

# Equilibrium

*by Lady Apythia*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy verses what is right in love and life

## Chapter One

*Chapter 1 of 8*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy verses what is right in love and life

Author's Notes: This story was written for sweetmelodykiss as part of phoenix\_fest on Insane Journal.

Disclaimer: The characters, unfortunately, belong to JK Rowling, not me. I just like to bend them to my will.

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Harry Potter threw down the *Daily Prophet* in disgust, raking his fingers through his unkempt hair, curses flying out of his mouth fast enough to top even his best flying record.

"You kiss Ginny with that mouth?"

Freezing mid-rant, Harry pivoted slowly to see Remus Lupin, looking haggard despite the lopsided grin trying to brighten his face, leaning against the doorway.

"You're dead!"

"So people keep telling me," he said, pushing off the wall and stumbling slightly.

Harry was immediately at his side, guiding him to a comfortable chair in front of the fire.

"Do you need medical help? Do you want to go to St. Mungo's? Can I get you a drink? Something to eat?"

"Harry," Remus interrupted, "I'm fine. Well, as fine as one can be expected after nearly dying, transforming in my grave and then digging myself out. Thank god no one was around. When I think what could have happened if anyone had been in the cemetery that night." He shuddered.

"You... you ... what? How?"

"Bellatrix is a particularly nasty bitch. After... after she killed Tonks" ... he averted his eyes to the fire ... "she hit me with a stunning curse and then forced the Draught of Living Death down my throat. I think she intended for me to be buried alive, which I was. What she didn't count on was the full moon and a werewolf's sense of self preservation.

"When I transformed without the aid of Wolfsbane, the pain was so intense that it I was finally able to regain my senses and crawl out of my grave."

Harry looked at Remus with complete horror etched on his face. He could not contemplate what it must have been like to crawl out of one's own grave. "But you were there with me when I went to face Voldemort," Harry pointed out.

"I had given up," Remus confessed. "My spirit had surrender, and my body was sure to follow. But then I saw Severus Snape. He was ghosting in the afterlife, or where ever we were, cursing much like you had just been. He had taken precautions against Nagani, and it looked like they had failed."

"But he's alive," Harry interrupted.

"I know," Remus assured him. "Just before he was jerked out of the realm, he told me not to be a fool and that I should go back and 'try living for once now that blight on our existence had been removed.' I thought of Severus, of Teddy, of you, and I knew he was right. It was cowardly to take death, the easy way out, when I had a son and a chance to finally live a life without the constant threat of Voldemort or war like the Sword of Damocles waiting for the last thread to unravel. So I came back."

"But that was over a year ago!" Harry protested. "Where have you been? What have you been doing?"

"Even though I decided to come back, I wasn't ready to face anyone yet," Remus said. "I was in horrible physical shape and my mental condition wasn't much better. I needed time before I could face the Wizarding World again and before I could try to be any sort of father to Teddy."

"Have you seen him yet?" Harry asked, glancing to a picture of his godson on the mantel.

Remus's eyes trailed Harry's, wincing at the image of his son.

"No," he said bitterly. "Andromeda Tonks' werewolf prejudices are even more pronounced since that was what allowed me to live while her daughter remained dead."

"I'll talk to her, Remus. You're Teddy's father; you have a right to have your son with you."

"Thanks, Harry, but this is something I need to do myself," Remus said with a sigh.

"Don't get me wrong; I am ecstatic that you are alive and relatively well and here, but what brings you back now, if not Teddy?"

"I believe it is the same issue that had you swearing so creatively when I arrived."

"Snape?"

"The one and the same."

"I can't believe they still convicted him after the testimony Hermione and I gave!" Harry ranted. "Dumbledore's portrait even confirmed Snape actions were the result of an order he gave. Snape is a war hero and deserves to be free to live his life! It's amazing he actually lived through the war and to be sent to Azkaban ..." Harry growled in frustration.

"The Ministry did leave a loophole," Remus reminded him.

"And do you know of anyone who would willingly bind himself to him for life?"

"Harry, you were just defending him rather violently!"

"Well, yes, but being a hero doesn't change the fact he's a snarky git. Can you imagine spending the rest of your life tied to him?"

"Yes," Remus whispered under his breath. "I can."

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"Harry!" Hermione squeaked in surprise when her best friend suddenly Apparated in the middle of her kitchen, causing her to drop her teacup. "How many times have I told you not to do that?"

"I'm sorry, Hermione, but I really need to talk to you," Harry pleaded, casting a quick *Reparo* to the shattered china before handing the cup back to her.

"What is it?"

"Maybe we should sit down," Harry gestured to the table.

"Okay," Hermione said slowly. It had been awhile since she had seen Harry so visibly upset. She wasn't sure she wanted to hear whatever he was about to say.

Adjusting to life post-Voldemort and the loss of so many people she loved had not been easy for her. The war had strained her relationship with her parents to the point she wasn't sure if they would ever forgive her for tampering with their memories, no matter how pure her intentions were.

And then there was Ron. While Hermione loved him terribly, she couldn't imagine spending the rest of her life with him. She could never be like Molly; marrying young and raising a Quidditch team was never her idea of a Happily Ever After. Ron deserved to be with someone whose future goals matched his own, not someone who was hanging on to a relationship just because it was the one thing left unblemished by war. She couldn't make him happy. And she wasn't happy with him.

So she made a decision. She ran. She said her goodbye to Ron in the garden at the Burrow and then Apparated directly to a dinky little cottage in the outskirts of Paris where she could heal her broken heart, along with her war wounds, in private, giving Ron a clean break, a chance to move on.

It worked for Ron, who was once again dating Lavender Brown, and if George was to be believed, the two would soon be engaged.

For Hermione, life had taken an unexpected turn nearly eight months ago when she literally ran into a supposedly dead man in a bookstore. It was the second dead man she had seen since the war ended.

"Snape was convicted yesterday," Harry said, interrupting Hermione's reverie.

"What?" she asked, appalled.

"He's been sentenced to Azkaban for life unless someone agrees to be bound to him and accept full responsibility for his actions."

Hermione's cursing was nearly as impressive as Harry's had been. "Those bloody idiots at the Ministry! They deserve to be trapped in the Forbidden Forest with irate centaurs!"

"It gets worse."

"How so?"

"Remus is alive."

"Why do you think that?" she asked guardedly.

"Because he came by my house yesterday before going to the Ministry."

"Where is he, Harry? Is he alright?"

"He's been arrested."

"What?" Hermione shrieked.

"The Minister is holding him on trumped up charges of werewolf activity during the war."

"He was a spy! He didn't commit any crimes even when he was with the pack!" Hermione was near hysterics.

"I know, Hermione," Harry said consolingly before his temper took over. "I swear the Minister is trying to eliminate all the Order members he can, especially the ones working closely with Dumbledore like Snape and Remus. Hell, they called an emergency meeting of the Wizengamot just to try Remus immediately. Said his being a werewolf was too great a threat to wait any longer."

Hermione let Harry continue his rant as her mind raced to find a solution to a problem she didn't fully understand. Remus and Severus were both in Azkaban. Two people who devoted their lives, literally, to saving the wizarding world were being repaid with punishment that probably had both of them wishing they had remained dead.

Hermione merely nodded when Harry asked to use her Floo, too caught up in her own thoughts to really pay attention to him. There was no choice. She would have to return to England. This time, she wouldn't be able to just quickly Floo in and out of the Ministry; she'd have to face more than just the interior of the Wizengamot courtroom.

"He's been convicted," Harry said gloomily, throwing himself down onto a chair. "Same sentence as Snape: Find someone willing to bind with him or it's life in Azkaban."

Hermione was quiet, her mind trying to reason out how this had happened.

"Harry," she whispered. "How did Remus end up getting arrested?"

"He went to the Ministry to save Snape," Harry said, making a face.

"How was he planning to do that?"

"I'm not sure," Harry confessed. "It's not like he was going to offer to bind himself to Snape or anything, though, right?"

Hermione was suddenly not so sure.

## Chapter two

### *Chapter 2 of 8*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life

Hermione had been in Paris for a month when the depression of being alone, working as a glorified shop keeper in a local apothecary, and licking her wounds had increased her desire to drown her sorrows in Firewhisky. Or vodka. Or maybe both. It had been a night that played out far differently than she could have anticipated.

Deciding to indulge herself, she changed into her trusty Little Black Dress, the one that pretty much guaranteed it wouldn't be her galleons falling into the bartender's hand. She figured the price for drinking away her troubles would be quite high, and she didn't intend to pay for it herself. It was the one situation in which she allowed herself to play "the girl" card.

It was a warm July night without a breeze, and Hermione tugged off her shrug, baring her shoulders and her back in an attempt to cool off. Voting in favor of air conditioning and anonymity, she decided to patron the nearest pub instead of continuing her walk to the wizarding section of the city, figuring if things went her way, she'd be too drunk to Apparate home, so it was better to imbibe somewhere within stumbling distance to her front door.

Entering the next pub she came across, she settled herself at the bar and commenced plan Get Hermione Drunk.

"Drinking alone is never a good sign, Miss Granger."

She had been possibly five, maybe six, shots down when she was certain the alcohol was affecting her mind, or at least her hearing, because she could have sworn the voice that had just whispered in her ear was the same as her dead Potions master's.

"Hit me again, Henrie," Hermione said, ignoring the obvious hallucination behind her.

"Make that two," the voice said as an arm reached passed her to drop some coins on the bar. It was a familiar hand, one she had watched fastidiously chop ingredients and stir cauldrons for five years.

"Join me?" The voice that never before had sounded so full of temptation was now practically dripping it against the bare skin of her neck as black-clad arms reached around both sides of her to pick up the shot glasses.

"Is it really you, Profesor?" she whispered, not daring to believe.

"Turn around and find out."

Slowly, she twisted in her chair until she was face to face with a very-much-alive Severus Snape.

"How? I saw you die. The blood, so much blood." The last word was barely audible as visions of her professor lying prone in a crimson pool chased away the happy fuzziness in which the alcohol had cloaked her brain.

As if sensing her change in mood, he transferred the shot glasses into one hand, along with a bottle of vodka with a nod to Henrie, and gently took one of hers in his other.

"Come, and I will tell you a story."

She followed him and the alcohol to a corner booth, unable to stop staring at her former teacher. He was dressed in a black button-down shirt and matching trousers. She briefly wondered if he had ever dared to don something other than black or his house colors. *Concentrate!* she chastised herself. *The man is back from the dead, and all you can think about is his sense of fashion.*

Back from the dead.

She downed the shot before her in a single gulp. Snape graciously refilled it.

"Thanks," she said. "I'm not used to speaking to people I watched die two months ago."

"Obviously I didn't die."

"What happened?" she asked, staring into his never-ending black eyes.

"Dumbledore had his suspicions about Nagani before he died. I was certain to always take an antivenin when Summoned."

"But you *died!*" she insisted.

