticed."

"The ladder must like you, then. It's constantly disappearing on me."

Hermione chuckled. "I doubt it's anything personal, Severus," she told him.

He glared at the ladder. "Perhaps," he murmured.

She laughed out loud.

"Do not laugh at me, woman," he said as he glared at her.

"Sorry!" she cried before turning and moving back into the lab. She reached the table and pulled a few feathers from the jar. Severus came up and did the same. They worked silently, removing the feathers from the quill carefully, trying to keep each small, wispy feather intact.

Soon they were ready to be added to the potion. Hermione gathered them up and dropped them into the cauldron. Severus began to stir them in.

"Ten times clockwise," Hermione advised.

He nodded, concentrating on what he was doing. When he was done, he looked up to her.

"Perhaps we should both try it?"

"I thought you considered this to be a bunch of bunk!" Hermione retorted.

He smirked. "Maybe I just want to prove you wrong."

She shook her head. "You're exasperating, you know that?"

"I believe I do," Severus countered.

She regarded him thoughtfully. "It would be a good test, though. Do you really want to experiment with it?"

He nodded.

"All right. What will you be thinking of?"

"What about something during the dinner hour tomorrow?"

"That would work."

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She handed him a vial. He took it.

*It would be foolish of you to concentrate on her. She'll need to know eventually. Maybe Trelawney... no, she never comes to dinner. Minerva? Yes, that should do.*

He brought the vial to his mouth and gazed at Hermione as he tipped his head back to drink it. Immediately thoughts of his hand on her back rushed into his brain. Despite his thinking of Minerva, his vision had nothing to do with the older witch.

*Hermione sat at the table between Perry and him. She was chatting with Perry, who was gesticulating wildly. No matter how hard Severus tried, he couldn't hear what was being said. Then, her hushed tones became clear.*

*"If that's how you feel, then fine!"*

*She threw her napkin on her plate, rose, and stalked out of the Hall.*

Severus returned to the present and gave her a curious look.

"What did you see?"

"For the sake of the experiment, I will tell you later," he told her.

She looked at him skeptically. "All right," she said slowly. "I suppose I should do mine now."

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Downing the potion, she just concentrated on the dinner hour and eating. She was surprised, then, to find herself hurrying down the hallway in her vision.

"Hermione, wait!" Jacob called from behind her.

She stopped and stood ramrod still until Jacob caught up to her. He gently turned her around.

"I was out of line, I'm sorry," he said.

Hermione's stance softened somewhat.

"You realize that he used to be my best friend. If you're going to pull this jealousy act, I really think we should reevaluate our relationship."

"Hermione, no. I just... You sometimes seem distant with me. I don't know if it's because you're thinking about your other life, but it worries me."

Hermione looked down. "I'm sorry, Jacob. Sometimes I do get caught up in the past. That doesn't mean I don't value my time with you."

Jacob's face brightened considerably. "You do?"

She nodded and smiled. "I do."

He pulled her to him and kissed her.

The shock of Severus Snape's face in her mind sent her real-self hurtling back to the present. She grimaced.

"That good, huh?" Severus asked.

She shook her head to clear it and gazed up at the man she had been fantasizing about. *Damn, he's handsome when he looks at me like that!*

"For the sake of experiment..." She winked at him coyly. "I will tell you later."

Severus watched her smile at him, wheel around, and leave his laboratory. He had become incredibly self aware when she'd winked at him. His every nerve seemed to be alert and tingling. What had she done to him? Surely, just that smile could not elicit such an involuntary response from him.

He frowned. He was in big trouble if just that look had sent him into such a state. He was in big trouble anyway. In his vision, he'd felt pleased that Perry and she had fought. As if it made any difference. She was happy as a clam with Perry. One little tiff would not a breakup make. Even if she did break up with the pill, what of it? The woman would not even consider him as a possible suitor.

He gazed at his hands, pockmarked with burns from brewing. Meandering to the mirror, he looked at himself. Drab, dark hair hung limply around his face. His nose protruded from said face awkwardly. Definitely not a candidate for the cover of *Witches Weekly*, that was for sure.

No, she would not be interested in him. He was no prize. He was also ancient in comparison to her. Oh, then there was the reality that was his now non-existent counterpart. He could never hope to compete with Mr. Perfect.

"Just give up now. You've lost before the contest has even begun," he said to his reflection.

The reflection scowled back, as if in total agreement with his judgment. He sighed and turned his back on the harsh visage in the mirror.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 9

Hermione glared at Jeanette Crowley. The girl smugly stared back. She'd been arguing with Hermione for the whole class, claiming that her methods of calculating the Arithmantic equation she was teaching were flawed.

Hermione had asked her to explain herself, but the girl had only said that Mudbloods had no place in the classroom and obviously wouldn't be able to tell the right approach if it was inscribed on their foreheads. The entire class had gasped in shock.

Hermione looked over the arrogant girl. Her first instinct...to hex the daylights out of her and show her just what a Mudblood could do...obviously wasn't the right approach.

"Detention, Miss Crowley, for a week. You will go immediately to the Headmaster's office and tell him exactly what happened here."

The girl simply stared at her.

"Now!"

Grumbling to herself, Jeanette Crowley gathered her things and huffed her way out of the room. Hermione sighed. Her day would get no better. Dinner was in an hour, and she would find out if her vision would come true.

Both Severus and Hermione were a bit on edge at dinnertime. This was the evening that their potions-induced visions would come to fruition or not. If the visions happened, then Hermione could claim success on the changes she'd made to her potion. If they didn't... well, she'd have to start over again.

Hermione was already seated when both Severus and Jacob sat down. Hermione leaned in to Severus and whispered in his ear.

"Well, I hope whatever you see truly happens," she told him.

He arched an eyebrow at her and moved in to whispered himself. "I hope your vision comes true too."

Both frowned to themselves as they looked to their plates. Severus thought he saw Perry shift uncomfortably in his chair. He paid close attention to the couple on his left, although he seemed to be absorbed in filling his plate with dinner items.

Just as in his vision, the couple talked to one another. Just as in his vision, he couldn't hear what they said, but they both seemed agitated. Finally, just as in his vision, Hermione rose and stormed from the Great Hall. A few seconds later, Jacob had risen and followed her out.

Hermione straightened from whispering to Severus and saw Jacob stiffen next to her. She turned to him and softly asked, "What is it?"

"What are you and Snape up to?" he asked sharply.

Hermione furrowed her brow. "Whatever do you mean?" she asked softly.

"You're constantly holed up with him. Now you're whispering sweet nothings to him."

Hermione frowned. Was every man on this earth just a Ronald Weasley in non-ginger colored hair?

"Sweet nothings?" her harsh whisper demanded.

"What do you expect me to think?" he whispered tersely.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him. "I expect you to think that I am faithful to you, Jacob Perry," she whispered back, just as tersely. "If for some reason you can't have

that confidence in me, then you can just stuff it!"

With that, she rose and raced from the Hall. She concentrated on her heels clacking against the floor as she stormed away.

Bloody hell, the nerve of him! How dare he read something into nothing!

She heard her name being called. Mr. Jealousy-incarnate had chosen to follow her. She stopped, but stood ramrod straight. Feeling his hands surrounding her arms and gently turning her, the vision from the day before flooded into her mind.

"I was out of line. I'm sorry," Jacob said.

Hermione's stance softened somewhat.

"You realize that he used to be my best friend," she responded. "If you're going to pull this jealousy act, I really think we should reevaluate our relationship."

"Hermione, no. I just... You sometimes seem distant with me. I don't know if it's because you're thinking about your other life, but it worries me."

Hermione looked down. Her mind reeled as the scene unfolded exactly as she'd seen it before. "I'm sorry, Jacob. Sometimes I do get caught up in the past. That doesn't mean I don't value my time with you."

Jacob's face brightened considerably. "You do?"

She nodded and smiled. "I do."

He pulled her to him and kissed her. An image of Severus Snape appeared before her. His distinguished nose brushed her cheek as he kissed her. His fine hair brushed against her as he came near. She pictured herself running her fingers through it and feeling its softness. She groaned as his kiss took her to places she'd only dreamed of going.

But this is a dream too!

Reality was like a slap in the face. She pushed herself away from Jacob. He looked at her curiously.

"I'm sorry!" she cried. "I just... Jacob, I need some time alone!"

She wheeled around and raced away from him.

"Hermione?"

"Hermione, wait!"

She ignored him and ran up the stairs and away from the man who seemed only able to elicit visions of a man she knew she could never have.

When she'd gathered her wits back about her and after she'd summoned a house-elf to bring her a snack, she made her way down to the dungeons. Severus' door was ajar, but she knocked lightly. He summoned her in, and she found him grading papers.

"My vision came true," she said blandly as she entered.

He looked up at her. "So did mine."

"Will you tell me what you saw?" she asked.

He placed his quill on the desk and leaned back in his chair. He folded his hands in front of him and explained the fight he witnessed between Jacob and her.

"You heard us fight?" she asked wildly.

"No, I couldn't understand anything you said."

Hermione sighed in relief. She mulled over events that had transpired during dinner.

