New Beginnings

by nogod1215

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JKRowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)

New Beginnings

Chapter One

Draco rolled over and stretched his arm across the bed. The sheets were cold.

'Why are the sheets cold?'he thought.

Slowly he opened his eyes, searching for the familiar mass of dark hair that usually greeted him in the mornings. Coming to full realization that he was indeed alone in the large double bed, he sat up.

"Harry? Harry, where are you?" the blonde asked the empty room.

Rolling out of bed and grabbing the black satin robe he had been given at Christmas by his husband, he made his way toward the kitchen. Harry was sitting at the table, staring at a parchment that was unrolled in front of him. He looked up at Draco, a grave look on his usually happy face.

"What is it? What has happened?" asked the blonde, while thinking who knew what.

"He almost killed her... I can't believe it came to this! Bill went over there last night for dinner and found her bleeding on the kitchen floor. He was just sitting there... eating at the table as if nothing was amiss." Harry had started to cry, and Draco could tell all he really wanted to do was run from the house and Apparate to a small cottage in Hogsmeade to rain down his vengeance on Ronald Weasley.

"Slow down, my love! What do you mean he almost killed her? What was she doing back there? I thought she was still at St. Mungo's?" Draco was only mildly confused.

"He checked her out! Ron threatened the Healer and checked her out." Harry was now almost hysterical.

"Where is she now?" Draco asked, the panic for his friend starting to rise.

Harry looked into his eyes. "Bill took her back to St. Mungo's. Then he owled me to let me know what had happened."

Harry was sitting in a chair he had conjured upon entering the guarded room at St. Mungo's, holding the small hand of his best friend. There used to be another that shared a spot in his heart until Harry had seen up close how the war and drinking had changed him. Now, Harry's only concern was that Hermione get better. Draco walked into the room and stepped around the bed to gently lay a hand on his husband's shoulder.

"Any improvement?" he asked. Harry looked up at him and caught his eyes. The look of complete and total concern in them moved Harry.

"No. The Healer said she could wake up at any moment, but she lost a lot of blood before Bill found her and Flooed her here."

Draco pulled out his wand, conjured another chair and sat down next to Harry. "Well, I have some good news! Ron has finally been arrested, and before you ask, no, I don't know where he's being held. They won't tell me for fear that I will tell you and you would kill him. This, of course, is a valid concern because I most certainly would. But what they don't realize is, you would have a hard time killing him because I would have already done so myself before telling you."

Draco and Hermione had become fast friends after he and Harry had started dating. It had been eight years now. Just after the end of the war. They had seen each other again at Ron and Hermione's wedding and had fallen in love almost instantly. Ron and Hermione... they had been so happy back then, or so everyone thought. No one could have seen that even on her own wedding day, Hermione had been hiding bruised flesh under her dress robes. It wasn't until just two years ago that Draco had popped into the house in Hogsmeade that Ron and she were renting and figured out why she was always so careful to wear long sleeves and long pants. Hermione had missed their weekly lunch together, and he found her lying on the sofa in the living room. She had been nursing a black eye and three broken ribs.

It seemed that the aftereffects of the war caused Ron to be removed from his place on the Cannons because he could barely sit on a broom without pain. Of course, the fact that Hermione had gone to work so they wouldn't have to borrow money from his parents made him take out his aggression on her. Hermione, always believing the best in people, had thought that all he needed was to get back to work, but after he was denied a modest position at the Ministry, he stopped trying all together and took to drinking. Soon his drinking was out of hand, and he and Hermione started fighting, which lead to him beating her almost daily.

"What are they going to do with him?" Harry asked, snapping Draco out of his memories.

"I don't know, but ever since the end of the war, the new Minister has not been kind to husbands who beat their wives. He will most likely be sent to Azkaban, or even exiled from the Wizarding World altogether," stated Draco.

"Well, I just hope that whatever they do with him, we never have to see him again," said Harry.

Finally the train pulled into Hogsmeade station.

'It feels strange being back here,'Hermione thought.

After waiting for all the students to exit the train, she stepped out into the cold, January air only to be swept up into a crushing embrace by the two biggest arms ever to touch her.

"Well, hello there again, Hagrid," she said, smiling. It had been three years since she had last seen him because even when she lived in Hogsmeade, Ron rarely allowed her to go up to the castle, even to visit.

"Ello, 'ermione. Missed ye 'round 'ere," Hagrid stated, smiling broadly. "'Arry said ye were comin' in t'day. Got yer carriage all ready fer ye." He turned around and lead her over to a private carriage and waited for her to climb inside before doing so himself. She smiled at being joined by him, and they chatted happily all the way up to the castle.

TBC

AN::: I would like to take my betas Pixie and Allison. Without them you would never have gotten to see this. In the next chapter we fine out why Hermione is back at Hoowarts.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JKRowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

 $Summary \hbox{$:$:$ Upon returning to Hogwarts Hermione is offered the Transfiguration position. (Ultimately a SS/HG) }$

New Beginnings

Chapter Two

Sitting in his usual dark corner of the staff room, it was not surprising that Professor Snape was unnoticed when the cloaked figure entered and headed for a table on the other side of the room. He watched with intent eyes to see who this intruder on his free period was. It could be said that he was very shocked when the figure removed the cloak to reveal a mass of frizzy hair that he realized could only belong to Mrs. Hermione Weasley. It still felt odd calling her this, even after eight years. Turning to sit in her chosen chair, Hermione looked up to see the unmistakable black eyes of her former Potions professor. She smiled but did not speak. When she purposely looked away, Severus had to wonder if she was still as scared of him as she had been in school, or if she was just nervous to be back here after all these years.

"Hello, Mrs. Weasley," the most hated professor in the school said. "To what do we owe the honor of your presence after so long?"

Hermione looked up at him again, trying to decide if he was being sarcastic or if he really wanted an answer. "The Headmistress invited me," Hermione stated simply. When the professor raised an eyebrow in question, she added, "She said she had something very important she wanted to discuss with me."

Before Professor Snape could respond, the door opened again, and in swept a harried looking McGonagall. She was carrying several scrolls of parchment, and her usually tight bun was coming loose in the back. To anyone who knew her, she looked a right mess. The Potions professor was instantly forgotten.

"Oh, thank heavens you have arrived. I was starting to worry that you wouldn't make it to the train and you would have to floo into Hogsmeade and walk. I trust Hagrid met you at the station?" the Headmistress asked. Hermione had never seen her look so frantic.

"Yes, I arrived just fine. Hagrid told me to wait here until you arrived. He said it wouldn't be long until you joined me," Hermione said, standing to help McGonagall with her load. Taking several of the scrolls and setting them on the table, Hermione was then swept up into a hug that rivaled Hagrid's.

"It is so good to see you. We have so much catching up to do. But first... I have something very important to ask you," the Headmistress stated.

"Have you ever considered teaching?"

Confused at first Hermione just stared at her former Transfiguration professor a moment. "What do you mean?" she finally asked.

"I am in desperate need of someone competent enough to take over my classes. As Headmistress I should never have continued teaching, but as there was no one qualified to take over the position, I had to remain. Now that you have become available, and considering your NEWT scores in the subject, I don't see why I should look for anyone else," McGonagall stated matter-of-factly.

"Professor, I don't think that would be a good idea. How would the Board of Directors from the Ministry feel if you appointed darnished woman into such an important position? I am sorry, but I must refuse," Hermione said firmly and stood to leave.

She almost made it to the door before she remembered Professor Snape and glanced up to meet his eyes in goodbye. But what she saw there made her freeze mid step. 'What does that look mean?' She thought.

"Actually, Mrs. Weasley, you of all people should know that none of us care what the Ministry has to say about how this school is run. Albus didn't, and neither does Minerva," Snape stated coolly.

Only then did Professor McGonagall seem to notice that he was even in the room. "Thank you, Severus. You took the words right out of my mouth," she said, nodding her head. She then turned back to her, hopefully, new recruit and continued, "Hermione, you are no more a *tarnished* woman for having gone through what you did, than I am for having been in a relationship with a man for more than forty years and never marrying him. Even though we all know he asked me to on several occasions."

Hermione turned to face McGonagall and agreed.

"You are right... both of you. Harry would hex me to hell and back if he had heard me talking like that. I will take the job," she stated with finality. Then she went back to the table and sat down again.

Instantly the Headmistress launched into a detailed list of her duties, which would include her becoming the new Gryffindor Head of House. She would be given Minerva's old rooms and would start her classes as soon as the students settled back in after their Christmas holidays.

The Great Hall was all abuzz as the students tried to quiet themselves for the feast after returning just that evening from their holidays. They were all talking about what they had done while away with their families; what they had received for Christmas; and who the new professor sitting at the staff table was. When the Headmistress rose from her seat, the hall fell silent. It amazed Hermione how that seemed to happen now just the same as when she was a student.

"Attention, everyone, attention," McGonagall said, "I would like to welcome you all back for another term. As I am sure you are all starving from your long journey back here and just want to get on with the feast, I will keep the announcements short. First, Mr. Filch would like me to remind you all that the newest products from Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes have been banned from the school, and you will receive a week's worth of detentions with him should you be caught with the contraband items. Second, I would like to introduce to you all a new member of our staff. Professor Weasley." Turning toward Hermione slightly before turning back to the students, the Headmistress continued. "Professor Weasley will be taking over the position of Transfiguration professor, and you are all to grant her the same respect that you have shown me over the years. Also, she has been appointed Head of Gryffindor House, as that was her house when she was a student here. And now...," smiling broadly, McGonagall spread her arms wide, and instantly food covered every inch of every table as she stated, "Let the feast begin."

All the students and most of the professors glanced at Hermione in greeting and in welcome before digging into the mountain of food that had appeared in front of them. But as Hermione looked around she noticed that there was a pair of onyx colored eyes that never seemed to leave her. Smiling, she met Professor Snape's eyes. He nodded to her and then raised his glass of wine in a salute. Lifting her own glass, she accepted his small toast and sipped her wine, smiling slightly.

TBC

AN::: I would like to thank my betas Pixie and Allison. Without them you would never have gotten to see this. In the next chapter Hermione has her first day of classes.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

Summary::: Hermione's first day as a Professor.

New Beginnings

Chapter Three

It was the first day of classes for the new term, and Hermione was nervous as she sat at the staff table for breakfast. The students were making their normal amount of noise as they ate and prepared for their morning classes. Hermione had chosen to sit on the end so she wouldn't be bombarded with questions and greetings from the other professors. She was concentrating so hard on eating that she did not notice the surly Potions professor entering the hall and sitting in the chair next to hers until he spoke.

"Prepared for your first day at Hogwarts, Mrs. Weasley?" Professor Snape asked.

"It's Professor now, and yes, but I am nervous," she stated. "I am a bit afraid that I won't be able to hold up to Professor McGonagall's expectations."

"I wouldn't worry about that. You could have started teaching here directly after graduating if you hadn't wanted to go off and get married," said Snape.

Hermione winced at these words, but said nothing. It still hurt her every time she thought about how foolish she had been. She had known then that Ron would never change, but she had loved him so much. When he was released from his contract with the Cannons, everything got worse. If he had been argumentative before, he was ten times worse after that.

"I will do my best. The Headmistress gave me her syllabus, and I can follow that. It will at least get me through the term," Hermione said after awhile. Professor Snape just looked at her oddly and then turned to his cup of coffee.

The morning classes had gone as well as could be expected. She had a few students in first year that wouldn't be able to transfigure a handful of snow into a snowball even if their lives depended on it. One of her second years, a female Hufflepuff, had burst out crying when Hermione had tried to help her with the pronunciation of the spell they had been working on. By the time she made it to her third year Slytherin class, which was just before lunch, she had gotten herself into a foul mood. And she had a hard time restraining herself from snapping the wand of a boy who singed off the eyebrows of the girl next to him when his spell backfired. Now, she slumped into the same chair she had occupied at breakfast and waited for her meal to arrive.

"I understand you tried to kill one of my third year students by sitting her next to Mr. Boden," came the smooth drawl of Professor Snape to her right.

"I did no such thing! I simply had the students sit in alphabetical order so I could learn their names more efficiently. Muggle teachers use the technique all the time. And furthermore, it is not my fault Mr. Boden is useless with a wand," Hermione stated defensively.

"Yes, well, he is kind of Longbottom-ish with his wand, isn't he," he joked.

This brought a surprised look to Hermione's face.

'He just made a joke! Is that a smile on his face? Wow, he looks quite handsome when he isn't scowling at everythingshe thought.

Before she could respond though, an owl swept into the Great Hall and landed right in front of her.

'Who could this be from? she wondered.

Nobody knew she was even there except for Harry and Draco, and they would have used Hedwig to send her a message. Taking the rolled note from the tiny brown owl, she gave it a small piece of her toast in payment, and it flew off.

Unrolling the parchment and starting to read, her heartbeat picked up to an alarming pace. Her hands were trembling by the time she finished the brief note. Dropping the letter and standing on wobbly legs, she ran from the Great Hall, leaving everyone to stare after her.

Seeing Hermione's reaction to the note, Professor Snape picked it up and read through it quickly:

Hermione,

I really wish you would just talk to Ron. He is so upset with the way everyone is treating him. He didn't mean to do those things that he did. It was just the stress of not working and you having to support him. We are all sure that if you just went to the Ministry and told them that it was all just some horrible misunderstanding, they would let him come back. He is so alone out there. He knows nothing of that world. Please, just think about it.

