

Recovery and Resolve

by

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Hermione Granger leaned back on the over-stuffed sofa in her parents' parlor and groaned a little in pain. Ever since she had been petrified in her Second year, she had been down-playing exactly how dangerous the wizarding world was becoming. Because of the severe injuries she had sustained in the battle at the Department of Mysteries, however, she had had to explain everything to her parents.

It had taken over an hour. Hermione was exhausted, and her left side felt like someone was carving her with red-hot knives. Still, she managed to open her eyes to see how her parents were reacting, something she had been avoiding for some time.

They were in shock.

Hermione's mother started to open her mouth, and Hermione could tell it would not be good. Then her father jumped in.

"What you're basically saying is that there is some powerful, magical lunatic running around, with beliefs that are like a cross between Hitler and modern terrorists?"

"That's a good way of putting it," Hermione agreed.

"And, to him, we're the Jews?"

"More like the Slavs; inferiors who should be worked to death." She looked up, with a determined look. "I'm the Jew. I'm the threat. I outdo all those Purebloods, and I'm proud of it. I question their stupid, racist, bigoted theories of Muggles, the Muggle-born, and elves." She glared at her mother. "Grandmother protested nuclear weapons in the Sixties. You both protested trade with South Africa during apartheid. You both signed petitions against genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. Would you have hidden your views just because they might be dangerous? Are you just paper liberals?"

Hermione's mother glared back.

"This is a great deal of information for us to process," her father said.

"Yes, it is," Hermione agreed. "And I'm very tired. Before I go take my potions and go to bed, I need to say two things. First, just remember one thing. I am a witch. The Death Eaters know I'm a witch. Even if I weren't friends with Harry, I'd be high on their hit list, and if I'm not at Hogwarts, I'd be in even more

danger."

Hermione struggled to her feet. "Second, we need to do a ritual."

"This isn't . . . satanic, is it?" Mrs. Granger asked worriedly.

"No," Hermione said with a sad smile, "there are no spiritual forces involved at all." She hesitated, and explained, "There are runes of power. I need to lay down this potion, in the form of these runes. The potion is almost complete. Professor McGonagall, my friends Ginny and Luna, and I made it. The potion interacts with our intentions. It will keep the house safe from magical attacks."

"Is this common?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"No," Hermione said. "One of the people involved has to really understand the incantation and the runes, and most wizards don't. It's really at least two years beyond what I learned in class, but I wanted to find something like this. The potion was really complicated as well. I couldn't have made it without Professor McGonagall's help."

"What does it need to be completed?" Mr. Granger asked.

"A drop of blood of each of the people to be protected," Hermione answered. "Each person also has to be present as each rune is drawn." Hermione sighed. "I think I'll need your help getting around in any case."

"Right," her father said getting up. "I'll get an appropriate bodkin and some alcohol and bandages."

"I really hate this," Mrs. Granger said after he left.

"So do I," Hermione agreed. "I can't run away, though."

"No, I understand that," her mother answered. "How about during the day?"

Hermione snorted. "Death Eaters attack at night, like the cowards they are."

"You don't think much of them as wizards, do you?" Mrs. Granger answered.

"Mum, six students, four Fifth years and two Fourth years, fought a dozen of these so-called superior Pure-Bloods nearly to a draw. If we had been less surprised and just a little more careful, I think we would have beaten them. And some of these were supposed to be the best and most powerful Death Eaters, too."

"Like that awful Malfoy person who insulted us in the book store four years ago."

"Exactly. In fact, he was the group leader. They're terrorists. They're like the worst elements of the IRA or the KKK or those people who attacked the Israeli athletes. They can't win a straight up war."

"That both frightens me more and makes me feel a little better," Mrs. Granger said. She stood as her husband came back into the room. "Let's get this over with."

Hermione's alarm woke her up at 7:00 am the next morning. She took her potions, used the toilet, and went back to sleep until nearly noon. She had agreed to three days of bed rest in order to be released to come home, and indeed the stresses of the train ride and laying the runes the night before had exhausted her. Hermione spent most of Saturday and Sunday sleeping, even eating her meals in bed.

When Monday morning came, she was feeling better, but knew if she overdid things she would be back on her back for days. She therefore didn't argue with her parents when they told her to stay in bed as much as possible. Hermione merely got them to agree to letting her rest on the large sofa in the parlor while they were at work.

This put her near the kitchen and the downstairs 'powder room', as well as the downstairs telephone and the only television in the house. Hermione had agreed before leaving Hogwarts not to crack a book for at least four days after getting home.

Once her parents left, Hermione laid on the sofa, Crookshanks purring near her feet, surfing through the channels of their satellite connection. Even the foreign language channels were boring her, and those had always been channels of last resort, where she could lose herself in the language, if nothing else.