"Well, this is good, actually. My vision took up where yours left off. Maybe if we use enough people with the potion we can get a really clear picture as to what we need to do."

Severus arched his eyebrow at her. "What was your vision?"

She shrugged. "Just Jacob running after me and apologizing for being a prat. At the time of the vision, I didn't know what we'd been fighting about."

Several days had passed, and Hermione had been working diligently on her potion. She was now scribbling notes to herself and chewing on the end of her quill. She looked up to see Severus enter the room. She caught her breath at the sight of him. He looked no different than usual, but she was just struck by his unusual beauty.

She knew that many would find his features harsh, but she'd never had. Maybe it was the fact that her Severus had a soft side to him. It was easy to picture him as being handsome. He smiled all the time, and there was a contented look on his face on most days.

This Severus seemed pained. Nonetheless, she thought him distinguished. She loved the way his nose curved downward, longing to be kissed. She liked the way his hair framed his face. She usually didn't like men with long hair, but there was something incredibly sexy about Severus' long, black tresses. She'd always found them delicious. She longed to run her fingers through them.

Oh, she'd done that before in her timeline. She often gave him backrubs and massaged his head when he'd had a headache--all very platonically, of course. She'd wished for something more, but had always felt there was something holding her Severus back. In retrospect, she wondered if he remembered her from her counterpart's trip back in time. Maybe he didn't want to become involved because of whatever her counterpart had done in the past.

Hermione's eyes traveled to Severus' hands as she watched him gather a cauldron and some ingredients. She loved his long fingers. His hands seemed a little more scarred than the Severus she used to know. But every scar was a tribute to his genius, and they just made her want to take his hands in her own and kiss them.

She shook her head. In a matter of seconds she'd gone on a fantasy ride about Severus Snape. She frowned. Maybe things with Jacob were meant to be done in a few short weeks. It wasn't fair to him if she were going to be pining away for someone else. It would be easier to end it with Jacob if she knew that Severus had feelings for her. Unfortunately, he was a lost cause. She knew he just tolerated her. Too bad, really.

Merlin, Hermione, would you shut up? Quit lusting after someone you obviously can't have! Concentrate on the man who does have feelings for you.

She'd backed off of Jacob since the visions had occurred. He'd looked at her worriedly, but she wouldn't explain. How do you explain to someone that they elicit visions of

another man when they kiss you?

As she made another notation on her notepad she decided it was time for her to be an adult and forget about Snape. Her obsession was doing nothing toward getting closer to him or keeping her current man happy. She'd apologize to Jacob tonight. Harry and Ron were stopping by, and it would be a good time to spend some time with Jacob in a comfortable setting. She hoped things would work out, and she'd be able to make things better with him.

"What are you researching?" Severus asked.

She was a bit startled. Severus usually didn't start conversations. She gave him a small smile.

"I'm just working through the calculations for the potion's final product."

"Are you almost done? I could use your help."

Hermione's mouth dropped open. This was the first time he'd voluntarily asked her for something. She rose from the table where she was seated.

"It's not something that has to be finished right now," she replied. "I can come back to it later. What do you need?"

"I'm trying to improve the standard wound cleaning potion. I think that if we can concentrate it, it will not just clean a wound, but heal it instantly. It will be helpful on the battlefield."

"Oh, Severus, that would definitely be a wonderful breakthrough."

He huffed. "What I need you to do is to brew the normal wound-cleaning potion. I will brew the version I've been postulating about. We'll need to examine the final products to see if there are any significant changes in the new potion before we test it.

Hermione set to work. Severus chopped and added next to Hermione, who was doing the same. Soon both cauldrons held a cream colored, syrupy solution. Severus poured some of his into a bottle and motioned for Hermione to do the same. He carefully sniffed both potions.

"The new potion seems to have a different fragrance," he muttered. "That is a good start."

He gave his vial to Hermione. "Pour a little of each onto my fingers of each hand" he directed.

She completed the task and watched as he rubbed his fingers together, feeling the texture of each potion.

"The new one is slightly thicker, also a good sign."

"Should we test it, then?"

Severus nodded and went into his storeroom. He returned with two mice that seemed to be unconscious. He placed them on the table in front of Hermione. With a wave of his wand, both mice had gashes along their body.

"Hermione, for a control I'd like you to treat this mouse with just the wound-cleaning potion. I will treat the other mouse with the new potion."

Hermione nodded and administered a small amount of the potion onto the mouse's wound. The potion worked, cleaning the wound efficiently.

Severus then took some of his potion and applied it to the second mouse's wound. They both watched in amazement when the wound not only cleaned itself, but knit itself together without leaving any traces.

Hermione gasped and threw her arms around Severus.

"You did it!" she cried.

Too late she recognized that her arms were now around a ramrod straight Potions master. She released him and backed off a few steps.

"Sorry," she muttered. "Sometimes I get overly exuberant."

Severus was staring at her oddly. His mysterious look didn't help the flaming color of Hermione's cheeks. She just knew she was probably purple by now.

"I... I should go," she stammered.

With that she practically ran out of the Potions lab.

When Severus had felt her arms around him his first instinct was to freeze. His second was to pull her to him. He beat that instinct down until it was crouched in a corner of his mind, unable to even raise its head. His foolish emotions did not need to show themselves when she was obviously only happy about his discovery.

He watched her back off. He watched her turn red, then deeper red. He watched her stammer, and then practically run out of the room. He watched all of that while wishing that she was single, wishing she was interested in him, and wishing he could be just a little good-looking.

He slammed the bottle on the table. Luckily it didn't shatter. He stalked back into his storeroom and came back with a box full of jars. He slowly filled each jar with the new potion and placed the lid on them. He tried to keep his mind empty and just concentrate on the repetitious work that usually made him feel calm. It wasn't working.

Her arms, all he could think about were her arms. They'd pulled at him and surrounded him, hugging him tightly. He'd felt something odd in her embrace. He'd felt comfortable within it. He'd felt as if he were home.

"Home," he muttered.

His eyes closed, and he turned his head slightly. *What would it be like to consider Hermione Granger to be mine? How would it feel to have her be the one who could bring me to that feeling of home? How would it be to feel that comfort from her every day?*

"It doesn't matter. She'll never be yours," he said bitterly.

Picking up another jar, he continued his task, trying diligently to not think of the beautiful woman who had been so close to him for far too short a time.

Hermione closed her door and leaned against it. Her hand came up to her chest. She could feel her heart racing. She knew it wasn't caused by her sprinting to her room. Just thinking of the dark, handsome man she'd just left set her heart racing even more.

"Oh, what am I going to do?"

She took some deep breaths before sinking to the ground. Her hands came up, and she dropped her face into them.

"I'm doomed. Hugging him... it just made me want him more!"

Her mind turned to Jacob, sweet, loving Jacob, a man who didn't deserve to be strung along. She was fooling him. She was fooling herself. There was no way she could place her interest in another man when her thoughts constantly turned to Severus. She dreamed about him, she imagined he was kissing her when Jacob was. She needed to admit she was lost and let Jacob move on.

She needed to tell him tonight. It was cruel for her to keep trying with him. He would never be Severus Snape. No other man would.

Hermione walked along the corridors, heading to meet with Harry and Ron. She was excited to see them. The one thing that was making her nervous was that Jacob would be there. She knew she had to be truthful with him, and she planned on doing so that evening after Harry and Ron left. She knew he would be hurt, but it was better to hurt him in this way than to pretend to feel something which she just didn't.

A group of girls caught her eye. They were in a tight circle, giggling. Jeanette Crowley was speaking. She had her back to Hermione, so didn't realize she was approaching. It was unfortunate for the girl, because she'd picked that moment to badmouth Hermione once again.

"That Mudblood has no right teaching here. We're Purebloods and demand the highest level of education possible! It's outrageous that she's been kept on as faculty. She should be sacked so she can be executed with all the rest of the filth of her kind."

It was then Jeanette realized the wide eyes of her friends. She turned slowly, a mild look of surprise on her face when she saw Hermione. The shocked look quickly dissolved into a smirk.

"Do you hear that, Mudblood? You're incompetent!"

Hermione couldn't believe her ears. She couldn't believe that a student, despite being a Slytherin and daughter of a high-ranking Ministry official close to Malfoy, would speak to a professor in such a way. The girl was practically begging to be expelled.

"Miss Crowley, I would expect more respect from a student. Detention again, for a week. We'll keep handing them out until you learn respect. I'll be having a chat with the Headmaster about your actions."

"You can't punish me! This isn't class time!" the girl said haughtily.

Hermione took a step closer to the smug student.

"Miss Crowley, inside or outside of class, you are to be respectful of your professors, despite their blood purity."

The girl glowered at her, but kept her peace. Hermione glared back, but moved around the group and continued on her way. She fumed internally. What on earth were these Purebloods teaching their children? Such disrespect should be dealt with in the home, no matter what the views of the family were.

Reaching the teacher's lounge, she took a deep breath. Time to forget about nasty students, she advised herself. She put on a happy face and entered. Harry was the first to spy her, bounding up from the couch to throw his arms around her in a great bear-hug. Ron was close behind, also drowning her in his arms.