Your Mother-in-law.

Molly Weasley

After finishing the note, Professor Snape stood and walked out of the hall himself.

'How could that woman be so insensitive? Didn't she know what her precious son had done to Hermione?

Being banished from the Wizarding World was just a slap on the wrist in Snape's opinion. If he had been overseeing the proceedings, Mr. Weasley would have spent the rest of his days as a drooling mess in Azkaban. Snape was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he didn't see that Hermione was crouched on the floor against the wall. Rounding a corner he ran smack into her and almost tumbled to the ground himself.

"Professor Weasley, are you all right?" he asked.

"Stop calling me that. It isn't right," Hermione cried.

"Stop calling you what, Professor or Weasley?"

"Weasley. I was never really one of them and am not in name either as of a few days ago. When Ron was sent away, I petitioned to change my name back to Granger. I got the certificate on Saturday making it so. I am Professor Granger now. Please address me as such," Hermione stated.

She was calming down. Now all she wanted to do was go to her office and distract herself by preparing for her classes.

"Excuse me, Professor, but I need to be going. I have a class in ten minutes."

At this she stood and started to walk away.

Turning around, Snape reached out his arm and placed his hand on her shoulder. She stopped moving and turned back to face him. Meeting his eyes, she said, "Yes, Professor?"

"If you ever want to talk, you know where my office is."

With that said, he spun on his heel, his robes billowing around him as he walked away. Stunned, Hermione stared after him.

TBC

AN::: I would like to thank my betas Pixie and Allison. Without them you would never have gotten to see this. In the next chapter Hermione visits the kitchens and has a snack

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Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 17

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Summary::: Hermione gets some questions answered.

New Beginnings

Chapter Four

It was close to midnight, and Hermione was still sitting at the desk in her office marking essays, when a house-elf popped in and startled her. Deciding that it was time for her to head to bed, she stood and startled for her private chambers. She had just approached the portrait to her rooms when her stomach growled loudly.

"You had better get down to the kitchens and take care of that, Professor, or none of us portraits will get any sleep tonight," the young lady in a white dress standing in a garden of yellow roses stated. This portrait had always been one of Hermione's favourites, and she used to converse with it often as a student.

"I think I will do that," Hermione agreed, turning around and heading down toward the kitchen.

When she entered the kitchen, all the house-elves inside started rushing around, piling her arms up with food. She tried to explain to them that she could never eat all this in a week, and all she wanted was a nice fresh salad.

From behind her came that now familiar voice, "Will you get the poor girl a salad, already?"

Turning around, she said, "Thank you, Professor, but I have everything under control."

He met her eyes for a second, and then, looking at the food in her arms, smirking, he met her eyes again.

"I can see that, Professor Granger. So what were you planning on doing with all that food in your arms? Or were you just holding it so they would have space on the counters to prepare your salad?" he drawled sarcastically.

Her eyes flashed with anger as she leaned over a nearby table and deposited her load of food. Ignoring his comment, she put her hands on her hips and asked, "Are you stalking me?"

Looking shocked for a moment, Professor Snape asked, "Stalking you? Why in the name of Merlin would/ be stalking you?"

Smilling, Hermione's eyes danced with mischief. "Every time I turn around, there you are, ready to throw a comment at me just to see if you can get a rise. Well, I hate to burst your bubble, *Professor*, but you don't scare me. You never did."

That being said, she turned around, took the salad she had requested from the elves, and walked over to a small table in the corner of the kitchen. Sitting down, she began to eat, completely ignoring the fact that Professor Snape asked for a piece of pie and, after receiving it, walked over and joined her.

They each ate in silence for awhile until Hermione's curiosity got the better of her, and she asked, "What kind of pie is that? It smells delicious."

Not looking up, Snape simply stated, "Peach."

Before she even had time to ask one of the elves for a piece of her own, one appeared on the table next to her salad. Grinning, she started in on it, too. They ate companionably until they were done. When a tea service appeared on the table between them, Professor Snape poured them each a cup and asked, "How has your first week of classes gone? I hope they have improved since Monday."

Hermione picked up her cup of tea and sipped it before responding, "The week did improve, thank you."

Then as if she just couldn't wait any longer to know, she asked, "How long have you been back at Hogwarts, Professor? The last I heard you were out of the country."

"I returned just last term. Yes, the last time I wrote to Draco, I was still in Tibet, so he would not have known I was back here. We don't keep in contact like we used to when we were first pardoned," he said, never looking up from his tea.

"How did Professor McGonagall get you back here? I thought the Ministry said you could never return to Hogwarts?"

"Oh, they did, but like Albus, Minerva can be very... convincing when she needs to be. She just frankly told the Minister that if he wanted her to stay on as Headmistress, he would have to give her free rein of the hiring and firing of professors just like Albus had had. Of course, he agreed, and she even talked him into signing a Wizarding contract attesting to it," he said, a small smile playing across his lips.

Shocked, Hermione said, "Who knew that the personification of Gryffindor could be so Slytherin." Then smirking, she added, "If she doesn't watch it, she just might turn into you."

Hermione giggled a little at the thought. Snape, on the other hand, laughed all out. He tilted his head back and simply laughed.

Not understanding this new side of Snape she had never before seen, she felt compelled to ask him about these changes.

"Who are you? If Harry ever saw you laugh like that, or even smile, he would die of shock on the spot, and then Draco would be forced to kill you out of revenge. I don't understand."

"Well, Professor Granger, as you know, I spent four years in the hills of Tibet after I was pardoned by the Ministry, when they discovered I was not really responsible for killing Albus. The poison he drank to get that fake Horcrux killed him the instant I cast the silent levitation charm on him to get him over the edge of the tower. It took some convincing and demonstrating that I could indeed perform a different spell silently than the spell I said out loud. Sometimes people just don't realize that it is the power of thought and feeling that is the strongest magic."

Sipping his tea again, he continued, "Anyway, while I was in Tibet, I lived with a group of Muggle Buddhists. They taught me about inner peace and forgiveness. They helped me to see that all the anger inside of me was toward a person that had only done to me what had been done to him, a person that had been dead for almost thirty years--my father. The Buddhists showed me how to move beyond the past and live for today. They believe that every day is precious, and that if you ignore the little things in life, then the big things don't matter as much."

Hermione was fascinated by listening to him talk about the Buddhist monks as if they had saved his life. And in a way, she guessed that they had. After the war had ended, everyone had tried to go on with his or her lives, and Snape had been stranded. He was a wanted man, so he couldn't go home. He had 'killed' Albus Dumbledore, so he couldn't go back to Hogwarts. He was no longer needed by the Order, and so he couldn't go to Grimmauld Place. He was stuck.

After the trial that freed him and Draco of all charges pertaining to the death of Dumbledore, Draco had been able to marry Harry, but Snape had no one. So he left the country. From what Draco had told them, Snape had travelled the world, spending very little time in any one place, but constantly moving. That is, until he had arrived in Tibet. All he would tell Draco in his letters was that he was alive and staying in the mountains. They had all pictured him living in a cave like the overgrown bat they had all considered him.

"It must have been difficult," she said finally.

"What was difficult?" he asked. "Do you mean the releasing of all the anger and hatred that I had carried all those years, or living as a Muggle for four years? In my opinion, the fact that I had to do chores without magic was the hardest part."

Picturing Snape on his hands and knees scrubbing floors made her chuckle, and Snape started to laugh too. Once they had settled down, the Potions professor set his teacup down and stood up.

"Well, Professor, it is late, and as we have a Hogsmeade trip to supervise tomorrow, I bid you good night." He bowed low, and then, looking up into her eyes, he smiled.

Smilling herself, she said, "Goodnight, Professor. Sweet dreams." Then she stood as well, and they walked out of the kitchens, going their separate ways toward their respective rooms.

TBC

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AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 17

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Summary::: While in Hogsmeade. Hermione remembers the night she almost died.

New Beginnings

Chapter Five

For being only the third week in January, the weather was surprisingly warm as Hermione made her way towards Hogsmeade. She was supervising the first trip since the students had returned for the term, and she was faintly aware that she had not even set foot in the town since that horrid day four months ago.

That day, the weather had been unseasonably cold for mid-September. She had just walked in the door of the tiny cottage she lived in, after spending the day shopping for their dinner with Bill that evening, when she felt a sharp pain in the back of her head. Dropping her groceries she grabbed her wand out of her back pocket, but her wrist was grabbed in an iron-tight grasp before she could level it on her attacker.

"I have told you countless times to NEVER point that thing at ME," growled the voice that made her cringe. "Now, you will have to be punished for disobeying me."

With that said, Ron backhanded her across the face hard enough to bring her to her knees. She tried to crawl away, but he grabbed her by her long hair, and dragged her across the room. She clutched at his hand and kicked her legs.

"Please, Ron! Don't do this! Not today! I have to cook dinner. Bill will be here tonight for dinner. You know he always comes on Saturdays," Hermione pleaded with her husband.

"Shut up, wench! You know fighting your punishment only makes it worse."

He was dragging her down the hall now. He stopped briefly to open the bedroom door, then pulled her inside. Bending low, he grabbed her by her shirt and pulled her to

her feet. Once she was up, he pushed her toward the bed.

"You know what happens when you pull your wand on me."

His eyes held nothing but pure fury.

"Get on the bed."

Hermione paused a little too long, and he slapped her again.

"GET ON THE BED, NOW!"

This time she was quick to respond. She climbed onto the double bed and lay flat on her stomach. Tears started to build in her eyes as she felt him move in behind her. She heard him unfasten his belt, and he lifted her skirt. As he grabbed her hips, she blacked out.

When she came to it was dark outside. She was lying on the floor, and he was snoring in the bed. Slowly she took inventory of herself, and realized, that considering what he had just done to her, she was relatively unharmed. Kneeling, she quietly straightened her clothing and crawled out off the room. She needed to send Bill an owl, to let him know that dinner was canceled. There was no way she could make it through hours of laughing and joking with her husband's oldest brother tonight. One look at the black eye she knew had formed on her face, and he would know that something wasn't right.

'It's funny really,' she thought, as she crawled out of the room. 'I've only been out of the hospital three days, and already I wish I was back there. At this, she actually chuckled softly.

Once she was out of the room, she slowly closed the door behind her and stood. Her legs ached from crawling, and she was a little wobbly as she made her way back down the hall and into the kitchen. She quietly opened a drawer in the kitchen and pulled out a quill and piece of parchment, and quickly wrote a brief note to her brother-in-law telling him they had to cancel dinner, making the excuse that something had come up last minute at work. That was the usual excuse, and she knew he would accept it without question. Rolling the parchment, and tying it with a small piece of twine from the drawer, she walked into the front room, where Pigwidgeon's cage was and pulled him out. He hooted softly, and she tied the note to his leg, but when she turned to take him to the window she collided with a hard object. Freezing, she looked up into the once kind eyes of her husband and shrieked. Throwing her arms out, she caused Pigwidgeon to fly into the air. He then came to rest on Ron's shoulder.

"What is this, my dear?" he asked, pulling the note off the tiny owl's leg. He placed the bird back in its cage. "A note to your lover? Or perhaps a note begging that Slytherin sneak to come rescue you. I always knew you would go crawling to him the moment you thought you could leave me!"

Ron's voice was fierce, but his eyes were much worse. He glared at her as if she were nothing to him. It broke her heart to know that she loved him so much when he hated her so. She continued to stare into his eyes as he spoke horrible words to her, things that she had never known could be spoken anywhere but perhaps hell itself. But then again, this house was as close to hell as she had ever been.

"What are you staring at? Do youdare to challenge me?" Ron was screaming at her now. She held her eye contact with him too long. She knew better than that.

'He will be angry now, if he hadn't been before. Damn, what had I been thinking? That's right, I hadn't Hermione thought as she watched his hand rise to her again. She tried to turn away from the blow, but he was too fast. His hand made contact, and she dropped to the ground again.

"You thought you could just run off," he growled and hit her again, but with a closed fist this time.

She started to crawl, scrambling with all her might to get away, to get anywhere but here. She felt his booted foot as it came into contact with the back of her right thigh, and she rolled to the side as the leg gave a little. Righting herself quickly she crawled faster. Making it to the kitchen, she tried to escape. He followed her and kicked her again, this time in the ribs of her left side. This time she rolled all the way over on to her back, and he kicked once again at her side. She heard more than felt the sickening crack of the bones breaking. Screaming, she tried to roll away, but he dropped to his knees and grabbed her hair. Pulling her head up toward him, he punched her in the nose. Then again, in the left cheek, shattering the bone there also. Hermione was screaming, and he continued to hit her.

"You will NEVER challenge ME in MY home again. Do you hear me?" he ranted. "NEVER AGAIN!"

All the while, Hermione screamed, as he continued to strike her. When he landed a heavy blow to her jaw, her screaming stopped as she blacked out once more from the pain.