"I lost consciousness due to loss of blood," he told her. "I was afraid I might die; I nearly did. The antivenin was draining from me along with the blood. The only thing that truly saved me was that I was able to apply Dittany to the bite just in time to save my life, but my body rendered itself in a state of suspension in order for it to work."

"Dittany," she said in awe. And then she smacked herself on the forehead. "Dittany! Why the hell didn't I think of that? I stood there, watching the life seeping out of you, and I had a bottle of Dittany with me! I didn't do anything!"

"Hermione," he interrupted her self-censure, "you were in the middle of a battle and had just witnessed death first hand. You can't blame yourself for not thinking clearly."

"I could have saved you," she said, looking at him with glassy eyes.

"I didn't need rescuing," he assured her.

"Doesn't everybody?" she asked, taking another swig.

"Is that why you are here?" he asked. "Looking to be rescued?"

"Why are you here?" she countered.

"To see you."

She just stared at him.

"Am I right in assuming that Potter has shown you the memories the two of you collected that night?"

She nodded.

"For nearly twenty years, I was fought over as a valuable pawn in a never-ending war. Never once was I asked how I felt about risking my life on a daily basis. Never once was anyone concerned about what I had sacrificed for the greater good of the wizarding world."

"I was. Am," Hermione assured him.

He studied her, his stare so intent that Hermione had to fight to remain still under it.

"You are in the minority then," he confided. "I am tired of running, tired of hiding. I want to have my name cleared. I want a chance at the life I have been deprived of all these years. And you, Miss Granger, are going to help me."

"Of course," she said. "Whatever you need."

"You will testify to what you have seen in my memories?"

"Yes," she said adamantly. "And you will have Harry on your side as well. He sang your praises to all at the battle before he killed Voldemort. He felt, still does, that you were unfairly manipulated by Dumbledore and should be celebrated as a war hero."

"With the Boy Who Lived on my side, how could it possibly go wrong?" Snape asked snarkily before downing his own shot.

Hermione giggled, then, appalled, covered her mouth.

"Don't," Snape whispered, reaching over to remove her hand. "I like to see you smile."

They were both silent for a second before each swallowed the alcohol before them, confused by Snape's last comment.

Hermione realized her lips were rather numb, and her limbs were feeling tingly, a sure sign that room spinning, complete babbling, and possibly even developing a close, personal relationship with the loo, might not be too far off in the future.

She toyed with the empty glass. Not meeting Snape's gaze, she asked, "Do you want to walk me home?"

She kept her eyes down as she felt him slid out of the booth and stand before her. His hand, palm up, infiltrated her line of sight. Slipping her hand over his, she stood and allowed him to lead her out of the pub.

The door to her flat had barely closed behind them before they were on each other, a tangle of arms and skin and breath and heat. Hands tore at clothing, mouths sucked at skin, tongues ran smooth, wet lines down bodies.

Somehow they had found their way onto her bed. Naked and needy, they took turns mapping each other's bodies by sight, by touch, by taste, until the desire became so great that the only thought either had was *NOW*.

Severus rolled them over until he was cradled between Hermione's thighs. She lifted her hips encouraging. Loneliness, regret, alcohol, hormones, whatever the reason, tonight, she wanted Severus, wanted him in a way she had never wanted Ron, wanted any man.

"Severus, please!"

He looked at her as if searching for a second meaning in her words. She lifted her lips to his and said with a kiss what she couldn't say with words.

"Please," she begged.

And he acquiesced, sliding his length deep inside her, causing a shudder to rock through her body. He withdrew slowly, dragging a moan from her, before slamming back into her. Her hips rose eagerly to meet each thrust, as indecipherable noises escaped her kiss-swollen lips, an action that only seemed to drive Severus to greater heights of passion.

He slid a hand between their bodies, his skillful finger manipulating her until she came undone beneath him, screaming his name until she was breathless with pleasure.

They fell asleep tangled in sweaty satisfaction.

In the morning, he was gone.

Hermione had not seen him again until she had showed up at his trial to testify, as she had promised. Even then, she was unable to speak directly to him. And now, Severus Snape was stuck in a cell in Azkaban. As was Remus Lupin. Hermione wondered how running away had managed to complicate her life even more and just what she was going to do for the men who, once again, needed to be saved.

## Chapter Three

### *Chapter 3 of 8*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life

"Hermione!" Remus Lupin threw his arms wide, and Hermione couldn't stop herself from running into his embrace.

"Are you okay? Why didn't you tell me you were leaving? Why didn't you wait for Harry or me to help?"

Hermione continued to babble against Remus' chest as he held her tight. She hated that he was being kept in this awful place, hated that he was away from her. Ever since she found him in that dusty, old bookstore all those months ago, he had become a constant in her life, someone else who was running, someone she could focus on and not have to examine her own life too closely. They weren't lovers, yet, but Hermione thought they could be. Easily. They just needed more time.

But now, they were out of time.

Just as she vowed to aid Severus, she had promised Remus to help him reclaim his life. She nursed him physically and emotionally, preparing Wolfsbane while they talked of lost comrades, friends, and lovers. She held him in silence the first time he returned from visiting that bitch Andromeda who dared to keep him from seeing his son. Her anger had sent her directly into research mode the next day. Remus would have his son back.

But not if he stayed in Azkaban.

She took a deep breath and pushed back from his embrace so she could look at him. His amber eyes, always so full of emotion, entranced her. She desperately wanted to see those eyes crinkle in happiness, twinkle with mischief again. Cupping his cheek in her palm, she stood on tiptoe and placed a gentle, chaste kiss on his lips.

"Marry me, Remus," she whispered against his neck. "Let's let the Ministry bind us together so you can get out of here and come home. With me. We'll clear your name and get your son back. I swear, Remus! I will do everything I can to help you. I will not allow you to rot here."

"Hermione," Remus interrupted, his voice husky. "I don't know what to say."

"Say yes."

"I can't ask this of you Hermione." He gently removed her from his embrace so that he was holding her at arms' length.

"Yes, you can," she persisted.

Remus released her, running his fingers through his sandy hair and sighing deeply. "Please, sit." He gestured to a rickety chair at a wobbly table that comprised the visitors room at Azkaban as he commenced pacing the small area.

Hermione watched him with wary eyes. She wasn't big on marriage ... and it certainly wasn't something she had thought about doing before now ... but it was the only thing she could think of to get Remus out of here, which was Priority One. Priority Two was getting the charges dropped and reuniting Remus with Teddy. After that, they could address what that might mean for them beyond a superficial level. In the grander scheme, getting married to help a man she had grown fond of during the last eight months was a small sacrifice.

"There's something you need to know," Remus said slowly. "About me. About Severus."

Hermione looked at him, noting the anxiety radiating from his features. *This is going to be bad*, she thought as she perched on top of a rickety chair.

"Do you know why I finally decided to reveal myself here again? Why I chose yesterday to announce that I was alive?"

Hermione shook her head.

"I heard about Severus' sentence. I decided to come forward and volunteer to bind myself to him. To give him the chance at a life he's never had."

"Why? You two loathe each other."

Remus kneeled before her, taking her hands in his. "Severus and I have a complicated relationship. We aren't friends, nor are we enemies. We're lovers. Or at least we

were, or had been."

Hermione felt her mouth drop open. She knew that Remus felt a sense of gratitude toward Severus for giving him the courage to return to this world, but she had no idea that the two of them had a more intimate history.

"But Tonks," she protested.

"Was a wonderful woman. I did love her in my own way," he assured her. "Severus is not really a relationship-type of man. We were more about anger and stress reduction. Ours was always a volatile pairing. But there was always something underlying, something deeper that neither of us have dared examine too closely."

"You love him," Hermione stated, suddenly sure of it. "Even after all that you two have been through, have done to each other, you are in love with him."

Suddenly she felt silly for being here, for thinking that she had sensed something between her and the man before her that obviously existed only in her imagination.

"Yes, I believe I am. I think Severus returns the feelings, even if he would never say so." Remus' grip tightened around her fingers. "But I'd be lying if I didn't confess to feeling something for you these last few months." He brushed his fingers against her cheek. "I think we could have been happy together. But I couldn't let Severus face the rest of his life here."

"And now you both are facing the same fate."

"Yes, well, events didn't turn out quite as I had imagined," Remus confessed with a slight laugh.

"No, I image not," she said, covering his hand with her own. "While we're in confessional mode, there is something you ought to know. A month before our paths crossed, Severus had found me. I was drunk and in a bad place mentally, as was he. One thing led to another, and...well..." She let her voice trail off before adding, "He was gone before I woke."

She locked her gaze with Remus' searching eyes. Moments past in silence before he spoke.

"There may be a way for this to work yet."

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"He suggested what?" Harry's voice rang out, causing Hermione to grab his arm and drag him bodily into the hallway, away from the remaining Order members gathering in Godric's Hollow, where Harry had restored his family home, to discuss the fates of their two spies.

Hermione had hoped to have this discussion with Harry before anyone had arrived, but luck was not on her side today. Instead, she pulled him up the stairs and into the library before locking the door and casting a silencing spell.

"He asked if I would consider being bonded to both of them," she repeated, turning to face her best friend.

"Why?" asked a dumbfounded Harry.

"I think they may be in love," she said with a shrug.

"What about you? Don't you deserve a chance to be married to someone who loves you? If you bond with them, you won't be able to marry anyone."

"Harry, this isn't about love. At least not where I am concerned."

Harry pulled her into a hug.

"You're always trying to fix things for everyone else," he said into her hair. "What about doing what you need to do? Why are you even considering this? And why is it that you didn't seem too shocked to find out either of them were still alive?"

Hermione pulled away and sat down on the couch. Harry followed. She turned to face him.

"Because I knew," she confessed. "I saw Severus once shortly after moving to Paris. It was about six weeks later that I crossed paths with Remus. He and I, well, we stayed in contact and became friends. I think we both needed someone who knew what the other had been through in order to heal."

"You really care for him, don't you?"

"He's my friend, Harry."

"He's more than a friend." Before she could protest, he continued, "I am not implying anything happened between the two of you. It's just that you get this strange look on your face when you talk about Remus."

"It doesn't matter how I feel," she said with a wave of her hand. "All that matters is that we get them out of Azkaban, the sooner the better. The rest can be dealt with later."

"I just don't want to see you get hurt," he said, reaching out to squeeze her shoulder.

"I know." She smiled at Harry. "Besides, neither would dare hurt me knowing the Savior of the Wizarding World would hex them for even thinking about it."

"Damn straight!"

They both laughed, though neither's heart was really in it.

"Will you send up Ron?" Hermione asked hesitantly. "I feel I owe him a private explanation."

Harry nodded and pulled Hermione into another hug before leaving the room.

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Silence weighed heavy in the air around the three people sitting in the rickety chairs in the cold, impersonal visitors room in Azkaban.

