

# Daughter of the Snake

*by kyasky*

PostHBP: spoilers. Hermione, an Auror, makes one drunken mistake and finds herself on a new path towards love, adventure, and the discovery of her true heritage.  
Eventual HG/SS with some HG/HP

## Chapter One

*Chapter 1 of 5*

PostHBP: spoilers. Hermione, an Auror, makes one drunken mistake and finds herself on a new path towards love, adventure, and the discovery of her true heritage. Eventual HG/SS with some HG/HP

Disclaimer: I don't own shit, and most definitely not Harry Potter or any HP characters. So, sorry, I can't take all that money I know you want to give me. Dammit. Also, this is posted on fanfiction.net under kyaxskyxgoddess, who is also me. I am not plagiarizing.

Warnings: Rated for mentions of sex and swearing. Eventual SS/HG with a little HP/HG

A very special thank you to my beta Dawn.

Chapter One

*Hermione stood atop a dark hill. She wasn't alone, she knew that, but who she was with she was not sure. There was Harry, and Ron lay in a puddle of ... blood? And then there was a figure, a figure that filled Hermione with dread, pure terror and bile building in her mouth as adrenaline pumped through her veins, making her body shake. She clutched her stomach and screamed*

Hermione jerked upright in bed, shaking hands clenched over her mouth, body drenched in a cold sweat. Harsh screams that she refused to voice tore at her throat as tears ran down her cheeks. The urge to set the screams loose was almost unbearable to resist, but Hermione refused to let her basic instincts get the best of her. It was her body, dammit, and she would control it!

After a few moments Hermione felt able to control herself. She relaxed her stiff back and removed her hands from her lips, noticing absently as she rubbed her cheeks with delicate fingertips that she had dug tiny crescent-moons into her own flesh with her nails. Still shaking slightly, Hermione carefully got out of bed and walked towards the half-closed door across the room.

The tiny bathroom held only a cramped shower, a toilet, and a dingy (though immaculately clean) sink. Hermione bathed her face in cold water, washing away the tears and, to some extent, the lingering dream. *It wouldn't be so bad*, Hermione thought to herself, *if it weren't happening so frequently lately. If it were only every now and then I'm sure I'd be able to cope better*. Unfortunately, it was happening frequently; the nightmare, which had haunted Hermione ever since the night of her seventeenth birthday over three years ago, was occurring three times a week now, more frequently than ever before.

What was worse, the dreams were stronger now too. The first time she had ever experienced the dream, Hermione had been shocked and frightened, but hadn't felt the same stomach-wrenching terror she now experienced on a nearly daily basis. Furthermore, once she had awoken from the dream, it was hopeless to try to go back to sleep that same night. Sleep was too elusive.

[illegible]

Hermione jumped, eyes flying open as she came out of her light doze. "Sorry, what?" She mumbled confusedly, trying to organize the papers on her desk and remember what she had been doing.

These days' meaning wartime. With Voldemort still roaming the country at large, all Aurors had to constantly be ready to spring into action. While Voldemort rarely showed himself in public lately, one never knew when a Death Eater attack might pop up. Almost four years after the death of Dumbledore, few places were truly safe, even Hogwarts.

Wanting to think of anything else, Hermione rubbed her eyes. "I'm okay, I've just been having some bad dreams," Hermione's brow furrowed in irritation. Now the blasted nightmares were interfering with work too! "I'll be alright if I can get some rest." Seeing Harry still lurking self-consciously in the doorway, Hermione gestured him forward. "Come in. I could do with some company."

"Even the Great Book Worm can't keep organized these days, hmm?"

"My desk! *I'm* afraid to go into my *office*! There's parchment everywhere!" Harry almost laughed, but not quite. Nor did his smile quite reach his bottle-green eyes, which held only a look of tense strain. Hermione knew that the same look must be in her own eyes. Lately everyone she knew had lost the ability to completely enjoy anything, even friendly conversation. "I have reports to complete as far back as that meteor shower five months ago," Harry added. He meant the meteor shower the Death Eaters had caused over Hogsmeade village. There had been only one casualty, but many injuries. Tragically the only death had been that of Madam Rosmerta, the attractive owner of the Three Broomsticks.

Harry shook his head no. "Actually, Ron has invited us to go out for drinks tonight with him and Lavender. I think they've gotten engaged or something. He's been hinting about proposing for a while now. Wanna come?"

"Not just any Monday," Harry shook his finger at her in admonishment. "Do you realize what tonight is? Besides the day before Halloween of course." At Hermione's blank look, he shook his head and clucked his tongue in disappointment. "And you call yourself a bookworm. It's the day before Samhain! At midnight tonight it'll be a holy magical day, not to mention the magical new year "

"There's the bookworm we know and love," Harry tugged a frizzy lock of hair teasingly. "Either way, Ron's probably gotten engaged and it's an excuse to get smashed."

Hermione vaguely remembered those words several hours and many pints later. Blinking blearily at her friends, she opened her mouth to say something, then realizing she had no idea what she meant to say, closed it. Remembering, she opened it again.