"Where's Jacob?" Ron asked.

"He should be along soon. He said he might be late. He's finishing up a detention."

"In that case, I need to have a word with the Headmistress," Harry said. "I'll be back in a few. Don't start without me."

"As if we could!" Ron laughed.

As soon as Harry was gone, Ron led Hermione to a couch and they settled themselves in.

"So, what's been going on?" Ron asked.

Hermione shrugged. "Anything interesting will have to wait for Harry's return."

Ron gave her a serious look. "Is Jacob treating you right?"

Hermione sighed and looked away. Ron placed his hand upon hers.

"If he's not, just tell me. I'll set him straight."

Hermione smiled and looked back at him. She studied his face, looking for the tell-tale 'Ron-is-jealous' look. She didn't find anything but concern. Picking her hand up, she caressed his cheek.

"You are one of the wonderful things about this timeline, Ron Weasley. The Ron I knew and sometimes loved would be red with envy right now. He'd be badmouthing both Jacob and me and trying to convince me that he was a better choice."

Ron smiled thinly. "Hermione, I love you. You're my best friend and always have been. The six months we dated actually helped to solidify our friendship. We came out of that relationship with a strong understanding of just what we could and couldn't handle from each other. I just want you to be happy."

Hermione pulled him to her. "Thank you. You don't know how much that means to me right now."

"Hermione, what's wrong?" Ron asked as he pushed her away to look into her face. "You seemed so happy with Jacob. Now, there's something bothering you. It's written all over your face."

Hermione sighed and looked down. "Oh, Ron. I've come to the conclusion that Jacob and I just aren't going to work."

"Why not?" Ron looked incredibly confused.

She shrugged.

"Come on, tell me," he urged.

Grimacing, she told him what had been plaguing her. "I've developed feelings for someone else. I'm miserable because I've been trying to make things work with Jacob, but I keep thinking about this other man."

"Hermione, what are you going to do?"

With her shoulders sagging, she looked to her lap once again. "I'm going to break it off with Jacob. Ron, I can't do this to him, he's a wonderful man and deserves to have someone who's fully invested in him. I thought I could do that, but as the weeks have gone on, it's been very evident that I can't."

"Who is this other man, Hermione? Have you done anything with him?"

"No! Ron, you know I'm not one to be unfaithful."

"Does he feel the same way?" Ron asked. His hand squeezed hers.

She scoffed. "No, he definitely doesn't."

"This all seems so sudden," Ron mused as he got up and started to pace around. "I thought everything was going well with Jacob. When have you had time to fall in love with someone..."

He spun around and faced her. "Is this someone you were attracted to in your timeline as well?"

She nodded guiltily.

"Did he feel the same for you there?"

She shook her head. Ron sat back down and took her hand again.

"Will you tell me who it is?"

She looked at him with huge eyes. "You won't like it, Ron. I'd rather not."

Ron nodded. "If you'd rather not, I'll respect that."

It was his ease in letting it go that changed Hermione's mind. This Ron Weasley was not the man she'd known all her life. This Ron Weasley could take the truth without exploding... hopefully.

"It's Severus," she said with downcast eyes.

"Snape?"

"Do you know another Severus?"

Ron chuckled. "Can't say that I do. Blimey, Hermione. Could you have picked a more difficult man to fall in love with?"

Hermione sighed with relief. She'd half expected Ron to rail on her for her choice. But the man sitting next to her had done some maturing. She sat back against the couch and looked over at him.

"He was different in my timeline. I've explained that before. It's just that, the essence of the man I knew is in this more aloof version. His past is far different from the man I knew. It has shaped him differently. But I almost find those differences more appealing. It's unknown territory, you know?"

Ron leaned back and put his arm around her, drawing her near. "You're bonkers, you know that? Only you could find a challenge in falling in love."

Hermione laughed and laid her head on Ron's shoulder. "You're so right, Ron!"

Jacob made his entrance then, smiling broadly at the two of them.

"Now, now, if I was the jealous type, I'd have major problems with the two of you cuddling on the couch like that."

Hermione frowned at him. He'd been plenty jealous only a short week ago, and the fact that he even mentioned her cuddling up to Ron seemed to say the exact opposite of his statement. Despite her mild annoyance, she rose and went over to him, hugging him tightly.

"I'm glad you're here finally. How did your detention go?"

He shrugged. "It was fine. Hopefully, I won't need to repeat the performance again soon."

She led him to the couch and they settled in. Ron got up and drew a chair over, seating himself so he could look at both of them and chat.

Before they'd had a chance to discuss anything, Harry came back in. Jacob stood and shook his hand before he too pulled up a chair, turned and straddled it, resting his arms on the back of it.

"So, what's up?" Harry asked.

Hermione giggled. "Shouldn't you be the one with all the news?" she asked with a grin.

Harry shrugged. "You've been working on important things, Hermione. I'd like to hear about your progress."

Hermione became serious again. She explained about the tests she'd done and their success.

"The final test should be proven in the next couple of weeks. It's been two months since I tested the potion. The vision I saw should happen any time now." She didn't bother to mention that she thought it would probably occur that night.

"You can't pinpoint the time?" Ron asked.

Hermione shook her head. "The two month window is imprecise. Since it was before my improvements to the potion, there's no way to pin down the exact time. I know my vision will happen within the week, but I'm not sure when. The improvements I've made to the potion make future visions timeframes predictable."

"What did you see?" Jacob asked.

Hermione looked at the three men nervously. "I'd rather not discuss it. I don't like to influence the outcome at all, and telling anyone would do that."

They all nodded simultaneously. Hermione changed the subject, telling them of Severus' new potion.

"That might just be the edge we need," Harry mused.

What about you, Harry. What news do you bring from the Ministry?" Jacob asked.

"Percy has managed to ascertain that two of Malfoy's personal bodyguards are unhappy with him and what he's doing. He spoke with them both, and they are willing to help us in any way they can."

Hermione arched an eyebrow at this information.

"Can they manage to be on guard when we attack at the party?" she asked.

Harry nodded.

"Percy will arrange everything," Ron explained. "They won't be the only guards there, but they will be able to help with the attack at least."

"This is good news," Jacob murmured. "And if your potion works, Hermione, we'll be able to know exactly what to do to capture and overthrow Lucius at his party."

"And I'll be able to go outside!" Hermione said with a grin.

Everyone laughed, but there was a tension in the air. They all knew they were risking their lives. They were willing to do it to make it possible for their world to reunite and heal.

Jacob walked arm in arm with Hermione as they headed for her room. He stopped her in front of her door and pulled her into a kiss. Hermione stiffened, causing Jacob to pull back and look at her curiously.

"Come on in, Jacob," she said tentatively.

Jacob followed her in, and they were both soon sitting before the fire she'd just conjured. Hermione looked uncomfortable, which caused Jacob to frown.

"Hermione..." he started. "What's going on? You've been distant for days and now you stiffen up when I try to kiss you. Have I done something to upset you?"

Hermione looked at Jacob. She didn't know how to begin. Finally, she just began.

"I don't know, Jacob. I just don't think we will work out."

Jacob frowned. "Why, Hermione?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. I just don't like you in the way I should like you."

Jacob rose and walked over to the fireplace. She watched him shift around, then walk off and stare out the window. She got up and went over to him, placing her hand on his arm. He turned to her, his eyes filled with pain.

"I thought we were good together." His frown increased as he looked into her eyes, begging for an explanation.

"I'm sorry, Jacob. I just don't feel what I should feel for you," she said sadly.

"You're sure you don't want to give us a little longer?" he asked hopefully.

"I've been trying to feel that way, honestly, but it just isn't there."

Jacob looked down and tapped his foot. "It's Snape, isn't it?"

Her eyes closed. There it was. The vision she'd had replayed itself verbatim. What was she to say to him? Should she tell him the truth? She didn't know.

"I tried, Jacob," she replied, a bit choked up.

His eyes narrowed. "Answer me, Hermione. Is this because of Snape?"

She looked down and nodded almost imperceptibly. "I'm sorry. I tried to forget about him; I just couldn't."

"You can't get past your attraction to him in your world, can you?" he said knowingly.

She nodded again.

He pulled her to him and enveloped her in his arms. "I knew that we were a long-shot. I rushed into things when you came, hoping that you might see me a little differently than the other Hermione. I just wanted us to work out."

"I'm sorry."

He pulled back and tilted her head up so he could look in her eyes. "Don't be. You should never apologize for loving someone, Hermione, even if it's not me."

Her eyes filled with tears. "I wish it were you. Life would be so much easier!"

He smiled then, although the sadness never left his eyes. "I don't envy you loving Snape. Do you think he'll ever reciprocate?"

She shook her head. "I think that is a lost cause."

Jacob kissed her forehead. "Well, if you ever see the folly in loving someone who doesn't love you, tell me so I can learn too."

"Please forgive me, Jacob."

"There's nothing to forgive. I've loved every minute of our entire relationship, especially the most recent developments. You can't help how you feel. Can we still be friends?"