The next thing she remembered was waking up at St. Mungo's and being angry that she was still alive. Harry had been at her bedside and explained how Bill had found her and brought her here. He explained that Ron had been captured and banished from the Wizarding World for crimes against society and spousal abuse. He was never allowed to return, and was only allowed to see his family for a few hours once a month in Muggle London. Of course, under heavy guard from Aurors to prevent him getting a hold of a wand and doing something drastic. She had been so grateful that the nightmare of the last ten years was over, that she had cried herself to sleep and slept for nearly three days.

When she finally woke up again, her Healer had explained to her that she would need some time to recover her strength. She would be staying until she could breathe without pain and walk without limping. It seemed that Ron had broken the bone in her right thigh, and her broken ribs had punctured one of her lungs. Both injuries would heal best with time, rather than charms or potions.

It was a full two months before she left St. Mungo's and went to stay, at Harry's insistence, with Harry and Draco. She had been fired from her job, for missing so much time, and had no money to rent a place until she found another. She still had the cottage, whose rent was paid up till the first of the year, but had absolutely no desire to return to the place she had almost died.

Hearing her name being called, Hermione snapped out of her memories. She turned around to she who had spoken her name and found herself staring into the eyes of a man with red hair that reminded her of another. Gasping at the sight, she fainted.

TBC

AN::: As always, I would like to thank my betas Pixie and Allison. Without them this story would be junk. In the next chapter Hermione has an encounter with a Weasley.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione wakes up and has an encounter with a Weasley.

New Beginnings

Chapter Six

Slowly, Hermione came around. Her eyes fluttered as she opened them. She could make out blurry faces surrounding her, and then suddenly she remembered that she had fainted. Shooting upright, she felt a firm arm push her back down. Looking to her right, she saw Severus Snape kneeling beside her and gently holding her still.

"Calm down, Professor Granger. You are all right. Everything is fine," Snape said reassuringly.

"What happened?" she asked, knowing the answer but hoping she had not just seen a Weasley.

Glancing behind him, Professor Snape said, "It appears that you fainted after seeing Mr. Weasley back there."

"W... Weasley?" Shrinking back as if she was trying to push herself into the ground by her will alone, she asked, "Which one?"

"Bill, but that doesn't matter because he isn't supposed to be here. He isn't supposed to be anywhere around you. None of them are, correct?" Severus asked.

"That is correct, but what is he doing here? Why did he sneak up on me? What does he want?" Hermione asked, becoming frantic. She was breathing so fast, Severus feared she would hyperventilate.

"Calm down. You are just stressing yourself out. Come now, let's get you up." He placed an arm gently around her shoulders and lifted her to her feet.

Hermione looked over to where Bill Weasley was standing, surrounded by three Aurors. They had their wands pulled and aimed at the frustrated looking Weasley.

Meeting the Potions professor's eyes, Hermione asked again, "What is he doing here?"

"Mr. Weasley says that he came to Hogsmeade to finish clearing out the last of his brother's things from the house you two shared. Hesaid that when he approached the house, he saw a figure standing outside the front gate. When he got close enough and saw that it was you, he said your name. When you didn't respond, he said your name again and you turned around. Then you fainted."

"Why would he want to talk to me? The whole family knows they aren't supposed to be around me." Hermione said, getting annoyed by the look Bill was giving her.

As Professor Snape led Hermione past the Aurors and Bill Weasley, Hermione looked up to him one more time.

'What does he want from me? He doesn't look like he wants to hurt me, she thought.

Just as they were passing him, she heard Bill say, "I just want to talk to her. I promise I won't do anything stupid. Please!"

Hermione stopped and turned slowly to look at him. Professor Snape put a protective arm out to her, and she looked up at him.

"It's all right, Professor, I just want to know what he has to say," she said, trying to calm him. Stepping up to the Aurors, she looked Bill in the eyes and asked, "What do you want to say to me?"

"I... I just wanted to make sure that you are all right." Bill said, becoming nervous. "Harry wouldn't tell me where you went when you got out of the hospital. Hell, Harry and Draco wouldn't even let me see you while you were still there. After you were released, the Ministry sealed your whereabouts. Since I wasn't allowed to see you after the trial, I just wanted to know that you were all right."

"As you can see, Mr. Weasley, I am just fine. No thanks toyou or your family." At that, she spun around and started to walk away.

"I saved you, damn it! I saved you that night and helped the Aurors hunt down my own brother. I did all of that and you still think I am just like theest of my family?" Bill was all but screaming at her.

Hermione had stopped dead in her tracks. Tears were forming in her eyes, as she slowly turned around and looked up at him again. "Yowaved me? You dare to say you saved me? When you and the rest of your DAMN family saw the way he was? You all saw what he was doing to himself. After Harry and he had their falling out, because he just couldn't get over the fact that Harry is in love with Draco. You all saw it and you did nothing. He was drinking like a fish, and you just ignored it. You all just said it was the war. It wasn't the damn war, it was HIM."

Hermione was frantic. She was waving her arms around as she screamed at her ex-husband's eldest brother.

Snape had been standing by, saying nothing. Now, he reached out his arm and touched her shoulder. Hermione spun around, once again, and glared at him. He knew she wasn't mad at him, but the hatred and hurt he saw in her eyes stung just the same.

"Hermione, I... I'm sorry!" was all Bill said to her back.

Lifting her head up as high as she could, Hermione stalked off, back toward the castle.

'Let the other teachers deal with the students,'she thought as she started to pick up speed, all but running back to the safety of her quarters.

TBC

AN::: Sorry it's so short. I just thought this was as good a place to stop as any. Once again I would like to thank my wonderful betas Pixie and Allison. In the next chapter Hermione has a visitor.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to J. K. Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione has a visitor.

New Beginnings

Chapter Seven

Once Hermione reached the castle, she ran to her quarters, locking and warding the door against entry. She collapsed onto her bed and cried herself to sleep, sleeping several hours before she woke to the sound of knocking on the portrait door. Standing, she nervously walked to the doorway, her wand out and ready.

"Who is it?" she called out.

"Hermione, its Minerva. Could I come in, please," replied the Headmistress.

"Yes, of course," said Hermione, dropping the wards.

When the portrait opened, the Headmistress entered and was somewhat taken aback at the sight of Hermione's red-rimmed eyes and tear-streaked face.

"My dear, what happened? Severus informed me you had an encounter with Bill Weasley in Hogsmeade today and that you returned to the castle early. He asked that I check on you, as your portrait would not allow him access to your rooms," Minerva said, sounding worried.

"Oh, Minerva, it was awful! I was walking through Hogsmeade when the memory of the last time I was there came flooding back," Hermione sobbed.

Professor McGonagall put up a hand to stop her from continuing. "Perhaps we should have some tea," she said, moving towards the armchairs in front of the fire. Summoning a tea service, Professor McGonagall offered a cup to Hermione and then said, "Please continue."

Taking a deep breath, Hermione began again. "Well, as I said, I was remembering the night that Ron almost killed me."

"I was just walking and remembering, and somehow ended up in front of our old house. Then I heard someone say my name, and when I turned around... there Bill was... standing so close to me I could almost *smell* him. Then, I guess I fainted."

"Is that when Miss Docker ran and got Severus?" asked Minerva.

"I guess so," said Hermione. Then she added, "I didn't really think about how he or the Aurors got there. Miss Docker must be so confused." Jumping to her feet, she started to pace in front of the fire.

"Oh, gods, there were several students there. I made such a spectacle of myself. What must they think of me?"

"Hermione, please sit down. The students that were present during your encounter with Mr. Weasley are all concerned about you. I have already spoken to them, and they just want to know that you are okay."

"That's just it, Minerva. I don't know if I am. I am so scared right now," Hermione said, taking her seat once again. "Seeing Bill today has brought up all the feelings I have been trying to push aside since I got out of the hospital. The whole family blames me for what happened to Ron. Molly even sent a letter begging me to tell the Ministry it was a misunderstanding. Can you believe it?"

"No, I can't, but I don't doubt it either. Molly has always been very protective of her family. She is very blind when it comes to them as well." Minerva thought for a moment, sipping her tea. "Perhaps we should set up something where all your mail is sent to one of the senior staff before going on to you. Just so we can filter out any Weasley letters"

"That is very nice of you to offer, but I can't ask the rest of the staff to take time out to sort through my mail. It just wouldn't be fair," Hermione said.

"Well, we will just have to figure something out. Now, perhaps you should get some sleep. It is very late. We can talk more tomorrow if you would like," she said, as she stood and headed for the door.

Outside the portal, she turned to the portrait and said, "It might be a good idea to allow senior staff members access to Hermione's quarters. Especially when she is as upset as she was today. Don't you think?"

"Yes, Headmistress," the lady in the portrait replied. Minerva nodded and headed back to her office; she had an owl she needed to send.

Hermione was sitting in her office after dinner grading essays, as she always did. She liked to be available for any students who might need to speak with her about their lessons. She would even speak with the members of her house if they felt the need to talk. So it was that she could be found this Tuesday evening grading once again. She had been there a couple of hours, and not one student had knocked on her door. Finishing with the essays she was working on, she stood and was tidying her desk to call it a night when there was a knock on the door.

Still straightening her desk, she called out, "Come in."

"Well, it looks like you are fitting right in here, Hermione," replied the voice of one of her best friends.

Looking up, she dropped the small stack of papers she was going to put away in a drawer and threw herself into the arms of Draco Malfoy-Potter.

Having expected this reaction, he caught her easily and spun her around in a hug. Smilling as he set her back on her feet, she hugged him again.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, pulling him toward the chairs in front of her desk.

"Actually, I got an owl from the Headmistress telling me that you were all right after what happened in Hogsmeade. She was worried about how I would react. She is very concerned about you, as am I. When I saw the incident report that the Aurors filed, I was tempted to come here right away, but just as I was leaving my office at the Ministry, Minerva's owl arrived to tell me you were all right."

Taking her hand, he looked her in the eyes before asking, "Are youtruly all right?"

"Yes, Draco, I'm fine. Bill just scared me. I promise I'm okay," she said, forcing a smile. "No need for you and Harry to worry about me so much."

Everyone in the castle had been walking on eggshells around her since it had happened. She just wanted everything to go back to the way it was before the Hogsmeade weekend.

"Hermione, I know you well enough by now to know that you aren't as okay as you say. But I also know not to push you," he said, looking into her eyes before he continued, "You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to, but you do need to talk to someone. I hope there is someone you feel you can trust enough to talk to. Remember what the Healer said: talking about it will help. It won't make it go away, but it will help. Promise me you will talk to someone, promise me."

"I promise, Draco. I promise," she said, hugging him again. Then, smiling earnestly, she asked, "Now, if you're done lecturing me, how are you and Harry?"

They sat there, in her office, talking for few more hours before it grew late, and Draco needed to be getting home. After saying their good-byes, Draco made his way to the entrance hall, and Hermione headed for her rooms.

TBC

AN::: Once again I would like to thank my wonderful betas, Pixie and Allison. I would also like to thank the newest addition to my beta family, Piper. All of you are helping in ways that I just cannot begin to describe. In the next chapter a ball is announced.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione gets a date.

New Beginnings

Chapter Eight

In the first week of February, the Headmistress announced, during the after dinner staff meeting, that there would be a ball on February 14. It seemed that Valentine's Day would fall on a Saturday this year, and she wanted to celebrate it as Professor Dumbledore would have, which meant Hogwarts was to have a fantastically outlandish dance. All of the staff would be required to attend, along with the entire student body. Of course, her proclamation irritated the Potions professor.

"I see no need for my attendance, Minerva," Professor Snape said testily, "and I'm certain the students would agree it would be a more festive affair without me."

"Now, Severus, it would not be fair to the other professors if you did not attend," Minerva McGonagall said, trying hard not to smile. "Besides, it would hardly kill you to chaperone just this once."

Under his breath, Professor Snape muttered, "It just might, Minerva, it just might." With that he stood and swept out of the room, robes billowing behind him dramatically.

"That man is such a drama queen," chuckled Madame Hooch, and the rest of the staff smiled in agreement.

Following the announcement of the Valentine's Day ball, the teaching staff had difficulty holding their classes' attention. The students were so preoccupied with arranging dates and discussing what to wear that they ignored their professors' efforts to teach them anything. This situation only fazed Hermione for a few days, though. By the Wednesday after the ball was declared, she had given up on her scheduled syllabus and instead used the ball as a practical lesson in clothing Transfiguration. Remembering the awful get-up Mrs. Weasley had sent to Ron in their fourth year, she particularly focused on helping students faced with a similar situation. For this, many of her students were extremely grateful.

Professor Snape was sitting in his office two nights prior to the 'horrid affair', as he called it in his own mind, when a knock came on his door.

A little startled, as it was after his normal office hours, not that any student ever took advantage of his office hours anyway, he called out, "Enter!"

Looking up as the door opened, he watched as the newest member of the staff entered and walked slowly up to his desk. She was glancing around with an odd look on her face. He wondered if it was because the last time she had been in his office she had been a student in trouble or if there was an entirely different reason.

"What can I do for you, Professor Granger?" he inquired. "I assume, from your expression, that this is not a social call."

Meeting his eyes, she said, "That is correct, Professor Snape. I came to see you because of something I overheard during my rounds this evening." Taking a deep breath she continued, "I believe that one of your Slytherins, Mr. Greyadder, is planning on acquiring his date for the ball in an unethical way."