The four friends sat in the Leaky Cauldron, filling one of the few occupied tables in the pub; after all, few working witches or wizards would go drinking at the beginning of the work week. Parvati had been with them earlier, but several shots of tequila had sent her home over an hour ago. Behind the bar Tom was grinning his toothless grin at the drunk group, having supplied the last round for free as an engagement gift.

"We have to keep our wits about us these days." Hermione gazed into her drink gloomily. Mind functioning for only a moment, she glanced up. "What time is it?"

"I should get home. We have work tomorrow." Hermione moved to rise, but tripped over her own feet and stumbled into Ron. Giggling, Hermione apologized half-heartedly. "I guess I'm too drunk to Apparate," she announced, almost proudly.

"Hey, I'm a trained Auror," Hermione declared fiercely. "I can fight just fine on my own!"

Since there was no way to refute this logic, Hermione found herself bidding the happy couple farewell, waving to Tom, and stumbling away from the Leaky Cauldron with Harry's arm around her waist. They supported each other almost equally, nearly falling several times when one of them swerved too far in any direction. Luckily enough,

Hermione kept a small flat not too far from Diagon Alley, so they didn't have far to walk.

Thanks to low Auror's wages, the apartment was small and fairly cramped. Although Hermione kept it exceedingly clean and neat, years of grime made everything slightly grey. It was still a fairly comfortable home, however, which Hermione appreciated. Once they had stumbled up the single flight of stairs to her home, Hermione struggled to unlock the door before all but falling into the small living area and collapsing onto her squishy red couch. Harry lurked in the still open doorway for a moment, uncertain of what to do.

"You're too drunk to walk home alone," Hermione announced. "You live too far away. Come stay on my couch."

"Okay." Harry shrugged before closing the door and following her onto the couch.

"Unh, I don't feel like moving," Hermione groaned, shifting to give Harry some space on the couch.

"That's fine, we both fit." Harry pulled off his shoes and robes, laying them carefully on the floor nearby. His glasses went on the coffee table and he began to unbutton his shirt.

"Are you stripping?" Hermione mumbled lazily, giggling tipsily.

"Is it okay for me to sleep in my boxers?" Harry paused in his undressing. "It's what I usually do."

"Whatever makes you comfortable." Hermione leaned back, closing her eyes sleepily. A few moments later Harry was nudging her with his feet as he lay down, pulling the small blanket she kept on the couch over himself. "Can I lie down next to you? My room seems so far away," Hermione complained. Harry nodded sleepily. Hermione pulled off her robes and kicked off her shoes before lying down beside him, cuddling up to his warm form. "You're warm," she murmured.

"Body heat," Harry agreed.

"That's kind of nice." Hermione shifted so that she was facing him. She had never been this close to Harry in any situation resembling this one before, and was startled to find that she felt very comfortable. Hermione was rarely comfortable being close to anyone, even men she had dated in the past. But at that moment, Hermione felt closer to Harry than she had ever felt to anyone before. "Do you mind..." she trailed off as she held a finger close to Harry's scar. He shook his head.

Gently tracing the upraised mark, Hermione found herself engrossed in the feeling of his skin. Her hand trailed away from the scar to caress his forehead, and she briefly ran her fingers through his dark, messy locks. Then her hand traveled down his face, running over his straight nose and firm cheeks, which were only slightly scratchy with stubble. One finger ran across his lips, finding them oddly soft after the scratchiness of his cheeks and chin.

"You have nice lips," Hermione murmured, before leaning in and brushing her own lips against them. Liking the feeling, she kissed him again, then again, deeper this time. She didn't notice the clock on her wall hitting midnight and Samhain.

That was the last thing that Hermione remembered when she woke up the next morning completely naked on her own couch, spooning with an equally naked Harry Potter.

"Oh, fuck," was all she could say.

TBC.....

Preview:

"Harry Potter, don't you even think about telling Ginny about this! I will not allow you to destroy things with that girl just because of one idiotic mistake. Last night will be between the two of us and Ginny never needs to find out. Harry, I know how honorable you are, but last night was not important enough to jeopardize your and Ginny's future happiness. You have to let it go."

## Chapter Two

*Chapter 2 of 5*

PostHBP: spoilers. Hermione, an Auror, makes one drunken mistake and finds herself on a new path towards love, adventure, and the discovery of her true heritage. Eventual HG/SS with some HG/HP

Thank you to everyone who reviewed! You have no idea how much it warmed my heart to get all those positive replies to my first story on this site. It was especially exciting for me to see that some people added me as a favorite story or author, so thank you and I hope you continue to enjoy the story! I love all of you!!!!

Thank you to my beta, Dawn.

Chapter Two

Hermione jerked upwards, falling out of the couch. *Oh God, oh God, oh God.* She ran through her bedroom and into the small bathroom, barely making it there in time to retch helplessly into the toilet bowl. She felt unclean, like the worst kind of whore and bad friend. *Oh, Ginny,* she thought in despair. Deciding she wasn't up to dealing with this situation she fell into the shower, dressed, and left for work. Never mind it was hardly six in the morning when she dashed out the door. She trusted Harry to leave her apartment in decent condition.