Hermione kept her eyes trained on her interlaced fingers, her knuckles white with tension.

"Why?" It was the low voice of Severus Snape that final broke the silence.

"It's the best option for all involved," Remus said.

"No," Severus admonished.

"Why ever not?" Hermione ask, finally daring to raise her eyes to the men before her.

"How can you even contemplate this?" Severus stared at Lupin in disgust. "You would ask her to bind herself to us for life?"

"I've already agreed to it," Hermione reminded him.

"Of course," Snape said. "She's a bleeding heart, Lupin, and you are taking advantage of her."

"Severus..." both Lupin and Hermione started.

Snape raised a hand to halt them. "Besides," he continued, "I have no desire to be bound to another person ever again."

"So you'd rather stay in Azkaban than agree to this?" Lupin asked.

"And just what exactly am I agreeing to? Married life and living happily ever after? Do grow up!"

Hermione watched as Remus' face fell. Her heart ached for him, even knowing he loved Severus and not her. Maybe Severus and Harry were right. Maybe she was just setting herself up for more emotional pain.

She hadn't realized the men had stopped talking until she felt a hand lifting her chin and was surprised to see Severus' black eyes boring into hers. "Hermione, why are you doing this?"

She felt him prod gently into her mind, and she dropped her guard, welcoming him into her thoughts. She showed him the feelings of outrage and injustice she felt at both of their sentences, the desire to see them free and living their lives, the desire to right a wrong.

"Not good enough," he said softly, their minds still connected.

This time, she showed him the ones she wouldn't say out loud. She thought about the night in the bar and what had happened later in her bedroom. How she felt discovering he was alive and then discovering the delights of his body. She shared the regret of waking alone and the concern for his safety that followed for months afterward.

"And Lupin," Severus prompted, his voice betraying his projected unaffectedness.

She showed him images of her and Remus crying and cuddling in front of the fire, of the slow building of their friendship, of the deepening of her feelings for the werewolf. The indignation she felt at his being barred from his son. Her disappointment upon finding out about his relationship with Severus. Her drive to set it right, to let the two men who never stood a chance before to finally find happiness together.

She felt the emptiness as Severus withdrew from her mind.

"Hermione," he whispered, wiping a tear from her eye. She followed his disparate gaze to Remus who looked helpless under Severus' accusing stare.

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"What did you tell her about us?" Snape demanded once the door had closed behind Hermione.

"Nothing that wasn't true!" Remus protested.

"The chit is in love with you, and you're trying to convince her to bind herself to us for life so we can shag in peace?"

"That is not what I suggested!"

"Lupin!" Snape cut him off. "She's barely an adult. She idolizes you and always wants to do what's right. Did you really think she would say no to your suggestion, no matter the cost to her personally?"

"I didn't think..."

"No, you didn't."

Silence once again fell heavy in the room as the two men were lost in their thoughts.

"We can't do this," Snape said with a heavy sigh. "She fancies herself in love with you. It's not fair to her to be trapped with us."

"Is there an 'us,?'" Though he tried for nonchalance, the uncertainty in his voice was clear.

Severus studied the other man intently.

"Aren't we a little old for this, Lupin?"

"Severus Snape, I want you to look me in the eyes and tell me you truly feel nothing for me after all this time."

"I feel a lot of things toward you," Snape answered snarkily.

"Would you really rather rot in Azkaban than be with me?"

There was a long pause, where only the breathing of two men filled the air, before Snape whispered a barely audible, "no." Before he registered what was happening, he was gathered in Lupin's arms and being snogged most soundly. Giving himself over to the only other person he had loved besides Lily, Snape surrendered to the kiss.

The banging on the door by the guard reminded them of their surroundings, forcing them apart.

"Please, Severus," Remus begged. "Give us this chance."

"What about Hermione? I've spent the better part of my life regretting tying myself to people. I don't want her to feel the same."

Remus cupped Severus' face in his hands. "You have feelings toward her, don't you?"

Snape rolled his eyes.

"You do!" Remus insisted. "Something happened that night between the two of you."

"Of course something happened; we shagged," Snape said in exasperation.

"Besides that," Remus persisted. "I see it in her, too, the way her expression changes when I say your name."

"That's because you're breaking her heart, you dumb dog, by reminding her you care for me and not her."

"But I do care for her!"

Snape locked eyes with Remus and dove into his mind. He found many of the same memories he had seen in Hermione's: them taking comfort in each other, developing a friendship, both wondering if it could be more. And then Severus had been arrested, and everything had changed.

Snape withdrew and sat wearily upon the chair. "You should marry her," he said, defeated. "You two could be happy."

"And what of you? What if I can't be happy without you? And can you honestly say you feel nothing for her?"

Snape was quiet for a moment before muttering, "Sentimental fool."

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The three of them were once again stuck in a waiting room. This time, instead of the visitors room in Azkaban, Hermione Granger, Severus Snape, and Remus Lupin were pacing a small room outside of Courtroom Five, waiting for the Minister of Magic to approve their proposal and legally bind the trio, thus releasing Severus and Remus into Hermione's care.

"Miss Granger." A clerk had peaked his head around the door. "The Minister wishes to have a word."

Giving a quick glance toward the men, Hermione followed the clerk into the courtroom where the Minister and what looked like the full Wizengamot sat. She schooled her face before the surprise could show.

"Minister," she acknowledged with a nod of her head.

"Miss Granger," Minister of Magic Cole Cresswell replied. "As you can see, we consider your proposal to be a very serious matter. Surely you understand just how unusual your request is?"

Hermione merely nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"You do understand what you are agreeing to, don't you?" asked an elderly woman to the Minister's left.

"If you find me acceptable as a warden, both Remus Lupin and Severus Snape will be bound to me magically, and I will be responsible for their actions."

"You understand that this binding is permanent?" asked a kind-looking young wizard whose gaze seemed filled with pity.

"Yes," Hermione said, trying not to let the exasperation come through in her voice. "The process functions much like a marriage. Our magical energies will be bound and cannot be unbound by any way other than death, and as neither man seems to take to death too well, I can safely assume this binding will most definitely be forever."

"And you still want to do this?"

Hermione held her head high, looked Cresswell square in the eye and respond with a strong, sure, "yes."

"Then you shall have your wish," he said, sounding like he was taking joy in something that would obviously cause Hermione much pain.

"Marsters." He gestured to the guard. "Bring in the prisoners."

## Chapter Four

### *Chapter 4 of 8*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy verses what is right in love and life

An hour later, Severus, Remus, and Hermione found themselves in Hermione's living room in France.

"Well, welcome home," Hermione said, staring at the equally unsure men before her. Unable to help herself, she began to shake, the events of the day overwhelming her as her knees gave out. She was caught by men on both sides before she hit the floor. It was too much. She was essentially a married woman. A woman with *two* husbands who were in love with each other. She didn't know whether that made her the luckiest or saddest woman alive. If only they loved her as well.

"Hermione, are you okay?" Remus asked, brushing her hair from her eyes.

She offered up a weak smile. "Yes, I guess I was just a little overwhelmed. I never imaged having one husband, yet alone two at the same time."

"Do you want two husbands?" Severus asked silkily.

"It's a little late to change my mind," she laughed.

"No, Hermione," Remus clarified. "I believe he's asking what you want from us."

"I don't want anything," Hermione protested.

"Really?" Severus purred, running his hand up her arm.

"Nothing?" Remus echoed, his actions mirroring Severus'.

Hermione's eyes flashed from one man to the other. They certainly couldn't mean what she thought they did. Deciding she was obviously misinterpreting the situation, she found herself in need of space and a moment alone to gather herself. "Tea anyone?" she asked, jumping up from the sofa and heading to the kitchen, not waiting for a response.



As she set about boiling the water and searching through her cupboard for tea leaves, Hermione chastised herself for even considering the possibility that either man may be interested in her. Yes, she and Severus had a thing a year ago, but it was one night. Who knew how many "one nights" he and Remus had shared. Sighing heavily, she set cups down on the counter. It would be nice to have a real marriage, even if it were unconventional. Shaking her head, she inhaled deeply, forced all unreasonable thoughts from her mind, and returned to the waiting men.

After a few uncomfortable moments of sipping tea and searching for conversation topics, Hermione gave up and suggested the men get settled in their new life.

"This is your home now, as small as it is, but I'm sure we'll figure out how to make it work," she assured them. "Shall I show you to your room? I think I'm going to turn in early. It's been a long day."

The men followed her up the stairs. Hermione regretted having to sacrifice her personal haven of a library to create a bedroom for the men, but ultimately, she figured it was a small sacrifice. She could always use magic to create another room downstairs for her books. She opened the door and ushered them in.

"Of course you are free to redecorate as you wish," she said, gesturing to the room which now contained a large four poster covered with caramel-colored linens that complimented the mahogany wood that dominated the room. "There is a wardrobe for both of you," she said, gesturing unnecessarily to them.

"We're sharing a room?" Severus asked, eyebrow raised.

"I... I thought that was what you wanted," Hermione stuttered, feeling stupid.

"It's fine," Remus assured, hugging her. "You've done so much for us Hermione. We couldn't ask for more."

She looked over Remus' shoulder to Severus. "I didn't mean to assume... I am sure we can work some magic to create more room. You can have my room."

Snape walked up beside Remus and hesitantly put his arm around Hermione. "There is no need to offer up your room until you're ready. This will be fine."

Confused by his words, Hermione gave up trying to figure anything else out until she had some sleep and distance from the life-changing actions of the day. Excusing herself, she bade the men a good night, leaving them alone in their room.

"This isn't going to work," Snape sighed as he collapsed on the bed.

"Ever the pessimist," Remus said, crawling onto the bed next to Snape. "I am pretty sure this will work just fine," he said, running his hand lightly up Snape's thigh.

"Not that, you prat," Snape said, swatting Lupin's hand away. "I meant us and Hermione. She's too young, too innocent to want what we're offering."

"She may surprise you," Remus said as he nipped at Snape's neck. "After all, she's already taken a tumble with you, and according to your unquestionable Legilimency skills, she wants to do the same with me." Remus began to unbutton Snape's robes. "Is it really such a large leap in logic to assume she might be interested in both of us together?"

"I thought I was the one assumed to corrupt young, impressionable minds."

"Well, yes," Remus said, finally baring Snape's chest and dragging his tongue from bellybutton to throat. "But this time, you'll have help."

Severus moaned and cast a quick Silencing Spell at the door as he pulled Remus' head toward him and devoured his mouth as two sets of hands worked to divest their bodies of unnecessary and unwanted clothing.

Reveling in the feel of skin against skin, the men became a tangle of limbs, each relearning the lines of a body that had been gone too long from his touch, enjoying the gasps and moans that tongues and touches brought.

"It's been too long," Remus whispered into Severus' ear. "No more waiting."