Interested in anything concerning a member of his house, he asked, "And just how do you think he is going to do that, Professor Granger?"

"I believe, from what I have heard, that he is planning on giving a student, from a different house and a different year, a love potion."

"And what gave you that idea? Did he tell you this? Are you now an expert on love potions? Or are you just assuming that no Slytherin would be acceptable to a student from another house without resorting to such drastic measures?" Snape found himself becoming quite angry.

'How dare she accuse a student of MY house of plotting to dose another student!' he thought, fuming.

"Professor, I am sure that any of your precious Slytherins could talk a veela into dating them, if their heart so desired, but when I hear a seventh year student talking about getting more Ashwinder scales for his potion, then I have to wonder what he is doing. Furthermore, I become curious when I know that said Slytherin has asked the same fifth year Gryffindor, Miss Docker, to go with him to the ball no less than six times with the same negative answer each time."

"You mean to tell me that a Gryffindor turned down a Slytherin six times," Severus muttered with disbelief. "That is truly amazing."

"Amazing! What do you mean amazing?" Hermione huffed indignantly. "You think that no Gryffindor could resist a Slytherin's advances? That is just preposterous!"

"Will you go to the ball with me?" Severus asked.

"Yes, yes, of course," she said, still so outraged she didn't really hear his question.

"Excellent! I will be at your chamber door at seven," he said, smirking. He knew he had caught her off guard and was enjoying her reaction.

"Wait... what did you just say?"

"I said that I would be at your chamber door at seven. Are you losing your hearing, Professor Granger," he inquired politely. "Perhaps you should see Madame Pomfrey."

Hermione blinked before asking, "Be at my door for what exactly?"

"For the ball, you silly Gryffindor. I asked you to the ball, you accepted, so I will be at your chamber door at seven. Please do not make me repeat myself a fourth time."

With that he went back to the parchments he had been reading before she entered.

"Oh, umm... what do you plan to do about Mr. Greyadder?"

"I was already aware of his potion. I caught him just two hours ago trying to sneak into my private stores to steal the ingredient." Smirking he added, "He, unlike a Gryffindor I used to teach, is not very good about sneaking into places he is not allowed."

Hermione blushed. "You knew about that?"

"Of course I did. To whom do you think Madame Pomfrey came to find out when the Polyjuice was likely to wear off?"

"Why didn't I get detention for it?" she asked. She was certain she should have gotten detention for stealing from a Professor.

"I never reported the theft. I was too impressed that you had successfully brewed Polyjuice, and in your second year, no less. I couldn't tell Dumbledore about it, or Minerva would never have let me give you such bad grades in my class. Even if it was necessary for my cover."

"I see, well, I guess I can tell Miss Docker that Mr. Greyadder will not be asking her to the ball anymore. Thank you."

Hermione turned to exit the Potions professor's office. Just as she reached the door, she heard him say, "Seven o'clock sharp, Professor Granger. I will not be kept waiting."

Smiling, she exited the office, thinking, 'What ever shall I wear?

TBC

AN::: Once again I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Pixie, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank everyone who has left a review. In the next chapter Hermione goes to the ball with Professor Snape.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JKRowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Professor Granger goes to the ball with Professor Snape.

New Beginnings

Chapter Nine

"You know, you could just knock. She will not mind if you are early," said the portrait to Hermione's rooms. "Besides, you are making me dizzy with your incessant pacing."

"If my presence here bothers you, you could always move to another frame. Otherwise, please cease your equally incessant whining," Professor Snape sneered.

At exactly seven o'clock, Hermione heard a firm knock on her door, and called out, "Come in, Professor."

The Potions professor opened the door and stepped into the large sitting room, pulling the door closed behind him. As he glanced across the room, Hermione entered from the doorway on the opposite wall, and his breath caught.

'Merlin, she is stunning,' he thought.

Looking up into the black eyes of her former-professor-turned-colleague, she smiled. He looks amazing. Who knew he could clean up so well? she marveled.

"On time, as always, Professor," she said.

"It would have been disrespectful to keep you waiting... Hermione," he said and bowed slightly.

At the use of her given name, her breath caught in her chest, and her mouth dropped open.

"Was it something I said that made you do an impression of a Hufflepuff being asked to brew the Wolfsbane?" he asked, smirking.

"I... I'm sorry; it's just that you called me Hermione. You have never used my given name before. Somehow, it's quite shocking coming from you."

"Well, I thought that since we are going on a date, calling each other professor all night would become tiresome. However, if you would prefer I not call you by your name I shall stop."

"No... no, it's fine. Please do call me Hermione, Severus," she said, testing the name on her tongue. She found that she liked the feel of it.

"Thank you, Hermione. Now, if you are ready, I believe we have a ball to attend."

Stepping up to him, she nodded, and he turned slightly, offering her his arm. Taking it, she allowed him to lead her out the door.

Music was already resounding from the Great Hall when they made their way to the Entrance Hall. The several students milling around in front of the doors stopped talking and stared at the two professors arriving arm in arm as a perfect pair. Hermione's dress robes were of deep burgundy crushed velvet with black satin trimming at the hem and sleeves. Severus was in his customary black, but instead of the usual twill, his dress robes were of luxurious matte velvet with intricate silver embroidery around the collar and sleeves.

They looked simply stunning together.

Upon their entering the Great Hall, Minerva walked up and greeted them.

"Hermione, Severus," she smiled in welcome. "I did not know you two were attending together. Had I known, I might not have felt the need to invite some special guests."

As Minerva finished, two men stepped around the Headmistress and smiled warmly at Hermione.

"Hermione, it looks like you are feeling a little more like yourself," Draco grinned and swept her into a hug.

Severus glared at him, but said nothing. Once Hermione was released from Draco's embrace, she was swept into another hug, this one from the famous Harry Potter-Malfoy himself. Once again, Severus glared, but held his tongue.

"It is great to see you both," she said. Harry hugged her again at these words, and Severus could hold his tongue no longer.

"Mr. Potter-Malfoy, would you be so kind as to stop mauling my date? You are crumpling her robes," Severus growled.

"Now, Severus, there is no need to be rude. Harry is just excited to see his best friend. It has been more than a month since they last saw each other," Minerva interjected sternly

Glancing coldly at Minerva, Severus took Hermione's arm and pulled her toward him, asking, "Would you care to dance? Or would you prefer to talk with your friends all evening?"

Hermione looked up at Severus and smiled, "Why, yes, Severus, I would love to dance."

He took her arm, and they made their way to the center of the dance floor as a familiar slow beat started to play. Spinning Hermione around to face him, he asked, "You do know the waltz?"

She nodded and their bodies melted together as they began to move around the floor as if they had been dancing together for years. Students and teachers alike stopped to stare at them, and a few began to conjecture about their probable relationship.

"It seems, *Professor Granger*, that we are causing a bit of a distraction for the students. I fear that your reputation will be in shambles by the start of classes on Monday," Severus said, never missing a step.

"Professor Snape, if I cared one bit about my reputation, I never would have accepted a teaching position here at Hogwarts. Any regard people held for me was lost the day I divorced Ronald," she responded honestly.

Hermione had been a pillar of the Hogsmeade community until that fateful night her ex-husband tried to kill her. She had worked very hard to hide the evil things he did to her, but when Bill Weasley walked into their home and found her so near to death on the kitchen floor, she believed her reputation as the most powerful witch of her generation was permanently lost.

"Hermione, you have not lost the regard of everyone," Severus whispered.

Then, Severus spun her around and she smiled again. Her eyes danced to a faster beat than her feet did, and Severus was delighted.

"You look simply amazing this evening, Hermione. Burgundy is definitely your color, but I would love to see you in a deep green sometime."

"Well, if I am to wear green for you, then you will just have to wear a color other than black for me," she retorted, her bright smile showing in her eyes.

"Hermione, I will only be wearing black until they make something darker," Severus said wolfishly.

The song ended, and Severus led her off the dance floor. They walked over to the refreshment table, and he filled two glasses with punch. Accepting hers, she was about to take a sip when a strange scent caught her attention. Sniffing her punch, she looked at Severus and said, "I believe we have a prankster amongst us. This punch has been spiked."

Bringing his own glass to his nose he sniffed and agreed, "Doubtless you are right, Hermione. I don't remember firewhisky being an ingredient in Paradise Punch."

Hermione pulled her wand out of her sleeve and vanished the punch with a quick flick. Then she summoned a house-elf and requested more to replace it. Taking a glass from this batch, she sniffed it before drinking and confirmed it was free of alcohol.

"So, who do you think it was? My money is on Mr. Llewellyn, as he and Mr. Berilo have a pranking competition going on. You did know about the competition, didn't you?"

"Yes, Hermione, I know about the competition. Who do you think approved the competition for Mr. Berilo?" he said with a smile.

"Oh, of course. The head of house must approve it. So, which one do you think it was?" she asked again.

"House allegiance suggests I should say it was Mr. Llewellyn, as he is from Gryffindor, but the truth is that it most likely was Mr. Berilo."

As if on cue, Mr. Bazeel Berilo walked up to the table with Miss Kallan Docker on his arm. "Hello, Professor Snape, Professor Granger. Are you enjoying the refreshments?" he said, smiling knowingly.

"Mr. Berilo, you will need to see me Monday after classes to discuss how you got the firewhisky into the castle and into the punch," Professor Snape answered. "And to discuss your punishment".

"How... why? It was just a prank. As long as no one is hurt, it falls into the rules of the competition," he said incredulously.

"Mr. Berilo, there are several first through fifth year students here this evening, and we as staff members cannot overlook you trying to get them drunk," said Hermione.

"That is the brilliance of the charm I used. It will only serve the spiked punch to students sixth year or older. I didn't want to get the younger students drunk. It won't even allow an older student to give any to a younger student, as the liquid will disappear as soon as the younger student touches the glass. Watch."

Mr. Berilo then held up the glass he was holding for his head of house to smell. Once Professor Snape nodded and agreed it was spiked, he passed the glass to his fifth year date. As soon as she took the glass from him the liquid disappeared.

"See? The charm will not allow any younger student to obtain the liquid," said Mr. Berilo.

"That is an amazing little piece of charm work, but it does not explain how you as a sixth year got firewhisky into the castle. You will still serve a detention with me on Monday evening," Severus said, before adding, "go about your business, you two. I am sure talking to your professors is not your idea of a good time."

"Thank you, Professor, good evening," he said before he and his date scurried away.

"You handled that well, Severus. I don't suppose it has anything to do with him being a Slytherin, does it?" Hermione asked.

"Of course not, I do not play favorites with my house," he said sarcastically.

"Of course you don't," she responded gently.

Another waltz style song started to play. Severus took Hermione's arm and led her back out to the dance floor, where he proceeded to spin and dip her till she was breathless.

They spent the rest of the evening dancing when they could and talking with their colleagues. Hermione chatted with Harry and Draco, when they weren't dancing, which wasn't very often. All in all, Hermione was having a lot of fun. It felt natural to be laughing with Severus. When the last student left the Great Hall for bed, Hermione and Severus bid their friends and colleagues good night and left themselves. As Severus walked Hermione back to her rooms, they did not speak. Each was too wrapped up in their thoughts.

'It is amazing how he has changed since the war ended, Hermione thought, 'He never went near the dance floor at the Yule ball in my fourth year. I didn't even know he knew how to dance, let alone that he is so good at it.'

'She looks beautiful tonight. That radiant glow she has right now must be from all the dancing, Severus thought.

They reached the portrait to her rooms, and she said the password. Then she turned back to Severus and said softly, "Thank you for a wonderful evening, Severus. I really had fun."

"I am glad you enjoyed yourself, Hermione. I had fun as well," he said just as softly. He looked as if he was trying to decide something, as several emotions seemed to flash in his eyes. With a slight incline of his head, he asked slowly, "May I kiss you, Hermione?"

Her eyes widened to the size of saucers, and Severus thought she would refuse him. Dropping his eyes to the floor, he nodded a goodbye and had started to turn away when she spoke gently, "I would like that very much, Severus."

He turned back, leaned down and brushed his lips lightly across hers. Before he could pull away completely, he felt her hand at the base of his neck. Looking into her eyes, his lips twitched in a slight smile as he leaned into her again. He pressed his lips to hers, and she moaned. Emboldened by her reaction, he opened his lips slightly and ran his tongue across her bottom lip, urging her mouth to open. When her lips parted, his tongue entered her mouth, and their tongues dueled. Hermione's free hand came up to join the one at the back of his head. Severus wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close to him. Feeling her soft body pressed against his firm one, he moaned into her mouth.

The sound of his moan brought Hermione back to reality, and she slowly ended the kiss. Smiling up at him, she blushed furiously.

"Hermione, would you care to join me for lunch tomorrow? I can have the elves prepare a private lunch for us in my quarters," he asked, somewhat hesitantly.

"I would enjoy that very much, Severus. I will meet you for lunch at noon tomorrow," she said.

"That would be perfect. Good night, Hermione."

"Good night, Severus."

With that he turned and headed down the hall toward his dungeons, and she went into her quarters to prepare for bed and think about her evening... and for the day ahead.

