

Hogwarts Exposed

By

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Chapter One Memories of the Way We Were

Saturday, August 30, 2003

As Professor Granger located an empty compartment and took a seat her mind wandered back to her first ride on the Hogwarts Express twelve years ago. *Has it really only been twelve years? It seems like a lifetime ago*, she thought to herself. *It's amazing how something as insignificant as searching for a lost toad can change you life forever.* For Hermione Granger's life was definitely changed the day she met Ron Weasley and Harry Potter. Little did she suspect that those two nervous eleven-year-old boys would end up as her best friends. Nor could she ever have envisioned the adventures they would share together.

Hermione's eyes filled with tears as she remembered what the boys looked like, that first day on the train. Harry with his unruly black hair and broken glasses and Ron with his smudged nose and mouth full of chocolate frogs.

It's strange how one's perception of events change as time passes. Who would ever think that being chased by a mountain troll and nearly killed in a girls' toilet could become a fond memory? Who in their right mind would ever wish they could be trapped in Devil's Snare again or be a living piece in a game of Wizard's Chess? The memories of those seven years constantly preoccupied her. If only she could turn back time and experience again those wonderful years and be with Harry and Ron all over again, but sadly a time turner can only turn back time a few hours, a day at most, but it won't allow one to relive her life and correct the mistakes she's made. And most sadly, Hermione reflected, it can't bring back people or restore friendships lost years ago.

Hermione Granger finished Hogwarts with the highest marks ever achieved by a student since the founding of the school over one thousand years ago. She was believed by many in the wizard world to be the smartest witch alive. *Clever with books, but stupid when it comes to life choices*, Hermione thought to herself. *All these years and not so much as an owl from either one of them; how could I have been so stupid?*

Professor Granger tried to bring herself back to reality by going over her lecture notes, but with little success. Thinking of teaching Transfiguration just reminded her of the circumstances surrounding her receiving the position. It all started when the centaur, Firenze had interpreted that Harry, Ron and she were the three proclaimed by the prophecy to be the coven that could defeat the Dark Lord.

Nearly one third of the wizard population in England had died due to the war and so it was declared by the members of the Order of the Phoenix that they should immediately seek out Voldemort and destroy him, no matter what the cost. Harry had fought for Ron and Hermione to stay behind, as he feared greatly for their safety. Hermione long suspected however that he looked upon the final battle between Voldemort and himself as a personal one, and he didn't want to risk any others.

The Order insisted that Voldemort could only be defeated by the combined efforts of Harry, Hermione and Ron. They knew that Harry would die if he battled Voldemort alone and with his death, they would lose any chance of defeating the Dark Lord. Knowing that he couldn't persuade them otherwise, Harry insisted that the families of the three should be protected, since Voldemort knew the three of them made up the covenant. That was agreed on, and both

Ron's and Hermione's parents moved into the castle at Hogwarts. As soon as they were safe, the members of the covenant were given the gifts by the Order. Gifts that would aid them in the coming battle it was hoped. Harry had been given the sword, Excalibur. Ron received the Staff of Merlin, and Hermione carried the orb of Mab.

Dumbledore had referred to them more than once as the Heart, the Mind and the Soul. Due to the obscure nature of the spell and charms that bound the three of them, some personal questions had needed to be asked. Hermione was more than a little embarrassed when she was asked if Harry and her had ever been together intimately. But on answering yes, she was told that for this quest to be successful, the Heart and Mind had to be joined.

The embarrassment didn't stop there though, as she had to face Ron after answering knowing that they hadn't ever been Intimate. The fact that Ron already knew about Harry and Hermione's relationship during the fifth year did little to lessen the redness that Hermione could feel on her face. Dumbledore never answered her questions about what would've happened if Harry and she had not been together. She even muttered under her breath that they probably would've been required to perform the duty with witnesses. Nor did he answer when she asked what would've happened if Ron and her had been as intimate as she and Harry were.

Now thinking back on it, and with the aid of hindsight, she was glad that Harry and her had the intimate relationship when they did. It gave her very fond memories to look back on.

The defeat of Voldemort certainly wasn't simple and without the gifts it would have been impossible. But defeat him they did. After his essence was banished into oblivion, they returned to Hogwarts. After three years, they knew the wizard world could rejoice. They were finally free of the constant dread of the Dark Lord. None of them could keep the smiles off their faces as they grew closer and closer to their school and families.

Those smiles were quickly replaced with frowns and then looks of fear and anguish. As they approached Hogwarts, instead of seeing a great celebration, they all witnessed truth of the war in stark reality. Smoke was rising from the rubble that had once been the location of the Great Hall. Voldemort had ordered a Death Eater attack on Hogwarts before he'd been destroyed. The Headmaster and two of the professors had lost their lives in the attack, along with twenty-one students. Six other people had also been killed. Both Hermione's and Ron's parents had been killed along with two of Ron's sisters. Harry, of course, blamed himself for having suggested they take refuge in the castle.

A service was held and the hillside beyond the Quidditch field was turned into a memorial cemetery to honor those who had lost their lives. Harry didn't attend. When Hermione returned to her room she found a simple note on her bed.

When someone destroys what is most precious to the ones he loves, that someone no longer deserves their love or friendship. I can never give you back what I have caused to be taken from you and I cannot bear to look at your faces and know that I am responsible for the grief displayed upon them. I will love you both always. I know the love you have for each other will see you through this time of grief and that together you will in time find happiness. All my love forever.

It was signed Harry. Hermione ran as fast as she could to his room, but to her despair she found he was already gone.

Hermione lowered her head to her cupped hands. Tears came to her eyes. She missed her friends, and remembering such times did little to help the feeling of separation she felt from them. Suddenly, she was shocked back to the present with a loud rapping on the glass of the compartment door.

The lovely red haired girl on the other side of the window said, "Can I join you?"

Hermione looked up in surprise, quickly wiping the tears from her eyes. "Ginny, I can't believe it's you. Come in. Come in." As soon as Ginny had closed the door, Hermione put her arms around her and had held her in a tight embrace.

Ginny returned the embrace and they both stood like this for a few moments before the silence was broken by Ginny saying, "Hermione, are you all right? I thought I saw you crying."

"I was. Every time I think of ..."

As if knowing exactly what Hermione was about to say, Ginny interrupted her, "I know. I know. It was so hard to lose so much you love and cherish in one day. I don't think I'll ever fully get over it."

As if trying to change the subject, Hermione quickly suggested, "Sit down Ginny. It's so good to see you again. What are you doing on the train? Are you going to visit friends in Hogsmeade? Why didn't you fly or Apparate?"

"Actually, Professor, I'm traveling to the same place you are. You're looking at the new Muggle Studies professor at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I assume we both took the train for the same reason: fond memories."

Hermione tried to hide the shocked expression she was sure covered her face, "You are going to teach Muggle Studies? Ginny, don't detest me for saying this, but what do you know about the Muggle World?"

"First, Hermione, I could never hate you and second, I've become rather knowledgeable about Muggles. You know that my father always had such a love for Muggle inventions. Well, after I left Hogwarts, I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I decided to learn all I could about the Muggle world and figured the best way to do it was to actually live in their world." A look of pride washed over her friend's face, "You, Professor Granger, are looking at a graduate of New York University."

Hermione couldn't avoid showing a combination of pride and envy. She had planned on going to a Muggle University herself after completing Hogwarts. Her parents had always dreamed of her becoming a doctor and in memory of them she had wanted to fulfill that dream. However, when Professor McGonagall asked her to take over as Transfiguration Professor, she had found it impossible to turn her down. Not only was it an extreme honor to be offered such a position directly out of school, but also she had such respect for Minerva that it was impossible to say no, especially after her former teacher had almost died saving the lives of two students during the devastation.

"Congratulations, Ginny. I'm so proud of you, but then you did finish first in your class, so I shouldn't be surprised. It's certainly going to be nice to have another woman on the staff. I've felt extremely out numbered these last few years and now with Minerva retiring."

Ginny interrupted, "Knowing that I'd be teaching along side you is one of the reasons I decided to take the job when it was offered by Professor Snape. Hermione, we were such good friends and then...well when Harry broke up with you and well... I know he dated Katie for awhile, but -"

"Ginny, it's all right. I know what you're trying to say. Harry and I, well I guess it must have been all hormones. We were just so comfortable with each other and I guess I just convinced myself I was in love with him. Harry, on the other hand, should have broken up with me much sooner. Not once did he tell me he loved me, probably because he never did really. Ginny, I don't blame you for our breakup. And yes, there is nothing more I'd rather see happen than us become good friends again. It's been so lonely with out Harry and..." Hermione hesitated before saying, "Ron."

Ginny noticed the hesitation in Hermione's voice before she had uttered Ron's name.

"Hermione, no one blames you. Ron was a total arse and the whole world knows it. He just let the whole bloody Quidditch thing go to his head. Maybe if he had never made the team, things would have been different between you two."

Hermione shook her head, "I don't really know. There were so many ifs when it came to Ron and me. What if I had dated him first? What if he hadn't been bitten by Remus and turned into a werewolf? What if we had ignored the dangers and made love? What if he hadn't made a professional team? Ginny, I just don't know, but once he started getting that press and the girls started following him, we had no chance."

"I was disgusted to have him as my brother. What did the headline in the Daily Prophet read? 'WEASLEY SCORES 85 IN A ROW!?' Then the text went on to quote Ron as having said he wouldn't be satisfied until he scored at least two hundred. I was totally confused. Keepers don't score points. Then when I saw the pictures of all the girls, I realized they weren't talking about Quaffles through a hoop it was about how many different women he had shagged in a row."

"Another Quaffle through a different hoop, perhaps?" Hermione said, the sarcasm edging her voice. "The money, the fame--we know which head that all went to. He definitely got the publicity he'd always envied of Harry. He never apologized; do you realize that? Never an "I'm sorry, Hermione". He just walked out of my life without so much as a goodbye. Harry, at least, left a note."

Ginny moved to the other side of the compartment next to her and embraced her tightly, not at all fooled by the amusement Hermione had attempted to convey. "Well, at least the devil got his due."

"Ginny, even Ron didn't deserve that. As much as he hurt me as a girlfriend, I can't hate him. He was a wonderful friend for seven years. If he came to me today and just apologized, I'd lean over backwards to get that friendship back. Oh! Don't get me wrong," Hermione exclaimed, noticing the odd look on Ginny's face. "I would never, ever think of him romantically again, but I miss the closeness we had. We three had a special bond."

"I guess he would have made it to two hundred if it hadn't been for that championship game that lasted four days. He had to know what would happen when moonrise came, but he was stubborn and kept playing."

"Were you at that game, Ginny?" Hermione questioned.

"Yes, I didn't really want to go, but Fred and George insisted. 'He's your brother', they said. It's the championship game. The tickets are free. So we went, and on the fourth day the sun set and Ron turned into a werewolf. I'll never forget the look on that poor chaser's face when Ron went after her. Sometimes I have nightmares about it and wake up hearing her screams. It took ten Aurors to get him off of her. Till this day I don't know how they avoided being bitten, too. But by the time the Aurors had subdued him it was too late. His bite had nearly severed the born girl's leg and she had gone into shock."

"Did anyone from the family ever try to talk to her?" Hermione questioned.

"I tried to, but she wanted nothing to do with anyone who bore the name Weasley. I couldn't blame her. She's a beautiful girl. I imagine up till then she had to fight the boys off. Just eighteen years old. She had the most beautiful long blonde hair and her figure, well she'd even give you competition."

The fact that Ginny paid her such a nice complement in the middle of such a serious conversation caught Hermione quite off guard and she turned a bright red. "Now her life will never be the same"

"No, the court, besides sending Ron to Azkaban for four years, liquidated all his assets and gave them to her, but her life is ruined. What good is money when the world shuns you? Most werewolves at least have the benefit of being able to hide what they are from the public. This poor girl had her face spread all over the wizard press. She can't walk down the street without someone recognizing her."

"Ginny, isn't Ron's time up soon?"

"Yes," she nodded, "he's scheduled to be released next Wednesday".

"Oh! Have you talked to him? What are his plans?"