Since the office wasn't open until eight in the morning, Hermione went to a nearby café to wile away the next hour and a half. She gazed despondently into her tea, picking at her blueberry muffin until it was little more than a pile of crumbs. How drunk had she been to do something like that with Harry? How drunk had Harry been to forget Ginny?

The official story from both Harry and Ginny was that they were "on a break" a.k.a. waiting until Voldemort was gone before they could be together. To ensure Ginny's safety Harry had convinced her to hide out in Romania with Charlie until the danger was gone. While neither claimed to be in a serious commitment, it was obvious that they were keeping faithful to one another. Until Hermione had ruined everything, that is.

Pushing her uneaten breakfast away, Hermione set her crossed arms on the table and lowered her head onto them. She had absolutely no clue how she was going to handle this.

Eventually it was time for Hermione to get to work. She strolled slowly from the café to the Ministry offices and made her way to the Auror's division.

"Happy Halloween and a Merry Samhain to you," declared the cheerful secretary as she walked to her office.

"Sure, why not," Hermione mumbled bleakly.

A little later Hermione was deep into her paperwork when she heard a knock at her open door. Glancing up, she saw the one person she had no desire to visit with today. "Harry." She nodded, looking back at her paperwork and continuing to scribble busily.

"Morning," Harry began slowly, watching her carefully. "Mind if I come in?"

Hermione dropped her quill, looked up and gave a large false smile. "Harry, you know you're always welcome in my office. Is something wrong?"

Harry was now looking at her like she had gone mad. "Er, don't you remember what happened last night?"

Hermione maintained her large, overly-bright smile. "Of course I remember last night, Harry. I woke up before you did today. I just don't see any reason for us to discuss it."

"Er, why not?"

"Harry," Hermione began slowly. "When I was a little girl I saw that my uncle, my mother's brother, drank a great deal. When I asked my mother why, or if something was wrong to make him drink so often, she told me that we weren't supposed to talk about it. I asked why. She told me that it isn't nice to talk about unpleasant things and that we should try to talk about something else instead. So, if there's something unpleasant happening, I just don't see why we should be discussing it. It won't solve anything and it's just upsetting."

Harry was now regarding his best friend of ten years like she had just grown another head. "Hermione, I'm pretty sure that's not a healthy attitude. In fact, I read somewhere that supporting an addiction like your uncle's by not acknowledging it can be downright harmful to everyone involved. And you never seemed to mind speaking your mind in the past."

"Harry, I speak my mind when it will solve something. Rehashing the foolishness of last night won't solve anything. What it will do is make us both uncomfortable." Harry knew that Hermione was being ridiculous, but at the same time the idea of avoiding their problems by ignoring them was attractive.

"Fine, we'll never speak of it again. But, Hermione, what about G..."

"Harry Potter, don't you even think about telling Ginny about this," Hermione snapped, dropping her freakishly false smile. "I will not allow you to destroy things with that girl just because of one idiotic mistake. Last night will be between the two of us, and Ginny never needs to find out." Harry looked uncomfortable. "Harry, I know how honorable you are, but last night was not important enough to jeopardize your and Ginny's future happiness. You have to let it go."

Harry nodded brusquely, his square jaw clenched in unhappiness. "As long as this doesn't ruin our friendship," he added.

This time Hermione's smile, although smaller and sadder, was genuine. "Of course not Harry."

After Samhain, or Halloween, Hermione threw herself into her work, distancing herself from Harry and Ron even though she had said she wouldn't. She tried to pretend that nothing had ever happened between Harry and her, but telling herself not to think about something only made her think about it even more. As the brisk fall of October progressed into the chill of November and then the outright cold of December, Hermione had never felt lonelier. Watching the snow fall outside her window every night made her remember all the winters at Hogwarts with her friends.

Of course Hermione still saw her friends. She worked with Harry and Ron, although Ron was rarely in the office because he was a good field agent and terrible behind a desk. After several examples of Ron's horrendous filing, Moody had banished him from the office. She still spent time with them, almost as much as she always had. But the huge secret between Harry and Hermione put something between them and Ron as well as between one another. Being estranged from her friends made Hermione lonelier than actually being alone would have. And of course it didn't help that Ginny would be visiting for Christmas and Ron and Lavender's wedding. Hermione didn't know how she would face her closest female friend after such a great betrayal.

One night at the Leaky Cauldron with Harry and Ron found Hermione feeling particularly lonely. The conversation had been somewhat stilted and awkward because of all the unspoken thoughts between the three friends. After a while Ron caught on to the way Hermione was refusing to look at Harry whenever she spoke, looking instead at her apple-cider. She had decided drinking only led to foolish choices.

"Alright, what's going on between the two of you?" Ron regarded them suspiciously over his drink. "Harry, you've been quiet all night, and Hermione, you haven't looked at Harry since we got here. Did you two have a fight or something?"

Hermione flashed her fake-cheerful smile. "No, Ron, of course not. Nothing's wrong, don't worry." Harry nodded his agreement. Ron, however, did not look convinced.

"Well, whatever's going on between you two, I hope you get over it by the wedding. If everything isn't perfect, Lavender'll pitch a fit, and I'd rather there not be any awkward moments." The wedding was to be on January first. "Promise me nothing'll go wrong?" Ron looked at them pleadingly.