Too much had happened this past year, this past month, these past few days, for her to care about anything else.

Hermione had always trusted authority. That trust had survived the abuse of Professor Snape, the betrayals of Professors Quirrell and the faux Moody, the shallowness of Professors Lockhart and Trelawney. It had survived the stupidities of the Ministry of Magic, perpetuated by Ministry Fudge and others, including Percy Weasley. Delorus Umbridge had finally shown her that authority was not to be

implicitly trusted.

Even worse, Albus Dumbledore had shown that even the world's greatest authority could be tragically wrong. Worse still, Hermione had learned that she could be tragically wrong as well.

She thought about the house elves, because as painful as that was, the other memories were worse.

She had caught Dobby cleaning the common room a few nights before she had left for the summer. She had been too tired to go upstairs. She had been surprised to see him wearing all the hats she had left, and she had forced him to confess what had happened.

She had not freed one house elf, and would have failed to do so even if they had picked up the hats. How could she have been so stupid? She did not own the elves, after all, so she could not free them. All she had accomplished was cause more work for the one elf who did not make fun of her or dislike her.

That had really hurt, learning that the house elves, who even loved wizards who misused them (like Winky still loved the Crouchs), actually disliked her. She knew she was right about what house elves needed, but she had obviously misunderstood them more than she had anticipated.

Hermione was not certain what she could do to help the house elves, now that they were actively keeping an eye on her. That was one area that she had totally made a hash of.

Hermione also realized that she had made equally great errors in her relations with people. While Hermione was a brilliant young witch, she rarely questioned herself or her values. Having had little to do for two weeks in June except think of her pain, she had thought of her life and her choices without distractions. And, once she had started, she could not stop just because she found many of her discoveries very uncomfortable.

Hermione had realized for the first time how much she tended to use people, defending that use as either for that person's good, or for the greater good. She had spent nearly five years trying to make Ron and Harry into studious copies of herself, rather than encouraging them on their own merits. She had drilled all the Fifth years she could round up for their O.W.L.s as much for her own ego and benefit (so she could show off her knowledge, and check that knowledge against their's) as she had to help the students. She had done the same thing with the DA. She had used Harry's gifts to make certain that she learned the O.W.L. material. That the DA had evolved into something even more useful and important did not totally negate her original intentions.

And Harry. Looking back, she knew both that not everything she had tried to do for Harry was motivated by the best intentions, and that more often than not, she had failed to act in ways that Harry really needed.

"A saving people thing'," she muttered to herself. How could she have said that? In a way, she had accidently poked Harry in some very sensitive spots this past year.

She had gone through a very tough, even heart-breaking year. What had it been like for Harry? She had lost a friend, Harry had lost his godfather. She had seen Dumbledore proven wrong; Harry had suffered because Dumbledore had been wrong. She had lost faith in authority because of Umbridge. Harry had been tortured by her. She had fought to make people believe Harry. Harry had been publicly called a lunatic and a liar in the press and by his peers. She had been severely injured. Harry had seen his best friends injured, and knew he was partially responsible.

Hermione was lying on a huge, comfy sofa, in a loving home, with loving parents. Harry was at a sterile house, trapped with people who hated him.

Crookshanks carefully made his way to his mistress' healthy shoulder and curled up between it and her neck, purring comfort. Hermione smiled through slightly blurry eyes. Harry loved Hedwig as much as she did Crookshanks, but the owl couldn't comfort Harry as well as the cat could.

The orange fur reminded Hermione of two orangish redheads. Along with all her other problems, she knew she had to figure out what she felt for Ron Weasley. For the last year and a half, they had danced around each other, clumsily almost flirting with each other and then pulling back. The closest they had come to any actual statement of affection had been Ron's giving her that awful perfume at Christmas.

Did she like Ron as more than a friend? She wasn't certain if she was attracted to any boy, but if she was, she knew it would be either Harry or Ron, with Ron the slightly more likely, at least until that moment.

Why did they fight so much? Because Hermione wanted to control Ron, and Ron, coming from the vocal and independent-minded Weasleys, fought back. What Hermione had always hoped would evolve into friendly banter never would, she now realized, because it was really a struggle for dominance. Neither could be under the domination of the other, both had to be top dog.

Harry would never wish to dominate or change her, which should put him slightly ahead of Ron in any prospective romance. On the other hand, Harry Potter could be dominated by nobody. Anyone who stood up to Snape, Umbridge, Fudge, Dumbledore, and Voldemort would not bend to the will of Hermione Granger. While a relationship with Ron would be a never-ending fight for dominance, Harry would never fight with her, but he would ignore her, which could be worse at times.

Hermione really wished Ron was there, to hold her, but he wasn't, and she had no idea if he ever would be. She rolled over, hugged Crookshanks, and fell asleep, convinced she would figure things out by September.