"I haven't talked to him, but George and Fred have. He's changed a lot. Not the same Ron we knew. Fred and George have offered him a job managing their store in Hogsmeade until he gets on his feet."

Hermione's face turned as white as the blouse she was wearing. "He's going to be here? Here in Hogsmeade?"

"Yes."

From the look on Hermione's face, it was Ginny's turn to change the topic of discussion. "So what do you think Severus Snape will be like as a Headmaster?"

"Oh! Ginny, I don't know what to say? Sometimes it's almost as if he's developed multiple personalities. I feel so sorry for him. First he loses Lily to Harry's father. Then after all those

lonely years, he falls in love with your sister just to lose her so tragically. You were there that first year after her death. What was he like in class?"

"He certainly wasn't the Professor Snape that taught you. It was like he was there, but just going through the motions. He seemed like he didn't care anymore. Oh yes, he taught the class, but he was completely calm and quiet. It was like he was some sort of zombie from an American horror picture. He didn't yell. I don't even recall him taking house away points the entire year."

"Well, now he's a different person every day," responded Hermione. "You never know what to expect from him. One day he can be so pleasant and very personable. The next day he's mean and miserable. Day after that he looks so sad and lonely that you feel like you have to take him in your arms and hug him as tight as you can."

"Hey! Hold on, girl. Sounds to me like someone has developed a little crush on old Snapie." Ginny wiggled her eyebrows at Hermione.

"No, it's not like that Ginny," Hermione blushed brightly. "He is an attractive man and honestly, we have taken in a few shows together, but purely as colleagues. It was totally platonic. I could never picture myself in a relationship with Severus."

"Well, I sure could. When he was dating my sister he really took care of himself. His hair was clean and styled, not oily. He dressed differently; he was drop dead bloody gorgeous. There were many a night when I fell asleep thinking about him..."

"Virginia Weasley! I can't believe my ears."

"Believe them. Ginny Weasley isn't that timid shy little girl anymore." Once again she changed the subject. "So, do you do the same Animagus trick to start your first year class that McGonagall did? I nearly peed my pants the first day when that cat jump off the desk and transformed into McGonagall."

Hermione blinked once and shook herself slightly, attempting to adjust to Ginny's frankness before answering the other woman's question. "I tried that my second year, but it didn't work out quite as successfully for me as it did for Minerva. The first years were too frightened to enter the classroom. It seems a wolf lying on the professor's desk is a bit more intimidating than a cat. Oh, I nearly forgot. What years will you be instructing in Muggle Studies?"

"First through seventh."

"Goodness, Ginny, are there enough hours in the day?"

"Oh," Ginny smiled. "This isn't your normal two or three times a week class. Since there is more and more interaction between the wizard and Muggle worlds, the Board of Governors wanted all years to at least get an introduction to Muggle Studies. They realized it would be difficult to squeeze it into the students' already tight timetables, so the class will only meet once a week with two houses attending at a time. Actually, I'll only have fourteen lessons a week. Professor Snape has even worked out the schedule so that I have no classes after noon on Thursday."

"Now I'm envious. Want to trade? My schedule is so full what with Animagus training and all that. I have no idea when I'm going to prepare lessons and grade tests, let alone sleep."

"Hermione, if you're anything like you were in school, you'll make time. I assume there have been some changes since I left. Who else is on the teaching staff this year besides us?"

"Well, of course, you know Charlie is returning to teach Care of Magical Creatures and unfortunately Trelawney will be roosting in her tower again." Hermione suddenly had a disgusted look on her face.

"You don't like Trelawney, do you?" Ginny had a questioning look on her face.

"It's not that I don't like her, it's just that she's so... fake. And I hate that she goes as far as predicting student's deaths. She did it to Harry year after year and now she's doing it to Jamie. It really bothers the poor girl and she's such a good student."

"First name. Sounds a little like she's the teacher's pet."

"No, not at all, she is just a very special girl.. Jamie's at the top of all her classes and like Harry, was made seeker of her Quidditch team in first year. The girl is absolutely beautiful, but doesn't have a conceited or mean bone in her body. You'll love her, believe me."

"Sounds to me like she the product of mixing Harry and Hermione genes." Ginny laughed.
"Have you not been telling us something?"

Hermione blushed because she often wished she could have a daughter, a daughter exactly like Jamie. Unfortunately the father she wanted for her child wasn't in love with her. In fact, he was no longer even a part of her life.

"Well unless you're suggesting that Harry and I conceived a baby when we were both nine years old-- I'm afraid that's out of the question. Actually, I've met Jamie's parents. They are very nice people and have another daughter named Emily who will be starting Hogwarts next year. Let's see, where was I? Madam Hooch will be back for flight instruction and Professor Longbottom will be once again teaching Herbology. Professor Monroe quit as Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, so I guess we're back to one-year guest appearances again. I haven't heard who the lucky victim is this year. As long as it's not another Gilderoy Lockhart we'll be okay."

"Hermione!" Ginny was practically shouting. "Professor Longbottom. Is that Longbottom, as in Neville Longbottom?"

"The very same." Hermione said. After Professor Sprout was killed there was some difficulty in filling that position, but Neville started last year and really took to it."

"Is Neville still as good looking as he was your last year?" Ginny had a devilish look in her eyes.

"No. Actually I think he has gotten even better looking." Hermione couldn't help but snicker.

"And you haven't gone after--" Ginny was interrupted

"No, Ginny, Neville and I are close friends, but no more," came Hermione's firm response.

"Which sounds better, Hermione? Virginia Snape or Virginia Longbottom?"

"I'm not sure. How about Virginia Malfoy?" Hermione teasingly responded. "Draco is taking over as Potions Master now that Severus has become headmaster."

Ginny Weasley's face flushed as she sputtered, "Draco-- Draco Malfoy is teaching potions?"

Chapter Two Orientation

Sunday, August 31, 2003 5:50 AM

The room was still dark as Hermione stretched and crooked her head in the direction of the nightstand. She squinted at the alarm clock. The hand was pointing at *Go Back to Sleep You Still Have 10 Minutes*. Hermione reached out and turned the alarm off. She couldn't remember the last time she had actually heard the alarm scream *Time to Get Up Lazy Bones*. It seemed her body had just simply become conditioned to waking up every morning by 6:00 AM no matter how late she might have stayed up the night before. *It's good to be back at Hogwarts*, she reflected as she tossed the covers aside and sat up.

The start of a new year at Hogwarts always held the promise of novel and surprising things. Already Hermione had been surprised by the appearance of Ginny. It was a very pleasant surprise indeed, but a surprise none the less. She had often wondered what had become of her in the years where Hermione had little contact with the Weasleys. Yesterday on the train she had been envious of Ginny for having attended a muggle college, but deep down inside she realized she didn't want to be a physician. She loved books, she loved children, but most of all she loved teaching at Hogwarts. This was her home now and she cherished it. *Okay Hermione, lets get the day started*. Promptly she stood up and walked to the bathroom. After answering nature's call she brushed her teeth and washed her face. She looked at her hair disgustingly and reached for a hair band. *No sense worrying about that now, I'll be running alone this morning anyway*. She slipped on a running bra, a pair of shorts and sat down on the bed to put on her socks and running shoes. By 6:05 she was headed for the door.

Hermione and Harry had started running together during the summer prior to their fifth year. Harry was no longer a part of her life, but she had continued running daily.

It was a beautiful late summer morning. It was warm: at least warm for Scotland. Hermione had only begun her warm-up exercises when she was startled by a voice calling out, "Mind if I join you Granger?"

Looking up when she heard her name, she was shocked to see Draco Malfoy walking towards her. Though maybe she should've expected it considering the use of her surname. Hermione ran to meet him, immediately giving him a big hug and a brief kiss on his cheek. He returned the hug and kiss with equal enthusiasm.

"Draco, it's so good to see you again. What's it been, three years since I ran into you during my vacation in the States? Welcome back to Hogwarts."

Draco smiled in a slightly devilish manner, and Hermione could feel his gaze, or more succinctly where his gaze was fixed on. "It's good to be back and grand to see you once more. I'm pleased to see that you're taking excellent care of that rack of yours."

Hermione blushed as she gave Draco a good-natured punch in the arm. "Hey don't bruise the merchandise," Draco complained.

Hermione found herself checking over Draco for a brief moment and had to admit that he was looking quite good. Not that she'd ever let him know that.

Hermione shook her head in mock disgust. In reality she found it oddly comforting. "You'll never change, Malfoy. Less than a minute together and you're already making wise cracks about my breasts."

She'd always been slightly embarrassed by the fact that she was quite well endowed. Growing up she'd concentrated so much on her studies and mind that she'd almost grown into a woman without her or anyone else noticing it. That at least was the case until her fifth year. Still even now seven years later she felt slightly embarrassed whenever any attention was brought on her physical attributes. She'd almost died of shock when Playwizard magazine had offered her more money than she would earn in ten years teaching to pose for them. She knew that she had a good body. All the years of running had seen to that, but no matter how high the money, she was never going to seriously consider it. Her body was for her and her future husband to see, not the whole wizarding world.

It wasn't that she had never been seen naked. She and Harry had been as intimate as two could be with each other during their fifth year. Also, in one of the accidents that occurred during that year, she had inadvertently shown way more of herself to Ron, Draco and Ginny than she had ever planned. Something Hermione realized that Malfoy was still fondly remembering till this day when he asked, "Have you flashed anyone lately, Granger?"

He moved quickly out of the way of her swinging arm.

"You better duck," Hermione yelled at him. "Look, do you want to work out with me or is it your intention to spend the entire morning embarrassing me." Hermione vividly remembered the day that Draco, Ginny and Ron had walked in on her and Harry after they had spent the night together. She had been asleep and sat up, not realizing they were in the room. The covers had fallen to her waist before she realized they were there and she had ended up giving the three of them quite a show. Draco evidently had never forgotten that moment and didn't plan to let her either.

"Let's exercise. I have to keep my gorgeous body in shape," was Draco's response.

Hermione just looked at him and shook her head. *He's conceited, but he's right about his body.*

The final exercise they did was sit-ups. Firstly, Hermione held Draco ankles as he did fifty sit-ups and then Draco reciprocated as Hermione did one hundred. Hermione was concentrating on each sit up, but Draco failed to notice. He had fallen almost into a trance watching Hermione's shorts grow ever tighter between her legs with each successive movement that she made.

She first leaned down to the front, easily touching her toes. Then went to a sitting position. Then laid back on the ground with her arms stretched back as far as possible. Each time she laid back her shorts seemed to ride up a little more and become tighter and tighter. By the time she was at sit-up fifty Draco had become entranced. By the time she reached number seventy-five her shorts had ridden up so far that he was starting to perspire. By the time she reached one hundred, Draco was in a panic as to how to hide the physical effects of his entrancement.

Hermione jumped to her feet as if she had spent the last few minutes taking a relaxing nap instead of exercising. "Okay, lets go. How many kilometers are you going to run? I usually do five."

"In all probability only three. You go ahead and begin. I'll catch up." He searched for an excuse. "I have to tie my shoe."

"I can hang around," she said.

"No, no you go ahead and start. I can catch up," he said as he sat with his arm discreetly hiding the bulge in his shorts.

"Okay, but don't take too long or you'll never catch me," she said as she ran off.

Damn! Draco checked out her firm butt as she ran off. She looks as good going away as she does coming. Speaking of which Granger, I'm definitely shagging you this year.

* * * * *

Sunday, August 31, 2003, 10:45 AM

Hermione took a very pleasant lengthy shower, had a little breakfast and then curled up for a couple of hours with a book. Now she felt prepared to take on the world.

It was hard not to think about all the times gone past as she walked down the corridors of the school towards the Great Hall. So much of her life had occurred here. So much happiness. So much sadness.

As she rapidly walked toward the large double doors to the Great Hall she smiled to herself. Today is officially the start of a new existence for Hermione Granger. No more living in the past. No more dreaming about what could have been. From here on I live for the future.

When she entered the Great Hall it seemed so bare. The house tables had not been set up yet for the Welcoming Feast and neither had the long table where the staff normally partook of their meal. The only furnishings in the room were an outsized rectangular shaped conference table in the very middle and chairs surrounding it. There was one at either end and five on either side. Near to the large table there was a much smaller table containing cups, coffee, assorted cold drinks and snacks.