"No worries, mate," Harry tried to be reassuring. "Nothing's wrong. It'll all be fine." It was Hermione's turn to nod.

"Just think about your wedding, Ron," she added cheerfully. "After all, it's supposed to be the happiest day of your life, right?"

After that night, Hermione and Harry tried to act more natural around one another, but it was still difficult to avoid guilty thoughts.

Hermione, in the hopes of stopping her own thoughts at least, began taking long walks through the snow, chilling herself so thoroughly that she could almost numb out her own guilty conscience. Because Hermione walked every day it came as no surprise when she came down with the flu. When the flu persisted for more than a week, Hermione decided to visit a doctor.

"Um, what?" Hermione could feel her jaw hanging open. She sat in the office of a St. Mungo's medi-wizard.

The wizard regarded her coolly, though not unkindly, across his desk. "I tested you three times, just to make sure. That's general hospital policy to avoid unfortunate mistakes. There's no doubt, Ms. Granger, you are pregnant."

"But ... how ..." Hermione trailed off, desolately staring down at the wooden desk before her. Her hands absently moved to cradle her flat stomach. "I guess I haven't been getting my period, but I was just so busy .... This is terrible!"

The wizard looked confused and somewhat distressed. "I'm very sorry, Ms. Granger. Is there anything I can get you? A glass of water or some tea? You look pale."

Hermione felt pale. She also felt slightly nauseous, though that hadn't been an unfamiliar feeling of late. "So, there's no chance this is a mistake." It wasn't a question.

"No, Ms. Granger, absolutely no chance." The medi-wizard still looked troubled. "But, come now, do try to cheer up. Babies are a blessing! Nothing can bring happiness to a family like a baby!"

"Yes, of course," Hermione mumbled. She stood abruptly. "If you'll excuse me, I really must be going now. Thank you for all your help."

"Yes, yes. Well, congratulations, and I will owl you when you need another check-up." At Hermione's confused expression he explained. "It's important to monitor the baby's

progress, make sure everything's going smoothly. Oh, and one more thing!" Grabbing a bit of parchment and a quill, the wizard scribbled something quickly. "Please give this to the witch at the desk. It's for a potion you should be taking everyday. Just a spoonful when you wake up in the morning, some extra vitamins and such. Good day!"

Hermione left in a daze, numbly walking down the corridor towards the outside. Stopping only briefly to receive her potion from the young witch at the desk, Hermione continued on her way, unaware that she had even left the building until a sudden gust of wind made her shiver.

"Oh, God," she murmured, staring at the clear winter sky above. "What the hell am I supposed to do?"

TBC.....

A/N: Short chapters, I know, but otherwise too much would be happening per chapter. Hopefully the chapters will get longer later on.

Preview:

Mrs. Weasley secretly approached Hermione. "Anything you'd like to tell me, Dear?"

## Chapter Three

*Chapter 3 of 5*

PostHBP: spoilers. Hermione, an Auror, makes one drunken mistake and finds herself on a new path towards love, adventure, and the discovery of her true heritage. Eventual HG/SS with some HG/HP

Big thanks to all reviewers and to anyone who enjoys the story. Also, thanks to my beta Dawn. This happens to be my favorite chapter of the ones I've written so far, so I hope you all enjoy it too!

Chapter Three

"You're what!" Harry looked extremely unwell. In fact, he looked remarkably like he had just had one of his unpleasant encounters with Voldemort.

"I'm pregnant, Harry." Hermione tried to seem calm. Inside she was feeling just as bad as he was. "The wizard at St. Mungo's did the test three times. There's absolutely no doubt." It was actually only a little later that same day. Hermione was facing Harry over tea sandwiches at a small Diagon Alley restaurant. She had decided it would be best to inform Harry as early as possible.

"H-how are you sure it's mine?" Harry asked, instantly feeling like an asshole.

Hermione bit her lip to keep from saying something regrettable. Harry was in shock. His reaction was completely understandable, if a tad rude. After all, it wasn't as if they were in a relationship; they had just slept together once.

"You're the only one I've been with in quite some time, Harry," Hermione said quietly, leaning across the table. "The only way it could have been anyone else's would be if I'd been pregnant since last March. As I'm not as big as a house, I'd say that's unlikely."

Harry gulped nervously. "And you're... having the baby?"

Hermione sighed, rubbing her eyes wearily. "I have to have the baby. Only someone raised by Muggles would ask such a question. Abortion is against wizarding law. The population's too small." Harry didn't think to ask how Hermione, a Muggle-born, knew more wizarding law than he did. She knew everything. "I could give the baby up for adoption, to wizarding parents only of course, but few would want the child of a Muggle-born. Add to that the fact that it will be your child and it's a tricky situation."

"So you're keeping it?" Harry leaned back, still looking extremely pale.

Hermione sighed again. "I think I have to. I can't come up with any other solution."

"I'll help," Harry volunteered weakly. "I'll take responsibility."

"I know you would, Harry." Hermione smiled at him sadly. "But you don't have to. I'll take care of everything. You really needn't worry."

"God, how can I explain this to Ginny?" Harry ran his hands through his hair. "Do you think she'll ever forgive me?"