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Pixie, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank everyone who has left a review. They have really made me happy. And, of course, I would also like to thank Piper for the use of the line 'I am only wearing black until they make something darker.' In the next chapter Hermione has

lunch.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

AN3::: All of the student's names have meaning. I selected them specifically for those meanings. The only name not researched was Docker. I chose it to pay homage to a dear friend. She knows who she is. I just didn't want to use her first name, so I chose one that fit her last name. The names, origins, and meanings are as follows:

Berilo: (Spanish, Greek) means: "Pale green gemstone."

Llewellyn: (Welsh) means: "Like a lion."

Bazeel: (Greek) means: "royal, kingly."

Kallan: (Scandinavian) means: "flowing water."

Also, Mr. Greyadder's name, from previous chapters, was derived from 'silver snake.'

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione has lunch.

New Beginnings

Chapter Ten

Hermione sat up in bed and stretched, as memories of last night's ball brought a smile to her face. Climbing out of bed, she walked into the bathroom to get ready for her day. After a quick shower and twenty minutes wrestling with her tangled hair, she was just slipping her shoes on when she heard tapping at her window. She opened it to allow a large Barn owl into her rooms. The owl landed gracefully on the small nightstand beside her bed. Hermione eyed the bird with suspicion, but removed the roll of parchment from its leg anyway. When the bird did not take flight to leave, she assumed the letter required an immediate response, so she unrolled it and read.

Hermione.

Firstly, I would like to thank you again for a wonderful evening last night. Secondly, as something of an emergency has come up that will take me away from Hogwarts for most of the day, I am sorry to say that I must reschedule our lunch to dinner. If this is an inconvenience, please let me know. My owl will return your answer, to me, post haste. Would eight o'clock be acceptable to you? In my quarters as previously arranged.

Truly sorry,

Severus Snape

Potions Master

After reading the note, Hermione pulled a quill and parchment from the drawer of her nightstand and scribbled a quick note telling Severus that eight o'clock was fine, and that she hoped his emergency was nothing too severe. Tying the note to the owl's leg, she watched the owl take flight and disappear.

After closing the window, Hermione headed out of her rooms. Just as she was closing the portrait door, a hand touched her shoulder, and she jumped, spinning around, her wand in her hand.

"Whoa there, Hermione, it's just me," Harry said, his hands up in mock surrender. "No need to hex me, I mean no harm." There was a smile in his voice, even though his face was serious.

"Gods, Harry, you scared me to death. Do that again, and if I don't hex you into next week, Hogwarts will add another ghost to its residency," Hermione said, clutching a hand to her chest.

"I'm sorry. Draco suggested I come by to see if you wanted to have breakfast with us in our guest room. The Great Hall is very crowded, and we can talk more freely in private."

"Harry, that is a wonderful idea. It's Saturday, so I am not required to take my meals in the Hall. Let's go."

At this, Harry put his arm out, and she took hold of it as they made their way to the private guestroom that Minerva had provided him and Draco. Entering the room, Hermione was immediately picked up and spun around in the usual hug Draco liked to give her.

Laughing, Hermione protested, "Draco, I just saw you last night. Please, put me down."

Setting her on her feet, Draco replied, "I know, Hermione, but I don't get to see you very often, so when I do I have to make up for lost time."

"I understand, but spinning me around like that makes me feel like a little kid. I am a grown woman, Draco, and grown women do not get spun around in hugs," she said, half teasing him.

"Okay, Hermione. I will try to refrain from spinning you, but I will not give up the hugs."

Smiling at the interaction between his husband and his best friend, Harry said, "If I didn't know better, I would be jealous of you two."

"Now, Harry, you know that I would never try to steal Draco away from you. He is so not my type," Hermione said.

"Yeah, Harry, it seems our Hermione here has developed a thing for the tall, dark and Slytherin portion of the male species," Draco commented with a wink to Hermione, who was blushing.

"Speaking of Snape, let's all sit down, and you can tell us all about what is or isn't going on with you two," Harry said, motioning to the small dinning table on one side of the

The table was loaded with food, and as they sat down, they each filled a plate with the various offerings. Once everyone was comfortable, Harry looked up at Draco, and then over to Hermione

"Spill it already, Hermione. What is going on with the two of you?" he asked.

"Nothing at all, really," she said.

"Then how did you come to be his date last night?" Draco asked.

Realizing she wasn't going to get out of telling them every last detail, she told them about Mr. Greyadder's potion and how she went to Severus about it. She told them about Mr. Berilo's charmed punch and about Severus walking her back to her rooms after the ball. She even blushed as she told them about the kiss and how he had asked her to lunch today. Then she told them about the owl this morning and the dinner rearrangement.

"Yes, the parents of one of his third year students were killed in some kind of Muggle attack while on holiday in India. It seems that the Muggle law enforcement wouldn't cooperate with the Ministry, and Severus had to take that poor Boden boy to identify the bodies," Draco informed her.

"That is awful! Mr. Boden is only thirteen years old. How can those Muggles expect him to be strong enough to look at his parents' dead bodies? I can't believe they would force him to do something like that," Hermione said indignantly, pushing her plate away. She was not hungry any longer.

"Well, as you know, Muggles aren't as smart as we magical folk," Draco teased her.

Before she could respond, there was a soft humming sound and Draco stood up.

"Damn, hold on a second, I will be right back," he said, fishing in the pocket of his robes and exiting the room.

Hermione looked after him, puzzled, and turned to look at Harry questioningly.

"The Ministry is calling him. Everyone in the Magical Law-Enforcement Department is required to carry a charmed Galleon, like the ones we used back in fifth year. If you press your Galleon and say someone's name, their corresponding Galleon hums. It is quite annoying when you don't want to be disturbed. If you have it on your person, and don't respond to it in time, it becomes a Portkey and takes you to whomever it is that is calling you. If not, it just gets louder and louder. Very annoying," Harry answered her unspoken question.

"Well, I should get royalties from the Ministry. It was I who invented them after all," she said, only half-serious.

Then, Draco came back into the room looking more than a little upset.

"It seems that there was a disturbance in Diagon Alley an hour ago, and they need help from my department. As Tonks is on holiday, I have to go."

"Will you be gone long? Should I wait here for you, or do you just want me to meet you at home later?" Harry asked.

"It will most likely take most of the day. You stay here and visit with Hermione. I will see you at home," Draco said, leaning down to kiss his husband good-bye. Turning to Hermione, his eyes shining, he said, "Why don't the two of you go into Hogsmeade for lunch? I am sure a little shopping therapy will help you get over having to push back your date with Severus." With that, he bent and kissed her gently on the forehead and left the room.

"I do need to go into town for some more ink and parchment. It would be nice to get out of the castle for awhile," Hermione said.

Nodding, Harry stood up and offered Hermione his hand. Taking it, she stood as well, and they headed out for a day of shopping and talking.

Harry and Hermione had been in Hogsmeade for more than two hours, but had visited only two shops. First they had gone into the general supplies shop, and Hermione had purchased the items she needed for grading and such. Then, Harry had dragged her into the Quidditch supply shop as he had always done when they were still in school. After browsing through every item in the shop, he purchased a new broom repair kit, and even Hermione made a purchase - a small button that she had laughed at when Harry had showed it to her. It was charmed to show a Snitch flying around being chased by a green snake and a red lion. The shop owner said that if a Gryffindor held it, the snake and lion would chase the Snitch forever, but if you were to give it to a Slytherin, then the lion would catch the Snitch, and it would flash red letters saying 'Gryffindors Rule, Slytherins Drool.' Hermione thought it would be a great joke gift for Severus.

After the Quidditch shop, Hermione thought they would go to the Three Broomsticks for lunch, but Harry had other plans. He grabbed her arm, dragged her to the robe shop and informed her she needed to buy something nice to wear for her dinner with Snape that night.

"Why, Harry? It's just an informal dinner," she protested.

"Didn't you say it was in his quarters? It sounds to me like he is trying to get you alone, Hermione. I think you should get something new to wear. Tease him a bit. You do like him, don't you?" Harry asked.

"Yes, I like him, but I don't think I'm ready for anything serious. It's only been a few months since Ron and I split up. It's too soon."

"Hermione, I am not suggesting you sleep with the man tonight. Just let him know that you may be interested in it someday." Inwardly, Harry shivered at the thought of Snape actually having sex.

"Oh, okay, fine. One new set of robes, but nothing too over the top. Simple is better," she relented.

They spent the next hour picking out just the right shade of green robes to complement her eyes and hair. Harry asked her several times why she wanted green, but she insisted she had her reasons. Just before leaving, she saw an elegant silk shirt in a color she knew would suit Severus perfectly. Pulling it off the rack, she added it to her purchases, ignoring the odd look Harry gave her at buying a man's shirt.

Finishing their shopping, they finally headed for the Three Broomsticks for lunch. They sat at a corner table and chatted happily throughout their meal. Caught up in their conversation as they left the bar, neither of them noticed the small cloaked figure that exited behind them and followed them as they made their way back to the castle.

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Pixie, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank everyone who has left a review. In the next chapter, Severus and Hermione's date!

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Severus gets stood up.

New Beginnings

Chapter Eleven

As Hermione and Harry approached the gates to the castle, Hermione stopped, turned, and said, "Harry, there is no reason for you to see me all the way up to the castle, only to walk back down here again to Apparate home. It's getting late, and I know Draco will be worried if he gets home to find you still out. Why don't we just say our goodbyes now, and you can pop right home?"

"I don't know, Hermione... Are you sure you will be all right?" Harry asked with a trace of concern in his voice.

"I'll be fine. Once I cross the wards on the grounds, you know I will be perfectly safe," she replied. Then, hugging him, she said, "I had a wonderful afternoon. Now, off with you, I'll be fine," she repeated.

Harry hugged her back and gave her a chaste kiss on the cheek before stepping away and Apparating home. Hermione watched him go, then stepped toward the castle. Just before she crossed through the gates, she heard a rustling sound and paused, listening. Hearing the rustling sound again, she turned slowly toward the bushes to her left

Nervously pulling her wand from her robe pocket, she asked cautiously, "Who's there?"

When she didn't receive a response, she waited, straining her ears for another sound.' I must be going crazy. Hearing strange sounds in perfectly ordinary bushes, she thought, pocketing her wand.

Shaking her head ruefully, she turned and headed for the gates again, only to hear the noise once more. This time, she pulled her wand out and pointed it at the bushes as she slowly stepped forward, a curse ready on her lips. Just as she approached them, though, she jumped back, gasping as a small brown rabbit bounded across the path. Pulling her wand arm to her chest in shock, she chuckled at herself for being so paranoid.

Turning one more time to head home through the gates of Hogwarts, she screamed as strong arms grasped her painfully from behind. Struggling, she tried to aim her wand at her attacker, only to have it twisted out of her grasp. The last thing she heard as everything went black was a familiar voice whispering. "Stupefy!"

Hermione slowly came to. 'Damn, my head hurts,' she thought groggily. Then, the memory of the attack came back to her. Sitting up quickly, she looked around. She couldn't see much in the dim light coming through the tiny window in the door at one end of the room. She could just make out the ratty mattress she was sitting on and a rusty bucket in one corner of the room. The walls, floor and ceiling seemed to be made of concrete, so she determined that the room she was in had been constructed using Muggle materials. Now, if only she could place that voice, and figure out how to get the hell out of this 'prison-cell' she found herself in.

It was nearly nine o'clock, and Severus Snape had been pacing in front of the door to his quarters for the past forty-five minutes: What is keeping Hermione?' he thought.

He had been pleasantly surprised when she'd agreed to switch their meal from lunch to dinner. He didn't want to break the date altogether, but worried a bit whether changing it to dinner would rattle Hermione. Her note had sounded like she was fine with the new plan... but... could she have changed her mind?

As he was making yet another pass in front of his door, he heard his Floo activate, and stepped up to it to see the flames dancing about in a brilliant shade of green, with the Headmistress' head floating in the middle.

"Severus, have you seen Hermione? Her fifth year prefect has notified me that she hasn't been seen all day. Is she here with you?" Minerva inquired.

"No, Minerva, she is not here. She had agreed to have dinner with me, here, an hour ago, but never showed up." Starting to pace in front of the fire now, Severus began to run all kinds of horrible scenarios through his mind.

"You don't think something happened to her, do you?"

"I don't know, but I certainly intend to find out." With that, Severus straightened, and left his quarters. He needed to get outside the castle wards so he could Apparate. His first stop would be to the Potter-Malfoy residence, and, after that, the Ministry.

Hermione figured it must be about eight or nine o'clock. The sun had gone down hours ago, and her stomach had been growling for the last forty-five minutes: *I missed my dinner with Severus*; he probably thinks I stood him up on purpose, 'she thought.

Suddenly, a light came on outside the door and shone through the window. Jumping up, she ran over to the door to see if she could make anything out through its grimy window. She had discovered the hard way not to touch the door itself, but if she stood on tiptoes, she could just make out a dark shape moving on the other side. A small panel in the door opened, and a tray was thrust through it across the ground. The door snapped close again before Hermione could drop to her knees to try to look out.

Sitting back against the wall, she looked at the tray, her stomach growling again. If I wasn't so damn hungry right now, I wouldn't touch it, she thought.