Neville and Draco had arrived already and were standing next to the smaller table holding beverages and ostensibly engrossed in a lively conversation. That is until the door closed after Hermione. For a short time they both seemed to gape at her as if in suspended animation. Hermione in an automatic nervous response looked down at her robes. She occasionally had nightmares in which people were staring at her because she was naked. The look in they eyes made her momentarily feel like perhaps she had left her quarters in her birthday suit.

Before she realized what was happening both men approached her and as if they had rehearsed it for hours said in unison, "Would you like a drink, Hermione?"

"Yes please, but only one," Hermione laughed at the strange way Neville and Draco were acting.

Now after asking if she wanted a beverage, they both stood there looking at each other as if silently debating who should hang about and who should go get the beverage.

Hermione shook her head and smiled. "Why don't we all go? I might have something to eat as well."

Just as they started toward the table, Professor Vector entered the room followed by Ginny and Trelawney. The two women were clucking away as if they were life long friends. As Hermione was getting her drink Ginny gave her a quick wave, but then returned right back to her conversation.

Well, so much for that grand friendship we were going to have. Looks like I'm odd man out. She had been counting on Ginny being someone she could talk with. She never really had a close female friend. When she was a student she spent so much time with Ron and Harry that she never became very close to any of the other girls. Actually back then it didn't matter to a large extent because no one could have been a better friend than Harry or Ron. But now they were gone and it got somewhat lonesome at times not having somebody with whom she could really talk.

Sybil Trelawney and Hermione, well that was like oil and water. Madam Pomfrey although quite nice was so much older than Hermione and spent all her time in the infirmary. Then there was Madam Hooch.... Well, Hermione preferred to not socialize with the broomstick-flying instructor.

* * * * *

Hermione was free, but completely naked. She ran down the corridor as fast as her legs would allow, tears streaming down her face.

What if someone sees me? Two months as a professor and I'm streaking the halls of Hogwarts. Please God help me. What have I ever done to deserve this? Please let me make it to the faculty area, please.

Finally after what seemed like hours but in actuality was only a few minutes she reached the staircase to the faculty area.

The portrait, I've made it. Hermione gave the password and was in the staircase that led to the faculty quarters.

"Hermione, did you hear me? I said what the bloody hell is she doing here?"

Draco's voice cut through Hermione's thoughts and when she turned to look at him, she saw that he was staring a hole through Virginia Weasley. The look on Draco's face made it clear that he was not happy to see his former girlfriend.

"Ginny's teaching Muggle Studies," she responded.

"Well isn't that bloody perfect. If Snape had told be that bloody bitch was going to be here, I never would have taken this bloody job."

Hermione couldn't resist saying, "Is that a bloody fact."

Neville who all this time had been staring at Ginny like a dog in heat, laughed just as Charlie Weasley strolled into the hall. Charlie gave Ginny a quick hug.

Hermione was just about to make a comment to Draco and Neville when Professor Binns floated into the room saying, "The headmaster is on his way. Please everyone take a seat. Ms Granger, The headmaster would like you to sit at this end of the table."

I wonder why? Hermione thought as she headed for her seat. Neville and Draco vied for the seat to her left, with Neville winning. Draco looked at the chair to Hermione's right, but Charlie had already taken it, so he reluctantly sat next to Neville. Draco couldn't believe his luck when Professor Binns sat next to him. Professor Vector likewise looked uncomfortable as he took the empty chair next to Binns. Sybil and Ginny were just taking their places when the new Headmaster walked into the room.

Hermione stared in shock when Professor Snape walked through the door. It wasn't the appearance of the former Potions Master that stunned her though. Accompanying him was the new Minister of Magic and someone she hadn't seen for over five years. Someone who she never thought she'd see again, even though her thoughts were filled with memories of the times before he left. There he was, walking next to the Minister.

Harry Potter had come back to Hogwarts.

She watched as he took a seat next to Ginny and the Minister took the end chair to the left of the Headmaster. Hermione was sure her face looked as though she'd seen a ghost, for that was what Harry had been to her for these past years. Then she realized Harry hadn't even looked in her direction. It actually seemed like he was intentionally avoiding looking toward her end of the table.

Severus began, "Good morning and welcome back. I hope you all had an enjoyable vacation and are looking forward to the school year ahead of us as much as I. Before we get down to business I would like to introduce the new Minister of Magic, Emma Wrong. Minister Wrong can only stay a few minutes, but would like to update us on the increase in Death Eater activity that has occurred this summer."

The headmaster sat down as the Minister Wrong stood to address the teachers. "Good morning. I'm not here to make a speech, but rather to bring you up to date on the Death Eater menace. This is a casual meeting so please feel free to interrupt at any point with questions and I will try my best to respond to them." The minister looked about the room.

She continued, "Once Voldemort was destroyed in 1997 the wizarding world enjoyed two years of relative peace and quiet. The ministry realized that it was just a matter of time until the Death Eaters who had not been killed or imprisoned would start regrouping. Signs of this regrouping started to emerge in the summer of 1999. First they operated in local gangs, then gangs merged and grew."

"Minster Wrong"

"Professor Longbottom, isn't it?"

"Yes. Is it possible that the leaders of any of these groups could become so strong that they could control all the Death Eater in one country or worse multiple countries"

"Regrettably, that is quite possible. I will use Voldemort, himself, as an example. Tom Riddle was not born with great power; he achieved it. He was a student of this school, a brilliant scholar, who took an unfortunate curiosity in dark magic. The greater his knowledge of Dark Magic grew the more Death Eaters aligned themselves with him. Soon his influence covered all of Europe."

"Is that likely to happen here in Britain again and so rapidly?" questioned Harry.

"Harry, or rather Professor Potter I should say."

Hermione's eyes widened. *Professor Potter? Did that mean that Harry was the new Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor?* She looked at the wide range of expressions around the room. Neville had a questioning gaze. Draco was disgusted and had broken his pencil. Professors Vector and Binns were smiling. Ginny looked ready to jump out of her seat with joy. Trelawney was in a fog as usual and Charlie was grinning. Hermione couldn't quite place the expression that Severus had on his face.

Minster Wrong persisted with a very dejected look on her face, "I'm fearful it already has happened."

Before the Minister could continue, Hermione injected, "If the Ministry knows the Death Eaters are gathering numbers and power so fast, why isn't something being done to seize their leader?"

"If only it were that straightforward, Professor Granger. We don't know who he is nor where they're headquartered. For that matter we don't even know absolutely that the leader is a male." There was a look of frustration on Emma Wrong's face.

Draco had a puzzled look on his face. "Haven't you tried infiltrating their ranks?"

"I'm sorry, but we haven't met yet."

"Draco Malfoy, Potions Master"

"Extremely nice to meet you, Professor Malfoy. In response to your question, yes we have, on numerous occasions as a matter of fact. Our last spy returned to us castrated."

Several of the men swallowed quite hard.

"He had no knowledge of it happening," the Minister continued. "He remembered being captured by Death Eaters and then he was standing in a field. It was, however, two weeks later."

As the others continued to ask questions, Hermione sat in a daze. *Harry is back! I missed him so much. Why is he ignoring me? If anyone should be angry, it's me. Where was he? Can we be friends again? Or more? Why won't he acknowledge my presence?*

"Well then if there are no more questions I must be on my way. Remember if you deduce any Death Eater recruiting is taking place on the school grounds please contact my office." Emma Wrong had completed her remarks and was ready to Apparate when Professor Snape whispered in her ear, that wasn't possible on Hogwarts' ground. "Thank you, I had forgotten about that. No need to see me out. I know the way."

The Headmaster waited until she had left the room. "I have a few comments to make and then we shall have our lunch." First I would like to welcome Ms. Weasley, Mr. Draco and Mr. Potter to the Hogwarts staff. We now have the youngest instructional staff in the history of Hogwarts. I am sure you will make up for your lack of experience with an abundance of enthusiasm. Ms. Weasley will be teaching Muggle Studies. Mr. Draco will take over my former position as Potions Master and although he knows little about the subject, Mr. Potter will be instructing Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Everyone laughed at this comment and Hermione thought, *Severus must be in a good mood today.*

"Next," he continued, "I'm sure you have noticed the absence of Madam Hooch. She is experiencing some personal problems and will join us as soon as possible. That will not be for at least three weeks. Because of this it will be necessary to cancel first year flying lessons and possibly delay the start of the Quidditch season."

Hermione wondered if she was imagining it, but it looked like Severus was making sure she heard him very clearly.

Neville whispered to Hermione, "That won't go at all well with the students."

"It has been brought to my attention that the students do not find me the most understanding and pleasant person to speak with." There were a few chuckles at the Headmaster's comment. "With that in mind I have decided to have Professor Granger act as Assistant Headmaster and Dean of Students." Hermione blushed slightly as the others gave her polite applause. She was one of the people who had commented to Snape about his handling of students, but she was quite surprised and proud about her new position. "Professor Granger, please see me in my office as soon as you have completed lunch. Speaking of lunch; shall we?"

While everyone tucked into the quite generous meal in front of them, Hermione suddenly found her thoughts filled with memories she tried so hard to forget.

Almost there, she said with relief as she ran down the last hall and turned the corner to her room only to stumble over Severus Snape who had leaned over to pick something up off the floor.

Oh! My God, Hermione thought. I'm starkers laying on top of Severus Snape. It rapidly became apparent that her two tiny hands were rather inadequate at covering all the parts she wanted covered. She quickly rolled off of Severus and he jumped to his feet.

"Good gracious, Hermione, what happened?" Alarm covered his face as he promptly removed his robe and tried to cover the girl as she attempted to get to her feet while simultaneously trying to cover three body areas, but succeeding somewhat poorly. "Have you been raped?"

Dear Lord I'll contact Minerva immediately. We'll form a search party. We'll catch the bastard that did this to you and ... and we'll give him to the Dementors."

"No, please Severus." Hermione could not get used to calling Professor Snape by his first name. "Please don't tell anyone what happened."

"But Hermione, the Bastard that did this to you must be punished. He can't be allowed to get away with this," Snape responded emphatically.

"No please, Severus, I'll tell you what happened, but please... Ow." Hermione winced in pain and grabbed her right breast. In all the panic to get back to her quarters she had ignore the pain, but now that things had slightly calmed down it couldn't be ignored any longer. She looked down at the robe she was now wearing, Severus' robe, and noticed a large circle of blood had already formed. She turned away from Severus in order to block his view and opened the robe just enough that she could observe her breast. "Oh my God," she cried. "She bit off my nipple."

"SHE," was all he could say as his face turned white with shock. "Quickly then, we must get you to Madam Pomfrey immediately. A human bite carries more disease than that of an animal. And your breast, that part of it must be regenerated. It can not be allowed to heal shut."

"Please, no Severus. I don't want anyone to know about this. You can give me a potion to prevent disease and you're a hyperempath. You can heal my breast?"

Severus just looked at the girl. "Hermione, we must talk. Would you feel more comfortable in my quarters or yours"?

"Mine, if you don't mind," she said as she opened her door and lead the way into the room.

"Please sit down," Severus said sounding very apprehensive. Hermione sat down on the edge of her bed and Severus sat next to her. "Hermione, you're a full hyperempath. You know that in order to heal a body part you must handle it. My hyperempathcy powers are not nearly as strong as yours. In order for me to regenerate a body component such as you ask I must hold the injured part in one hand and an identical uninjured part in the other. I cannot do what you ask without physically holding your breasts in my hands and working with the one.

"Yes, I know." Hermione's voice quivered. The nerviness she felt because of what was about to take place was apparent in her voice. "Can you excuse me just a minute, please," she said while picking her slacks up off the chair where she had laid them when first preparing for bed. She then headed for the bathroom.

After closing the door Hermione removed the cloak Severus had given her. She looked in the mirror. The bleeding had subsided slightly, but her breast hurt like hell. She tried to wash the blood off as best as feasible and then leaned on the sink looking in the mirror. Her breast looked awful. 'Can I do this, can I actually ask Severus to hold my breasts? If I were able to do the regeneration to myself it would probably take about ten to fifteen minutes. With his limited healing power it will probably be more like an hour. An hour he will have to massage my remaining nipple between his fingertips. What if I just left him heal the wound? He could do that with his wand without me even taking my shirt off. Yeah sure, and then if I ever find

mister right I get to explain why I only have one nipple. What if I have children? I want to breast-feed them.