Hermione's eyes flashed. She loved Harry like a brother (excluding what had happened between them of course) and she didn't want to see him unhappy. "We won't tell anyone it's yours. I'll say I was seeing a Muggle man, we broke up, and I learned I was pregnant after. No one needs to know."

"Come on, Hermione!" Harry exploded. "Another secret? It's bad enough having to cover up what happened, but this? This is a human life we're talking about! This is our child!" He sat up straight in his chair, glaring at Hermione intently. "I hate lies."

"Then don't think about it as me helping you lie to Ginny," Hermione insisted logically. "Consider this. What if Voldemort, who has spies *everywhere*, learned that I was having your child? That would make both me and the baby targets. Do you *want* to endanger us?"

Harry collapsed in his chair, slouching his shoulders and leaning forward despondently. When he looked up Hermione almost cringed at the look of defeat in his eyes. "That was a cruel card to play, Hermione." Hermione looked away, remembering the way Harry always blamed himself for the deaths of those around him. "But you're right, as usual. So I'll go along with this madness. The baby isn't mine."

"Thank you, Harry." Hermione reached across the table, grasping his limp hand. "Thank you. It's better this way, really."

"But I will help." Harry squeezed her hand back, smiling tentatively to show that he forgave her. "Every month I'm going to have some gold from my account transferred to yours, to help the baby. And if you ever need anything....."

"I know, Harry." Hermione smiled back, feeling tears in her eyes. "We are still friends after all, right?"

"Of course."

[illegible]

"Hermione!" Mrs. Weasley ran from the kitchen to hug Hermione, arms and festive green and red apron covered in flour. "Welcome, welcome! Happy Christmas to you, dear!"

"Of course, dear, of course! Come into the kitchen when you're done. I've got some fresh cookies and a nice bit of eggnog for you. Just leave your bag in the hallway for now."

"Yes, yes." Mrs. Weasley nodded distractedly. "Any particular reason, dear?"

"Mum?" The shout came from the living room Hermione had just come through. "Anyone home?"

Ron entered a moment later, followed quickly by Lavender and then Harry.

"I am, but I wanted to stop by and wish you a Happy Christmas on the way." Lavender waved at Hermione and the twins. "Hey, Hermione, Happy Christmas!"

"Do you have time for some cookies, Lavender?" Mrs. Weasley raised a plate temptingly.

"Good girl, that one." Mrs. Weasley nodded her approval. "She'll make a nice Weasley, she will."

"Thanks, Mum." Ron rolled his eyes behind her back, snatching one of Hermione's cookies.

"Don't roll you're eyes at me, Ronald." Mrs. Weasley waved her rolling pin threateningly. "And leave Hermione's cookies alone. You can have your own plate."

"How are you?" Harry asked Hermione quietly. "Everything all right?"

Hermione smiled at Harry, refusing to answer his questions. "Happy Christmas, Harry." Rising, she grabbed the rest of her cookies and put them in the pocket of her jumper for later. "I'm gonna take my bag up to Ginny's," she called, making her way out of the kitchen. She grabbed the bag and headed up to the bedroom, munching on one of her cookies as she went. She was happy her stomach hadn't been acting up that day as she had no desire to forgo Mrs. Weasley's cooking. When she opened the door to Ginny's bedroom, she was somewhat surprised to find Ginny already there, lying on her bed with a book.

"Ginny, I wasn't sure you'd arrived yet!" Hermione dropped her bag, rushing forward to greet her friend. "You look fabulous!" Working with dragons in Romania had agreed with Ginny. She was lean and muscular and had taken to wearing her hair in an efficient and attractive French braid down her back. She wore good quality leather clothing, normal garb for one who worked around the ever volatile and frequently dangerous dragons. "Did you know Harry's downstairs?"

Ginny's pale face flushed, making her even prettier. "He is? I hadn't realized...."

"He and Ron just got here." Hermione smiled at her friends excitement, ignoring the stab of guilt it brought. "Come on, I'll go down with you to say hello."

Ginny practically flew down the stairs, meeting Harry halfway. Evidently Mrs. Weasley had just told him that Ginny was already home. The two regarded each other awkwardly for an instant before throwing themselves into a passionate embrace. Hermione watched from the flight above as Harry kissed Ginny deeply, caressing her hair tenderly before pulling back to cover her small face in kisses.

"I've missed you so much." Hermione heard him whisper. "How long has it been?"

"Since last Easter," Ginny whispered back, burying her face in his neck. "Far too long, love."

Feeling like some perverse peeping Tom, Hermione cleared her throat. "Um, hey," she mumbled uncomfortably. The couple laughed.

The three of them returned to the kitchen, joining Ron to reminisce about past Christmases. The arrival of the rest of the Weasleys, excluding Percy of course, made the kitchen, if slightly more cramped, even more homey. Fleur in particular seemed to brighten up the room, as she always did, and her and Bill's daughter was made the center of attention. Like a tiny, golden-red haired version of her mother, Celeste was definitely a charmer.

Watching Harry cradle the infant, Hermione couldn't help but touch her own stomach. Harry saw, and regarded her solemnly. Mrs. Weasley, who caught the gesture but luckily missed the exchanged glance, gave Hermione a questioning look with one raised eyebrow that spoke volumes.