She didn't have her wand to test the food for poisons, so she had to rely on her senses of smell and taste. Most commonly used poisons were harmless in tiny amounts, only making the person sick, but not sick enough to kill them. The stronger poisons were either hard to hide in food or had a distinct scent to them.

Sniffing the food offered and determining that, if poisoned, it wasn't one with a strong smell, she took such tiny bites that it would be hard to tell if she could taste anything at all. Deciding that no poisons were tainting her meal, she ate slowly. She nibbled on what she figured was scrambled eggs and some kind of odd meat product that was in the exact shape of a can. None of it tasted very good, but she was hungry and had no idea when her next meal would be pushed through that horrid little 'cat-flap' door, so she finished every scrap.

Finishing, she placed the tray back on the floor in front of the cat-flap and moved over to the mattress to think and then try to sleep. She knew it wouldn't be easy, but she had to keep her strength up if she was going to get out of here, and the only way to do that was to rest and eat.

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank everyone who has left a review. In the next chapter Hermione finds out a little about her captor.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione learns a little about her abductor.

New Beginnings

Chapter Twelve

Hermione awoke to the sound of metal scraping on cement. Slowly opening her eyes, she saw that the door to her cell was being pushed open. Sitting up quickly, she tried to find something to be used as a weapon should the need arise. Finding nothing, she scooted back into the corner and watched as a small figure entered the space and crouched to pick up her bucket and tray.

"I mean you no harm, Miss," whispered a gentle female voice. "All I ask is that you do not attack me."

"You mean me no harm! What do you mean, you mean me no harm?" Hermione questioned. "You have kidnapped me and are holding me against my will. Who the hell are you? What do you want with me?"

"I have done nothing but feed you, Miss. My master would not have been so kind," the girl stated. "Who I am is of no importance. You are all that matters." With that, she stood and left Hermione alone in her cell.

Once she was sure the girl had gone, Hermione stood and crept over to the door. Pulling the sleeve of her jumper down over her hand, she reached out gingerly to touch the door. Tapping the door, she was thrown back onto the ratty old mattress. 'Damn, she put the blasted ward back up.' Hermione thought. Sitting up again, she propped herself against the wall and thought about everything the girl had said to her. 'Her master wasn't kind enough to feed me? She had said that I was all that mattered? But why? What is it about me that matters? I'm nothing special. Who is this master of hers?'

Hermione was so engrossed in her thoughts, that she didn't hear the door opening again just enough for the girl to push Hermione's now empty bucket back into the room, along with another tray of food.

Severus had spent the last half an hour questioning Harry Potter-Malfoy about his day shopping with Hermione in Hogsmeade, and still wasn't any closer to finding her. Now, as he and Harry stepped out of the Floo into Draco's office at the Ministry, all he wanted to do was strangle the boy for leaving her alone.

"Severus, Harry, what brings you both here at this time of night?" Draco asked, smiling. Then, seeing the worried looks on their faces, his smile faded. "What has happened?"

"Draco, Hermione has been abducted. It seems that she never made it back to the castle after I left her this afternoon," Harry gasped.

"What do you mean, abducted?" Draco shot out of his chair and rounded his desk. "Who was the last person to see her? How long has she been missing?"

"I was," Harry groaned, dropping into a chair. "I left her at the gates to Hogwarts at around five o'clock. She told me she would be fine. I should have insisted on walking her up to the castle, or at least waited until she was inside the gates! Damn, this is all my fault."

Secretly agreeing, Severus had had enough. "Mr. Potter-Malfoy, stop your whining this instant!" he yelled, making the other men jump. "We have enough to worry about, without you having a breakdown."

"Harry, Severus is right. Freaking out right now is not going to help us find Hermione. You can't blame yourself for this. It won't help you think, and since you were the last to see her, that is exactly what I need you to do," Draco commented, trying to remain calm himself.

"Okay," Harry agreed, taking a deep breath. "I know you're right. I just wish I had followed my instincts and not left her alone."

After another frustrating hour of Draco questioning both Harry and Severus, they still had no idea what could have happened to Hermione. Draco was now in a meeting with several of his best Aurors, explaining the situation. Harry was sitting in a chair, wrapped up in his own misery, and Severus was pacing the office, trying to figure out what he should do next.

Suddenly, Draco rushed into his office and over to a cabinet in the corner. Pulling the second drawer open, he shuffled through some files and pulled out a parchment form.

"We have been permitted to use all our resources to find Hermione and return her to Hogwarts," he exclaimed, waving the form in the air. "The Minister himself has approved the mission and is having a team of highly skilled Aurors sent out to collect the Weasley family as we speak."

"You think the Weasleys kidnapped Hermione?" Harry choked. "But why would they do something like that?"

"After what Severus has told us about the encounter with Bill in Hogsmeade, and the letter he saw that Molly sent to Hermione, it has been decided they are the most likely suspects." Draco took a deep breath before continuing, "Also, Minerva has just informed us that the letter Severus saw was not the only one sent to Hermione. She has personally intercepted four other letters from Molly. Although no threats were issued in them, they were far from friendly and a violation of the Ministry's no contact order."

There was a knock at the door. A large, blonde Auror entered and said, "Sir, Misters William, Fred, George, and Charles Weasley are in room six waiting for you. We are still trying to locate Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. They are supposedly out of the country, and we are having trouble tracking them."

"Thank you, Auror Garvey, I will be right there," Draco replied. The Auror dipped his head and left the room, closing the door behind him. Turning to Harry and Severus, Draco asked, "So, do you two want to watch me do my job, or sit in here wondering what is transpiring out there?"

Severus said flatly, "I want to watch. Maybe I can glean something from their behavior to help you."

"I want to watch too. I want to watch them try to lie to you," Harry smiled grimly, standing up and moving toward the door.

"Let's go then," Draco smiled as well, leading them out of his office and into room five. There, he cast a monitoring spell on the wall connecting rooms five and six, and they could see the four Weasley sons. Bill was pacing the small room, irritation all over his face. Charlie was leaning against the wall opposite the spelled wall, his hands in his pockets, a confused and slightly frightened expression etching his features. The twins were slumped in two of the chairs provided, chatting away, their feet propped up on the small table.

"Well, here we go," Draco grimaced, exiting room five.

All four Weasleys looked up when the door opened, and in walked Draco Malfoy-Potter.

"What is the meaning of this? Why have you brought us here?" Bill demanded.

"Good evening, gentlemen," Draco said conversationally in response. "Let's all have a seat. I have some questions for you."

The five men sat down, the redheaded Weasleys on one side of the table, and Auror Malfoy-Potter on the other.

"Now that we are all comfortable, why don't you tell me which one of you kidnapped Hermione Granger?"

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank all those who have reviewed. In the next chapter the interrogation continues.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: The interrogation continues.

New Beginnings

Chapter Thirteen

"What do you mean, 'which one of us kidnapped Hermione'?" Bill shouted, shooting to his feet.

Draco slowly stood and looked Bill squarely in the eyes, answering calmly, "Mr. Weasley, I suggest you sit back down. I would hate to have to hex you when I have more questions to ask."

Looking stunned and more than a little scared, Bill dropped back into his chair. The other three Weasley brothers held their tongues, but kept looking from Draco to Bill apprehensively.

"How long has she been missing?" asked one of the twins.

"She was last seen just outside the gates of Hogwarts at five o'clock this evening. From what we have been able to determine after a search of the area, it appears she was surprised from the behind and stunned. Then she was moved, but not Apparated. We could trace that, but she seems to have been moved by other means," Draco explained.

"What about the magic signature?" Charlie asked. "Can't you figure out who took her that way?"

"Normally, yes, but who ever stunned Hermione did so at very close range. We are unable to get a strong enough reading to use a magic tracer. If she had been hit from even just a few feet away, there would be enough lingering magic to track her attacker." Draco paused. "Also, we could follow the traces if she had been Apparated, but seeing as she was moved manually, we are at a dead end. Tell me, when was the last time any of you, besides Bill, saw Hermione?"

All three of the remaining Weasleys replied, at the same time, "The trial."

"I see. Did any of you know as to where she had moved and taken employment?" To this question Draco received two different answers.

Charlie dipped his head and muttered, "I knew she was working at Hogwarts. One of her students is the daughter of my flat mate at the reserve. She wrote a letter to old Docky about her wonderful new Head of House. Docky can't read anymore, and I have to read all his letters to him. Dragon accident," Charlie added, sadly.

Fred and George looked at each other, then at Draco, before one of them said, "We knew she was back at Hogwarts as well. Mum told us. She refused to say how she knew, but insisted that we violate the Ministry order not to contact her." The twin took a deep breath before continuing. "She begged us to go and talk her into going to the Ministry. We refused, and she... she threatened to disown us."

At this Bill shot a stunned look at his younger brothers and gasped, "Mum threatened to disown you? How could she do such a thing? Does she really feel Ron had a right to do the things he did to Hermione?"

"We don't know, Bill, but she has always insisted that Ron could never be so cruel as to hurt Hermione," the twin on the left replied.

"Well, she didn't see Hermione laying on that floor in a pool of her own blood. She didn't have to look Ron in the eyes that night and see the hatred burning ther he wasn't the one to hear the cries of pain and fear from Hermione when I picked her up and Flooed her to St. Mungo's." Bill paused to take a deep breath, sadness darkening his normally bright blue eyes, before continuing, "She wasn't there when I brought the Aurors to the cottage to arrest Ron. She wasn't the one he threatened revenge on. It was me! I did those things, and only I and Hermione know what a true monster Ron has become."

"Okay, Bill, we can see how you feel. We can't understand it, because we weren't there, but we can sympathize," the twin on the right said. Then looking at Draco, he continued, "Fred and I will do what ever we can to help you find Hermione. We know where Ron is living, and we will take you there to see if he had anything to do with this."

"That is good, George. I will have Auror Garvy accompany you to Ron's. I still have to find your parents. It seems they have left the country, and we are unable to locate them," Draco said, causing the four brothers to look at him, stunned.

"Our parents haven't left the country. I just saw them at the Burrow this afternoon. It was about noon when I left, and they were sitting down to lunch," Bill said.

Before Draco could respond, the door to room six opened, and Auror Garvy walked in. "Mr. Malfoy-Potter, we have located the father. He was bound and gagged and left in the uppermost room of the family home. He doesn't remember how he got there. The last thing he remembers is a strange sound coming from his wife's apron pocket, then nothing."

"Thank you, please bring him in. We can let his boys see him, and then we'll test him for memory charms to figure out what happened to him." When the Auror opened his mouth to object, Draco raised his hand and nodded his head in the direction of the wall Severus and Harry were watching through. "We will wait until he has seen his sons," Draco said, standing and exiting the room with the Auror.

Hermione had spent the last few hours thinking about the girl who'd brought her food. She had not figured out, yet, who the girl was, or who this master of hers was. The night was wearing on, and Hermione knew she probably wouldn't be missed for several more hours, by anyone other than Severus. 'He would just think I had gotten cold feet about our dinner though,' she thought. 'No one will even know I am gone until, well maybe breakfast, but most likely my first class.'

Out in the hallway, beyond the cell door, a light came on. Hermione could hear movement and figured it was the girl returning for her untouched food tray. Lying down on the mattress, she turned her back to the door. She was in no mood to have the girl looking at her as she cried.

"He finally got you, did he?" came a female voice that made Hermione whip around and scramble to the rear wall of her cell.

"I should... I should have known you had something to with this," Hermione stated, her voice shaking a little.

"My dear, he just wants to be happy. The way he was before the war stole his future," declared the woman in the doorway.

"The war didn't steal his future, the booze did. If you weren't so pig-headed you would have seen that," Hermione all but screamed.

Pulling her wand out, the woman pointed it at Hermione. Just before she could utter a curse, there was an odd sound. The woman kept her wand trained on Hermione as she reached into her pocket and pulled out a cellular phone.

"Yes, dear... of course... no, I haven't... yes, dear... I will see you soon." Pushing a button on the phone, it was slipped back into the pocket. "You, my dear, are a very lucky girl. He will be home soon and says he has a surprise for me. Be a good girl and don't tell him I was down here." With that the woman exited the small cell and locked and warded the door.

Hermione released the breath she had been holding since the wand had first appeared. 'She has lost her mind if she thinks I will ever that Ron hurt me again. No, Mrs. Weasley, he will never hurt me again,' she thought, preparing herself for a battle, sans wand.

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank all those who have reviewed. In the next chapter Severus and the rest pay a visit to Ron.

AN2::: Sorry it took so long for the update. I recently moved, and everything was in boxes. Also, My desktop computer decided to freak out and stop working, so I had to switch to my laptop; the problem is, where I moved to I can't use my wireless modem. So, now I have to check my email, and post my updates from the office. Which, of course, I don't get into very often.

AN3::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione and Ron... need I say more?

New Beginnings

Chapter Fourteen

Wandless magic ~ the ability to cast spells and charms without the use of a wand.

Hermione had never been very good at wandless magic. The theory behind it was easily understood, but theory alone is not all there is to magic. She had the theory down. She could even perform a few spells, a couple of charms and one hex, but none of that would help her now. All the research she had down after graduating from Hogwarts and the work she had done for the Ministry, would not get her out of this damn cell, or help her defend herself against an armed and very pissed off Ronald Weasley.