I don't have a choice. I have to do this. I have to.

Hermione placed Severus' cloak back on over her slacks and bare upper torso, figuring it was already ruined so there was no sense in getting blood on something else. She stepped out of the bathroom. Hermione was petrified and her voice trembled. "Maybe we should sit at the table so that you can lean your elbows on it. Holding your arms out in front of you for an hour will be quite uncomfortable."

"Hermione, are you sure you want to do this. Wouldn't you feel more comfortable going to Pomfrey?"

Oh yes, thought Hermione. That would definitely be more comfortable, but then everyone would find out what happened. "No I can't, if you're willing lets get started."

Severus and Hermione took seats at the corner of the table. "Now I can't talk to you at all or I'll lose my connection, but you can speak, up until the last phase; then you must be quiet, also. Suppose you use this time to tell me exactly what happened to you. I'm ready to start whenever you are."

Hermione contemplated. If we wait till I'm ready, we'll be here forever. She stood up, opened the front of the robe. Took a deep breath, closed her eyes and allowed the robe to slip off her back. She sat back down and started to apprise Severus of the events of the evening her eyes still closed.

Severus softly spoke, "I'm going to start now."

Hermione nodded ever so slightly as her body trembled awaiting the touch of his hands. First he tenderly placed the palm of one hand against her still bleeding injured breast. This palm would remain there, not moving for the next hour. Next he took his other hand and gently placed his finger on her nipple which instantly hardened. He began moving the finger in a clockwise direction.

After about twenty minutes she realized that the pain had completely left her breast. She studied Severus' expressionless face and his eyes that remained fixed on her chest. Although she noticed he seemed to be staring through her instead of at her.

Her story had barely ended when he gently shook his head left to right without moving his eyes off his target. This evidently meant for her to remain quiet. For the next ten minutes they just sat there; his eyes fixed on his target and her eyes watching him. Then he first lifted his hand off the previously injured breast and then the other. He looked back and forth between the two before simply saying, "Perfect."

His work done he rose from the chair and picked up the blouse that Hermione had thrown on the bed. He handed it to her without comment.

Hermione slipped on the garment, but merely held it shut instead of buttoning it. "Thank you, Severus."

His voice showed concern as he said, "Hermione, are you absolutely sure about not informing McGonagall."

"Definitely."

"I disagree, but will abide by your wishes. Now I think its best you get some rest." He headed to the door and Hermione followed to leave him out.

He had opened the door and was just about to leave when Hermione reach out and put her arms around him. "Thank you again, Severus. I don't know what I would have done without you." She gave him a quick kiss on the cheek.

Severus smiled and left, but after taking only three steps he turned; Hermione was still standing at the door. Because she had not considered holding her blouse shut, her breasts were quite visible. The older man simple said, "Your beautiful." Then he turned and proceeded down the hall.

Hermione just stood there until he had closed his door and then quietly said aloud, "So are you."

Chapter Three A New Year, A New Beginning

Sunday, August 31, 2003 12:10 PM

"Hermione, please have a chair. I asked you to stop in because I wanted to have a discussion with you about one our new first years."

Hermione had been edgy as to what Severus had wanted to speak to her regarding and was relieved to hear it was something associated with her new position.

Snape continued, "Her name is Caitlin Garrison. She was twelve yesterday. The girl came very close to not ever celebrating her birthday or attending Hogwarts. While she was at summer camp in July she was attacked and sexually abused."

"The poor dear. How awful." Hermione was both sadden and revolted at the thought. Her own attack was floating back to her thoughts for the second time in the day.

"Unfortunately it gets worse," Severus continued. "The attacker, in order to avoid being identified, tied the naked girl to a tree and left her to die of starvation and exposure or be killed by wild animals."

Hermione shook her head, a look of anguish on her face.

"Somehow she survived the night tied to that tree. The next morning a group from the near by boys' camp found her unconscious body while hiking. She was rushed to a medical facility where she was treated for shock, exposure and injuries consistent with sexual assault and rape. She was..."

"No, Severus, please don't say it. Who could do such a thing to an innocent little girl? Did Caitlin know her attacker? Have they arrested the bastard?"

Severus looked at Hermione. His eyes were moist. "Caitlin knew who the attacker was and the scum has been arrested, but unfortunately I'm afraid the perpetrator will go unpunished."

"How is that feasible? Why scot-free?" Hermione was gnashing her teeth to think such an individual would not suffer for what they had done to that unfortunate child.

"When the case goes to trial it will be one person's statement against another. The accused has acquaintances in the Ministry and is fairly well known and liked. Caitlin is a little girl who made no secret of the fact that she didn't like her instructor. Caitlin will lose and a few months from now another young girl will be attacked." Professor Snape just shook his head in anger and repulsion.

"Severus is she alright? There must be something that can be done to aid her?" Hermione wiped her hands across her face as if trying to wipe away the mental picture of what that young girl had gone through.

The headmaster sighed, "Physically she is satisfactory and should be capable of conceiving and giving birth when the time comes for such things, but she is definitely scared mentally. As to what we can do to help, I'd suggest we both testify against the attacker."

"Huh, why? We weren't there?" Hermione asked confused.

"No, we weren't but,..." Severus paused knowing that this would be a difficult subject.

"Hermione, it was Madam Hooch."

"Madam Hooch? Are you saying Madam Hooch did such a horrifying thing?" Hermione stared at Severus in astonishment.

"I'm not saying it," responded Severus. "Caitlin is, but after what that fiend did to you, I can categorically believe Hooch competent of such an act."

"Are you suggesting that I be a witness at the trial?" Hermione seemed somewhat panicky.

"No, I'm not suggesting; I'm asking. I would readily collaborate your story. If you don't, Hooch will go free. She will be allowed to come back here to teach. In time another girl will be attacked, but she may not be as fortunate as you and Caitlin. She may not survive to tell about it."

Suddenly Hermione was racked with guilt. If only she had listened to Severus and contacted the authorities when she was attacked, possibly this conversation wouldn't be taking place.

"I can't do that Severus," Hermione was quick to counter. "It's not the trial or the publicity. Although I'm sure the press would have a field day with me. It's facing that girl and her parents. None of this would have happened if I had listened to you and gone to McGonagall."

"You don't know that Hermione." The Headmaster had been sitting on a chair behind his desk, but now got up and moved around to the front thereby eliminating the barrier between the two friends and colleagues. He sat on his desk and looked caringly at Hermione.

"Hermione, the average Wizard lives to be slightly over two hundred years old. In that many years you make a hell of a lot of decisions. Even the smartest witch alive is going to make a few bad ones. Hindsight is perfect. Could you now experience again that appalling night, I'm sure you would make a different decision, but we can't relive the past. We can only ask forgiveness of those we have hurt and hope they will grant it. Although we can't change the past, we can alter the future. You can't take away the hurt that poor girl suffered or the memories that will haunt her, but perhaps we can prevent it from happening to someone else. Please, think about it and give me your answer at the feast tomorrow evening."

Hermione heard everything that the her headmaster and friend was saying to her, but as soon as she had heard about that poor girl's ordeal, her mind had started to replay in graphic clarity the events she had tried so hard to put behind her.

* * * * *

It started on her first day at Hogwarts as a teacher. No matter how much she told her no, Madam Hooch wouldn't acknowledge Hermione's feelings. On every opportunity that presented itself, she insisted that she could pleasure her better than any man alive.

One evening during her first year as a teacher Hermione had retired early to her quarters. She had slipped off all her clothing and was preparing to take a shower after which she was going to read for a few hours. She then realized the book she was currently reading wasn't on

the nightstand. Thinking back she could remember having it last in her classroom. She quickly slipped on her robes. Not bothering to dress underneath because she knew all the students would be in their dormitories by this time.

Hermione rushed through the empty hallways to her classroom. After giving the password and opening the door, she quickly retrieved the book. As she turned to proceed back to her quarters after locking the door, she nearly walked right into Madam Hooch. "Oh! Excuse me," Hermione said. "I didn't see you standing there."

The older woman immediately began pleading. "Hermione, please! Please give me a chance to show you how much I love you. Please! Just spend one night with me. No one will know. I'll do anything that you ask. If you still want to go back to "them" afterwards, I won't bother you ever again. Please at least give me one chance!" Madam Hooch actually had tears in her eyes.

Hermione looked into the woman's desperation strained face. She recognized that look. This woman actually loved her. She felt a combination of fear and pity. Pity for this forlorn woman who cherished her so much and fear that she would weaken because of her compassion and let her have her one night. Now Hermione had tears in her eyes. "No, no, I won't, I can't. Please I have to go." Hermione hastily turned ready to run down the hall. Madam Hooch, frantic not to lose the woman she loved, just as quickly reached out and grabbed at Hermione's robes and in doing so simultaneously ripped the robes open and turned the girl to face her.

For the briefest moment both women froze; one because of fear and embarrassment and the other in awe of the beauty that she now beheld. Hermione felt like a deer caught in the glare of an on coming car as the other woman lunged at her, throwing her arms around the young girl's body while inserting her head between Hermione breasts. As Hermione struggled to free herself the older woman struggled to find a nipple and take it in her mouth.

Hermione was stronger and Hooch began to lose her grip on her. The older woman fell to her knees regaining a hold on Hermione's buttock, but as she had fallen to her knees the woman had bitten Hermione nipple extremely hard in an effort to not lose her hold. Hermione screamed in pain. Hooch released the breast and allowed her head to slide to Hermione's private region at the same time sinking her hands deep between Hermione cheeks in order to not lose her grasp on the struggling girl.

The young girl twisted and turned as the older woman attempted to show her how she could be 'loved'. Finally Hermione lifted her knee catching the older woman under the jaw with enough force to cause her to lose her hold. She turned to run as the older woman lunged for the hem of her robes. Hermione struggled to run for a few meters while dragging the other woman, but in desperation finally reached her arms back and allowed the robes to slip from her shoulders.

Hermione was free, but completely naked. She ran down the corridor as fast as her legs would allow, tears streaming down her face. "What if someone sees me? Two months as a professor and I'm streaking the halls of Hogwarts. Please God help me. What have I ever done to deserve this? Please let me make it to the faculty area, please." Finally after what seemed like hours but in actuality was only a few minutes she reached the staircase to the faculty area. "The portrait, I've made it." Hermione gave the password and was in the staircase that led to the faculty quarters. "Almost there," she said with relief as she ran down

the last hall and turned the corner to her room only to stumble over Severus Snape who had leaned over to pick something up off the floor.

Monday, September 1, 2003 4:00 PM

Hermione Granger stood at the window watching the sunset and waiting for the carriages to come up the road from the Hogsmeade train station. This had become a first day tradition since her initial year as a professor. She loved watching the first years in their boats crossing the lake and the older students arriving in carriages. She enjoyed seeing the happy faces as friends were greeted with handshakes and hugs. It transported her back to happier times when she was with Harry and Ron.

This year she was unable to get into the celebratory spirit of the day; Her mind was preoccupied with making a choice. A choice she had to give Severus this evening at dinner. She had struggled since after lunch yesterday and was no closer to solving her dilemma.

She hadn't heard Harry approaching her until he spoke. "May I please speak with you?"

Her response was sharp and biting. "Now is not a good time Harry. I have a tough decision to make. I'm sure Ginny would love to talk to you."

Harry looked at the cold expression on her beautiful face. He heard the anger in her voice. *I've lost her. I waited too long to return. Maybe it would have been best to just stay away. No, I deserve to be hurt. I deserve to suffer.* He couldn't turn his eyes from that face; the face that he had missed so much. Suddenly tears filled his eyes. "Hermione, please, please just give me seven minutes. I know I don't deserve it, but please."

Hermione took one look at his face and the tears in those beautiful green eyes; the ice in her veins began to thaw. *Seven minutes, he's asking for, one minute for each year we spent together as best friends. They were the most wonderful years of my life.* Hermione felt her own eyes tearing up and turned away from Harry so he wouldn't discern. "Okay, seven minutes," she said.