She grinned. "You don't know how much I wanted you to say that," she said in relief.

He hugged her once again. "Then I should say good-night, my friend."

"Good night, Jacob."

He stroked her cheek and gave her a wistful look. Despite his claims that they would be friends still, Hermione worried that perhaps they couldn't go back now that they'd started this relationship. She fervently hoped that wasn't the case.

Jeanette Crowley smirked to herself as she walked stealthily down the hall. She came to a corner and peeked around to make sure no one was around. Seeing that both hallways were clear, she rounded the corner and rushed to the classroom door. Throwing it open, she quickly entered and shut the door behind her, only stopping to make sure no one had seen her despite the empty hallway. She congratulated herself on her Slytherin cunning.

Removing her wand, she placed a Notice-Me-Not spell over the door, so people walking by wouldn't be tempted to enter the classroom.

Smiling to herself, she lit her wand and approached the teacher's desk. It was the epitome of neatness. All the better. The object she was about to place upon it would cry

to be touched. Reaching into her robes, she extracted a broken quill and set it in the middle of the empty space upon the desk. Waving her wand over it, the quill glowed for a second, then resumed its rather lack-luster appearance.

"That will teach you, Mudblood," the girl uttered beneath her breath.

She'd complained bitterly in letters to her parents about the poor treatment she'd received from the Mudblood teacher. They had been appalled. Her father had sent her this quill and described exactly what she was to do with it. He assured her the Mudblood would never bother her again. Jeanette wasn't exactly sure what would happen when she touched the quill, but she knew whatever it would be would result in one less teacher at Hogwarts. One less unworthy, vile, incompetent teacher.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 10

"Oh bother!" Hermione cried as she looked into her bag. "I forgot the tests on my desk. Well, they won't mark themselves."

She left her room and made her way to the Arithmancy classroom. It was late, and she wanted to get this task over with and get to bed. Lighting the room with a quick flick of her wand, she went over to her desk, her eyes on the stack of papers neatly piled in the corner of it.

She stopped when she reached the desk. *Odd, I don't remember breaking a quill. If I had, I'd have thrown it away. I wonder if it belongs to a student? Maybe a house-elf put it there so it could be claimed.*

She moved around the desk and lifted the quill in her hand. Immediately when she touched it she felt the pull at her navel. It was a Portkey.

In a few seconds, she reappeared in total darkness. She heard an alarm sound and looked around to try and ascertain just where she was. Unfortunately, it was so dark she couldn't see a thing. Wherever she was, the air smelled musky and dank. The sound of footsteps racing down stairs made her turn around. Pulling her wand into her hand, she extended it forward. She heard a spell cast and then a small line of light appeared.

The Stupefy spell came without warning. Somehow it found its way through the cracked door and hit her before she could even shield herself. She fell to the floor, her wand rolling away.

"Lumos," a male voice chanted.

Footsteps approached her.

"Finite..."

She shook her head and looked above her. Lucius Malfoy loomed over her. Her breath caught in her throat. The man before her grinned evilly. She scurried to her feet and backed away from him.

"Ah, we have finally captured you, Mudblood."

Hermione huffed. "Just how did you manage to place a Portkey on Hogwarts's grounds?" she demanded.

"I believe I will be the one asking the questions, Mudblood," he sneered. "Suffice it to say that not every student is happy being taught by such as you."

"Crowley..."

"Mmm, you're quite quick for a lesser creature."

Hermione straightened herself. She readied for her death. She would not show this evil man weakness.

"You have caught me. Go ahead and kill me."

Lucius moved toward her and stopped when he was within touching distance.

"Now, now, Mudblood... all in good time."

Hermione's eyes widened. What did this man have in store for her?

"Oh, don't even flatter yourself," Malfoy uttered. "I would not sully myself or any of my acquaintances with your body. No, I have more important designs for you."

Hermione just stared, afraid to ask anything. A great ball of nerves was forming in her stomach, and she feared whatever Lucius would say next.

"You will be my ultimate example, Mudblood. You will show the rest of your kind that there is no hiding from us. You will be publicly executed so all who defy me will know they have nowhere they can hide. With your execution, the rest of your kind will give up their fight. They will all be destroyed within a week."

Hermione's jaw tightened. "You underestimate your enemy, Malfoy. Muggle-borns will not just turn over and let you kill them without a fight."

"Well, that may be, but there are so few of them left they won't be hard to defeat."

He turned and walked to the door. Hermione's eyes followed him. He turned slowly and gazed back at her. He smiled smugly.

"Enjoy your last days on earth, Mudblood. Your execution is scheduled for the day after tomorrow."

He laughed. Pulling his wand from his cane, he flicked it and the lights went out once again. Slamming the great wooden door, he left Hermione to complete darkness.

Panic set in. She walked with her arms outstretched until she found a wall. Reaching as high as she could she ran her hands down along the wall, looking for something, anything, that could help her get out of this prison. She repeated her up and down motions until she had rounded the room and come back to about where she'd started. She examined the door closely, but was disappointed. Nothing. She'd found nothing but a bowl in one corner of the room. She got down on her hands and knees and inspected the floor. She could feel nothing but the cold, smooth tile.

She reached a wall and sat with her back against it. There was no escape. She was dead already. She thought of Harry and Ron. Would they even know she'd been captured before she was killed? What would Dumbledore and those at Hogwarts do? Would they even notice her gone before it was too late?

Severus stumbled his way to his seat at the High Table. He'd slept poorly last night, his mind filled with nightmares about Hermione screaming and reaching for him. He'd reach back for her, always grazing her fingers, but she wouldn't be able to grasp him and she'd fall into oblivion. The first time he awoke in a cold sweat. Once he'd calmed and gotten back to sleep, the dream had recurred. He'd not had bad dreams like that since the end of the war.

Settling himself into his seat, he began to place some bangers on his plate. Perry came up and settled into his seat. He looked over at Severus.

"Have you seen Hermione?" he asked.

Severus looked up and shook his head.

"That's odd. I just stopped by her room, but she wasn't there. I figured she'd come to breakfast already."

"She's probably reading every book she can find in the library," Severus said sarcastically.

Jacob shrugged. "Maybe."

Severus ignored him and began to tuck in. As he chewed reflectively on his food, he gazed out at the children. They were chatting amongst themselves. Suddenly a flurry of owls entered with the days post. Excitement grew as people received their mail and morning paper. Severus caught his before it fell into his plate. He placed it to the side, not interested in reading right now.

He pulled the carafe of pumpkin juice to him and began to fill his glass. A hush came over the entire hall, making his head snap up. The quiet didn't last long. A girl burst into tears and then the entire hall erupted in noise. Severus turned to Jacob, who had just gasped himself.

"What is it?" Severus asked.

Jacob swallowed hard and passed his paper to Severus. Severus took it and looked at the headline.

Hermione Granger Found! Execution Set for Wednesday!

He froze. His eyes went blurry, and he felt as if a brick wall had suddenly crashed into him. He turned to Jacob.

"You say she wasn't in her room?"

Jacob looked at him in fear and shook his head. The two men bounded out of their chairs and ran out of the Great Hall. In a flurry, they both raced for Hermione's room. Severus waved his wand, and the door flew open even before they'd gotten there. The two burst in and ran through the entire apartment. She wasn't there.

They met back in the lounge, each shaking their heads to signify her absence.

"Maybe she's in the library like you suggested?" Jacob cried. He turned to race out of the door. Severus held him back and pointed to the fireplace.

"Let's Floo," he advised.

In a matter of seconds they were in the library. Madam Pince assured them she'd not seen Hermione since breakfast the day before.

They Floo'd to the hospital wing, but she wasn't there. Racing to Dumbledore's office, they both banged noisily at his door after yelling for the gargoyle to move aside. The door opened to find a grim Headmaster looking at them.

"I see you've seen the paper," Dumbledore said sadly.

"Is it true?" Jacob cried.

"He couldn't have gotten to her! She never leaves!" Severus claimed defiantly.

Dumbledore moved back and opened the door wider. The two men looked into his office and saw a student sitting in the seat across from his desk. She was sniffing into a tissue.

"It seems that Miss Crowley was sent a Portkey by her father."

Severus rushed past Dumbledore and rounded on the girl. "You fool! How could you do that to one of your professors?"

"I didn't know they were going to kill her!" she wailed and burst into more tears.

"Are you an idiot? You call yourself a Slytherin yet can't figure out where a simple Portkey might take a hunted Muggle-born witch?"

The girl's eyes shifted slightly. "... I just thought my dad would make her disappear."

Severus got to within millimeters of the girl's face. "And what exactly is the definition of *disappear*, do you think?"

The girl began to wail. "I hated her. I just wanted her gone!"

Severus sneered.

"Severus," Dumbledore said calmly behind him.

Severus relaxed slightly and straightened. He turned to the Headmaster. Jacob walked up, practically forgotten in the drama that had just occurred.

"What do we do now?" he asked.

Dumbledore looked over at the crying girl. "Miss Crowley, please report to your room and stay there until further notice."

She looked up with wide eyes. "Are you going to expel me?" she cried.