It was only a little past noon, but preparations had to be made to feed the huge family, so Mrs. Weasley shooed the menfolk from the kitchen and asked, more like demanded, Hermione, Ginny, and Fleur to stay and help. Hermione, who found this slightly sexist, pulled on an apron reluctantly, complaining that she wasn't much of a cook.

"Oh, don't be silly, dear," Mrs. Weasley waved her protestations away. "All women can cook, some just don't know how yet." But Hermione was still given the easiest job: peeling and chopping potatoes to be boiled. Mrs. Weasley quickly dressed a massive goose before secretly approaching Hermione. "Anything you'd like to tell me, dear?"

Her first gift was a fossilized dragon egg from Ginny. It was a startling green color and more closely resembled dark jade than egg-shell. Her next gift was from Ron. It was a magnificent leather-bound book filled with information and brewing techniques for rare potions. Harry had gotten her a lovely charm bracelet with a Gryffindor crest charm already attached along with a charm of the Aurors' insignia. The twins had given her several of their new inventions. Charlie gave a vial of dragon's blood (a rare and

"I threw that together for you last night." Mrs. Weasley smiled at Hermione's bemusement. "A baby always needs more clothing and I have lots. If you ever need anything, you just come to me." Hermione couldn't help but embrace the woman tightly, wishing this had been her mother.

"Happy Christmas, Hermione," Harry whispered, handing her a small parcel as she headed out the front door.

Unwrapping the parcel on her living room couch, Hermione almost cried. Inside was a tiny brown teddy-bear. It was the softest thing Hermione had ever felt and it wore a miniature Gryffindor scarf around its little neck. "Thank you, Harry," Hermione whispered, hugging the bear and leaning back on the couch.

Preview:

## Chapter Four

PostHBP: spoilers. Hermione, an Auror, makes one drunken mistake and finds herself on a new path towards love, adventure, and the discovery of her true heritage. Eventual HG/SS with some HG/HP

Also, thanks to my interim beta Lucy. I do, however, need a new full-time beta, preferably an accredited one. If anyone who reads this would be interested, contact me!

"Dammit!" Hermione shrieked, throwing the dress away in irritation. It was a simple matter to charm the dress to fit better, but it was infuriating that she had to. "Anything else?" she demanded of the ceiling. Predictably, there was no answer.

The wedding dress was long and tasteful, not nearly as frilly as the bridesmaids' gowns. It draped elegantly over Lavender's slender frame and had a lavender sash



fastened around the waist. A coronet of tiny white roses crowned Lavender's head, from which hung a thin veil.

"Lavender, you look lovely," Hermione told her friend. "Nervous?"

"I think I'm going to vomit." Lavender laughed, looking pale under her make-up.

"Well, that's two of us then." Hermione smiled.

"Oh, Ron told me! Congratulations!" Lavender embraced her again.

"Thank you."

"You look like you're glowing," Parvati added.

Ginny inspected Hermione carefully. "You know, I believe you are. I guess what they say about pregnant women's true after all. You really do seem to glow."

"Oh, that's just the cold." Hermione blushed, shrugging off their compliments. "Are we going to the church soon?"

The women all crammed themselves into Mr. Weasley's new car. It was much like the old one in that it expanded to fit everyone as they climbed in, but it was still crowded due to the large skirts and the great amount of flowers. Hermione sneezed, remembering her pollen allergy. Unfortunately for Hermione the church was similarly decked out in flowers. Bunches of them hung from every surface of the small sanctuary along with white draperies and a multitude of candles.

Parvati, Hermione, Ginny and Fleur (also a bridesmaid) all preceded Lavender into the hall, but after the bride had been escorted down the aisle by her father, they all sat except for Parvati. Similarly, Harry lurked behind Ron, waving at Hermione and winking at Ginny who blushed prettily.

Hermione couldn't really remember the service later. She was too distracted by a runny nose and an upset stomach to pay much attention to whatever it was that the vicar said during the ceremony. She assumed that there had been a point where Ron and Lavender had recited some vows, and maybe said "I do," but other than that she had no clue what happened.

Hermione did remember the reception, however, which was held at the Burrow. Mrs. Weasley must have been cooking for days to prepare all that food, which fed about one hundred witches and wizards. Hermione hadn't been sure that everyone would fit, but it seemed to work out all right, so she relaxed. Because Ron and Lavender, as the center of attention, were always busy, and Harry and Ginny were spending every moment together, Hermione spent most of the reception hiding out in the kitchen. She had never been comfortable in crowds, and besides, she didn't even know most of the guests.

"Miss Granger, a pleasure indeed." Hermione almost jumped at that familiar voice.

"Professor! Ron invited *you*?" Hermione hadn't meant to make the 'you' sound quite so incredulous. She blushed at his raised brow.

"Quite alright, Miss Granger." Professor Snape chuckled darkly but did not smile. "No, Mr. Weasley did not, in fact, invite *me*. He did invite Headmistress McGonagall, however, and she brought me as her 'plus one'."

