

The Temptation of Time

by AirForceMarauder

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Unexpected Visitors

Hermione Granger was extraordinary in many ways. For one, she was exceptionally intelligent. For another, she was a witch and had spent the last six years attending Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. As she lay by the pool in her parents' backyard, basking in the dying rays of the sun, she reflected on her previous years at Hogwarts.

So much had happened in so little time. She felt as if she were no longer the person she was before. Memories crowded in on her, coming as they would in no particular order. They assaulted her; some nearly bringing her to tears, while others made her smile in remembrance.

She felt a twinge of sadness as she remembered the events in the Department of Mysteries, and another when she thought about the death of Dumbledore just a few short weeks ago. She shuddered when she thought about the Basilisk and being petrified. She had been so lucky that year. She felt anger sing through her veins again when she recalled how the Aurors had attacked both Hagrid and Professor McGonagall.

She laughed again at the look on Neville's face when he received the ten points for standing up to his friends and had won the house cup in first year. She smiled fondly when she thought about Hagrid's rock cakes and about Norbert the dragon. She winced, thinking about falling through the trick stairs until she'd learned to jump over them. And she sighed at how foolish she'd been when she had thought Remus had let Sirius in to hurt Harry in their third year.

The sun had long set by the time she snapped out of her reverie. Missing the warmth, she reluctantly entered the house and went upstairs to change for dinner. It was her first night home for the summer, and her mother had been cooking up a storm all afternoon. The smells emanating from the kitchen were heavenly, and Hermione quickly changed into an old, comfortable pair of jeans and a blue button down shirt.

Just as she and her parents were sitting down to dinner, Hermione heard the unmistakable crack of someone Apparating outside the house. She sprang into action, grabbing her parent's hands and pulling them across the kitchen, through a door and down to the dark wine cellar.

Pulling her wand from her pants pocket, she turned to her parents, holding a finger to her lips. "Stay here and don't make a sound. I'll check it out. Stay hidden until I tell you to come up." She crept back up to the top of the stairs, trying to keep her breathing even and under control.

The sound of the doorbell was loud in the empty house, and she was, for a moment, confused. Surely Death Eaters wouldn't ring the doorbell? She decided to wait to see what happened. Eventually, the doorbell rang again, and she could hear someone knocking on the door.

Keeping low, she carefully opened the cellar door, making sure not to make a sound. With her wand raised in a ready position, she crept slowly toward the front entrance hall. With her heart in her throat, she finally reached her destination. Thanking whomever had built the house for not installing a door with glass panes in it, she looked through the peep hole.

Professor McGonagall stood on her front porch. Hermione watched her ring the door bell again and saw her reach up to knock on the door.

"Identify yourself." Hermione kept her voice even despite the cold lump of fear lodged in her throat.

"Hermione," the older witch said, "it's Professor McGonagall. Open the door."

Still being cautious, and remembering that any witch or wizard could take the form of another, she said, "If you're really Professor McGonagall, prove it."

She saw the woman on the other side of the door sigh, though she looked proud of her student for taking such precautions. Then she watched as her favorite professor disappeared! She opened the door to find a tabby colored cat with square markings around her eyes sitting where before had stood the transfiguration teacher.

"Okay. I'm convinced." Hermione made a mental note to learn how to do that this year and opened the door wider so the cat could come in. "Boy, when you want to convince someone, you go all out, Professor."

"Hermione," McGonagall said quickly, looking around the living room, "where are your parents? There are things the four of us need to discuss."

She nearly slapped her forehead for forgetting her parents in the cellar. "Please, follow me, Professor." She started walking back to the kitchen, calling out as she went, "It's okay, Mom, Dad. It's Professor McGonagall! You can come out now."

By the time they walked through the kitchen door, Hermione's parents were coming out of the cellar. They had obviously been quite scared, but they tried to hide it.

"Goodness!" Hermione's mother exclaimed. "You certainly gave us a fright!"

Turning to his daughter, Dr. Granger asked, "Where did you learn to move that fast, 'Mione? I don't think I've ever gotten from one place to another so quickly in my life!"

"Sorry." Hermione apologized. "After a couple years of 'constant vigilance', as Moody would put it, you learn to move quickly." She smiled ruefully. "I didn't mean to scare you guys."

"Unfortunately," began Professor McGonagall, "I may have some news that will frighten you once again." She paused and looked at Hermione's parents before continuing. "I need to take Hermione to a safe place." She held up her hand to quiet their protests. "She is not safe here. Death Eaters have discovered her whereabouts. As a matter of fact..." she paused again, trying to decide whether to tell them the rest.

"Go on," said Hermione's father. "'As a matter of fact,' what?"

Professor McGonagall sighed heavily. After a moment, she continued, "You are not safe here either, and as Muggles, you are in great danger. The Order has decided that you should all go to safe places."

"Professor," Hermione interrupted, "you said 'places'. Can we not all go to the same place?"

Giving her a sympathetic look, the older woman replied, "No, dear, I'm afraid not. As Harry's friend, you are in quite a bit more danger than your parents."

Shaking, but determined, Hermione's mother asked, "Where are we going?"

"If I am not mistaken," replied the professor, "you usually go on holiday around this time of year, do you not?" At the couple's nod, she continued. "You will tell everyone that you are going to tour the Continent. The Order will provide lodging in safe areas, and you will be moved from place to place with an Order member for protection for the remainder of the summer. Once we are sure there is no more immediate danger, you will be allowed to return home, and by that time, we will have found someone to put the Fidelius Charm on your home so the Death Eaters will not be able to find it."

"But, Professor," said Hermione, "I thought Professor Dumbledore was the last known person able to do that charm?"

"Yes, Miss Granger." McGonagall sighed wearily. "Hence the need to send your parents on a trip of unknown length. We don't know how long it will take to find someone powerful enough to perform the charm."

Dr. Granger had been looking thoughtful during the explanation of what they were about to do. He finally spoke, saying, "When do we have to leave?"

"As soon as possible, Dr. Granger. The sooner the better, actually."

Suddenly subdued, Hermione mumbled, "I suppose we should start packing"

Patting her arm, Professor McGonagall offered her assistance. Hermione accepted, and they all went up the stairs to get their things together.

Several expansion charms and three empty closets later, the three Grangers were ready to depart. Professor McGonagall pulled an old newspaper from the pocket of her robes and offered a corner to each of them.

"Our first stop is Hogwarts and we will go our separate ways once we get there."

Once everyone had a good hold on the newspaper and their magically expanded suitcases, McGonagall activated the Portkey. Hermione felt the familiar tug behind her navel and they were pulled through space, finally landing in the Headmaster's office at Hogwarts.

****Author's Note:** Thank you to Phoenix for helping with the finer points of English Grammar. I never did well in that class. Your help was much appreciated.