"Hermione, I'm so sorry. I've been a fool and an idiot. A friendship like the three of us shared is incredible. Most people will never experience it in their entire life and I walked away from it. I tossed it aside like it was insignificant when in actuality it meant more to me than life itself. I blamed myself for the death of your parents, but instead of beseeching you to forgive me; I ran away like a coward because I didn't have the backbone to face you. I've learned you can't run away from your mistakes. Doing that only compounds them."

"We all make mistakes, we're human, but we must accept the responsibility for our mistakes and instead of running away ask forgiveness; try to correct them. Sorrowfully, there was nothing I could have done to bring your parents back, but I should have been here for you and I wasn't. Maybe, if I had been here, I could have prevented what happen with Ron. Maybe, I couldn't have, but I should have been here to try and I wasn't."

"The seven years we were together were the happiest years of my life. I remember meeting you on the Hogwarts Express: fighting the troll; you saving Ron and I from the Devil's snare; so many things. Remember how frighten you were to fly the Hippogriff to save Sirius?"

Sometimes I think holding onto me frightened you more than flying. I remember how beautiful you looked at the Yule Ball and how proud I was to be your boyfriend the following year. It wasn't always smooth sailing, but we were always there for each other."

"Hermione, I don't want to live in the past with only memories to keep me company. I want my best friend back. Please, forgive me. I'm so very sorry for hurting you." Harry Potter, the boy who lived, the boy who had the courage to face Voldemort and conquer him. Harry Potter was crying his heart out asking his friend to forgive him.

Hermione had listened without saying a word. He had hurt her when he left. No one had ever hurt her to such a great extent, not even Ron when he had shagged all those girls. Deep down inside she knew back then that she didn't really love Ron: she loved Harry. Now here he was after five long years admitting how mistaken he was to have left and imploring her forgiveness. Like her, he had been living in the past; living with what used to be. Could they regain the friendship they once had? Hermione didn't know, but she knew she was going to try her best. Even if he didn't love her, she loved him.

Hermione had her back to Harry as he spoke so he hadn't seen the tears flowing down her face. After he had finished, Hermione hadn't stirred; hadn't whispered a word. Harry dejectedly turned and began to walk away.

Upon hearing his movement, Hermione spun around yelling, "Harry." He stopped in his tracks and as he turned, Hermione threw her arms around him. Harry wasn't sure if she was trying to hug him or crush him. "Harry, I've missed you so much and of course I'll forgive you." Harry returned the hug and they stood there embracing each other.

After a few minutes of hugging Hermione looked at Harry and said, "Of course you do realize that if you ever leave like that again I will send the wolfhounds after you and hex you to within a inch of your life"

Harry looked down into her face and said, "If I'm ever that stupid again I deserve the worst hex you can conger."

The happiness of their reunion overtook them both. Together they stood there, holding each other, thinking of the lost time, and the time they now had together. Neither of them noticed a cloaked figure, storm off angrily after watching their exchange. For Hermione and Harry, at that moment, only the two of them existed.

* * * * *

Monday, September 1, 2002 5:00 PM

"Oh! Harry lets watch the arrivals."

Harry had never seen this before. He looked toward the village. Off in the distance he could see the dancing lights of the carriages as they started their procession down the winding road leading to Hogwarts. Then looking out over the lake he saw more lights. These were the sixteen lights of the boats carrying the first years. The trip by carriage was much faster .The first years had barely begun their journey across the lake when the carriages began arriving at the castle with the older students.

As the carriages arrived and the students spilled out, more and more reunions took place. Suddenly Hermione pointed at a group of three students that had just exited their carriage and were now walking across the grounds toward the castle steps arm in arm.

"Does that remind you of anyone Harry?"

Harry looked at the trio. Suddenly he pictured another trio from his past. He looked over at Hermione and smiled as she returned the smile. Hermione said, "We'd best be getting down to the Great Hall for the sorting. Thank you Harry."

Harry looked at her as if to say "thank you for what."

As if reading his mind she said. "Thank you for being you and helping me make a decision I've been wrestling with. You're right. We can't change the past, but we can ask forgiveness and try to improve the future. I only hope the person I've hurt will forgive me. Lets go, I have to talk to Severus."

Harry wondered to himself exactly what Hermione had done to Snape that she was now asking forgiveness for. She hadn't been involved with the headmaster had she? When Harry had hugged Hermione he had wanted so much to kiss her, but knew she didn't think of him in that way. He would have to settle for friendship, but at least he was back in her life.

As they silently walked the distance to the Great Hall, Harry turned his head slightly to look at Hermione. His smile grew even larger as he saw her grinning back at him. Gazing at her, his mind filled with thoughts. *I love you. I've always loved you. If only there wasn't someone else in your life. I'll always be here for you. I'll always be your friend, but I want to be so much more. If only you loved me as much as I love you.*

Hermione couldn't help herself from smiling. She had thought him lost forever, but now as she looked deep into his green eyes, she made a number of promises to herself, not knowing that Harry had been thinking much the same thing at the same time.

When they entered the Great Hall through the door behind their table they realized they were the last professors to arrive. The only chairs empty at the teacher's table were one next to Headmaster Snape and one between Professor Sprout and Ginny Weasley. The returning students were beginning to filter into the Hall.

"I have to speak to Severus and then meet the first years," Hermione quickly informed Harry. "Maybe we can talk more after the feast."

Harry nodded his head and then watched as Hermione went over to converse with Professor Snape. After a few moments she departed the Hall. Harry watched Severus, who suddenly had a very pleased look on his face. *Is something going on between them?*

Harry headed to the teachers' table and took the seat next to Ginny. Neville who was sitting to Ginny's left was not pleased when she immediately struck up a conversation with Harry.

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Professor Charlie Weasley knocked three times on the castle door. The door swung open at once. A beautiful witch in emerald -green robes stood there. Although she tried to look stern, there was something about her that looked very kind and loving.

"I would like to present the first years, Professor Granger," said Charlie.

"Thank you Professor Weasley. I will take them from here."

She pulled the door open wide. The students looked in wonder at the magnitude of the entrance hall. Flaming torches lit the walls and the ceiling seemed miles above. Facing them was a fabulous marble staircase that led to the upper floors.

The students followed Professor Granger into an empty small chamber off the hall. It was disturbingly confining in the chamber, which added to the apprehension of the first years.

"Welcome to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry," said Professor Granger. "The first course of business this evening will be to sort you into your houses. There are four houses each with it's own splendid history. The houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin. This ceremony is very important because the house you are sorted into will be rather like your family for the next seven years. You will have classes with your housemates, sleep in your house dormitories and spend the free time you have in the common room of your house."

"You will earn your house points through your triumphs and lose points for any infraction of rules. The house with the most points at the conclusion of the year is awarded the house cup, an immense honor. You should all do your best to be a credit to your house."

"I will go check to see if they are ready for us. In the mean time please wait quietly. You might want to take the time to smarten yourselves up as best you can." The Professor left the room.

After she had gone the nervous students theorized on what the ceremony would be like and into which house they would be sorted, but mostly they talked about Professor Granger. "She seems quite nice," one girl commented.

One of the boys spoke up. "I thought the female teachers would be old hags. She's beautiful enough to be in Playwizard magazine."

The shocked girl next to him responded, "Do you know who that is? That is 'the' Hermione Granger. She is the smartest witch alive and one third of the Covenant that defeated Lord Voldemort. She would never pose nude for one of those smut magazines."

Just as the boy was preparing to respond, Professor Granger returned. "They are ready to start The Sorting Ceremony. Please form a single line and follow me."

They left the chamber and walked across the hall and through a pair of double doors into the Great Hall. The huge room they entered was lit by thousands of candles that were just floating in mid air. There were four long tables in the room laid with golden plates and goblets where the other students were seated watching them as they entered. At the front of the hall was another long table where the teachers were sitting.

Professor Granger led the first years up to the front so that they formed a line facing the students, with their backs to the teachers. There was a four-legged stool in front of the first years with a patched, frayed, dirty hat sitting upon it.

Jamie Zacherley sat at the Gryffindor table listening intently as the hat sang its song. Jamie loved The Sorting Ceremony. She was always excited to see who would be sorted into her house. Jamie was starting her fifth year at Hogwarts and had been selected to be a house prefect. The boys' prefect was her best friend Alex Ward, who was seated to her right. On her left was, her other great friend, Amanda Pierce. These three had been inseparable since first year. Rarely was one seen without the other two being close at hand.

When the hat had finished its song, Professor Granger stepped forward; she was holding a long roll of parchment.

"When your name is called, please step forward, put the hat on and sit on the stool in order to be sorted," she announced. "Aldinger, Ronald"

A chubby little boy with unruly hair stepped forward and put on the hat. After a short pause--

The hat shouted, "HUFFLEPUFF!"

The Hufflepuff table clapped and cheered as their new member took a seat.

Jamie sat watching the sorting, becoming as nervous as the first years. Six students had been sorted and not one had been placed in Gryffindor.

Then it seemed to Jamie that Professor Granger's voice trembled as she announced the next name, "Garrison, Caitlin."

A petit little blonde girl hesitantly walked toward the stool. She had no more than touched the hat to her head when it shouted, "GRYFFINDOR."

The Gryffindor table exploded with cheers as the little girl shyly approached it. Jamie was the first on her feet, putting her arm around the girl's shoulder and saying, "Welcome to our house, I'm Jamie; glad you made Gryffindor."

As the other Gryffindors shook her hand and patted her on the back, Caitlin looked at Jamie's eyes. Those eyes showed sincerity and caring. She didn't know why, but she felt she could trust this girl. For the first time in weeks Caitlin's face broke into a smile and she said, "thank you," as she took a seat.

Hermione had been watching Caitlin approach the Gryffindor table. A feeling of guilt tugged at her stomach and she wiped away a tear that came to her eye. *That's it Jamie. Look out for her. She needs a special friend.*

"Hallowell, Michael," went to Gryffindor too. Once again Jamie was the first to greet him, but she had learned from past experience that the boys preferred a firm handshake to a hug from a girl at this age.

The sorting proceeded at a fast pace. Jamie remembered how nervous she had been waiting till the very last to be sorted. Having Zacherley as a last name definitely came with some

disadvantages, but she won't trade her name or the parents that came with it for anything in the world.

Finally, "Young, Matthew", went to Slytherin. The sorting was complete.

Severus Snape got to his feet and raised his hand. Suddenly the room became hushed. "Welcome. Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts. I'm sure you are all starved after that long train ride so we will start the feast momentarily. First, however, I would like to introduce some new members of our teaching staff. If you would please stand as I introduce you. First to my left is Professor Weasley.

There was immediate applause, but as Ginny stood to her feet quite a few whistles indicated the approval of the teacher appearance.

The Headmaster frowned. "That will be quite enough of that. Although I can appreciate your enthusiasm, whistling will never be an acceptable way of greeting a teacher at this school."

Ginny blushed. She wasn't quite sure whether it was because of the wolf whistles or because of Severus' comment.

Hermione, smiled. Thinking back to her first year as an instructor and being introduced by then Headmaster McGonagall. It was probably the most thrilling and at the same time most embarrassing moment in her life.

Hermione was being introduced as the new Transfiguration Professor to a roomful of students that except for the first years had been her classmates the previous year. Would they accept her as a teacher? Then there was her newfound celebrity status. Since Harry, Ron and her had defeated Voldemort in June it didn't seem a day had gone by that their pictures weren't in the Daily Profit. Just as it looked like the world was going to let her go back to a semi normal life; Playwizard magazine made public the information that they had approached her to appear in their publication. Despite the fact she immediately turned them down, polls had appeared on the Wizard net. The polls had indicated that the majority of the Wizard World wanted to see her naked. Now here she was being introduced as a new Professor at Hogwarts.