That was all the encouragement Severus needed to position himself behind Remus. With the cast of a lubricating charm, Severus sheathed himself in Remus, both men groaning at the sensation. Severus quickly found a rhythm, making sure to stroke Remus' prostate with each thrust. Pulling them both up onto their knees, Severus reached around to firmly grasp Remus' cock, stroking it in time with his thrusts as his lips sought those of his lover's. Remus reached back, tangling his hands in Snape's hair, pulling him closer.

The sensation of finally being together again, of being one, was too intense for either to last long. With a grunt from Severus and a strangled cry from Remus, the pair found their nirvana before collapsing breathlessly and satiated on the bed.

## Chapter Five

### Chapter 5 of 8

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life.

Author's Note: I hope the length of this makes up for the shortness of chapter 4.

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### Chapter 5

Hermione stumbled blearily into her kitchen and set about her morning ritual of making tea. She hadn't been able to sleep the night before knowing that the two men she desired were sharing a bed across the hall from her. Judging by the utter lack of sound emanating from the room, one of them had cast a silencing charm, leaving her to deduct that the two men had spent time getting reacquainted with each other.

Sighing heavily, she threw herself in a chair, her head in her hands. *What the hell had I been thinking?* she thought helplessly. *I can't do this. I can't lie less than four meters from them while they shag and not go crazy.* She let her forehead thump against the table, which was followed by a muffled "ow."

"Do you abuse yourself as such often, Miss Granger?"

Her head snapped up at the sound of Severus' voice. Her eyes widened in surprise to find two very fit men clad only in pajama bottoms and looking well-shagged entering the kitchen and joining her at the table. *Merlin! I am so screwed* Hermione thought, looking longingly from one man to the other, wondering just what had happened in her library last night. She was jarred out of her fantasy by the whistling of the kettle.

"Allow me," Severus said, rising to tend to the tea.

Hermione's eyes trailed his every move, following the long lines of his body as he reached into the cupboard for cups. She remembered the feel of those muscles under her hands, the way he reached to pull her closer that night. The memory of him moving under her, in her, was almost too much, and she could feel herself flush as she pulled her eyes from Severus' back into to knowing gaze of Remus seated next to her.

She unconsciously licked her lips at the sight of the man with tousled hair and bedroom eyes staring back. It was the first time she had seen him shirtless. She was surprised at the broadness of his chest and the firmness of the muscles covering his torso. Like Severus, his skin bore the marks of a hard life, and just like she had with Severus, she found herself wanting to run her fingers over those scars, trace them with her tongue, make him forget the pain they signified.

The clink of china being set before her on the table brought her attention away from her desires and to her tea as Severus settled into a chair across from her, raising his own cup to his lips. She watched, unable to tear her gaze away as his tongue snaked out and traced the remainder of the tea from his upper lip. She gasped involuntarily, startling herself out of her reverie.

"Excuse me," she muttered, racing out of the room.

Once safely ensconced in her bedroom with the door locked and warded, she paced, running her fingers through her hair.

"Fuck. Fuck. Fuck fuckfuckfuck fuck!" she chanted.

"Calm down, Granger!" she ordered herself. *I can do this*, she thought. *I just need to find myself a diversion. I just need some space.*

Deciding to go for a walk ... she wouldn't call it running away ... she quickly dressed in a pair of jeans and knit sweater and bounded down the stairs.

"I'm going..."

The words died on her lips as she found Severus and Remus in a heated embrace; Remus was backed up tight against her refrigerator as both their tongues seemed to be fighting for dominance. Severus' hands were tightly fisted in Remus' hair, controlling the angle of his head, while Remus' fingers stroked under Severus' shirt, pulling him closer.

Remus' moaned at the same moment a whimper escaped Hermione's mouth. Oh, how she envied them, both. What wouldn't she give to have been in the place of either of them in that moment? To have been between them? Her knees threatened to give as she watched Snape's hand trail down Remus' bare chest and disappear into his pants. Remus' answering growl made her shiver with longing. She leaned on the doorjamb for support, unable to move, though she knew she should go; she had no right to intrude on this private moment, yet she couldn't will herself to leave. She bit her lip as Severus slid down Remus' body, taking his pajama bottoms with him, exposing Remus' cock for a brief moment before engulfing it in his mouth.

"Fuck!" Remus gasped, his hands threading through Snape's hair as his hips buck under Snape's ministrations.

The wave of desire that hit Hermione at the sight before her nearly brought her to her knees. She wanted to touch herself, to touch them, to be touched. God, she was so turned on; she had never felt as lustful as she did watching the men in her kitchen.

"Severus," Remus moaned again. Hermione snapped her eyes back to his face at the sound of his voice, only to find open, lust-filled amber eyes locked on hers.

She fled.

She was several streets away and half-way through the park before she stopped running. Full of unrequited lust, shame, and heartbreak, she collapsed under a tree, allowing her emotions free reign as tears streamed down her face.

It was dusk when she stumbled back down the streets toward her home. Not really wanting to go inside, but not having much choice as she had left her wallet in there, she walked up the stairs. Reaching for the door, she changed her mind at the last minute and Apparated away.

She staggered at the force at which she appeared outside of the Burrow. Doubling over, she waited for the nausea and dizziness to subside. When it passed, she stood and knocked on the door.

"Hermione!" Ginny's squeal alerted the rest of the house to her arrival.

After being greeted by Harry and several redheads, Hermione found herself seated in the living room, a cup of tea thrust in her hand and an audience of Weasleys wanting to know what life was like being bound to Severus Snape and Remus Lupin.

"How are you holding up, dear?" Molly asked.

"I'm fine," Hermione answered.

"Must be rather interesting being tied to two men," Ginny said cheekily, causing Hermione to drop her cup.

"Sorry," she muttered as the Weasleys laughed. She whispered a quick *Reparo*, only the cup flew back together with such force that it shattered again.

"Having trouble with your new magic, Hermione?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"What do you mean 'new magic'?" Harry asked.

"Now that Remus and Severus are bonded to Hermione, their magical power is tied to hers. When she casts a spell, it's not just her magic, but the magical ability of all three of them behind her," Mr. Weasley said.

"You mean I am using their energy?" Hermione asked incredulously.

"Yes," Mr. Weasley responded with surprise. "Didn't the Ministry explain this to you?"

"No," she said slowly. "I knew we'd be bound, but ..."

"But you didn't understand what it meant, really," Mrs. Weasley said with pity.

"Hermione," Mr. Weasley started. "Remus and Severus are now bound to you. You have full access to their magic. You control it essentially. You are now the vessel through which they can do magic."

"I don't understand."

"Without you, they would be powerless," he said. "You have the ability to block them from accessing their own magic."

"What?" several voices sounded at once.

"No!" Hermione denied. "No! This can't be true! The Ministry would never..." She looked imploring to Mr. Weasley. "Why? Why did you let me do this?"

"It was the best option," he sighed. "And I knew you would never abuse this power."

Hermione was quiet for a moment, letting the horrified truth sink in.

"Is the reverse true?" Harry whispered. "Can they control her magic?"

"No," Mr. Weasley said. "They are bonded to her, but she is not bound to them."

Hermione was silent as she absorbed this new development. This was wrong. It was all so very wrong. This was not what she wanted; she didn't want to control their magic. She just wanted them safe.

"But, Mr. Weasley, the Minister said it was rather like a marriage bond. Surely, Mrs. Weasley, you don't wield power over Mr. Weasley's magic," Hermione pleaded.

Mr. Weasley sighed as Mrs. Weasley reached out to place a comforting hand on Hermione's arm.

"Oh, child," she said. "You really didn't know?"

Hermione shook her head.

"In the old days," Mr. Weasley began, "men would bind their wives to them in such a way. It assured obedience and gave the husband full control over his wife and her power."

"It was a practice that fell out of fashion in the last century as witches' rights increased," Molly continued.

"I believe many people had forgotten about it until the Ministry stumbled upon it and decided to use it as a new form of punishment," Mr. Weasley continued.

"It's barbaric!" Hermione cried, feeling sick. "I can't believe I did this to them!"

"It was their choice," Harry said. "They didn't have to agree to this."

"And what kind of choice was it, Harry?" Hermione said, standing and then pacing. "Be bound to me or spend life in Azkaban? Oh, god, what have I done?" she whimpered as she collapsed back on the couch.

"I assure you, Hermione," Mr. Weasley said, "both Remus and Severus knew exactly what they were agreeing to."

Hermione took no comfort in his assurance.

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It was nearly midnight when George and a rather drunk Hermione Apparated outside her home.

"Are you sure you'll be okay?" George asked.

She smiled at the concern in her friend's voice. She always thought of the twins as her older brothers, and she loved them dearly. The loss of Fred had been just as devastating to her as the other Weasleys. Since then, she'd taken even more of a concern for George; even during her self-imposed exile, she had written him often, even more than Harry.

"How can I face them?" Hermione asked, collapsing on the terrace steps.

"Talk to them, Hermione," he suggested. "They are grown men, and they made their choice. Clear the air between you. Let them know how you really feel."

Hermione let out a loud laugh. "How I really feel?" she said incredulously. "Let's see. How do you think they would react to 'I'm sorry I now control all your magical ability, and by the way, I want to shag you both silly?'"

"You what?!"

Hermione buried her face in her hands, embarrassed at her drunken confession. "I want them, George. God do I want them."

"Remus, and *Snape*?" he asked surprised.

Hermione looked up at him sheepishly and nodded.

"Damn, girl!"

"And they're already sleeping together."

"Remus and Severus. Are shagging?"

"Yes. I walked in on them in the kitchen today. *My* kitchen!"

"So why didn't you just join in?"

"Excuse me?" she looked up at him shocked.

"Come on," George chided her. "You're hardly a prude. If you want them, do something about it. I mean, you've already shagged Snape, so you know he's amenable. And Remus was with Tonks, so he can't be completely gay," he reasoned.

"I don't want a pity fuck," she mumbled.

"No, because if that were the case, we'd be taking a tumble right now," George joked as Hermione playfully smacked his arm.

"Just reminding you the option is always there," he said.

"Thanks," she said with a smile, knowing for all their flirting, nothing would ever happen between them. She sighed, struggling to her feet. "I guess it's time to face the music."

"You may be lucky," he said. "They may have already shagged themselves unconscious for the night."

"Goodbye, George," she said with a smile, turning toward the door.

"Bye, Granger," he said, disappearing with a pop as Hermione entered the building.

The house was dark and quiet as Hermione stumbled inside. She paused in the entryway, listening for sounds from her housemates ... Husbands? Prisoners? ... but finding none.

"Silencing charm," she muttered to herself as she battled her way up the stairs and into her bedroom before collapsing onto her bed, fully clothed, and falling into a drunken sleep.

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"No!" she screamed, shaking with fear as the knife dug deeper into her skin. She tried to twist, to escape, but Bellatrix' grasp was too tight.

Greyback was approaching, licking his lips with anticipation. "I love it when they scream."

He reached for her as the knife bit into her neck.