"I will decide that soon. Please remain in your room except for meals."

The girl gave a quick nod, rose, and ran from the room.

"She truly didn't understand the ramifications of her actions," Dumbledore mused as he stared out the door where she'd exited.

"She is acting. She knew fully well what was to happen," Severus huffed. "She's just trying to save her skin here at the school."

"That may be," Dumbledore mused, "but we have other concerns right now."

"How much time do we have?" Jacob asked.

Dumbledore moved to his desk and sat down, lifting the paper as he did.

"The paper says they will execute her tomorrow morning."

Severus sunk into the nearby chair. At that instant, Dumbledore's fireplace flared up. Harry's head popped in.

"Oh, good. May I come through with Ron, Headmaster?"

Dumbledore nodded and soon the two men stood with the other three. They all looked at each other in trepidation, none willing to express the fear they all felt.

"Does it say where she is?" Severus asked.

"It says 'an undisclosed holding cell,'" Dumbledore said.

"She's not at the Ministry. Percy already checked," Harry explained. "I think she's at Malfoy's. Percy said he's beefed up his security detail since last night. He has that room in his cellar. It would be a good place to hold her. It's pitch-black. She'd have no way to escape."

"How do we find out if we're right?" Ron asked.

Jacob put his head in his hands and scrunched up his hair with them. "We can't, can we?" he whispered.

Harry shook his head. "We'll have to assume she's there."

"But if she's not?"

"Then she's dead. We'll only have this one chance. Malfoy will double his guard if we make an attempt to rescue her that fails."

"Could she possibly be anywhere else?" Albus asked.

All eyes turned to Severus. He looked at them quizzically.

"You were friends with him. Is there anyplace secret that he might use?" Harry asked.

Severus thought. Finally, he shook his head. "No. He used his cellar for most things he wanted to keep hidden. Unless he's built something we're not aware of since he's been in office, he's probably got her there."

"How do we get in?" Ron asked.

Severus sat back and folded his arms. Harry looked at him.

"Severus, could we combine objectives? Attack the Manor and rescue Hermione?"

"He's already doubled the guards as it is," Severus mused. "It will be difficult."

"What if we used house-elves to get us into the cellar?" Harry asked.

Severus narrowed his eyes at the man.

"That's how we escaped from it when we were held there," Harry explained. "Dobby Apparated in and took us all out. If we can get several house-elves to Apparate small groups of us in, we can take the house by surprise and get Hermione out while capturing Malfoy."

Dumbledore looked at Harry. "The house-elves will help. They will want to rescue one of their charges."

"What about the Undersecretary?" Jacob asked.

"We could do the same at his house," Ron said thoughtfully.

"Technically we could ambush anyone's home that is influential and on Malfoy's side."

Dumbledore took charge then. "Severus, we need a floor plan of the Malfoy mansion. Harry, call an Order meeting here in my office in two hours. Jacob, go talk with the house-elves and see if they'll help us. Ron, create a plan of attack. Work with Severus so you know who needs to be where."

The four men nodded and rose to leave. "Gentlemen," Dumbledore added. The four turned back to him. "Remember, we only have one chance at this. If we fail, Hermione will die and our hand will be tipped. There will not be another opportunity to attack Malfoy."

The men nodded and all left to do their appointed tasks.

"Would you just listen to me? If we attack there, they will be alerted. That part of the manor has extra wards. They were installed after your escape!" Severus said tersely.

"Then how do we get to Hermione?" Ron asked, his arms crossing defiantly.

Severus studied the map he'd drawn up. He pointed to the drawing room above the cellar. "If we Apparate here and descend, the wards will not be triggered. They just alert for Apparations into the basement."

Ron looked over Severus' shoulder at where he was pointing. He gave a terse nod. Severus closed his eyes and breathed heavily. Ron and he had been working non-stop to prepare for the attack and the upcoming meeting. He glanced at the clock. They were set to meet with the Order in fifteen minutes.

"I suppose that's it, then," Ron said from behind him.

He nodded.

"Snape," Ron asked quietly.

Severus looked back at him.

"Do you think we'll be able to save her?"

Flashes of the nightmares he'd had the night before ran through his mind. He looked back down at the map.

"I don't know, Weasley," he murmured softly.

The meeting had gone well. The House-elves had been eager to help and had sent a representative to be in on the planning. It had taken over an hour to organize everything. Everyone was as ready as they would be. Dumbledore would head the group that would attack and capture Malfoy. Harry would lead the rescue team. There were two other groups to provide distraction and several groups set to raid other officials' homes. At the meeting's official end, each group separated to work their own personal strategies.

Harry sat at the staff room's table with Ron, Jacob, and Severus. He looked at the map provided them and pointed to the drawing room.

"If we Apparate into a fight, we can probably use the chandelier as a distraction. Ron, you be in charge of making that thing crash to the floor if need be."

"If we are stuck in battle, one of us needs to go to the basement and get Hermione," Jacob noted. "I'll do that."

"I will do that," Severus broke in.

Jacob looked up at him, his eyes narrowed. "Now you give a damn," he muttered.

Severus gave him an odd look. "I am the best suited for the task, Perry. I know the manor well and my wand skills are superior to all of yours."

"I can do it just as well as you!" Jacob countered.

"I know she's your lover, Perry, and that playing the knight-in-shining-armor is something you've been dreaming of doing, but believe me, I am far better suited to this task."

Jacob grimaced. "We've broken up, Snape. I have no knight-in-shining-armor fantasies. I just want her safe."

"You've broken up?" Severus asked curiously.

Harry looked between the two men. "Look, you two can have this discussion another time. Severus, you will make the rescue attempt. Jacob, I need you to fight with me."

The two men glowered at each other for a moment before nodding.

A little while later, Harry dismissed them. "All right, I suppose that's it. We've gone over the plan five times. We could probably do it in our sleep. We'll meet in the Great Hall tonight at eight."

The men left. Severus quickened his pace to catch up with Perry.

"You've broken up?" he reiterated.

Jacob frowned. "Yes, we have. She doesn't feel what she should about me."

"I thought you two lovebirds were enthralled with each other," Severus mused sarcastically.

Jacob stopped and turned to Severus. "Look, I don't want to discuss this with you. Just drop it. If it weren't for you..." Jacob's mouth slammed shut.

Severus arched an eyebrow. "Do go on," he drawled.

Jacob's lips thinned. "We just didn't work out." He continued on down the hallway, leaving Severus to stare after him.

Severus paced back and forth. He'd stride across the length of his bedroom, wheel around and pace again. This was not a new activity for him. He'd paced for the majority of his life. Usually he paced when he had to confront the Dark Lord or had to do something for Dumbledore. That pacing had its own rhythm. This pacing was a bit different.

His nerves were on edge and there was an added component. He was worried sick. His stomach was tied in knots, and he could barely contain the scream that wanted to leave his lips. His pacing increased. He hadn't paced like this for a long time. A very long time. Since the night Lily was killed, actually.

He stopped and closed his eyes. *Please don't let this end that way.*

He shook his head to clear it, and then began his pacing once again. His thoughts were clouded with concern for the woman he'd developed feelings for.

What could Lucius be doing to her?

His pace quickened even more.

What if... No, don't even think about that. We will save her.

Huffing, he went over to his bedside table. He opened the drawer and extracted a book. He grabbed a quill before lying on the bed and opening the book. Sometimes when he couldn't think straight, penning his thoughts helped. He had an entire bookshelf of diaries, glamourous to look like Potions texts, as evidence of that fact.

She's been abducted by Lucius. My heart has never beaten so fast. My mind is clouded. I cannot think straight. I fear more than I have ever feared, save for when Lily was killed. If we are unsuccessful, she will die. How will I survive the loss of yet another woman I love?

Severus stared at what he'd just written. His subconscious had outsmarted him. He'd finally admitted he loved her.

It frightens me to realize that I love her now that she's near death. It frightens me that I may never recover if she is lost. I don't know why I worry so. She will never be mine. Despite her breaking up with Perry, it's just impossible that she would look to me in any romantic way.

But I will not let that bastard kill her. We will prevail, and Lucius will fall. She will be safe. She has to be.

He wrote on for a while. Finally, feeling calmed and better in control, he shut the book and returned it to its place. There was a bit to do before they attacked the manor tonight. He would be busy until their departure.

The door creaked open, and Hermione shielded her face. Two of Lucius' goons entered, one carrying a small bowl.

"You ain't allowed utensils. Hurry up and eat," the guard ordered as he shoved the bowl at Hermione.

She took it and gazed down into it. She was ravenous, but really, what was the point of eating? She'd be dead soon anyway. Her heart sank in despair. Her defense training had taught her never to let her strength wane, so she picked up the slop, which consisted of mashed potatoes with chunks of mystery meat in them, and ate it quickly. Glancing up, she saw the two men leering at her. A sudden fear gripped her.

"The boss said not to kill you. He didn't say nothing about roughing you up," the first goon said.

"Oh, yes he did. He said it wouldn't do for the other Mudbloods to see she'd had it easy before her death," the second advised.