As McGonagall spoke her name the students had risen to a standing ovation. Not one of those where a couple people stand up and then a few more until those seated feel guilty and join, but an ovation where everyone simultaneously jumped to their feet. Minerva had halfheartedly tried to get the students to sit down, but then looked at Hermione shrugged her shoulders and smiled. Minerva then whispered in her ear. "You deserve it; every bit up it," as she began to applaud herself. Hermione had stood there smiling from ear to ear, tears flowing down her cheeks. The only thing that was missing was her best friends. She wished so desperately that Harry and Ron were here with her.

"If only Harry had been there it would have been perfect."

Snape continued, "Ms Weasley joins us as Professor of Muggle Studies. To my right I have a former student who excelled in class and I'm sure will do a fine job teaching you the subtle science and exact art of potion making. Professor Malfoy will be your new Potions Master.

The applause this time instead of being mixed with wolf whistles was interspersed with oohs and ahhs from the females and you could hear many comments about Draco's looks.

Up until this time Harry had gone relatively unnoticed. A few students had questioned friends if that was Harry Potter, but were laughed at. The normal answer being, "What would Harry Potter be doing here? Its just some want-to-be with black hair and glasses." It had been five years since Harry had appeared in public. His face was no longer on the cover of every wizard publication.

"And lastly," Snape said, "I would like to introduce the new instructor of Defense Against the Dark Arts. He has little experience in this field, but I'm sure he will try his best." Snape smiled as he alluded to Harry. "Professor Harry Potter."

For a moment, a very brief moment the hall was completely silent and then suddenly the cheers and applause were deafening. "It s him! It's Harry Potter! We're going to be taught by Harry Potter!"

Harry just stood there in shock. After all this time, he had never expected such a welcoming. He looked over to where Hermione was standing. She was applauding as hard as anyone in the room as tears streamed down her face. Ginny grasped his hand and squeezed it. "They love you Harry; we all do."

Snape looked out at the hall full of students and didn't even try to silence them. He knew that would be impossible.

Although they were standing and applauding, Draco and Neville didn't seem nearly as thrilled as the others. Neville kept staring at Ginny's hand firmly holding on to Harry.

Jamie wasn't applauding. She was crying. Her head was buried in Amanda's shoulder and Alex had his arm around her shoulder. Between the sobs she muttered. "It's him! I can't believe it's him! I still cringe when I think about that night. What if...? Now he's my Professor."

Chapter Four Getting to Know Her

Jamie tried to recoup her composure, as Headmaster Snape at last seemed to be regaining charge of the Hall. She swiftly surveyed the room hoping that no one other than Amanda and Alex had noticed her loss of control. Everybody still seemed to be concentrating on the head table.

"Let the feast begin," said Professor Snape. Astonishingly the dishes in front of the students were now piled with food.

Jamie glanced again at the head tables where the teachers were sitting, most of them, like the students, already enjoying the bountiful meal. Her gaze stopped on Harry Potter. Her mind was still coming to terms with the fact that he was going to be one of her professors this year.

If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't be here today. I would have never been born and most certainly not have lived to attend Hogwarts. He most assuredly has both given me my life and saved it.

Thinking of Harry Potter, took Jamie back to some of the darkest times in recent History. Few in the Wizard World, knew of the existence of the detention camps, Voldemort had set up in the seventies. Their locations had all been concealed by very powerful charms. Even after the first defeat of Voldemort the Ministry had denied their existence. Jamie only knew because her parents had been prisoners in one. That's where they met and that's where they would have died had Voldemort not fallen when his curse rebounded off of an infant Harry Potter.

Jamie's parents had genuinely thought about naming her Harrietta in tribute to the boy who lived, but had mercifully gone with Jamie Lily instead in respect to his parents. As a little girl Jamie had read every book and piece of writing she could find on Harry Potter. Finally the day came that she would get to see him. Not meet him, but at least see him.

England was playing Wales in a Quidditch Cup game and her father had generously been given tickets. The game was scheduled to commence at 2:00 PM and since they were traveling by portkey it was not necessary to depart until noon. Jamie was up washed and pacing the floor at 7:00 AM. As soon as the sitter for her younger sister, Emily, arrived Jamie practically flew out the door.

The day had been a dream to her. Wales had won and she had seen the 'boy who lived'. She didn't think anything could've spoiled the pleasure of that day.

She was wrong.

The dream turned into a nightmare as the game ended and fans were departing the stadium. High above the pitch the Dark Mark, the sign of Voldemort, flashed in the sky causing the spectators to panic. Nine-year-old Jamie struggled to stay erect in the pressing throng of bodies, knowing that if she fell she risked being trampled to death.

She'd long since lost contact with her parents, the crowd virtually carrying her out with them. It was only when outside the stadium that she was able to stop and wonder what to do. She had no idea where her parents were, and didn't have any notion as to what direction to head to look for them. In the end, she decided her best plan would be to remain where she was and let her parents locate her.

With each passing minute her anxiety rose almost in time with the thinning of the crowd around her, till she realized that she was quite alone.

She heard a noise and saw two men come out of the shadows; she was instantaneously alarmed. Even though she had always been taught to not judge people by their appearance, but rather by what was inside them, she also knew there were exceptions to almost every rule. It only took the first glance for her to know that she had no desire to find out anything more about these two men. Jamie started running as fast as her scrawny legs would move.

"Petrificus Totalus!" shouted one of the men, causing Jamie's body to freeze in mid stride. She fell face first to the ground sliding about four feet before coming to a stop. Her frozen body then falling on its side.

Jamie could hear footsteps approaching. She knew it was the two men, but she was helpless she couldn't move. One of the men said, "Well look what we have here; its an early Christmas present. I'll unfreeze you, but don't try running. You wouldn't get far anyway and it would really annoy me. Finite Incantatum."

Jamie stood up. Her nose was throbbing and when she touched her face her hand became all bloody. She felt so tiny and powerless next to them. Both men were rather weighty, though one was taller and the other one just fat. The taller of the two spoke. "Let her go, she's just a little kid. We had a job to do. We did it. Now lets get the hell out of here."

"You never want to have any fun. Lets unwrap the package and see what Santa sent us." He pointed his wand at Jamie and shouted, " Nullus Vestis"

Jamie felt the cold chill of the wind that was blowing on her body, and realized that she was now naked in front of the two of them. Looking into the eyes of the man that had performed the spell, she mustered as much courage as possible.

"Quite the pervert, aren't you?"

Her bravery was rewarded with a whack that threw her to the ground. Her hand reached for her cheek, but before she had any time to register the new pain, she was picked up.

Fatso gave a filthy laugh and said, "Come here sweetie you and I are going to have some fun." He reached out his greasy hand and pulled her tight against him, burying her face in his huge stomach. The repulsion inside of her grew and grew as he started to paw her body.

His partner just looked at him. "You're sick. Do you know that? She's too young; she's just a baby. You'll kill her if you try..."

"So? Do you really think I care?" Fatso had twisted Jamie around, his hands continuing to touch her, up and down her naked body.

"The only thing sicker then what you're doing is me watching it. I'm out of here. You better clean up the mess. I don't want any part of this." The words were no more out of his mouth then he was gone.

'Cleanup up the mess!' Jamie thought as she kicked and bit fatso in an effort to get free. 'He's going to kill me when he's done raping me.'

Just as Jamie felt her attacker start to force her down to the ground, she heard a voice shout, "What's going on there? Let her go."

Fatso looked up to see someone rushing toward him with his wand drawn and turned toward the advancing wizard picking up Jamie and using her as a shield against any curses. The wizard was still about a hundred yards away when he pushed Jamie aside and Apparated.

As soon as she felt her attacker disappear, Jamie ran in the direction of the wizard who had saved her. In her mind, he was her knight in shining armor. When they were within a few feet of each other she leaped for his neck, wrapping her arms around it as her knight wrapped his arms around her waist to prevent her from falling. "Everything is okay now," he said. "He's gone. No one will hurt you anymore."

Jamie didn't say a word. She just held on to her savior as tightly as she could and cried into his shoulder.

They stood like that a few minutes. Her crying her heart out, and him holding her in one arm as he gently stroked her bare back trying to calm her down. Finally he spoke. "Hey, sweetie, do you have a name? Who'd you come to the match with? I think it's best we have a mediwitch look at you."

Jamie slowly relaxed her grasp on his neck and her knight leaned forward letting her slide to the ground. As soon as her feet touched earth, he slipped his robes off and wrapped them around the young girl. "We need to keep you warm," her rescuer told her, giving her a reassuring grin as he could muster as he enclosed her in his robes.

Jamie smiled for the first time since being caught in the stampeding crowd. She liked her knight; he knew exactly the right things to say to take her mind off what had just happen. "My name is Jamie. I came with my parents, but we got separated in the panic and then, then..."

He could tell Jamie was starting to become distressed again and so he reached down and scooped her up in his arms. "Lets see if we can find that mediwitch and someone to help us locate your parents."

Jamie felt so secure in his arms; she wished he would hold her like this forever. Only now did she look up into his handsome face. Her knight was Harry Potter!

Now over six years later, her Knight in Shining Armour was sitting in front of her at the end of the hall.

After the desserts disappeared, and Professor Snape got to his feet again, the hall fell silent.

"I have a few start-of-term notices to give you. First the forest on the grounds is called the 'Forbidden Forrest' for a good reason. Students would do well to remember that. Madam Hooch has private difficulties that prevent her from being with us to start the year. Flying lessons for first years are temporarily canceled." A collective sigh was heard from the first years when this was announced, but nothing compared to the groans when he said, " Hopefully we will not have to cancel the Quidditch season."

After the singing of the school song was complete, Alex and Jamie gathered the first years together and led them through the chattering crowds, out of the Great Hall, and up the marble

staircase. The tired first years yawned as they went through doorways hidden behind sliding panels and climbed more and more staircases. Finally they reached the end of a corridor where there hung a portrait of a very fat woman in a pink silk dress.

"Password?" she said.

"Ear wax," said Alex, and the portrait swung forward to reveal a round hole in the wall. They scrambled through the hole and found themselves in the Gryffindor common room. It was an inviting room decorated in Gryffindor red with a toasty fireplace and full of spongy armchairs. Alex took the boys through a doorway on one side of the common room as Jamie showed the girls to the door on the other side.

Jamie escorted the girls up the spiral staircase and into their dormitory, staying to help them get settled in. She was about to depart when a timid voice called her name. "Jamie, may I speak with you."

Jamie went over and sat on the edge of the girl's four-poster bed. "What is the problem?" she tenderly inquired.

"Jamie, I'm frightened to close my eyes and go to sleep. I have these dreadful dreams and I sometimes wake up screaming. The other girls will think I'm peculiar and not want to be my friend."

Jamie looked at the desperation in the little girl's heartbreaking, but beautiful face. Suddenly she had an inspiration. "I think I know someone who can be of aid in helping you sleep well again and feel safer. Put on your slippers and come downstairs to my dormitory and I'll introduce you to him."

"Him? How can some boy help me sleep better?" The girl questioned. "Shouldn't I get dressed? What's a boy doing in your dormitory?"

Jamie held back a giggle as she smiled. "I don't have a boy in the dormitory. It's not that sort of he. You'll understand when you see him."

The other girls had promptly fallen sound asleep, so no one heard them as they left the room and went down the stairs to Jamie's dormitory. They entered the empty room and went over to Jamie's bed, which was on the far wall next to the window. "Pureheart, I'd like you to meet someone," Jamie said.

There lying at the end of Jamie's bed was a tiny unicorn about the size of a small dog. "Oh! He's beautiful. Is he real? May I touch him?"

Jamie whispered in Caitlin's ear. "He's not real, but he thinks he is. Pureheart is a toy stuffed Unicorn that has been charmed to life. He has all the qualities of a real unicorn. As for whether you can touch him or not that is a decision unicorns make based on your purity. You'll have to let him approach you and see."

Caitlin looked nervously at Jamie and then at Pureheart. *Will a unicorn consider me pure after what happened this summer? What will Jamie think of me if Pureheart doesn't let me touch him? She'll think I'm some tart that had underage sex.*

Pureheart was pawing at Jamie's pillow as if encouraging her to come to bed. "Where did you get him?" Caitlin asked.

"My dad bought Pureheart for me the year before I started Hogwarts. I was having bad dreams about a revolting guy who attacked me after a Quidditch game and tried to rape me. If it hadn't been for my 'knight in shining armor' he would have succeeded and in all probability killed me."