"Miss Granger!"

Her body automatically responded to the commanding voice of her former professor, and Hermione found herself suddenly awake, sitting up in a bed drenched in sweat, her heart still pounding.

"You were having a nightmare," Lupin said quietly, reaching out to caress her back. "Was it the same one?"

She nodded, not looking either man in the eye.

"He's dead, Hermione. He can't hurt you."

"He already did," she muttered, excusing herself from her bedroom.

Remus sighed heavily, running his hand through his hair. He had held Hermione through many nights like this when they first met up after the war. It had been months, however, since she had had a nightmare. He wondered what had brought this one on and hoped it hadn't been what she had seen in the kitchen earlier.

"What was that about?" Snape asked, reaching over to clasp Lupin's hand in his.

Remus hesitated, unsure as to whether or not to confide Hermione's secret to his lover. Deciding that it was probably best for all involved to know, he told Severus of the torture Hermione had suffered that night at the hands of the Death Eaters.

Severus was pale when Remus had finished.

"Did he... Did he..." Severus was unable to finish the sentence.

"She never said," Remus answered. "I could never push her for an answer."

Severus just nodded. "We should see to her," he suggested, rising from the bed and heading toward the bathroom.

"Hermione?" Snape rapped on the bathroom door.

"Go away," a whimpered voice sounded from the other side of the door.

"Hermione, please," Remus tried.

"I want to be alone now."

"Miss Granger! Open the door this instant!"

Remus glared at Snape's demanding tone. Snape looked back and shrugged. "It worked earlier," he whispered. "Perhaps she'll respond now."

"If you do not open up this door, we are coming in!" he threatened louder.

"Severus," Remus pleaded.

"Hermione," Snape's voice softened. "Please let us in. We want to help."

There was a long pause before a soft click signaled the opening of a lock, and the door swung open. Hermione was huddled against the wall between the tub and the toilet, shaking and tearful. Remus rushed to her, cradling her in his arms as he carried her back to her bedroom, Severus trailing.

They held her, one on each side, as she cried herself to sleep; both remained awake hours afterward.

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Hermione awoke to the sensation of swollen eyes and an inability to move, as if some weight were holding her in place. The night before came rushing back to her: the truth about the bonding, drowning her sorrows with George, the nightmare, crying herself to sleep. She groaned at the recollection, waking the men on either side of her.

"Drink this," a gruff voice said as a potion was thrust into her hands.

She downed the hangover potion, frustrated at herself for having a nightmare that she thought she had been over. The horrors of the war had died a slow death, and she was none too happy about their resurrection. *It must have been the stress of yesterday,* she figured. *Great!* she thought. *I get them in my bed, only to be sobbing the whole time!*

"How are you feeling?" Remus' voice was low and soothing.

"I've been better," she said.

Remus smiled at her, and her heart tightened at the memory of what she had done to him and his magic.

"Remus," she said, reaching out to cup his face. "I am so sorry."

"For what?" he asked quizzically.

She scooted up in bed so she could see both men. "Mr. Weasley told me the truth about the bonding last night. I swear I didn't know!"

She watched as the men looked from her to each other and back.

"And what truth is that?" Snape asked.

"That I can control your magic. That I am not bound to you as you are to me," she said guiltily.

"And?" he prompted.

"Isn't that enough?" she asked.

"Hermione, we were well aware of what the bonding entailed before we entered it," Snape assured her.

"Well, I wasn't!" she protested.

"Do you regret it?" Remus asked quietly.

She studied the look of apprehension on his face and Snape's weary expression. "I don't know." She held up her hand to stall their interruptions. "I certainly don't want to see either of you in Azkaban, but I didn't want this either. No one should have control over someone else."

"It's the story of my life, Hermione," Snape attempted to joke feebly.

"That's just it," she continued. "No one should have control over you, not like this."

"Hermione, do you intend to exert your control over us?" Remus asked.

"No, of course not!" she said adamantly. "I would never!"

"We know," Remus assured her. "Why do you think we were so amenable to the idea? We knew you could never use this power to harm us."

"How could you be so sure?" she asked.

"We know you," he continued. "We know your heart."

Hermione turned her pleading eyes to Severus. She knew he spent nearly his entire life answering to one master or another. Would he consider her any different? "Severus?"

He reached out and brushed a lock of her hair from her face. "Do you remember our night together in the pub?"

"How could I forget?" she said, her eyes locked on his.

"You said we all needed to be rescued," he reminded her. "Maybe that's what this is all about."

Hermione looked at him with confusion, but before she could say anything, his lips were on hers, and he was kissing her as he had that night. It was a kiss of passion and promise and a release of regret. Hermione gave in, relishing the feel of his mouth on hers, not wanting it to end.

When they finally broke apart, she looked at him with wonder. "You forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," Snape said. "After all, it was our idea."

Hermione, instantly reminded of Remus, turned to face the man on the other side of her, afraid of the reaction she might find for just kissing his lover. What she least expected was to have another set of lips crushing against hers as Remus kissed her for the first time. It was surprisingly demanding, and she yielded to his insistent tongue.

He pulled back enough to look at her, one hand clasped in hers, the other reaching out for Snape's. "Is this what you want, Hermione? Do you want us?"

She looked from one to the other, unwilling to believe what Remus was proposing.

Severus wrapped his hand around her free one, completing the circuit. "Do you want us all to be together, Hermione? To truly be together?"

Unable to form words, she just continued staring.

"Do you think us so callous as to just use you to be set free so Severus and I could carry on together? Do you think us that cruel?" Remus chided.

"I... I didn't know what to think. I didn't think," she stuttered.

"I won't deny there is something between Lupin and I," Severus said. "But you can't deny there is something between you and I, between you and him."

Hermione didn't trust what she was hearing. Surely they couldn't mean what she thought. "It was just a one night stand, Severus," she said, trying to keep her voice level.

"Was it?" he purred. "Did you truly never think of me as I have thought of you?"

Choosing to face Remus instead of answering Severus, she asked, "And what about you? You left here to bond Severus to you. Surely you can't want this?"

"Why not?" he asked her. "Why wouldn't I want the two people I love to share my bed?"

"Love?" Hermione choked on the word.

"Love," he said with affirmation. "Can you honestly tell me after all those months together, you feel nothing for me?"

Hermione shook her head, not trusting her words. *Heloved* her?

"Perhaps you need some time to think it over," Severus suggested. "Lupin and I are going to go out for a while to give you some space." He leaned over to kiss her forehead before dragging Lupin from the bed and out the door.

Hermione stared at the door long after the men had left.

# Chapter Six

## Chapter 6 of 8

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life.

"What am I going to do, George?" Hermione whined as her head met the top of the table in the Leaky Cauldron.

"What you should have done from the start," George said, stealing a chip from her plate. "Go home and shag them senseless. In fact, I've got a new product at the shop that might help you out."

Hermione groaned, lifting her head to stare at him. "I don't think I'll be introducing any Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes sex aids into my bedroom anytime soon."

"Why not? Could be fun."

"We often have different ideas as to what constitutes fun," she reminded him.

"Are you still miffed over that fantasy book? Really, you weren't trapped in there very long. And you did admit to having a nice shag, even if it was in your mind."

Hermione couldn't help smiling at the memory. It had been a good, if imagined, tumble.

"This isn't just about the sex, is it? It's about the magic," George guessed, taking a bite of Shepherd's Pie.

"That too," she agreed, pushing her lunch around her plate. "It's just not fair," she said, tossing her fork down.

"You know better than most that life isn't fair and that goes double for any dealings with the Ministry," he said pointedly. He took a long drink of butterbeer. "I have to ask," he continued, "why the famed library-lover Hermione Granger did not research this binding beforehand."

"Well, it all happened so fast," she said defensively. "I thought it was the normal type of bond used in marriages. I had no idea they were using something so archaic."

"So now you are adopting the 'what's done is done' attitude? That's not the social justice crusader I know and love. Where's the fight? Where's the dashing off to do research to set things right? Where is Hermione Granger, representative of hopeless causes and defender of lost rights? Is she too caught up in her sex life to think beyond the bedroom?"

Hermione glared at him, not because of his words, but because she knew he was right. She'd done nothing but wallow in self-pity. She should be out there looking for ways around their situation.

"I have to go," she said, standing abruptly.

"It's always nice chatting with you, Granger," George said, saluting her with his bottle as he watched her walk away.

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It was late when Hermione returned to her flat, her beaded purse filled with books, files, and copies of everything she could find on the binding that had been used on the three of them as well as other types of bindings used to control magic. Perhaps she could find a way to reverse the spell or to at least lessen her control over the men's magic. She felt somewhat better about the situation knowing that she was now being proactive. Research had yet to fail her. She refused to think this time would be any different.

"Hermione?"

She was startled to hear Remus' voice call out to her from the living room. It was still an odd sensation to come home to a house that had others in it.

"Hi," she said, peeking her head around the doorway.

"Where have you been? We've been worried," he asked, coming to hug her. Over his shoulder, Hermione could see Severus looking at her with wary eyes from a chair next to the fireplace.

"I met George for lunch in London, and then I had some research to do."

"Research?" Snape asked.

"I want to know more about our bonding," she said.

"So you didn't run away because of what happened this morning?" Remus asked with care.

"No," she lied.

"Good," he replied with obvious relief as Snape snorted, raising his eyes to hers.

"You never were a good liar," he said, standing. "Come," he said, taking her hand and leading her into the kitchen. "Knowing you, you've probably been working for hours and haven't eaten since lunch."

Hermione took a seat and watched as the two men easily moved around her kitchen, preparing leftovers from their meal for her. She nearly laughed at the reverse of the traditional domestic roles. *Severus Snape, cooking me dinner. Who would have guessed?*

As if he heard her thoughts, Snape turned to her, one eyebrow raised as if daring her to make a comment. She merely smiled sweetly and motioned for him to continue.

It wasn't long before a bowl of stew, warm bread, and a glass of wine were set before her. She tucked in as the men took seats at the table, pouring their own glasses of merlot.

"This is delicious," she said, swallowing another bite. Food was normally an afterthought for her, and as such, she subsisted more on take out and sandwiches than cooked meals. "I could get used to having you cook for me," she said cheekily to Snape.

"And what would you do for me in return, I wonder?" Snape asked silkily.

Hermione tried not to choke on her food.

Before she could reply, Remus interrupted. "Did you find anything of interest in your research?"

"It looks like Mr. Weasley was right. There is no way to reverse the bonding. Yet."

"Yet?" Snape asked.

"Just because it doesn't exist now, doesn't mean I won't find a way," she assured him.

"Hermione," Remus said quietly, "what if we don't want you to break this bond?"

"What? Why wouldn't you?"

"Well, we would end up back in Azkaban for one," Snape reminded her. "This bond is the only thing keeping us out."

Hermione's face fell.

"If you don't want to be tied to us, we do understand," Remus said immediately.