The other turned to him with a curious glance. The second huffed and rolled his eyes.

"That means he wants her to be beaten."

A grin spread over the first goon's face. "Shall we let her eat first?"

Hermione knew that begging would do her no good. Letting them see her fear wouldn't help either. They considered her to be some sort of animal and would expect her to cower before them. She finished the unappetizing meal and tossed the bowl on the floor defiantly.

"Oh, y'ell pay for that," the stupid goon said.

She laughed a short, caustic laugh. "As if you needed an excuse to beat me."

The man slapped her across the face. The other dragged her up into a standing position and muttered something while waving his wand. Immediately, her hands and legs were chained to the wall. She struggled to free herself, to no avail.

"Now we'll see how spunky you are, Mudblood whore."

Fists and feet made contact with all parts of her body. She'd barely cried out at one pain when a worse one assaulted her. They especially worked her face over, remarking to themselves that the camera would be concentrating on it the most. A tooth fell to the floor, and the men chuckled. Finally they left her, still chained to the wall. She slumped down, hanging from the chains, the only things that kept her vertical.

She swam in and out of consciousness, her brain trying to make sense of two men violently beating a defenseless woman. She came to the conclusion that they were the true animals, not her, before she completely passed out.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 11

The Order had assembled in the Great Hall. They were grouped into fours, each with a house-elf in the center. Dumbledore placed his wand tip to his neck so he could be heard over the chatter of last minute preparations.

"Attention, everyone!" he cried.

The room quieted immediately and everyone turned their eyes to Dumbledore.

"As you all know, our mission tonight is two-fold. Please concentrate only on your assigned mission. There are plenty of us here to do our respective jobs, and we are counting on each and every one of you to accomplish your specific task to make this attack succeed. Remember, this is the only chance we'll get to take down Lucius Malfoy and rescue Hermione Granger. On the count of three, we will Apparate together to our destinations. Good luck to you all."

Everyone nodded to one another and prepared themselves. Hands were placed upon each other and each house-elf and the house-elves each grabbed at least one wrist in their hands.

Dumbledore began the countdown. "Three... two... one." Each house-elf spun with their charges. In a mass of pops, everyone disappeared.

Dumbledore, Minerva, Flitwick, Percy Weasley, and their house-elf, Polywog Apparated directly to the second floor with wands extended. Two guards who were posted at a door farther down the hall immediately began shooting spells at them. The four wizards began to fight back, causing such a stir that the guards did not notice the small house-elf dart between Percy's legs and run at them. He jumped on the closest one and began tearing at his hair. The guard started shouting, batting at Polywog, but he could not dislodge the small creature from his head. Unfortunately, the commotion alerted five other guards, who raced from the stairwell, wands held forward. The ensuing battle was fierce. Polywog fought valiantly and through his unique form of distraction, made it possible for the wizards to fell two of their enemy. Percy turned to ensure their safety just in time to catch another guard shooting a hex straight for Minerva. He shielded her, but was sent flying by a hex from the group in front of them. Minerva turned and took care of the guard behind them, then rushed over to Percy, constantly shooting spells at their attackers as she did. She felt for a pulse. He was all right. She looked up to see Albus envelop one of the guards with a mass of rope. Flitwick had chosen to use Polywog's strategy. He was hanging from a guard's back, shooting spells at the others near him. Two men fell from his wand work. Finally, the last man dropped. All eyes turned to Percy, who by now was sitting up, shaking his head to clear it.

"You're all right, Percy?" Flitwick asked as he rushed over to him. Percy nodded and got to his feet.

"Good," Dumbledore remarked. "Lead us to the Malfoy bedroom."

Percy, being familiar with the manor, took the lead. He stopped before a set of double-doors. Counting off from three on his fingers, he gently grasped the door handle. On one, he threw the door open, and they rushed inside.

Harry's group met immediate fire when they arrived in the drawing room. All four of the men had hexes flying from their wands upon appearing. Their surprise attack brought down three guards, but there were still six more to deal with. They all started shooting hexes rapidly. Harry turned to Severus.

"Go, now!"

As the great chandelier crashed to the ground, Severus nodded and grabbed the hand of their house-elf, Drury. He rushed for the hallway to the stairs, shooting hexes behind him. He failed to see the man standing in the stairwell until it was too late. Luckily, Drury had been facing forward and had spied him as they entered the hallway. Drury lifted his hands and made a shoving move with them. The guard flew backwards and tumbled down the stairwell without even casting a hex.

Severus looked to his small companion as they raced down the hall.

"Thank you," he said quickly as they turned into the stairwell.

"I did what I could, sir," Drury responded.

They raced down the stairs, Severus with his wand extended, ready for anything. Strangely enough, there was only one guard at the door, and he'd been distracted by the other guard that had tumbled down the stairs. Severus took one shot at him, and the man crumpled to the ground.

Severus looked down at the two unconscious men. "Pity Dumbledore forbade us to use Unforgivables," he muttered as he sneered at Hermione's captors. He cast an incarcerous and they were soon bound in ropes. Quickly pointing his wand at the door, Severus chanted, "Alohomora." The door swung open revealing a darkened room. With another wave of his wand, the room was illuminated, and Severus saw a sight that stilled his heart. Hermione, beaten and bruised, hung from chains against the wall. She was slumped down, and her eyes were closed. With his heart in his throat, he approached her and felt for a pulse. It beat strongly beneath his fingers. He sighed in relief as Hermione moaned slightly.

He flicked his wand, and the chains disappeared. Hermione fell forward and Severus caught her gently. He took a second to look down into her face. She cracked her eyes open.

"Severus?" she croaked weakly. "I'd hoped you would come," she whispered before her head fell back, and she was unconscious again.

His mission was fulfilled; his only responsibility to get Hermione and get out. He looked over at Drury and nodded.

"Let's get out of here."

Drury bounded up to him and grabbed his robes. They spun and disappeared, leaving the battle behind them. Severus hoped everyone else would be as successful as he'd been.

Appearing in the infirmary, he saw that Poppy was ready for him.

"Place her on the bed over there," she directed. Her wand already out, as she casted diagnostic spells.

Severus gently laid her down as if she'd break. She opened her eyes again as he did so.

"Severus?" she whispered. Her hand reached out to him. It was one of the areas on her body that was not bruised black and blue. He took it in his two hands.

"You're safe, Hermione. You're in the hospital wing. Poppy will fix you."

"Thank you," she murmured, barely able to form the words. Her breathing was ragged, and Severus suspected she may have broken ribs. He looked to Poppy and arched an eyebrow, demanding an update.

"All her ribs are broken, and her left lung is punctured," Poppy reported. "What happened to her wrists and ankles?"

"She was hung by chains from a wall."

Poppy's frown grew. "Actually that probably saved her from having broken legs, although both wrists are broken. She's got massive internal bleeding."

"Severus," Hermione mumbled. "Everything's going dark." Her voice was getting weaker with every word.

Severus froze. She couldn't die. Not after all this. She'd survived being beaten; she'd have to survive being healed.

"Stay with me, Hermione," he pleaded.

"You... said my... name."

He scowled. "Of course I said your name, what did you expect me to say?"

"First... name."

Poppy leaned over her. "Hermione, I need you to take this potion. It will make you unconscious while I mend your bones and heal the rest of you. You'll be all right, okay?"

Severus gingerly lifted her head while Poppy administered the potion. He laid her back down gently, caressing her hair absently before removing his hand. He studied her features as her eyes closed, and her face went slack from the potion. Looking to Poppy, he frowned.

"Will she be all right, Poppy?"

Poppy's eyebrows knit together. "If I can get her ribs and lungs fixed within the next ten minutes she'll be fine."

"And if you don't?"

Poppy met Severus' gaze. "She'll die from asphyxiation."

She'll die. She'll die. She'll die. She'll die.

The room got fuzzy and Poppy's words reverberated in his head. He closed his eyes, willing himself to stay focused. Willing himself to not lose control. Hoping beyond hope that she'd live, he slowly brought himself back together. He would not fall apart in front of Poppy. He'd never shown his weakness before, he would not start now.

Be strong. Be strong. Be strong.

He wasn't sure if he was chanting that to himself or to Hermione, but it had its affect on him. Slowly he calmed. When he opened his eyes, he noted that Poppy was waving her wand furiously over Hermione's chest.

"What can I do?" Severus asked.

"Rub that paste on her chest. Don't press too hard!"

"I figured that," he snarked. *Ah, yes, back to myself then.*

He carefully took a large dab of the paste and began rubbing it onto Hermione's chest. He was so absorbed in trying to help her, it didn't dawn on him that her shirt had been stripped away. He tried not to concentrate on her black-lace bra as he gently rubbed the salve into her skin. It was definitely easier said than done. He concentrated on healing her and was soon able to place his wayward thoughts into the back of his mind where he was sure he'd examine them in detail later.

Poppy glanced up at him. "I think that's sufficient, Severus."

He pulled his hands away as if they were on fire.

"What else can I do?" he asked, noting that his voice sounded a bit raspy.

"I could use help with the internal bleeding. This spell works better when two people perform it. Are you familiar with the *Sanguinea* spell?"