Caitlin looked at Jamie as tears came to her eyes. *Someone I can finally talk to about what happened. Someone who will understand how it felt.* "I wish a Knight had been there for me," Caitlin whispered quietly.

Jamie's jaw dropped in shock. "Caitlin, were you raped?"

"Technically I suppose some people wouldn't consider what happened to me rape, but it wounded me a lot more and the nightmares are just as dreadful."

Jamie held Caitlin's hand as she was told the entire story of what had happen during the summer. The only detail she left out was the perpetrators name. Jamie gasped in horror as Caitlin told her about how she was tied up and left to die.

"I pleaded for her to stop, but she wouldn't listen. I couldn't do anything," Caitlin told her, reliving the horrible ordeal as she did.

They sat there silently for a few minute; Jamie with her arms tightly around Caitlin.

"Do you think Pureheart will let me touch him or am I soiled because of what happened?"

"I don't know how Pureheart will react, but you certainly aren't soiled. We can only hope. Come sit on the bed so he can decide."

As soon as Caitlin sat down Pureheart approached her and tilted his head, as if he were examining Caitlin closely. The tiny unicorn had a strange questioning look on his face. He took a few steps closer and sniffed the air, as if he was trying to work out something. His tiny head lifted after a second and when Caitlin looked at him, she could see tears falling from his eyes. Pureheart licked Caitlin's cheek and then curled up on her lap.

Jamie smiled. "Would you like Pureheart to keep you company for a while?"

Caitlin looked at Jamie. "Could he, you'd really let him stay with me?"

"Pureheart knows where he's needed. He'll keep those nightmares away. Just bring him to visit me occasionally." Pureheart jumped to the floor as Caitlin threw her arms around Jamie's neck.

Jamie walked Caitlin back to her dorm and tucked her in bed while Pureheart took his accustomed position at the foot of the bed. Jamie knew she would miss Pureheart, but right now Caitlin required him a good deal more than she did. "Have you ever done any running," Jamie asked.

"Just at camp," Caitlin replied.

"Professor Granger and a few of us run every morning before breakfast. If you or any of the other first years would like to join us, you're more than welcome. Of course, you have to get up early. We meet in the main hall at 6:30 AM."

"6:30," Caitlin shockingly responded. "Well, not tomorrow. I'm knackered, but I'll ask the other girls about it in the morning."

"Invite the boys, as well. See you at breakfast," Jamie said as she slipped out the door.

As Jamie entered the common room Alex and Amanda jumped up from their game of chess and ran to her. "Where have you been Jamie?" asked Amanda. "It's been over an hour since you took the first years up. How long does it take to get them settled in bed?"

Jamie just looked at her and smiled. "In some cases a little longer then customary. Who's winning?"

"Alex, but doesn't he always? Are you okay now?"

"I'm fine." Seeing him just brought back memories of that horrible night when he saved my life. How can I every repay him?"

* * * * *

Tuesday, September 2, 2003 6:00 AM

It was 6:00 AM when her clock awakened Jamie. She slid her legs out from under the covers and stretched. *It's good to be back at Hogwarts.* She went over to Amanda's bed and gave her shoulder a little shake. "Are you running this morning?" Amanada didn't answer, but shook her head yes and started rubbing her eyes. Jamie went to the bathroom then brushed her teeth. Then she slipped on her running gear and headed for the door. "I'll wait for you in the common room, Amanda. I want to see if Alex is up yet"

"I'll be down in a couple minutes," Amanda answered quietly in order to not wake the other girls.

When Jamie entered the common room she was surprised to see Alex already waiting there. "Wow, I'm impressed. What got you up?"

"Thought I'd try to get the year off to a good start by being early for a change," He responded holding back a yawn.

As soon as Amanada joined them, they headed off to the main entrance where Professor Granger was already doing some stretching exercises. Soon six other students and Professors Potter and Malfoy joined them. It was obvious that Draco and Harry were not happy to see each other.

Harry couldn't help staring at Hermione. *She hasn't changed a bit. The same pretty face and beautiful body.* Her running bra and bicycle shorts left little to the imagination. Harry had a vivid memory of how Hermione looked when they were together. *The perfect combination of beauty, personality and intelligence and I dumped her because I hankered after Ginny. What a fool I was.*

"Okay!" Hermione broke the silence. "Lets go outside and get started with our warm-up exercises. We have a nice size group for the first morning of the school year. Please pass the word to your houses that anyone is welcome to join us in the morning. Lets pair up and get started with our exercises."

Draco seemed to make a mad dash to Hermione's side. Amanda and Alex paired off, as did the six other students leaving only Jamie and Harry. "Well I guess its you and I," Harry said as he looked at the young girl. He couldn't get over how much she looked like Hermione.

"Looks that way Professor Potter. My name is Jamie Zacherley. I'm a fifth year Gryffindor."

"Nice to meet you Miss Zacherley." *Now where have I heard that name before?*

Jamie could see by the lack of recognition on Harry's face that he didn't remember her.

"Lets start with jumping jacks," Hermione said. "Since it may have been awhile since some of you exercised; don't over do it. If you want to stop any exercise before it's complete; that's quite all right. I don't want anyone having to go see Madam Pomfrey on the first day of classes."

After warming up they went on to regular exercises finishing with sit-ups. Harry and Draco were in the group doing the exercise first. Harry was determined to do more than Draco who he easily surpassed with seventy-five. It was now time for the partners. Harry held Jamie's ankles, but his attention was on Hermione. She looked absolutely beautiful and from the look on his face, Draco thought so, too. As they neared fifty sit-ups Harry noticed that a few of the students had stopped, but not Hermione; she didn't even look out of breath. Suddenly Harry realized his partner was going strong, too.

He looked at Jamie's face. *It's amazing how much they look alike; they could easily pass as sisters.* As he watched both Jamie and Hermione continue on further than the other students, he wondered how much Jamie was trying to emulate Hermione. She'd even followed Hermione's fashion tips, he thought in a brief moment before wishing he could do a Doby and bang his head against a tree for noticing the physical similarities and something else.

"One Hundred," good job Miss Zacherley. "Maybe we should raise the bar to one twenty-five?" Harry could hear pride in Hermione's voice as she spoke.

"I'm game if you are Professor," Jamie smiled at her Transfiguration Professor.

Hermione spoke up, "The route we run is a measured kilometer. Do as many laps as you feel up to and then do your warm-down exercises and head for the showers."

* * * * *

Jamie made her way up to the third-floor hall and headed toward a portrait of a girl in a very large skirt who had a shepherd's crook and a flock of sheep around her.

"Snuggle soft," she said to the shepherdess, gaining entrance to the prefects' bathroom for girls. The bathroom was as opulent as a Roman bath, with marble everywhere. It was also completely empty. It was nice not having to fight for a shower, but it was lonely not having anyone to talk with. Jamie missed her friends from the Gryffindor dorm.

When she was done with her shower she wrapped a towel around her hair and walked to the large wardrobe near the tub. As she walked across the room she had the strangest feeling she was being watched.

Jamie removed a fluffy red-robe with the Gryffindor lion embroidered over the heart and then put on a pair of the black shower shoes from the bottom of the wardrobe. Jamie felt refreshed, but lonely. *This private prefect bath isn't for me; I miss my roommates.*

She walked back to Gryffindor Tower shaking her head. *That was my first and last Prefect shower.* After giving the password to the Fat Lady she climbed into the common room only to find it empty, as was the fifth year dorm. *This stinks; everyone's already gone to breakfast.* She quickly slipped on her clothes, grabbed her books and ran down to the Great Hall.

As she entered, Amanda saw her and waved indicating the seat she had saved for her. Jamie stuck up one finger indicating she'd be there shortly and then she went over to the first years and whispered into Caitlin's ear. "How did it go last night?"

Caitlin looked of at her with a broad grin on her face. "No bad dreams. I dreamed I was riding a unicorn."

Jamie smiled back as she put her hand on Caitlin's. "Have a grand first day."

Professor Granger, who had watched Jamie enter the Great Hall and go over to have a word with Caitlin, looked on proudly with a tear in her eye.

Jamie had no more than taken her seat when her roommates bombarded her with questions about where she had been this morning. Jamie informed them that she had tried the Prefect showers, but that they would have to put up with her again starting tomorrow. Lisa said, "That's our Jamie."

Jamie just smiled and started eating her breakfast.

As they were gathering their things for their first class Alex realized he had left his wand in the Gryffindor Dormitory. "I have to get my wand or Granger will give me detention. You guys go on without me. I'll see you in class."

"Okay," answered Amanda. "Be quick about it. You know Professor Granger won't be exactly happy if you're late for class either."

Jamie and Amanada knew they were early so they took their time walking down the halls using the time to catch up on the summer events they hadn't written each other concerning. As they turned the corner they were startled to see seven first years from various houses except Slytherin floating in the corridor banging their heads against the ceiling. It was no shock to notice that Dick Bancroft the Slytherin Quidditch captain was the reason for the mayhem.

"Bancroft, what are you doing? These first years are anxious enough without you hazing them," Jamie shouted as she angrily approached Bancroft and his underlings.

"Mind your own business Zacherley or I'll charm your shoes to the rafters with you in them so everyone can check out your knickers. No bleeding Gryffindor bitch tells me what I ought to or ought not do."

Although Jamie didn't blink an eye at Bancroft's threat, Amanada looked scared stiff at the thought of this taking place.

"I know your first name is Dick, but that doesn't suggest you always have to be one," Jamie said as she took out her wand, first doing a cushioning charm on the stone floor and then floating the students to the earth. Jamie looked at the frightened first years and said, "Please don't judge all of us by that prat. Hurry to your class now so you're not tardy."

Jamie ignored the fuming Slytherin and turned to Amanda, "We best get moving or we'll be late for class ourselves."

Dick Bancroft turned to his flunkies and whispered, "You guys fancy a show? Watch this." He pointed his wand at Jamie's back as she walked away and....

Chapter 5 Getting to Know All About Her

"Hermione may I have a word with you before your first class."

Upon hearing her name, Hermione turned, recognising clearly her old friend. "Hi! Neville. Certainly I have a few minutes."

"When I was in Hogsmeade last week I saw signs advertising a concert to be given by 'Witches on Strings'. I remembered how delightfully you played the cello and wondered if possibly you'd like to attend. It's on Friday, October 31st."

"Oh! They are extremely talented. I attended one of their concerts two years ago. Certainly Neville, I'd be delighted to accompany you."

Neville nervously wrung his hands as sweat began to form on his forehead. "Perhaps we could go for dinner prior to the concert."

Nodding her head in agreement, Hermione couldn't be sure, but she was almost certain she could see in Neville's eyes the nervousness of someone who was asking for more than just two friends going out together. She'd seen such a look before and that experience had taught her that she needed to set the boundaries now. "That would be nice, but only if you agree to go Dutch."

Neville had a quizzical look on his face. "What is going Dutch?"

"Its when both people pay there own way."

"But that positively isn't necessary. I certainly can afford to pay for your dinner."

Hermione could see in his eyes that her suggestion had not been what Neville had wanted to hear. "No, I insist. When friends go somewhere together, it isn't reasonable for one to have to pick up the bill just because he's a male."

Neville looked sadly at her and reluctantly agreed. He tried his hardest to return Hermione's smile as she walked away, but all he could think about was how on earth he could get Hermione to see him as more than just a friend.

* * * * *

Alex hastened through the Gryffindor common room and flew up the stairs to his dormitory. As soon as he entered the room he spied his wand lying on his four-posted bed. After hurriedly grabbing the wand he ran down the steps and out of the common room. He looked like a relay runner as he raced along the halls with his wand in hand. Professor Granger had warned him last year that being late one more time to class would earn him a detention. This was a new year, but Alex didn't want to push his luck.

As he turned the corner he saw a group of Slytherins looking in the direction of Jamie and Amanda. Suddenly Dick Bancroft raised his wand and pointed it at the girls. Without waiting to ascertain what was going on Alex instantaneously focused his wand on Bancroft and shouted, " Stupefy."