"It's not that," Hermione said with a wave of her hands. "Of course I don't want you going back to Azkaban. I just don't want this imbalance of power between us."

"We've made it quite clear that we are fine with this arrangement," Snape reminded her.

"You can't be," she insisted. "And even if you are, I'm not."

She pushed her plate away, her appetite lost. Snape merely shoved it back toward her. "Eat. You can't expect to find an answer on an empty stomach."

She started up at him.

"We all agree that the bond cannot be undone," Snape stated. "What we need to make you feel better is a way to counterbalance the unlimited control you have over us, correct?"

She nodded.

"Well, then, where are the books?"

"Books?"

"Surely you didn't return home from a day of research and not bring anything back?" Lupin chided.

Hermione smiled as she *Accioed* her bag, which flew into her hands with such force that she nearly toppled off her chair.

The men stared at her wide-eyed.

"That," she said tossing her bag on the table, "is why we need to restore balance. My spells now have the force of three people behind them, one of which is an extremely powerful wizard," she said, looking pointedly at Snape. "I can't control this amount of magic. I nearly risk my life every time I Apparate!"

"I doubt the Ministry really thought their decision through," said Snape. "I can't imagine Cresswell would be willing to give you access to so much magical power."

"If all the bonders' magical abilities are being amplified like yours, Cresswell is creating a very powerful group of allies," Remus added.

"Or enemies," Hermione countered darkly.

The men smiled wickedly as she reached into her bag and started pulling out piles of books and parchment.

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"You're being unreasonable!" Hermione railed, tossing her quill down.

"*We're* being unreasonable?" Snape said incredulously. "What you are suggesting is completely out of the question!"

"Really, Hermione," Remus implored. "You couldn't possibly believe either of these would be acceptable solutions!"

They were three days into their search for counter spell when Hermione felt the need to point out two basic ways to right the situation.

"Blood spells are powerful magic," she insisted.

"Yes, but unless you have conveniently forgotten, I am a werewolf. I will not risk infecting either of you," Remus said.

"The risk is so slight, it's practically nonexistent!"

"Hermione," Remus sighed, collapsing back into his chair. "I am not willing to take that risk. The answer will remain no."

"Severus," she pleaded, flashing her hopeful eyes to him.

He looked at Remus for a long time before answering quietly. "I can't take that risk either."

"Then we do the mark."

"No!" Snape growled, slamming his palm hard on the table. "No dark magic. No marks."

She huffed in exasperation. "There must be some way that by giving you power over me, it will cancel out this bond."

"These aren't the answers," Snape said. "I suggest we keep looking."

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"We need coffee," Harry mumbled, rubbing his eyes. "Or Redbull."

Hermione laughed at the confused looks the other wizards were giving Harry. They were nearing the fifth day of straight research, looking for any way out of their current situation. Hermione was more than grateful when Harry and George offered to lend a hand.

"I'm going to make a caffeine and sugar run," he said, yawning. "Want me to pick up some dinner?"

"That would be great," Remus said as Snape nodded.

"Curry sounds good, mate," George added. "Want me to come along?"

"Sure," Harry said before tapping Hermione's head to draw her attention from the book to him. Harry waited patiently for her eyes to refocus on him, long used to Research Mode Hermione. "Do you want some dinner?"

"What?"

"Dinner? You know, food, nutrients, brain power," George prodded.

Hermione stared at him blankly.

"I'll take that as a yes," Harry mumbled.

George knelt in front of Hermione so they were eye level.

"Don't worry, luv. We *will* find an answer," he assured her.

Standing to leave, he turned toward her. "Have you tried kissing yet?" he asked with a smirk.

"What?" three voices sounded.

"You never know," he said with a shrug. "What if it were as simple as your Muggle fairy tales? You know, the evil wizard casts a spell that can only be broken with a kiss...love conquers all, and all that nonsense."

She sat motionless, staring at him blindly for a few moments, her mind arranging pieces of the puzzle and finding that they did, indeed, fit.

"That's it!" Hermione said, jumping up. "That's the answer!" She threw her arms around George, hugging him tight before raining kisses all over his face.

"I knew you wanted me, Granger," he joked.

Hermione swatted at him as she pulled away, neither noticing the hard glares from Lupin and Snape.

"Care to share with the rest of us?" Harry asked.

"Love!" Hermione said expectantly.

"Love what?"

"Merlin, that's brilliant!" Snape said in awe.

"Care to fill the rest of us sorry saps in?" George asked.

"Love conquers all. True love. The greatest magic is love," she said, beaming as she grabbed a book and quickly sifted through its pages, stopping at a ritual titled Soul Mating and thrust it toward Harry.

"But how do you know if you are soul mates?" Harry asked, glancing over the page.

"You don't need to be, Potter," Snape said. "Amortentia and a strong lust potion would recreate the effects of true love long enough for the ritual to take place, and then afterward, when the potions wear off, so will the effect of the ritual."

"Meaning?" George prompted.

"Meaning the ritual will override the bonding, and when it dissolves, so will the Ministry's spell, only as that spell is never directly acted upon, they will never know that it is gone," Remus said, putting it all together.

"How long will it take to brew the potions?" George asked, his voice full of excitement.

"They'll be done by morning," Snape asserted.

"I'll spread the word to the other bonded couples. They were hoping you'd come up with a solution to thwart the Ministry," Harry said, heading toward the Floo.

"Just one more thing, Potter," Snape said, his eyes never leaving Hermione's. "Remind them that this ritual does actually require physical mating."

Silence fell heavily as eyes glanced from person to person, until eventually, all eyes focused on Hermione's.

"Um," she cleared her throat. "There is that."

After another pause, Remus broke the silence. "Unless we come up with another solution soon, I suggest Severus start brewing. In the meantime, we can continue researching alternate plans."

Everyone nodded, and Harry began to make a series of Floo calls to update the others on the plan.

"Pansy and Draco and Narcissa and Lucius are in, as are Claire Underbrush who is the bonder of Stan Shunpike," Harry reported.

"All the others that are bonded are couples. Quite lucky, that," George pointed out, catching Hermione's gaze.

"Well, you'd have to feel something for someone to agree to such a bonding in the first place," Harry said, immediately paling as his own logic sunk in. "Hermione, can we talk?"

"A little slow on the uptake, hey, Potter?" George laughed.

"Come on," he said, grabbing Harry by the arm. "Let's go get that caffeine you were going on about earlier. I'll fill you in."

"And what exactly might Mr. Weasley be telling Mr. Potter right about now?" Snape asked Hermione once the three of them were left alone in the room.

"He might be saying something to the fact that perhaps I might have some feelings of some sort for certain men in my life," she muttered, twisting her laced fingers in her lap.

"I am so glad that was cleared up in a precise and decisive way," Snape smirked.



She grinned sheepishly, knowing full well she was being vague, but uncertain if she could express her true thoughts.

"And what might those feelings be for those 'certain men' in your life?" Snape pressed as he walked toward her until their bodies were just a breath apart.

"I've been considering your proposal," she started, looking up into Snape's intense eyes. Her mouth went dry at the look of desire she found there. "I think I may be amenable to it."

"Hermione, you do understand what this ritual will require of us?" Remus asked, coming to stand behind her, resting his hands on her shoulders as Snape's circled her waist.

She nodded.

"And how do you feel about that?" he continued.

"I think I'd enjoy it very much," she admitted in a shy voice.

She wasn't sure which man growled and which moaned as Severus' lips crushed against hers as Remus' tongue teased a particularly erogenous spot under her left ear. Feeling their hard bodies pressed up against her from both sides made her feel light-headed and weak-kneed. She was grateful for the support of their hands, which were currently roaming the planes of her body. She was right; she *would* enjoy this very much.

Severus pulled his lips from hers, but before she could protest, she saw his mouth seek out and find Remus', and she moaned in pleasure as desire washed over her at the erotic sight of the two men she wanted kissing above her shoulder. A hand, she didn't know whose as she couldn't bring herself to look away from the kiss, began a trek under her shirt, playing with her pert nipple, as another delved below the waistband of her jeans, teasing her through her panties. Her senses were quickly overwhelmed, and she came fast and hard between the two men.

When she finally came down from her high and opened her eyes, she was still trapped between the two men, both wearing very smug grins.

"And that, love, wasn't even true foreplay," Remus teased. "Imagine what will happen later tonight after our friends leave."

Hermione closed her eyes, lustful at the thought of what it would be like to be in this position, only naked.

"As pleasurable as this was, I believe I should get started on the potions," Snape said, untangling himself from her.

Opening her eyes, she drew him close for a kiss.

"Don't you want dinner?" she asked when they broke apart.

"I'll wait for dessert," he said with a smirk before heading downstairs to Hermione's small potions lab.

Harry and George returned shortly with takeaway and several forms of caffeine. Dinner was a rather quick affair as neither Harry nor Hermione seemed to be able to look at each other without blushing, and George, who apparently was enjoying seeing his friends uncomfortable, launched into a detailed description of his new products and how, perhaps, some of the bonders might like to try them out during the ritual. By the time he finished describing all the pleasures an automated riding crop could give, Harry looked as if he were in physical pain.

"As enlightening as this has been," Remus laughed, "I believe I will take a plate down to Severus and see if he needs help with the potions. You three can continue researching if you choose."

"Do we choose?" George asked Hermione once Remus left the kitchen. "Or are you content to finally have a reason to get into bed with them?"

"George!" Harry hissed, looking a little green.

"Come off it, Harry," George said, rolling his eyes. "Hermione is a grown woman. If she wants to shag a werewolf and a former Death Eater, then let her."

"You just wish it were you," Hermione joked.

George sighed dramatically. "Yes, I've always dreamed of being in the middle of a Snupin sandwich."

All three burst out laughing, the uneasiness banished as they decided that their current solution to the bonding problem was probably their best bet.

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"I brought you dinner," Remus said as he entered the lab. "You'll need to eat in order to face dessert," he said cheekily.

Snape smirked as he took the plate and set it on the table before pushing Remus against the door and kissing him soundly. "What if I changed my mind," he asked, nipping his way down Lupin's neck. "What if I don't want to wait for dessert?" Lupin gasped as Snape's hand fondled his cock through his trousers. "What if I want you now?"

"Take me," Lupin whispered. "God, just take me."

"Shhh," Snape breathed in his ear. "You don't want them to hear, or do you?"

Remus reached for his wand to cast a silencing spell, but Snape stopped him. "No magic. She'll know."

"And what if she does?"

"Then you'll have to make it up to her while I finish the potions," Snape said, turning Lupin toward the door.

Lupin bit back a moan as Snape's fingers then tongue prepared him. He whimpered with pleasure when Snape's thickly lubricated cock slid inside him.

"I want you to fuck her tonight, Lupin," Snape whispered in his ear as he thrust hard. "I want you to drive her crazy with desire to the point she begs for both of us to take her. Think of your cock thrusting into her while I drive mine into you."