He nodded curtly. "What about the wound cleaning potion I developed for healing? It may work for internal injuries."

"It can't hurt," Poppy said with a nod of her head. "There's some in the cupboard over there."

Severus raced to the cupboard and brought out two vials. Poppy and he poured some of the potion onto her abdomen and chest and worked it into her skin. Poppy checked the potions work. She shook her head.

"It helped some, but we still need to do the spell. Would you do the lower wand movements, please? I'll say the spell and do the upper movements."

He nodded again and extended his wand over Hermione's torso. Poppy began waving her wand above his as he did an intricate waving pattern directly over her stomach.

Poppy chanted "*Sanguinea*" as she continued waving. Bright blue, healing light shot from both their wands and directly into Hermione's stomach. Poppy checked their work. She nodded with approval.

"The bleeding's stopped," she informed Severus.

She worked for another twenty minutes at least, applying more of Severus' potion to her visible wounds. She had to keep going back to Hermione's lungs and doing more spells. She asked Severus to reapply the paste to her chest again. When he gave her a curious look she explained.

"Her injuries need multiple applications. It's normal to do this, Severus. She's responding well to the treatment. I think she's safe now."

Severus heaved a great sigh of relief as he reapplied the paste. His eyes shot to Hermione's face when she moaned.

"I thought you gave her a sedative."

"I did. She won't wake up for a while."

They continued their work for a bit longer. Finally, Poppy stepped back and examined Hermione once again. Her face, which had been purple and swollen, was now restored to its natural state. All the other bruises and blood had been cleared away too.

"I've healed her wrists completely. Her ribs are mended, but will take a few days to heal fully. Those were all the broken bones, except for her nose, which you can see is fixed. Everything else is healed." She looked over at Severus. "She'll be fine in a day or two. Thank you for your help, Severus."

The forgotten house-elf was fidgeting at the base of the bed. "May I return to the battle, sir?" he asked.

Severus nodded, but his eyes never left Hermione. He pulled up a chair and settled into it.

"I'm exhausted, Severus. I'll be in my office. Please alert me when any wounded come in."

He nodded, but still his eyes never left Hermione's face. Poppy left as he continued to stare at her. He memorized every little bit of her face, from her curved eyebrows to the way her nose came to a cute point at the end. Relief flooded him that she would recover. He sat marveling at her for a while before the hospital doors burst open. Harry and Ron rushed in.

"Is she all right?" Ron cried.

"Did she get hurt?" Harry asked.

Severus looked up at the two men. "She was beaten badly. We only finished mending her about twenty minutes ago. Poppy assures me she'll be fine."

"Why isn't she awake?" Harry asked.

"Poppy gave her a strong sedative so she could set her bones before healing them." He studied the two men before him, who both looked a bit mused up. "What of the battle?"

Harry looked over at Severus. "We won. Dumbledore's group had the hardest go of it.

They were all injured. Dumbledore is in pretty bad shape. He took the brunt of the curses. The Aurors are doing some quick patch-up work before they bring them all back here. They were accosted in the hallway and then again when they entered Malfoy's bedroom. He and Narcissa were surrounded by bodyguards. They fought bitterly. Both Narcissa and Lucius are dead. Draco is in custody. The other raids on the Undersecretary's home and his cabinet were all successful. They weren't suspecting anything. They've all been taken to the Ministry and into custody."

Severus sighed in relief. "It looks like there is a government to rebuild, and wounded to take care of. I will inform Poppy that there will be new charges soon." He strode to her office and tapped the door. She was out in a flash.

"They will be coming shortly," Severus advised. "Potter said that Dumbledore is in bad shape."

Poppy rushed over to Harry and began getting first hand information. As she began to gather what she'd need, the house-elves began Apparating in with the wounded. Severus helped Poppy get everyone to beds, and he did some diagnostics as Poppy took care of the worst-off.

It took several hours to get everyone taken care of. Albus had been the hardest-hit, although he had no visible wounds. But he'd been unconscious and paralyzed when he'd been carried in by the Aurors. Poppy had worked valiantly to free him from the multiple curses and hexes that had hit him, placing him in the state he was in. Once she'd stabilized him and assured all the onlookers that he would be fine in a matter of days, she continued on to the others. Both Severus and she never took a break as they mended bones, healed cuts, and administered rejuvenating potions for those weakened by hexes.

Finally, the last patient was sent on his way, completely healed. Severus looked around the infirmary. Only Dumbledore and Hermione remained in beds. All the others had been healed and sent home. Truly they'd been lucky to have so few serious injuries.

Poppy staggered over to him, resembling death warmed over. "I'm going to bed," she told him in an exhausted voice. "These two will be fine until morning."

"I'll stay," Severus volunteered.

Poppy shook her head. "No, Severus, you are as exhausted as I. Get some rest."

"All right. I'll just check on Miss Granger before retiring."

Poppy smiled knowingly at him. He huffed and shoo'd her away. Moving over to Hermione's bed, he grasped her hand. She looked peaceful as she slept. A sudden urge to run his hand through her hair came over him. He didn't bother stopping himself. Poppy had gone, and Granger should sleep through the night. His fingers sunk into her curls. He sat down in the chair next to her bed as he caressed her hair. *She's turned me into a sap. It's so good to see her alive, though. I want to rejoice in that, even if it's just for tonight.*

His fingers released her curly locks, and he took a finger and traced her jaw line.

"So beautiful," he murmured.

Rising to leave, he stooped low and placed a kiss on her forehead. He pushed back her hair and looked into her face. *The face of an angel.*

"I know you will never care for me, Hermione, but I will always care for you."

With that, he kissed her forehead again, straightened, and headed to his room. He didn't see Hermione's eyes crack open and follow his retreat.

Hermione moaned as her eyes opened and were accosted by bright light. She shielded her eyes and tried to open them again, this time a bit slower. The familiar ceiling of the infirmary greeted her before Poppy Pomfrey's face came into her vision.

"I'm alive," Hermione murmured.

Poppy smiled. "Yes, you'll be keeping us all on our toes for a lot longer, Miss Granger."

"I ache all over."

Poppy nodded. "When Severus brought you in, you had been beaten badly."

Hermione gazed around the infirmary. She noted Albus Dumbledore two beds over.

"I hope that didn't happen while trying to rescue me," she said while motioning to Albus.

"Well, not exactly. When the Order found out you'd been abducted, they just decided to take Lucius out and mount a rescue mission at the same time."

Hermione snorted, which made her wince in pain afterward. "You make it sound so simple."

Poppy smiled also. "No, it definitely wasn't simple, but both objectives were achieved."

Hermione's eyes grew wide. "Lucius has been captured?"

Leaning in, Poppy gave her a conspiratorial look. "Actually, he's dead. The result of four simultaneous hexes and a house-elf curse on top."

"House-elf curse?"

Poppy explained everything. Hermione nodded in all the right places. Truly, the use of house-elves had been ingenious. She was sorry she'd not thought of it. But her mind kept wandering. She was anxious to hear about one person, and one person only.

"Was Severus injured?"

"No, dear. He's just fine. He's exhausted and probably will sleep until tomorrow."

"May I leave?" Hermione asked.

Poppy gave her an exasperated look. "What do you think?"

Hermione had the decency to look chastised. "I had to ask."

"You may leave tomorrow morning if there are no complications. Did they cast any hexes or Cruciatius curses on you?"

Hermione shook her head.

"Surprising... but good, though. You should be fine." Poppy turned and retreated back to her office.

Hermione rested her head back on her pillow. Her entire body ached, and she found she was getting sleepy. She tried to remember what happened before she awoke in the infirmary, but her mind couldn't recall anything after she'd passed out from the beating she'd received.

Just then Jacob came into the infirmary and rushed to her bed. "I wanted to see how you were doing this morning," he told her. "You were unconscious last night."

Hermione smiled at him. "Were you hurt yesterday?"

"Just a gash on my arm. I managed to dodge all the spells that were thrown at Harry and me."

She craned her head to look at his arm. Of course, there was no sign of the previous wound. Jacob sat on the side of the bed and slowly moved Hermione's head back against the pillow.

"You need to stay still so you can heal."

Hermione made a face at him. "Turning my head is not going to set back my recovery," she retorted.

"Nonetheless."

They sat in silence for a few minutes. Hermione's eyes seemed to be drooping, and she looked like she would fall asleep. Jacob touched her arm.

"I guess I should be going. You need to rest."

Her eyes flew open. "Oh, no. I'm fine," she protested.

He squeezed her arm. "You rest. I'm glad you're ok, Hermione." He awkwardly kissed her on the forehead and made a hasty getaway out of the infirmary.

Hermione sighed. Things seemed to be ok with him, but there was still some awkwardness as they had conversed. She hoped that would eventually disappear and that

she hadn't lost her friend.

She let her mind wander again, her thoughts turning to her memory potion.

"What should I do with it? It has so much potential, but in the wrong hands, it could cause disastrous results. Maybe I should just let it be," she thought.