"Okay, Mr. Weasley, tell us again exactly what you remember before my Aurors found you in your attic?" Draco asked.

"Molly and I had just finished an early dinner, and I was having my pudding. Molly was clearing the table, and as she was walking away to set the dishes to washing, I heard an odd sound coming from her direction. As I looked over to her, she turned and pointed her wand at me. I remember thinking how much that sound reminded me of one of those Muggle techy phono things," Arthur Weasley answered, looking confused.

"It has to be Ron then," Bill shouted, shooting out of his chair once again. "He has to be the one who kidnapped Hermione. Then he must have contacted Mum on that techy thing to tell her what he had done."

Bill was pacing the room again, and when he finished his rant, he turned to see his father staring at him.

"What do you mean Ron must have kidnapped Hermione? She is safely tucked away at Hogwarts," Arthur said before turning to look at Draco. "Isn't she?"

"I am afraid, Mr. Weasley, that Hermione was abducted from the gates of Hogwarts around five o'clock yesterday evening," Draco replied. "We have been questioning your sons and seem to have all come to the same conclusion. Ron attacked and stunned her, them somehow moved her without Apparating."

"Well, if he stunned her, then he needed to use a wand. The Ministry snapped his when he was exiled. Since he can't get a new one on his own, he must have stolen someone else's."

"Of course, that explains why he didn't Apparate with her! You can't Apparate with someone else's wand, even if your magics are compatible enough to do small spells. Why didn't I think of that before?" Draco's eyes were almost glowing with the knowledge he had solved one of the riddles of Hermione's kidnapping. "Fred, George, where is your brother living now? My team must go there right away. If he is holding Hermione there, he has had her for more than twelve hours now. There is no telling what he may have done to her in that time."

It was not the twins, but Arthur who answered. "I will take you to him. If he did in fact abduct Hermione, and Molly knows this and is helping him hold her, I want to be there"

"Of course, and I have two guests of my own I plan to bring along when we call on your son," Draco said, leading the way out the door.

Once out in the hall, Harry and Severus joined the Weasleys and Draco.

"What are you doing here, Professor Snape?" Charlie asked, looking shocked.

"I am assisting in locating Hermione, as she is a professor at Hogwarts, and..." Snape paused to find the right words before continuing, "she failed to appear at dinner last night, and I became concerned."

"We are wasting time." Draco shouted, over the whispers from the Weasleys at Severus' answer. "Let's just get going and find Hermione."

With that everyone nodded and headed down the hall and out of the Ministry to the nearest Apparition point.

Hermione watched as the door to her cell was slowly pushed open. As soon as she saw the wand of the person entering, she slammed all of her weight into the back of the door, and grabbed for the wand as the person in the doorway was knocked off balance from the impact of the heavy door. Wrenching the wand from the hand that grasped it, she spun it around, pointed it at the door and backed away, as it was slammed open.

"Stupefy!" shouted a male voice.

Hermione had expected this and dodged the spell shouting, "Expelliarmus!"

As the wand shot out of her attacker's hand, Hermione shouted, "Petrificus T..."

She was never able to finish as she was hit with, "Immobulus!" Her body froze into its position, and she fell to the ground on her side, completely unable to move more than her eyes. She looked about to see who hit her with the hex, but could see no one.

"Well, I can see you are as feisty as ever, wife," Ron growled as he stepped into her limited range of sight. Turning to someone behind him, he shouted, "Get yourself up off the ground, and let Mum repair that broken arm. It won't do to have you slacking off on your duties due to your own stupidity."

Hermione heard a groan and shuffling.

"Come along, dear, let's get that fixed. You really should be more careful. If I hadn't been here to mend this, there is no telling if it would have healed right."

"Hermione, Hermione, Hermione. So I have you here at last. Mum is quite proud of me for getting you to come back," Ron said, picking up the wand that she had shot out of his hand and casting, "Incarcerous!"

Severus, Harry, Draco, and the Weasleys Apparated into the alley behind the small brick building containing Ron's flat. Arthur cast a Disillusionment Charm on the rescue party so that any Muggles who might be in the area would not see them as they made their way to the front of the building. At the front entrance, Charlie and Bill kept lookout as Arthur and Severus worked on opening the door.

"Do you know how this damn thing works?" Severus growled, indicating a small electronic pad with buttons next to numbers.

"I think you push the button to alert the resident you are here to visit, so they can open the door."

"Haven't you ever used it before?" Severus growled again.

"No, Ron has always met us out here and taken us in," Arthur said, annoyed.

Harry pushed Severus out of the way to examine the pad and asked, "Which one is Ron's flat?"

"Number three," answered Fred.

Harry pushed the button next to the number two, and a voice said, "Yes, what do you want?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I left my key. I am in number three; could you please buzz me in?"

A loud buzzing sounded, and the door clicked open. Harry pushed it open and smirked at the incredulous look on everyone's faces.

"What?" he asked as he stepped inside

"How did you do that?" Bill questioned.

"I was raised by Muggles, remember?" he answered with a shrug.

"Up the stairs and to the left. Ron's door is the third on the right," said George as he headed up the stairs.

Once the group was outside the door with a brass number three on it, Severus whispered, "Okay, Draco, you unlock the door. Arthur, you push it open from over there, and Bill, Charlie and I will enter. Wands drawn and read to stun anyone inside. Understood?"

"What do you want Fred, Harry and me to do?" George asked, as everyone nodded.

"Stay here and guard our arses," grumbled Severus. "Okay, one, two, three..."

"Alohomora!"

"Stupefy!"

"Stupefy!"

"Stup... Oh, well, it looks like you got everyone," said Bill sounding a little disappointed.

The rest of the rescue party entered the flat and saw two women lying on the floor of the small kitchen. Neither one of them were Hermione.

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank all those who have reviewed. In the next chapter comes Snape to the rescue, but is he in time?

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

AN3::: Okay, before I start getting flamed, our dear admin Southern pointed out that per canon a wand is not needed for Apparation. But, for the purposes of my plot, and to save my writing hand, let us just assume that one is needed. Thank you all.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione is rescued, but is it in time?

New Beginnings

Chapter Fifteen

"Bill, wake her and see if she knows where Hermione is," said Arthur, indicating the small girl who lay bound on the floor. Then pointing his wand at his wife, he said,

"Mobilicorpus!

Arthur moved his wife's inert body to a room on the other side of Ron's flat. Harry and the twins followed, leaving Severus with Charlie, Bill and Draco to question the girl.

"I can't believe Mom was really here," whispered Charlie. "I knew she would be, but actually seeing her here is... well, it is just unbelievable."

"I know what you mean," agreed Bill. "Ennervate!"

The girl woke with a start, blinking up from the floor at the four wizards staring down at her menacingly.

"Who... Who are you? What do you want? What did you do to me? Why can't I move?" The girl was struggling against her bonds.

"Who we are is of no importance," said Severus in his most intimidating classroom voice. "We are here to find Miss Granger. What have you and Mr. Weasley done with her?"

"I don't know who you are talking about. What have you done to me? Why can't I move?"

"I don't believe you," growled Severus. "Tell me where Hermione is NOW!"

"I don't know anyone named Hermione," cried the girl, shaking with fear.

"If you don't tell me right now, I swear I'll...," Severus growled, pointing his wand at the girl.

"Severus, stop!" interrupted Draco, placing a restraining hand on Severus' arm. "Let me see if I can get anything out of her."

Kneeling down, Draco looked the girl in the eyes, holding his wand in her line of vision but not pointing it at her.

"Do you know what this is?" Draco asked as if speaking to a small child.

"Yes! It's a stick."

Draco nodded and waved his wand over her head muttering something. Then he stood and turned toward the others. "She is undoubtedly a Muggle, but I can tell she has been healed recently by magic, and I think her memories have been modified also."

Severus pushed Draco out of the way and knelt beside the girl. Pointing his wand at her, he met her eyes and said L'egilimens!"

After sifting in her mind for only a few seconds, he pulled back, panting slightly, and nodded. "Yes, her memories have been modified."

Before the others could respond, Harry and the twins burst out of the room they were in, and Harry cried, "She's in the basement."

As they ran down the hall, they heard Arthur yell, "Ron's there also, hurry!"

Thundering down the stairs, the seven wizards raced to save Hermione before it was too late.

Hermione watched Ron wave his wand and felt incredibly cold. Ron knelt beside her and ran his hand down her leg, starting at her now-bare hip.

'He spelled away my clothes! Oh, God, I couldn't stand it if he...'

Her thoughts were interrupted by him muttering another spell which forced her legs to spread apart. She was utterly exposed, and trembled with the knowledge of what was to come.

"You've been a very bad girl, Hermione. Do you remember what happens when you point a wand at me?" Ron murmured, almost lovingly, as he continued to stroke her.

She blinked and prayed for the darkness to overtake her. As Hermione's eyes fluttered shut, Ron slapped her with all his strength, and she tasted blood in her mouth.

"No, wench, you will not be passing out this time," he snarled. "I let you get away with that before, but NOT this time. You will learn this lesson if I have to beat you BLOODY to get it through that incredibly THICK head of yours. And I want you to watch me do it. Keep your eyes OPEN."

He slapped her again, and again. Fumbling with his belt, he pulled his trousers down to his knees. Positioning himself between her legs, he crawled on top of her and kissed her forcefully. She felt like retching when he pried her mouth open and shoved his tongue inside.

Hermione wanted nothing more than to bite that tongue, to push him off of her and flee, but she couldn't move. She was bound there, he was going to rape her, and there wasn't a thing she could do about it. No one was coming to help her, he would probably kill her this time, and there was nothing she could do to stop it.

He had stopped kissing her and started licking and biting at her breasts now. She felt him shift his weight and prod his cock between her legs. She closed her eyes waiting for him to enter her, but instead she heard a crash as the door to her cell was thrown open with such force it embedded in the cement wall.

"Stupefy!" a familiar voice yelled, and Ron's body slumped onto hers.

"Hermione? Can you hear me?" a voice as smooth as silk asked. She opened her eyes and saw a blurry mass of black.

"An angel..." she whispered before she lost consciousness.

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas Allison and Piper. Sorry this update was so long in coming. Real life captured both myself and my betas and forced us to life in the 'real' world rather then in here where we belong. In the next chapter Hermione is at St. Mungos, again.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione is at St. Mungo's

New Beginnings

Chapter Sixteen

Harry walked into the small hospital room carrying two cups of tea. Seating himself in the chair next to Severus, he passed one cup to the dark man and turned to look sadly at the unconscious form of his best friend. It had been nearly a month since they had rescued Hermione from Ron, and she had regained consciousness only twice, but just for a few moments each time.

"Has she woken up today?" Harry whispered to Severus.

"No, she was restless earlier this morning, but did not awaken," Severus replied.

"You should get some sleep. She wouldn't want you to make yourself sick worrying over her."

"My health is of little importance. I want to be here when she wakes."

Harry eyed Severus for several long minutes before asking, "How long?"

"How long what, Mr. Potter-Malfoy?" Severus responded with a scowl.

"How long, Professor, have you been in love with my best friend?"

"Love is for women and sentimental old fools, and I do not subscribe to it," Severus countered. "However, if you would like to know how long I have admired Hermione, then my answer would be since you were both in your sixth year."

"Sixth year, eh? Well, as she was of legal age at that time, why didn't make a move on her then?" Harry asked, working out the timing in his head.

"It would hardly have been appropriate. She was my student, plus there was a war going on, I was leading two lives, and she was enamored of Mr. Weasley," Severus said, almost wistfully.

"Yeah, and we all know how well that turned out, don't we?" Harry responded sourly before he stood and left the room.

"Minerva, I am sorry, but I simply will not return to Hogwarts until she is awake. If the Board of Governors has a problem with that, then I will tender my resignation here and now."

"Now, Severus, I don't think it will come to that. You stay there and take care of our girl," Minerva said with a smile. "I will deal with the Governors."

Minerva winked at Severus, and her head disappeared as she ended the Floo call.

Turning on his heel and walking briskly down the hallway to Hermione's room, Severus idly wondered how long it would take for the boils Minerva was sure to hex Dharma Talon, head of the Board of Governors, with to heal. Entering and crossing the room, he looked down onto Hermione's face and sighed as he seated himself.

He had occupied the same chair day and night for the last six weeks, and his arse was starting to protest every time he came within a foot of the dratted thing. Picking up Hermione's hand he held it in both of his. Bringing it to his lips, he kissed it gently, and leaned his face against it.

"Please, Hermione, please wake up. I miss you so much." Severus sighed deeply, and continued, "I miss you. I need you to be all right. I... I love you."

Hermione's hand twitched, and Severus' head shot up. Looking at her face, he saw her eyes slowly flutter open. She looked up at Severus and opened her mouth to speak.

"Angel! Am I in heaven?" she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

"No, this is not heaven," he whispered, pushing a lock of hair off her forehead. "Sshhh, Hermione, do not try to speak."

A tear slipped from her eye, and Severus gently brushed it away with the pad of one callused thumb.

"Sev... Severus? Is that you?"

"Yes, my dear, it is I," he whispered, his voice raw with emotion.

"Is... is he dead? Did they kill him?" Hermione asked. Then choking, she asked, "Can he hurt me anymore?"