Remus bucked his hips, nearly coming at the words Snape uttered. Just thinking of having Severus fuck him while he was sheathed inside Hermione was enough for him to lose control. Snape moved faster in reaction to the pace of Lupin pushing back against him.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Snape's breath was hard, his voice ragged. "Or would you like for both of us to be buried in her. To feel our cocks moving inside her together, separated by a thin layer of skin."

With that thought and one last thrust, Remus was sent over the edge, taking Snape with him.

When their breathing finally slowed, Snape cast a quick cleansing spell before kissing Lupin once more.

"Take her to bed while I finish the potion," Snape repeated. "You're first time with her should not include me, nor with the influence of a potion."

"But..."

"Do you want her, Remus?"

"God, yes!"

"Then have her," Snape said. "There will be plenty of time for all of us."

"Do you think this will work?"

"The logic is sound enough."

"What will happen when we are no longer bonded?"

"That is for Hermione to decide."

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A/N: The reference to the fantasy book is a tip of my hat to all the wonderful stories that came from the "Lost in a Good Book" challenge.

Before anyone threatens to hex me, I promise the next chapter *will* contain the scene you've all been waiting for.

## Chapter Seven

*Chapter 7 of 8*

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life.

Remus returned upstairs to find Hermione alone, sitting on the couch, staring into the fire. He walked over, taking a seat next to her.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked her softly.

"What is right versus what is easy," she said, not trusting herself to look at him, instead focusing on her hands in her lap.

"Are they mutually exclusive?"

"I'm not sure."

He reached out and pulled her onto his lap, wrapping his arms around her, tightening his grip when she stiffened in his arms.

"Hermione, we've been dancing around this for months now."

"You love him." She was determined to talk this out, whatever *this* was before sex factored into the equation more than it already had.

"Yes, I do," he said. "But that doesn't mean I don't love you as well. There have been nights, so many nights, that I've laid awake at night wondering what would have happened if I had stayed. If I would have kissed you any one of those countless times I wanted to. God, Hermione, I've lost count of the times I wanted to take you in my arms and make love to you all night long."

"But you never did." She hated that she sounded so petulant.

"No," Remus said. "But it isn't because I didn't want to or because of Severus. It was because I was too afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Hermione, you were the only friend I had left. I couldn't risk losing you. You meant more to me than anything," he whispered, hugging her tighter.

"But not more than Severus." She looked away, gazing into the fire so that he wouldn't read the hurt in her expression.

"Please, Hermione, don't make me do this," Remus pleaded, his forehead resting on her head. "I care for you both deeply. Please don't make me choose."

"You already did, Remus," she reminded him gently.

"Hermione," he cupped her chin in his hands, forcing her to meet his gaze, "I want you. God, do I want you. You are an amazing woman. I had no idea how much I had fallen for you until I was in Azkaban and facing the prospect of never being with you again."

"I don't want to come between you and Severus."

"Why do you have to? Why does it have to be one or the other? Why can't it be both?"

"Can it?" she asked, her voice carrying the uncertainty and doubt in her heart. "Can it really be both?" She looked into his intense amber eyes and prayed it could be.

"That depends on you," he said, kissing her hair. "Can you learn to love us both?"

"I want you both to be happy," she said diplomatically.

"That wasn't what I asked," he said sternly.

"How can I possibly love both of you?"

"Who says you can't?"

She looked into his eyes and saw the soul of the man she had befriended, the man she had fallen in love with and knew she couldn't refuse him, body or heart.

"Please, Hermione, don't deny me. Don't deny us," Remus pleaded, running his hand lightly up and down her spine.

She felt the resistance flee her, but she had to put her biggest fear to rest.

"Is this just for tonight? Just to break the bond?"

Remus tilted her chin up so that he could gaze into her questioning eyes. "No, love. I would never use you like that. Don't you realize it yet? It's you that holds the power over what happens with us, if there is an 'us.' It's been you all along."

"And Severus?"

"He thinks our first time should not be under a potion," he confessed.

"I agree," Hermione said, taking a deep breath. "He should be here with us."

"He thought we should, ah, get acquainted, without him," he said sheepishly.

Hermione looked at Remus, finally comprehending.

"Oh," she said, her voice barely a whisper, suddenly feeling shy now that what she had wanted for so long was about to happen.

"I want very much to take you to bed, right now, Hermione. And then I want Severus to join us," he said, rubbing his nose against her neck before nipping at it. The sensation caused her to shudder with pleasure. "The question is, what do you want?"

She turned, her lips searching his as her arms wound around his neck. Their tongues swirled together, exploring and tasting each other's mouths. She turned in his lap, repositioning herself so that she was straddling him. He pulled her tight against him. She felt the firmness of his body ignite desire within hers, and she knew her answer.

"I want you. I want Severus," she said, her voice breathy with need. "I want you both."

With a growl, Remus kissed her fiercely. Hermione imagined this was what it felt like to be claimed by a man as his. And she wanted to be claimed. She moaned into his mouth and pushed herself tighter against his hardness. Without warning, he stood with her still wrapped in his arms, her legs now looping his waist, and carried her up the stairs.

Hermione was uncertain how they had managed to make it to the bed or how her clothes had come off so quickly. All she thought about was the need to finally be able to touch him, to run her hands through his shaggy hair and down his toned chest, to be able to kiss and taste every inch of his skin and have him do the same to her. She carried out her fantasy, her fingertips questing over his body, learning its contours, how he liked to be touched, where he liked to be teased. When she started to repeat the journey, this time with her tongue, Remus pulled her up to him and crushed his mouth to her as he rolled her underneath him.

"My turn," he said huskily before his lips mapped her body. Down her neck, across her collarbone, between the valley of her breasts. As his tongue danced along her skin, his fingers caressed her breasts, causing her to moan and arch off the bed into his touch. He moved lower, leaving a trail of kisses on her stomach, and she parted her legs at his gentle urging.

She gasped as he licked her in firm, long strokes before focusing his ministrations on her clitoris as his fingers dipped inside her. Crying out in pleasure, she rocked her hips in time with his movements, her hands fisted in the sheets. She came shouting his name, yet he continued, not relenting until she was certain she would go mad with the need to have him inside her.

"Now, Remus," she begged. "Please. I need you inside me right now."

Sliding up her body, Remus positioned himself above her. She caught his gaze, his amber eyes wild with want, and she knew hers reflected an equally strong desire. She fought her body's natural tendency to close her eyes when he slowly entered her; she wanted to see his reaction to their joining, to watch the arousal and pleasure wash across his face. She was not disappointed.

"Oh, god, Hermione," Remus choked out, moving with long, sure strokes within her. "You feel incredible."

"More," was the extent of her response.

He took her word as a directive and began to thrust harder and faster, causing her to gasp for breath between bouts of pleasure. When his lips enclosed her nipple, she was sent over the edge. With a few more unsteady strokes, Remus collapsed next to her. Gathering her in his arms, he kissed her possessively.

"That was amazing," he muttered, still breathless.

She could only nod. It was beyond all that she had imagined it would be. She drifted off to sleep, secure in his arms.

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"I do believe we are ready to test your theory, Miss Granger."

The sleeping couple opened their eyes to find Severus entering the room bearing two bottles full of potions.

"No," Hermione declared, crawling out of bed to stand before Severus, who was staring at her naked body with open lust on his face. Removing the potions from his hands, she set them on the bureau. "No potion this time. Just us."

Severus studied her with piercing eyes. "Are you sure you know what you are asking?"

"I am asking that the three of us make love without the influence of a potion," she stated back before lowering her eyes. "I need to know, Severus."

"Know what?"

She met his eyes. "That you both truly desire me, and not just because I hold the key to your magic."

Needing no more prompting, Snape gathered her in his arms and kissed her passionately until she was breathless and trembling in his arms. "What will it take to convince you?" he asked, drawing back, but not releasing her.

"That was a good start," she said cheekily before drawing his lips back to hers.

Severus' tongue wasted no time in plunging into her mouth, seeking out its deepest crevasses, causing Hermione to moan. He kissed her as though she were the very air essential to his existence, as if to be parted from her would mean his death.

Hermione gave herself over fully to Severus, letting him take whatever it was he needed. And he wasted no time in taking. Grabbing behind her thighs, he lifted her up until her legs wrapped around his hips, and he entered her swiftly, both of them gasping at the sensation.

"It's been too long," he whispered against her throat. "I'd forgotten how amazing you feel."

She knew what he meant. While she *loved* being with Remus, there was something almost primal about sex with Severus. She threw her head back, giving him more access to the sensitive skin he was currently nipping at as he thrust inside her at a steady pace.

The sound of Remus shifting on the bed caused her to open her eyes. She saw him, upside down from her viewpoint, watching them with lustful eyes. She moaned at the sight, grinding down hard against Severus, eliciting a growl from him.

Severus moved forward, bringing her closer to Remus who was now kneeling on the bed. When she was within his reach, Remus captured her mouth in a kiss. Without breaking the kiss, Severus and Remus lowered her until she was lying on the bed. She felt Severus withdraw from inside her, and she whimpered, reaching out blindly for him. He grabbed her hand and kissed her palm as he slid onto the bed on his hands and knees next to her. He guided her hand to his hard cock, which twitched under her touch, as his hand slid between her parted thighs, and his tongue teased her bellybutton.

She tore her mouth from Remus' long enough to glance and Severus and beg. "Please!"

With his eyes locked on hers, he moved between her legs, and she quivered with desire and anticipation. Without blinking, he lowered his mouth to her center, giving a long lick. As she arched and moaned with the wave of desire coursing through her, Remus positioned himself so she could take him in her mouth, pleasuring him as Severus did her.

She couldn't believe what was happening. She didn't have enough concentration to really think, so she just let go and felt, enjoying the sensation of four hands and two mouths tantalizing her body. She was a lucky, lucky girl and intended to fully enjoy the situation.

When Severus slipped a finger inside her, locking his lips around her clitoris, she cried out as an orgasm claimed her. Remus withdrew, allowing her to be vocal without obstruction. Just as she was coming back into herself, she saw Remus lean over her to lick the taste of her from Severus' mouth, and she came again as she watched them, Severus' fingers still buried in her.

When she finally could catch her breath and her vision cleared, she turned her head toward the two men casually stroking her and each other's torsos. The looks of adoration heavily dosed with lust made her want them even more. How could she not?

"What do you want, Hermione?" Remus asked, his voice low and heavy with desire.

"I want..." She paused and licked her lips, not missing how two sets of eyes trailed her tongue. "I want both of you."

"How do you want us?" Severus asked, his teeth gritted. It was then that she noticed that they were stroking each other's cocks.

She rolled to her side and then crawled toward them. Pushing their hands away, she took over caressing their cocks, loving the feel of having both of them in her hands and the sounds she was eliciting from them. But it wasn't enough, not tonight.