"Of course, sir." Hermione inclined her head politely. "Did you enjoy the ceremony?"

"Far too many flowers. Other than that, it would appear they are legally married, so I suppose the ceremony was a success," Snape responded dryly. "And you?"

"Oh, I wasn't paying any attention." Hermione giggled self-consciously. Even after graduating and being considered a mature, adult witch, her old Potions professor still made her exceedingly nervous. "I was too allergic to the flowers, and I've been feeling unwell all day."

"I hope you are not sick, Miss Granger." Snape raised his brow again, this time in faint, surprisingly polite concern. "Anything I can do?"

"Oh, not at all, sir." Hermione blushed even darker. "I understand it's quite normal for a pregnant woman to feel sick, so I'm not worried."

Now both brows were raised in very obvious surprise. "Congratulations, Miss Granger. I had no idea. Or, rather, is it a Mrs. Something now?"

Hermione thought that her face would burst into flames, she was blushing so furiously. "No, still Miss. I'm currently on my own, sir."

"Forgive me, then, Miss Granger. And congratulations." Snape also looked uncomfortable now. "Excuse me." With a slight bow, Snape left the kitchen, returning to the safer conversation of McGonagall.

"Stupid." Hermione banged her head lightly against the table-top. "Stupid, stupid, stupid...."

"You thinking about me again?" Ron grinned as he sat down across from Hermione.

"Ronald." Hermione sat up straight again, smiling at her friend and letting warmth infuse her voice. "I suppose I should think of you as a man now, but you still look like the fourteen year old boy I used to have a crush on."

"Really?" Ron looked rather pleased with himself. "I liked you too for a few years. Think it would've worked out?"

Hermione raised her brow in mock disbelief. "The Quidditch fanatic and the bookworm? You must be joking, Ron. No, I'm just as glad we never tried anything. I like it better this way."

"Would it insult you if I agreed?"

"Of course."

"Then I will continue to pine for you." Ron laughed as Hermione rolled her eyes. "You're looking down, though. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"No, I'm just feeling a little low. Don't let me spoil your day for you though, go dance with Mrs. Weasley."

"Mum?"

Hermione had to throw a napkin at Ron's laughing face. "I suppose that could get confusing," she admitted, giggling. "After all, now there's a Molly, a Fleur, and a Lavender. Go dance with Mrs. L. Weasley."

"Will do." Ron gave her a mocking salute before racing off to be with his bride.

"Have fun," Hermione called after him. Sighing, she stood from the table. Well, if she couldn't enjoy herself she might as well go home. At least Crookshanks would keep her company. As Hermione left the kitchen she ran straight into Ginny and Harry.

"Hermione, having fun?" Ginny gasped, laughter in her eyes. She and Harry had been dancing.

"Not really; I think I'm just gonna go home." Hermione tried her best brave smile, but couldn't quite make it reach her eyes.



## Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 of 5

Hermione must face a career change.

Huge thanks to my new beta, Althea, and apologies that this took so long to post.

## Chapter Five

"Granger, are you alright?" The gruff voice of Alastor Moody brought Hermione out of her daydream.

"Yes, sir, perfect. And you?" Hermione sat up straighter, scrambling to organize the scattered sheets of parchment on her desk. Halfway through January and she was still swimming in paperwork.

"You don't seem perfect to me," Moody stated matter-of-factly. "You haven't been paying attention at meetings, you come in late, you fall asleep, you spend half your time in the bloody bathroom, and you haven't been finishing your reports nearly as fast as usual. None of this would upset me much, but it isn't like you "

Sitting in the chair across from Hermione, the scarred old Auror regarded her with both eyes, although his false eye moved around sluggishly. As the glass eye moved to regard Hermione's midriff, Moody's real eye widened, and he leaned back in disbelief.

"Granger, do you have something to tell me?" He growled.

Hermione flushed. She hadn't thought to alert Moody before now, partially in embarrassment and partially in simple absent-mindedness. "Sir, I was getting around to telling you, I just couldn't find the right moment"

"Couldn't find the right moment " Moody yelled. "Granger, you could have been called into the field at any moment What if there had been a bloody attack, eh, what then? Would you let me be held responsible for a miscarriage?"

Hermione paled. She honestly hadn't even considered that. "Sir, I wasn't thinking. But look, I'm fine Just keep me at the desk until the baby's born, and everything will be fine, I swear "

Moody shook his head sadly. "Granger, don't you know anything? There are no desk-Aurors. If you can't go into the field, then you can't work at all. What would you do, report details about cases you haven't even seen?"

"What are you getting at, sir?" Hermione asked slowly. She was afraid that she already knew the answer.

"Look, you aren't married, right?" Hermione shook her head. "A boyfriend to help?" Again, no. "Then there's nothing for it. Hermione Granger, you are being put on an extended leave of absence. You can't work when you're pregnant, and to have a single parent working a life-threatening job is plain reckless."

"Sir, you can't mean"

"I'm sorry, Granger, but there's nothing for it." Moody looked genuinely regretful. "Until that child is a legal adult you can't work as an Auror."

"No "

"There's nothing for it," Moody repeated slowly. "I can't change policy, and even if I could, I wouldn't. This is for your own good, Granger, and much more importantly for the baby's. Clear out your office."