She shook her head then. Harry had been very positive about the new potion, and felt it had great promise for apprehending evil doers. Perhaps developing it secretly for the Ministry alone was the answer she was looking for.

"It works, and it's accurate. I shouldn't just let it die. It can help a great deal for the Aurors," she thought to herself. Coming to a decision to develop it for the Ministry alone, she let exhaustion overcome her, and soon fell into a deep, healing sleep.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 of 12

Many wondered what happened to the Hermione that was replaced in the timeline of Time's Treasure. This is her story.

Chapter 12

Severus awoke after sleeping for a full day. He felt alert and well once again. His mind went directly to Hermione. She would be awake now, possibly even ready to be discharged. He rose and hurried to dress. He pulled his pants on quickly and threw his shirt on, buttoning it as he walked into the bathroom and stood in front of the mirror. Running a brush through his hair, he studied himself.

Noting his appearance, he stilled. He questioned what he was about to do. Why would he rush to her side? She didn't care for him. She wanted the man she knew from her past. He was not that man, nor would he ever be. He was fooling himself if he thought he could ever win her heart.

Besotted fool or not, she will not return my feelings. I've been horrible to her. She could never truly care for me as more than a friend, even if I had been nice to her.

His shoulders slumped, and he turned from the mirror. Slowly, he wandered back into his bedroom and pulled out his diary once again. With plume in his hand, he sat down on the bed and began to write.

This whole ordeal has made me realize how special she is to me, however, I am not an idiot. I know that even though she has moved on from Perry, she will never see me like that. I know she will be all right. I must not make a fool of myself by rushing to her side, assuring for my own eyes that she breathes and speaks and is back to normal.

I will wait and see her when our paths cross. She must not know what she means to me. She will only pity me...

He placed his quill down on the page and stared ahead. Just then, there was a knock at the door. Frowning, he put his diary down and rose to answer the door.

Hermione awoke and blinked a few times to gain her bearings. She marveled at how good she felt after her ordeal at the Malfoy's. The only part of her that hurt was her ribs, which ached with the workings of the Skelegro that was helping them to heal. She slowly sat up and eased her legs over the edge of the bed. Standing, she took some tentative steps. *So far, so good.* She became bolder and began to walk regularly. Poppy poked her head out of her office.

"Ah, you're awake, I see, and determined to escape from here."

Hermione looked up to her and smiled. "Poppy, I can't thank you enough. Except for my chest, I feel back to normal. Can I go?" She gave Poppy a puppy-dog look, hoping it would better her chances of leaving the infirmary.

Poppy came out of her office, wand held high. She waved it around Hermione a few times, muttering a little to herself with each new wave. Finally, she lowered her wand and nodded to Hermione.

"You are free to go. However, if you start to feel achy in any part of your body, you'll need to lie down and rest, and if your chest pain increases in the slightest, I want you right back in here."

Hermione nodded. "All right. I will come back if I need to."

"Take it easy. You shouldn't be walking or moving around too much."

"Okay, Poppy. I will," Hermione said as she turned to leave.

With a wave of her hand, she'd pushed through the doors and was headed down the hall at a slightly slower pace. As she walked, she found that her mind was recalling everything she'd gone through. Scrunching her eyes together, she stopped where she was. The picture of Malfoy's men's fists crashing into her was a memory she'd rather forget.

She shook her head to clear it. The image of the men left her, but a new image came into view. Severus, wrapping his arms around her as she fell from the chains. Images from the night she was rescued flooded into her mind. He had been incredibly tender with her... as if he truly cared.

Then another memory came to her. It was of Severus tenderly kissing her forehead and saying he'd always care for her. She inhaled sharply. He'd borne his soul to her, thinking she was unconscious.

He cares... I can't believe it, he cares about me!

Spurred to action, she raced to the dungeons, almost tripping as she descended the stairs quickly. She slowed herself. The last thing she needed was to be berated by Poppy for falling down the stairs and breaking more bones.

It seemed to take forever, but finally she stood in front of Severus' door. She knocked and waited, shifting back and forth until he opened it. When it opened, Severus

frowned out at her.

"May I come in?" she asked tentatively.

She thought she saw relief flood his eyes as he gazed upon her. It was only fleeting. He nodded curtly and stepped aside to let her through. He closed the door and turned towards her. She sighed heavily before beginning.

"Thank you for saving me, Severus," she whispered.

He nodded, looking uncomfortable because of her words.

She took a step closer to him. "I have to tell you something."

"What is it?" he asked.

"I heard you the other night. When you kissed my forehead, I heard what you said."

His eyes grew wide before he schooled his features. "You must have been delirious, Professor, I neither spoke to you nor kissed your forehead."

She shook her head. "Oh, yes you did! I remember it. You said you cared about me." She looked nervously to the ground. "I want you to know that I care about you too."

Severus scoffed. "I believe the attack has made you delusional, Hermione."

Frowning as she looked up at him, she closed the distance between them. "You're wrong. I've had feelings for you for a long time now."

"I believe you are mistaking me for my doppelganger. You have felt nothing but revulsion when it comes to me."

"That's not true! No matter what has gone on between us and how awful you have been to me, I can't help but want to be with you. I know it's you I want, despite you being different from him. Your admission last night made me see everything clearly. Your actions towards me... you've just been trying to hide everything. You need to stop. You need to accept this for what it is."

"And just what is it?" Severus sneered.

Hermione tilted her head slightly. "It's love..."

Standing in front of Hermione, he stared at her intensely. Suddenly, he pulled her to him and kissed her.

"Is this what you want?" he demanded after breaking away from her lips. "Is this who you want in your life? I am not the man you grew up with!"

"Severus! I don't want him. I want you!" she cried and pulled him to her, kissing him passionately.

He was filled with awe as she kissed him. He wanted to hold her and bury himself in her. Suddenly, he pulled back as he remembered the vision he'd had when she'd first come to this universe. Could this all be some effect of that potion?

He released her and moved away, turning his back to her. "Go."

Her hand grasped his arm. "I won't. I'm not leaving until I've convinced you that you are the one I want."

"Why would you ever want me when you could have had him?" Severus said in defeat.

"Severus, you are him."

He gave a short laugh. "A broken version of him. I can never be Mister Perfect like he is."

Hermione chuckled as she shook her head. "He was not perfect. His temper flared, he could be moody, and he didn't love me like that." Her hand tugged at his arm. "You do, though, don't you?"

"Hermione," he whispered.

He let her turn him slowly toward her. He dared not look into her eyes. He feared that everything would dissolve and he would be in his room, in his bed, alone and only dreaming.

"Look at me," she asked.

He didn't. "The potion you created for seeing the future, what are the long term side-effects?" he asked through clenched teeth.

She looked at him curiously. "Why?"

"Please, just tell me."

"There are none. The only effect is that when the future vision is seen, you'll have a sharp recollection of the vision from before."

Severus frowned. "It doesn't coerce you to do anything to make the vision come true?"

Hermione shook her head. "No, that's never happened. Why are you asking this right now?"

Unable to bear the look he knew would be in her eyes, he turned even farther from her. "My vision just came true."

She inhaled sharply. "What did you see?"

His arms came up and folded in front of him defensively. "I saw that kiss. I heard myself telling you I wasn't that other Severus. It's impossible for it to not have interfered in what has happened."

"Severus."

He couldn't look at her. He didn't want to see the realization in her eyes that the potion had messed with his mind. That none of what she'd said was true, he'd only imagined it somehow.

"You really don't think a potion could drive the future like that, do you? That would take an awful lot of interference, especially with those who hadn't even taken the potion."

His head snapped around, and he glowered at her. "Then how do you explain this?" He motioned with his hand between the two of them.

She came closer and took hold of his robes near the collar. "I explain this as two people falling in love."

"You can't... you could never..."

"But I do. You do too, don't you? You've been trying to hide it, but I heard what you said. You can't hide it from me any more. You shouldn't want to."

"I'm not him." His voice was almost too soft to be heard. His face was pleading with her.

"I'm glad you're not. I want you, not him." She looked into his eyes, and he caught his breath. "I love you, not him."

"I would not have dreamed it possible that you could forget him and love me."

Hermione kissed him again. "But I did. And I do."

"Hermione, I am not..."

Her finger came up and silenced him by carefully touching his lips. "I know what you're not. I love you as you are."

"I... love you, too."

The realization of it hit him and an odd feeling coursed through him. He felt joyful and light as the second part of his vision came true. Unable to control himself any longer, he pulled Hermione to him. Bending into her, he whispered in her ear.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

"There will be no going back. No second thoughts. I cannot be that other man. Do you truly accept me as I am?"

He pulled back and saw tears in her eyes. He suddenly felt fear within his heart.

"I want you just as you are. I have now for a while." she whispered to him.

The reality of her words hit him. "You have, haven't you?" he asked in wonderment.

She smiled tentatively and nodded.

"I've been so blind," he murmured before pulling her into himself. His lips came down on hers, and he tasted heaven. Finally, something worked out for him. Finally, he had his Hermione.

The End

A/N: I hope you enjoyed finding out what happened to our 'other' Hermione. It seems that all wound up as it should in the end. Thanks for reading!