As if synchronized, the men leaned forward, each attacking a side of her neck while fondling a breast. She sucked in a breath, feeling overwhelmed with desire, amazed at the effect their foreplay was having on her, unsure if she would be able to handle the intensity of intercourse with both of them. But she wanted it, and she wanted it now.

"Take me," she pleaded.

"Which one of us?" Remus asked as he sucked on her earlobe, causing her to shudder.

"Both of you," she answered, her voice barely a whisper. "I want both of you inside me."

"Are you sure?" Severus asked.

"Oh, yes," she answered, nodding frantically, causing Severus to chuckle against her collarbone.

"And then," she added, lost in the fantasy of her own mind, "I want to watch you two."

Twin growls answered as she was suddenly repositioned so she was astride Remus. Severus lifted her as Remus guided himself inside her. Severus held her hips still as Remus pulled her down for a kiss. While Remus occupied her mouth, Severus whispered a spell, leaving Hermione feeling slick with lubrication. Slowly and gently, Severus' fingers prepared her.

Hermione was overcome with the sensation, wanting more yet unsure how she could possibly handle any more pleasure. She had never felt so lustful, so adventurous. She wanted to feel Remus move under her as Severus took her from behind. "Please, Severus," she begged. "Now. Now. Now now now," she kept chanting.

She felt Severus position himself, exerting some pressure on her back, so she leaned down toward Remus' chest. God, how she wanted him.

"This is your last chance to say no, Hermione," Severus warned, nudging against her opening.

She turned her head to look at him over her shoulder. "Take me, Severus."

It was all the encouragement he needed. He gently slid himself slowly inside her, his hand lightly circling her back, encouraging her to relax. Once he was fully inside her, he stilled, and Hermione relished in the sense of fullness. It was almost too much. Almost. She felt all her senses take flight as the men began to move in tandem.

This was right. This was what she wanted, and she never wanted it to end. With no conscious awareness of what she was doing, Hermione began to mutter the words of the Soul Mating Ritual.

"Hermione?" Severus asked warily, stilling behind her.

She only shook her head and continued the spell as she took control of the pace of their lovemaking. She was so lost to the sensation of sex and magic that she only vaguely noted that two other voices had joined her in recitation.

She was certain she was babbling, her arousal and pleasure building too fast to allow her to do anything but get swept along. When she came, it was if her body, her soul, shattered at the intensity of it, breaking into a million pieces before settling back into itself.

The wave of her orgasm caused her muscles to convulse around the men buried deep inside of her, milking both as her pleasure spilled over them, breaking their restraint. She felt them moving harder, faster, shouting and grunting as they found their own nirvana.

Boneless and unable to even open her eyes, she fell asleep with both men still inside her, the last of her energy draining away with the aftereffects of her orgasm.

Hermione awoke in stages. A strange sensation coursed through her as if she had ingested some potion and could feel it seeping through her veins. She tried to isolate it, to examine the feeling, but her brain was still too sluggish. The next thing she noticed was the warm, firm bodies pressed to her on both sides. She recalled the previous night of passion and felt an ache deep inside, as if both men were still inside her. The thought sent a small wave of pleasure through her, and she sighed.

"You're awake?"

She opened her eyes to find amber ones staring back.

"Shh," he whispered. "Severus is still asleep."

"No, he is not," a voice sounded from behind her. Hermione twisted to see Severus, looking equally as tousled and content as Remus. She grinned, positioning herself on her back so she could see both men, who were each resting on their sides.

Snape ran his hand across the flat plane of her stomach. Remus joined him in his exploration, locking their fingers together.

"Can you feel it?" Remus asked in awe. "Do you think it really worked?"

"Hermione, do you feel any differently today?"

She stretched luxuriously. "I feel great," she said. "Well, I am a little sore, but ..."

"I don't mean that," Snape cut her off, and she couldn't help but notice he seemed a little smug. "I meant do you feel the bond?"

She closed her eyes and considered. Was it the spell that she was feeling moving through her? She dropped her defenses and let her magic roam free. She could feel it reach out and almost caress the energy of the other two. It was a heady feeling, as if she concentrated hard enough, she could hear their thoughts, feel their emotions, touch their souls.

"Yes, I feel it," she said in awe.

"Here," Severus placed her wand in her hand. "Summon something."

Hermione looked around. "*Accio blanket.*"

A blanket from the back of the chair she was pointing at rose gently and floated toward her, lowering to the bed as her wand commanded.

"It worked!" she cried. "I wasn't using your magic!"

"Now try again," Snape instructed. "This time, I want you to try to tap into our power."

Hermione nodded, concentrating on that connection she felt. "*Accio bathrobe.*" Her bathrobe flew across the room, smacking her in the face, much to the amusement of the men in her bed.

Before she could say anything, the robe was back on the hook behind the door, and Snape was wearing a rather self-satisfied smile.

"What are you so smug about?" she asked grumpily.

"I believe the ritual worked," Remus said, looking from her to Snape.

"But we didn't use the potions. I was just... rehearsing," she said.

"It looks like they proved rather unnecessary," Snape said, pushing a stray piece of hair behind Hermione's ear.

Hermione's eyes grew wide at the implication.

"Breathe!" Remus reminded her, gently rubbing her arm.

"You mean..."

"I mean your plan appears to have worked," Severus said. "It appears we have overridden your control over our magic. Now we wait for the spell to fade and the bond to dissipate."

"In the meantime," Remus said, a sly look on his face, "I believe we have yet to fulfill Hermione's second request from last night."

Snape raised an eyebrow.

"What request?" she asked, looking from one to the other.

"I believe, my dear," Remus said with a sly grin, "you wanted to watch."

## Epilogue

### Chapter 8 of 8

Both Severus and Remus have been imprisoned and will not be released unless someone is willing to be bound to them. Hermione is forced to confront her feelings and history with both men as she debates what is easy versus what is right in love and life

### Epilogue

Hermione scanned the crowd in the hall; people were dancing, drinking, laughing, and generally being merry. She beamed, pleased that they were enjoying themselves.

"My-Kneeeee," Teddy drew his version of her name out into three syllables as he tugged on her dress. "You gotta dance with me. Daddy said so."

She smiled down at her newly adopted son. "Of course, luv."

She lifted the three-year-old into her arms and maneuvered out onto the dance floor. As she swayed with him, she couldn't help but feel like the luckiest woman alive. She had the love of two good men and the adoration of a young one. Her family was finally whole again.

Hermione, with the help of Harry and George, worked tirelessly for months to get Severus' and Remus' sentences overturned. Luck was on their side; Cresswell didn't last long as temporary Minister of Magic, and Shackbolt was given the job. His first order was to grant clemency to all war heroes.

Once Severus and Remus were free, they found they did not want to go anymore than Hermione wanted them to leave. There was an unconventional relationship, but it worked, bringing the three of them more happiness and peace than any of them had in quite some time.

When they announced their intention to marry, no one was really surprised. Hermione was pleased with the support she received from her friends and the Order members, none of whom seemed bothered by their relationship.

She looked across the floor to see Severus and Remus dancing together. She smiled at them. It still shocked her when they did something so public that acknowledged their relationship. After playing spy for so long, Severus had trouble learning to live without constantly looking over his shoulder. It was only in the last few months that he seemed secure enough to relax his guard and allow himself simple pleasures, such as dancing with a loved one, without worrying about the consequences. She knew how astonished Severus had been to find himself not only tolerated but welcomed after he had bonded with Hermione. She thought he was finally accepting that it wasn't an act; people did respect and even like him, snarkiness and all.

She hugged Teddy closer to her, as if he were a physical representation of her joy. In a way, he was. Once Remus was cleared of all charges, there was nothing Andromeda could do to keep Teddy from his rightful father. It had been a day of great celebration, full of sundaes, chocolate, and lots and lots of candy when Teddy came to live with them in their new home in the English countryside. Even Severus indulged, teaching Teddy the perfect way to slice a banana and just how much sauce one should use to top his ice cream. Teddy had laughed and then dumped half a jar of strawberry sauce in his bowl. Severus simply sighed and did the same thing, much to Teddy's delight.

And now, they were legally a family. It was a year ago that they had performed the Soul Mating Ritual, the results of which never did fade. And today, they performed rituals of another kind. Shackbolt, himself, presided over their wedding and then the adoption ceremony that made her, Severus, Remus, and Teddy a true family. No one would ever be able to break them apart now.

She kissed the top of Teddy's head.

"What was that for?" he asked.

"Because I love you."

"Good," he said, "because I love you too."

She smiled at him, doubting it would be possible to feel any more love and happiness than she did right then.

"You look very bootiful," he said suddenly.

She giggled. "Did Daddy tell you to say that?"

He shook his head. "Daddy Sevy did."

"We must work on your sense of secrecy," Severus said, coming up behind the couple and ruffling Teddy's hair. "And I thought I told you not to call me that," he said in a tone that made it clear this was an old and pointless argument.

"But you are my daddy now, too," Teddy persisted. "Just like 'Mione is my other mommy."

"That we are," he said, looking intently at Hermione.

"Yes, we are," she agreed.

"Hey, buddy!" Remus said, taking Teddy from Hermione. "What do you say to dancing with your old man?"

Teddy laughed as Remus whisked him out onto the floor.

"Can I tempt you with a dance, wife?" Severus asked her, extending his hand.

Hermione felt herself glow. She never thought she would love to be called "wife." "Just a dance?" she said suggestively.

"I think our guests would be rather gobsmacked if we shagged on the dance floor, but if you wish—"

"Maybe later," she said, tucking her hand in his.

"Definitely later," Severus insisted. "With Teddy spending the weekend with the Potters, we won't have to worry about innocent children wandering in on activities they are definitely not meant to see."

She laughed, remembering the time they had forgotten to lock the door and were caught "wrestling" by Teddy, who thought Hermione's moans were caused by bad dream like the ones he had after Severus told him a scary bedtime story.

Severus liked to act put upon by Teddy, but the truth was he absolutely adored the tyke. She would often spot them cuddled together on a chair as he read to the boy or find them in Severus' lab, Teddy playing with his toy potions kit as Severus brewed. And on the night of the full moon, Severus would do all in his power to keep Teddy occupied and not worried about his daddy.

It never ceased to amaze her. Judging by how Severus acted at Hogwarts, she never thought he might have a soft spot for any child. She was relieved to see how wrong she was.

The song ended, and Severus led her back to the table. No sooner had she sat than Teddy flung himself on her lap.

"I believe we are the parents of a monkey," Severus sighed.

"Nope," Remus said. "Just a typical three-year-old who is heavily sugared."

"Well, maybe we'll have better luck with the next one," she said, gliding her hand over her stomach.

Severus followed her movements and then paled with realization as Remus gaped. Hermione's laughter rang out through the hall.

The end

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Author's note: I apologize. I thought I had posted this ages ago. Real-life issues removed me from fandom for quite some time. I am just now coming back and finding I left

you hanging. My deepest apologies.