Hermione could feel her eyes filling with tears. Shock, outrage, and despair mingled as she fought to keep the tears from spilling.

Seeing this, Moody sighed sadly. "I really am terribly sorry, Granger. You're a good Auror: you do well in the field, you follow orders, and you process this damn Ministry paperwork faster than anyone else in this bloody department. But think; if you were to be hit in the field with almost anything, you would miscarry. And even once the child is born, there's always the extreme dangereven likelihoodthat that child might become orphaned. I can't have that on my head."

Moody stormed out of the office, leaving a stunned and teary Hermione in his wake. She felt almost paralyzed, too upset to move. If her next move would be packing up her desk, then it was a move that she had no desire to make. They had planned everything She, Harry, and Ron, they had planned to become Aurors together so that when the time came to fight Voldemort once and for all, they would be ready. Now Hermione had been neatly cut out.

"I'm gonna be sick," Hermione groaned, jumping from her seat and racing down the hall to the women's lav. Heaving dryly, Hermione remembered that she had already thrown up her breakfast earlier.

When the bout of illness had passed, Hermione collapsed against the door to her stall. Burying her face in her hands, she wept silently. What next?

[illegible]

"What will you do?" Harry stood, quite at odds, in Hermione's cramped apartment. "Do you have any money saved up?"

"On what they pay us?" Hermione snapped, sitting on her couch wrapped in a blanket. "Come on, Harry. Not all of us had rich parents leave us mountains of gold."

Harry gritted his teeth. That was low. But, ever a good friend, he let it pass for the time being, knowing how upset Hermione must be. "I'll share it with you. I was going to give you some every month. I'll just give you more, weekly."

"Harry, thank you, but don't be ridiculous. That would be unfair of me." Hermione rubbed her eyes, feeling exhausted. "I can find work, really. If nothing else, I'll move back home with my parents." She grimaced in distaste. "They are dentists after all; they do alright."

"Please, just tell me if there's anything I can do." Harry kneeled beside the couch, grasping Hermione's small hand in both his larger ones. "Anything at all."

"Go back in time and prevent all this," Hermione whispered.

When Harry's expression turned thoughtful, she rolled her eyes in exasperation. "Harry, try not to be so thick; I don't mean you really should."

Biting her lip in thought, Hermione's face brightened slightly. "No, I've had an idea. I think I know where I can go for help."

[illegible]

"I know that I'm too young to be a teacher; some of these older students were here when I was. But I was hoping you would know of some kind of apprentice, or even just assistant, position that I could fill?"

She fidgeted under Minerva McGonagall's penetrating stare, feeling awkward sitting in the Headmistress's office. The many portraits of Headmasters and Headmistresses past observed her solemnly from the walls.

McGonagall paused in thought. Continuing more like her old self, she regarded Hermione with a strict look. "But I must warn you, you will be working extremely hard."

Keen eyes flicked from Hermione's face to her slightly swollen stomach in some surprise, but McGonagall smiled congenially.

"Late June," Hermione cleared her throat. "So... I can have a job?"

[illegible]

"An assistant I could bear," Severus murmured. "It's the idea of an apprentice. I can't help but feel as though I'm training my replacement."

"Why certainly, Minerva," Severus practically purred in pleasure. "Anything you say."

"Of course, of course." Severus waved his hand distractedly as Minerva's head vanished from his fireplace.

[illegible]

Dropping her bag just inside the doorway, Hermione ventured forward.

which held a plain, dark wood table and four matching chairs. Hermione guessed that she could have food delivered from the kitchens if she so chose.

"Lovely," Hermione murmured to herself.

Hermione was unpacking and resizing her books when she heard a curt knock on her door.

"Good afternoon, Professor." Hermione inclined her head slightly, pausing in her unpacking. "What a pleasant surprise."

"No, Professor, thank you." Hermione resumed resizing books. Aside from being sacked, she couldn't help but think. "And you?"

"Well, well." Snape replaced a book he had been skimming through.



"No, sir, my stomach's just a little upset." Hermione rubbed her little belly awkwardly. She didn't know if McGonagall had told the other teachers yet.

"Miss Granger is expecting," Snape subtly informed Flitwick, leaning across Hermione to grab the pitcher of wine in front of her.

"Congratulations, child " Flitwick almost fell off of his perch in happiness. "Congratulations indeed "

"If you are having trouble with morning sickness, I can brew you something to help," Snape added gruffly.

"I'm already taking some kind of multivitamin I received at St. Mungo's, and my research says it should be ending soon." Hermione sipped her water and bit into a slice of bread, the only things on the table she could bear to eat.

Snape shook his head, his greasy black hair moving with him. "This is something else; multivitamins don't do anything for the sickness."

"And even if the sickness will end soon, there's absolutely nothing wrong with treating it for now. If you wouldn't mind, I can show you how to make it after dinner. As my apprentice, I should be teaching you how to make these kinds of things."

"Thank you, sir." Hermione went back to shoving her food around her plate, sighing mournfully. "I'll be happy as long as I can eat again."

TBC.....

A/N: Kind of an awkward ending, but that's the way it goes now and again.