"Hush now, no, he can never hurt you again. I will explain everything, but first we need to get a Healer to look at you."

As if summoned by the mere thought of her, Healer Valencia entered the room.

"Hermione, it is about time you woke up. I have missed our talks and wondered when we would have another one." Waving her wand over Hermione's small form, she tsked. "Well, other than being in great need of a nutritious meal, I see nothing in your scans to worry about."

Turning to Severus, the witch waved her wand again and frowned.

"You on the other hand, sir, need sleep as well as food."

Turning back to Hermione, she said, "If you had slept much longer, I was going to be forced to dose him with a sleeping draught. It just isn't healthy to only nap on and off for six weeks. But, now that you are back with us, maybe you can find a way to get him to sleep," she said with a wink. With that, she spun on her heel, glaring at Severus as she swept from the room.

A week after Hermione awoke, she was sitting in her bed eating yet another tasteless meal of hospital food, when there was a knock at her door.

"Come in," she called, curious who would be calling on her who would bother to knock.

She nearly choked as visions of red hair and cold blue eyes swam across her vision.

"Oh, gods, no," she gasped before a dark figure pushed his way to the front of the mass of red hair and rushed to her side.

"Hermione, it's all right," he murmured in a soothing tone, brushing his fingertips across her cheek to get her attention focused on him. "Do you remember when I told you that Ron could never hurt you again? I told you I would explain everything, and now I shall, but Arthur, Bill, and Charlie insisted that they be here to fill in any blanks you may need filled."

Having lost her appetite, she pushed her food tray way. "Okay, Severus, let's get this over with," she said, her eyes never leaving his face.

Severus sank into his chair and sighed, "The rest of you might as well sit also, for this could take awhile."

Waving his wand, Arthur conjured chairs for himself and his sons.

With a deep breath, Severus began, "After we found you, Harry brought you here to St. Mungo's. Draco and the twins went to the Ministry to fetch the Aurors while the four of us stayed behind to guard Ron and Molly from escape. They had all been gone about twenty minutes when Molly awoke. She flung herself at Arthur, and he was so caught off guard by her physically attacking him that she managed to take his wand from him. She sent a Stunner at Charlie, as he was closest to Ron, and then cast 'ENERVATE' on Ron to wake him. When he woke, he grabbed Charlie's wand and started flinging curses at Bill and Arthur. I was trying to get Molly back under control, but she had developed fast reflexes during the war, and was dodging my own Stunners quite well. Ron had hit Arthur with a Binding Hex, and was trying to Stun Bill when Molly hit me with a Slicing Hex to my left side." He held up a hand to stall Hermione's interruptions.

"I assure you I am quite well," he continued. "It was only a flesh wound and was healed quite easily. But the result was I hit the ground. When I looked over to see how Bill was fairing, Ron standing over him, wand pointed at his brother's chest, with a look of pure hatred in his eyes. He looked up at me and smiled. He actually smiled, but there was something very disturbing about the look in his eyes. He looked at Bill and said, 'Avada Keda...' as the door to the apartment shot open, and both Ron and Molly were Stunned by Draco and the Aurors who had just arrived."

Hermione had both hands pressed to her mouth, and she was looking frantically back and forth between Bill Weasley and Severus.

"How... how could he do that?" she gasped. "Even after everything he did to me, I would never have believed he would everonsider trying to kill his own brother."

"Hermione, how much do you remember about the night Ron nearly beat you to death?" Bill asked.

"Just the beating and passing out from the pain on the kitchen floor. Everything else I know, I heard second hand at the trial."

"Hermione, you know I was the one who found you and took you to St. Mungo's that night, but I was also the one who brought the Aurors back to the house to arrest Ron. As they were binding his hands, he told me that he would have his revenge on me for stealing you away from him."

"Stealing me away from him? He seriously thought that you and I were having an affair? I tried to send you a note. I tried to tell you not to come for dinner," she was speaking just above a whisper, and the men had to strain to hear her, "He had smacked me around and had... raped me earlier in the day. He had passed out, and I was trying to send you a message not to come."

Hermione was crying, and Bill approached the bed and gently sat on the edge of it.

"Hermione, I would have come anyway. I was planning on confronting Ron that night. I had seen you in Diagon Alley the week before with a black eye that covered nearly half your face. I wanted to talk to you then to make sure that you were alright, but Ron came out of the twins' shop and grabbed your arm. I don't know, but there was just something in that gesture that made my blood run cold," Bill said reassuringly. "I couldn't understand how my little brother could be so cruel to someone who loved him so much."

"By that time, Bill, I didn't love Ron anymore. I'm not sure if I ever really did. I know I did care about him at one time, but now, in hindsight, to call it love seems like a disservice to the noble emotion of love."

Hermione looked into Bill's eyes, then she smiled and as she opened her arms to embrace him, he began to cry. Holding each other in a comforting way, Hermione looked at Arthur and Charlie.

"I know I blamed you all for what he did to me, but now I see that none of you knew," she said. "I used to think that your entire family knew what he was doing to me and condoned it... since you ignored it. Now, I see that I was able to hide it too well from everyone so that none of you knew. I am sorry! I am sorry for thinking so ill of you all, and I am sorry for what you have all gone through because of him."

Pulling away from Hermione, Bill brushed his tears away and returned to his chair to the right of Arthur, who place a hand on his son's shoulder and gave a reassuring squeeze.

"Okay, Hermione, just a bit more to tell now," Arthur said gently, "After the Aurors stopped Ron from killing Bill, he and Molly were taken into custody. Molly was charged with accessory to kidnapping, improper use of magic, the use of magic in front of a known Muggle, and aiding an exiled wizard in regaining a wand through illegal means. She was sentenced two weeks ago to fifteen years in Azkaban. She was found yesterday, in her cell, dead."

Arthur paused to take a deep breath, a telling glistening in his eyes, before continuing, "It was an apparent suicide. Ron was charged with kidnapping, attempted rape, improper use of magic, the use of magic in front of a known Muggle, gaining a wand through illegal means, and the attempted use of an Unforgivable Curse. He was sentenced to life in Azkaban. Three days ago, he tried to escape, and upon re-capture was held for twenty-four hours before receiving... The Kiss."

TBC

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank all those who have reviewed. In the next chapter Hermione gets out of the hospital.

AN2::: IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE BEING ABUSED Physically, mentally, or emotionally you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799 SAFE (7233)

AN3::: Names and Meanings part 2;

Valencia (Spanish): Strength and Health

Dharma (India/Sanskrit): Ultimate Law of All Things

Talon (English): Claw

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 of 17

After nearly being killed by her husband, Hermione returns to Hogwarts. (Ultimately a SS/HG, but starts out a little different.)**NOW COMPLETE**

DISCLAIMER::: Everything you recognize belongs to JK Rowling and Warner Bros. I just love them so much I wanted to play with them a little.

Summary::: Hermione gets out of the hospital.

New Beginnings

Chapter Seventeen

Hermione stood on the platform for the Hogwarts Express looking out at the path leading up to the gates. Taking a deep breath, she started walking. Severus had wanted to escort her back to Hogwarts upon her release from St Mungo's, but she had insisted that she couldn't spend the rest of her life afraid to go anywhere by herself.

When she passed through the gates without incident, she released a breath she was not aware she was holding. As she passed Hagrid's hut, he looked up from weeding his vegetable patch and called out, "Ello, 'ermione! 'Tis good to see ye back."

"It's good to be back, Hagrid," Hermione said, smiling.

When she arrived at the castle entrance, she was greeted by a smiling Headmistress.

"Hermione, dear, it is so good to see you back. How are you feeling?"

"I am doing well, thank you, Minerva."

"Well, I expect to see you at dinner this evening, and I will not hear any excuses."

"Of course, Minerva, I will see you at dinner."

The lady in the portrait to Hermione's quarters was so happy to see Hermione that she nearly spun right out of her frame in excitement.

"Dreamless Sleep," Hermione called out

"I am sorry dear, but your password was changed while you were gone," the portrait informed her

"What? It's April. The password should be Dreamless Sleep. Who changed my password?"

A silky voice behind her said, "I did."

Turning around, Hermione looked into the face of Severus Snape and inquired, "Why did you change my password, Professor Snape?"

"It is more secure, Professor Granger, if you change your password at irregular intervals, rather than on the first of every month," he replied.

Hermione looked at Severus for several long seconds before smiling. "I missed you too, Severus. Besides, who needs a secure password with you in the castle to protect me?"

Severus' face stayed as expressionless as ever, but his eyes smiled as he looked from Hermione to the portrait and whispered, "Amortentia!"

"A love potion? How interesting," Hermione murmured as she entered her quarters with Severus following shortly behind her.

"What was that, Hermione?"

"Oh, nothing. Just thinking out loud," Hermione answered. Then gesturing toward the sitting area, she said, "Please, Severus, have a seat. I will put my things away, and then we can have tea."

Rushing through a door in the back of her quarters that led to her bedchamber, Hermione pulled the shrunken items out of her robe pocket and tossed them onto her bed. Quickly casting the spell to return them to normal size, she waved her wand again, and her clothes put themselves in the wardrobe. Severus had to duck as her books floated out into the sitting room to reshelf themselves.

When Hermione returned to the sitting room, Severus was just pouring the tea. She took the cup he offered her and sat on one end of her sofa, tucking her feet under her.

"How are you feeling, Hermione?" Severus asked.

"Other than being annoyed that everyone keeps asking me that, I am feeling alright," Hermione answered with a slight edge in her voice.

"I am sorry, Hermione. If you truly are well, I will stop asking," Severus said. Then looking her in the eyes, he said gently, "However, you look troubled. Is there something bothering you?"

"I... well...yes, there is. I have been trying to understand why."

Looking puzzled, Severus asked, "Why, what?"

"Why, Severus, did you spend six weeks at my bedside while I was unconscious, and then another three visiting me daily after I awoke," Hermione inquired softly.

Trying to figure out how to word his response, Severus took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Then, not meeting her eyes, he said, "Hermione, let me start by saying that I have respected you for many years. When Ronald abducted you, I was terrified. We had become friends, and I was furious that someone had dared to hurt you..."

Hermione remained silent when Severus paused.

"When we found you and young Mr. Weasley in that cell like room, and I saw what he was trying to do to you, I...well, Draco had to stop me from beating that child to death right then and there."

Hermione could see the truth in his eyes. 'Is he saying what I think he is saying?'she wondered.

"Hermione, I am not good at showing my emotions, but I think you should know that I have deep admiration for you," Severus said.

"Only admiration, Severus?"

"No, but I am not sure if you would accept anything more from me."

Hermione could hear a slight tinge of what sounded like fear in his voice. Does he think I would reject him? She thought.

"Severus, in the last few months, you and I have become good friends. I have come to care for you in a way that I have never cared for anyone, not even Ronald." Pausing to compose her next words, she then continued, "When I was stuck in that cell, I only had two wishes. If I was going to die, I wanted to see Harry and Draco again, to say good-bye, and I wanted to tell you that... tell you... I love you!"

Severus had been looking at his hands as she spoke, but as she said this, his eyes shot up to meet hers.

"Are you sure, Hermione? I am not an easy man to love, by any means. If you are sure, and would like to try a romantic relationship, I am also willing," Severus said with a small smile.

Hermione stood up and crossed the small sitting room to Severus. He looked up into her eyes and was shocked by the depth of emotion in them. She smiled as she bent to press her lips to his gently at first, just a slight brushing of lips.

Severus moaned softly as their lips met, and he gently pulled her head down to deepen the kiss. Hermione slipped into his lap, and he held her to him tightly. Her body was soft and rounded and perfectly complemented his hard and angular frame. One of Severus' hands went up to tangle in Hermione's unruly hair while her arms wound themselves around his neck. They pulled each other closer, their kiss becoming frantic. Severus broke the kiss first when breathing became necessary, but his lips did not wander far. He pressed feather-light kisses to Hermione's jaw and down her neck as one of his hands moved to cup her breast.

"Severus, it has been a very long time for me," Hermione breathed.

"It has been a long time for myself as well, Hermione," Severus whispered against her skin causing her to shiver and moan softly.

At the sound of her pleasure, he pulled back slightly to look in to her eyes.

"Are you sure?" he asked softly.

She nodded, and at her assent, he scooped her into his arms and carried her towards her bedroom.

Hermione and Severus never made it to dinner that night. The next morning, when they arrived at breakfast together, the staff knew where they had been. Minerva somehow didn't have the heart to be cross with Hermione for breaking her promise.

Two months later Hermione Granger became Hermione Snape in a small ceremony in one of the private gardens at Hogwarts. The only people to attend were the staff, students, the five remaining Weasley men, and, of course, Harry as Hermione's witness and Draco as Severus'. That night was the first night of the rest of their lives. It was their new beginning.

The End

AN::: As always I would like to thank my fabulous betas, Allison and Piper. I would also like to thank all those who have continued to read this story. I took the inspiration from my own life after being married to an abusive husband for many years. My therapist told me I should write down what he did to me, and so I did. Then, after HBP came out and I saw that Hermione and Ron seem to be headed in the same direction that my ex-husband and I were, this story idea was born. I took my life and adapted it to them, and so New Beginnings was born. I hope you liked it, and if you didn't, I am sorry. I am not a professional writer for a reason.

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