Upon hearing Alex's voice, Jamie and Amanada spun around just in time to see Bancroft's body collapsing to the ground and his wand rolling out of his hand. Amanda's face flushed as she realized what would have happened if Alex had not acted so rapidly.

Alex ran up to the girls as the Slytherins just stood staring at their unconscious leader. "Jamie, you ought to know better than to turn your back on that scum."

Jamie smiled at Alex as she said, "Why should I fret when I have the best beater at Hogwarts defending me. Lets get to class guys." As the trio walked off they saw the Slytherins slapping Dick Bancroft's face trying to wake him up. Jamie laughed, "Gee, maybe we should have stayed and helped with that, it looks like fun."

* * * * *

The day passed quickly and with the exception of Potions the fifth years had received modest homework from the first day of classes. One more class to go and their night might be relatively homework free. Amanda and Alex were already making plans for what the three of them could do that evening as they sat down for their last class of the day. Jamie was too nervous to think about tonight. She wanted to make an impression on her Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor.

Inside the classroom, the Professor himself was just beginning to feel as though he was going to make it thought his first day. Harry had found it hard to breath as his first class had entered the room, sheer panic taking hold of him. Slowly he fought off the shaking and knots in his stomach, and now at the end of the day, he was feeling a lot more relaxed and in command of the situation.

"Good afternoon and welcome to fifth year Defense Against the Dark Arts. I'm Professor Potter and I'll be your teacher." Harry brushed his hair aside reveling his scar. "Since every class thus far has asked to see the scar; I thought we'd get that out of the way."

Harry walked about the room. "Can anyone tell me why, since the threat of Voldemort has been eliminated, we should continue to study Defense Against the Dark Arts?"

At first there were no hands, but then Jamie raised hers timidly. "Yes, Miss Zacherley"

Jamie responded, "We are getting older and will soon be off on our own without the guidance of our parents and professors. We are going to be faced with numerous choices, one being The Dark Arts. The magical world although wonderful, can be a dangerous place especially if one is not properly prepared to face it. Although Voldemort was defeated, the Dark Arts still exist and are a constant danger. Knowledge is our best defense against them and our best insurance that we will make the right decisions regarding their use."

Harry was for a moment taken aback. Not one student in any of his other classes had come remotely close to the correct response, but this girl had summed his thoughts up perfectly. "Well done Miss Zacherley; ten points for Gryffindor." Harry faced the class. "Know your enemy. Voldemort may be gone, but there is always someone ready to use the Dark Arts for their own personal gains. Your best weapon is always your knowledge."

Jamie eyes were glued on Harry Potter as she listened attentively to his every word. She had spent her whole life reading everything she could get her hands on related to him. Now he

was here. He was so close that she could literally reach out and touch him. Her knight, her hero, her Sir Lancelot had returned. It didn't seem real, but there he was standing in front of her. Jamie could feel it in her heart, her stomach. She ached for him. *If only he would sweep me off my feet and hold me in his arms as he did that night when he rescued me.* Jamie got goose bumps as she remembered him holding her in his arms and stroking the bare flesh on her back. *I felt so secure, so safe, so loved. I want so much to be held like that again.*

"That being said, lets see exactly what you have learned about the Dark Arts in the last four years." Harry spent the rest of the class peppering the students with questions. By and large he was quite satisfied with their comprehension and the job that the former DADA teacher had accomplished schooling them.

The student that most impressed Harry was Jamie Zacherley. She was a younger version of Hermione, but was much less aggressive in displaying her extensive knowledge. Jamie's hand seldom went up to answer a question if other students had raised theirs. If no one raised a hand, Jamie would hesitantly raise hers, but she always had the correct answer. On a few occasions no one including Jamie raised a hand, but if Harry directly asked her the question; she was quick with the correct answer. By the end of the period Harry had reached the conclusion that Jamie Zacherley, a fifth year, might well be better prepared to teach this class than him. Every time he looked at her he thought of Hermione. *They are so much alike. Both are such special girls.*

The Gryffindors were ecstatic as they left the class. Professor Potter was so pleased with their overall knowledge that he had not assigned any homework. As they journeyed back to the common room, Amanda and Alex were in profound discussion about what they could do with their free evening.

The other member of the trio was silent, her mind filled with questions. Questions totally centered on her DADA Professor, her own 'knight in shining armor'. *He's just as wonderful as I knew he would be and so good looking. It certainly wouldn't be difficult to fall in love with him. Maybe, I already have and just won't admit it to myself. What can I do to show him how I feel; what can I give him to demonstrate how much I appreciate everything he has done. If it hadn't been for him my parents would have never lived to conceive me. If it hadn't been for him I would have been raped and killed. What do you give a person to whom you owe your very being? It has to be something very special. Something that is very personal.*

Suddenly Jamie knew what it had to be. Something she considered very special. Something she was saving. Something she had been determined to keep until she was able to give it to her true love. Her parents had raised her to believe that this was the most precious gift she possessed and that it should only be given to someone who had proved himself deserving. Harry Potter had certainly proved himself deserving. Jamie was convinced she wasn't dealing with a little girl crush on a famous hero. She had no visions of a relationship, but in her eyes, in her mind, he was the most deserving of her precious gift. Jamie had decided to give her virginity to Harry Potter. The question now was when and exactly how to go about it so that he wouldn't refuse her special gift.

* * * * *

Having survived all the way through the first day, Harry felt like celebrating.

From the beam on his face you would imagine he had just conquered Voldemort.

"I was going to inquire as to how your first day went, but from that grin on your face I presume rather fine." Hermione had entered the classroom while Harry had been occupied with reflections on the day.

"The day had its ups and downs. I was prepared to give up after period one with the Slytherin first years, but the Gryffindor fifth years made my day."

Hermione smiled at the reference to the fifth years. "They are an especially great group."

"Hermione, there is one girl in that class that reminds me so much of you. She ran with us this morning. Jamie Zacherley."

Hermione laughed, "Jamie is a very extraordinary young woman, but in reality she reminds me a lot more of you than me."

"Me?" Harry was taken aback by this comment. "What about her could possibly remind you of me?"

"Oh I'm not sure. Perhaps it's that she made her house Quidditch team as a first year. Or it could be that she plays seeker. Then again it might be that she seems to be constantly saving lives and looking out for others with no regard to her own safety. Or maybe it's that in four years she's been in the infirmary six times with serious injuries."

"Whoa! Did you and I have a daughter together?"

Hermione's face turned a bright pink. She knew, of course, that Harry was teasing, but little did he appreciate how much she wished they could parent a child together. He had absolutely no idea how much she loved him and always would.

Hermione smiled at Harry. "It's funny in a way that you would say that, because I really don't think that I could love her more even if she was my own daughter."

She could tell by the look of surprise on Harry's face that she would have to tell him more. "I know it's wrong for a teacher to take such an interest in just one student, but I've seen something in her since her first year. We almost lost her last year." Hermione shook her head trying to clear it of the emotions that just remembering those days and nights brought to the fore. "I cried myself to sleep every night, it was like part of me was dying."

"Almost lost her?" Harry's voice showed genuine concern for a girl he barely knew.

"Yes" Hermione's eyes were already tearing just thinking about the events. "It happened on parents weekend in mid February. I wasn't present, but Alex and Amanda were and filled me in on most of the details."

"Alex Ward and Amanda Pierce?"

"Those three individuals are attached at the hips. I've never seen three people care for each other more except maybe..."

Harry finished her sentence. "You, Ron and I. That was the three of them that you pointed out to me walking arm in arm before the Sorting wasn't it?"

Hermione found herself nodding in response even though her mind was already filling up with the memories of that night.

It was a gorgeous winter's day that greeted the students and staff of Hogwarts for the annual parent's weekend. After an exceptionally cold winter, to have a bright and sunny day with the temperature in the fifties was welcomed by all.

As Alex, Amanda and Jamie's parents had been unable to make it to Hogwarts for the weekend, they were simply hanging out together, enjoying the wonderful and unexpected mildness of the day. After making their way around the grounds, they had all stopped at one of the benches to rest and talk. A short time later they were passed by a couple of parents, and a little girl. A few feet behind looking less happy to have their parents with them walked two fourth year boys from Slytherin. They had only just passed when the one boy turned and ran back to the castle crying out that he would be right back. The others stood talking while waiting for him.

The three of them watched them walk by, before returning to their own conversation. Less than five minutes later, Alex and Amanda were both shocked when Jamie suddenly leapt to her feet without saying a word and ran towards the lake. It was only then that they heard a woman shouting in a panic.

"Karen, where is Karen?"

They watched stunned, as Jamie ran about fifteen yards onto the ice covered lake and without hesitation, jumped into the water where the ice had melted and been broken through. As everyone rushed to the side of the lake, Alex advised them to stay on solid ground to avoid more breakage as he cautiously worked his way on to the ice.

Suddenly Jamie surfaced with the screaming little girl in her arms. The little girl was sputtering water and crying, "My baby, my baby."

Alex rushed to assist Jamie, but had barely gotten the little girl in his arms when Jamie jumped back into the freezing water. "No Jamie, don't!" he shouted.

But by the time the words came out of his mouth, Jamie had once again disappeared. He rushed the little girl to her mother and hurried back onto the ice to help Jamie get out. As each minute went by and there was still no sign of Jamie, panic started to rise in him. When he felt Amanda tug on his robes, he knew that he wasn't the only one worried.

"She's in trouble Alex, we have to help her."

There was no need for discussion as they both instantly jumped in the frigid water.

Amanda stayed near the opening of the ice to act as a guide, while Alex dived lower to search for Jamie. He searched as far as his sight would let him in the freezing water. It may have been a sunny day, but the covering of ice kept the visibility down to a few meters. Then just as his own air was running out, he saw her rising a few meters away. As her body stopped against the ice sheet above, he knew that she was both trapped and unconscious. He swam as quickly as possible to her, fighting the burning in his own lungs at the lack of oxygen, powered on by the fear of losing his best friend. He put his arm around her to hold her steady, then searched for the opening where he knew Amanda and safety was. When he finally saw

her legs kicking in the water it gave him the energy he needed and with the last vestiges of his strength he kicked towards her. By the time he reached the surface Madam Pomfrey had arrived. She didn't even wait for Jamie to be pulled out of the water before putting her in stasis.

As Jamie's lifeless body was put on the stretcher to be taken to the infirmary, Alex pulled himself up to the stretcher. He pried the doll from her left hand and held it out for the little girl who was still there, wrapped up in fresh robes to warm her. Alex exchanged no words with the girl's parents or brother. What could anyone say at a time like this?

He turned to see Amanda looking at him. He could tell by the fear in her eyes, that she was still scared by what had occurred. As a teacher came over to wrap them both in new robes and put a warming charm on them, they held each other. It wasn't just the cold that caused them both to shiver. Both of them knew how close they'd all come to death.

Hermione had been in her office, when a student came rushing in with the news of what had occurred. She silently thanked Madam Pomfrey for letting her know as she rushed as quickly as possible through the halls of Hogwarts. When she arrived at the Infirmary, the look on Madam Pomfrey's face was enough to frighten Hermione to the core.

"I think we may be too late, Professor Granger. I'm hesitant to take her out of stasis. She was in that freezing water so long and she had stopped breathing. I'm not sure for how long. If she lives I'm afraid she's going to lose one leg and there is a 70% chance of brain damage. I don't know what to do."

Hermione looked at her and said all we can do is pray. And so they did. After a few days Pomfrey reported that Jamie wouldn't lose the leg, but as far as brain damage, she couldn't be sure until or if she came out of the coma. For two weeks they took turns sitting with her and praying that she would return to them. Then Headmaster McGonagall housed Jamie's parents in empty faculty quarters. They spent the days sitting with her and Amanda, Alex and Hermione took the nights.

"We really thought that we'd never see her alive again, Harry. But then one night, I fell asleep holding her hand, and our prayers were answered." Hermione smiled warmly as she remembered the feeling of seeing Jamie that night. "She looked like the most beautiful Angel in the world, and do you know what she said?"

When Harry shook his head, Hermione continued. "She said, 'Professor Granger, How is the little girl? Did I lose her baby doll?'"

Harry grabbed hold of Hermione's hand and gently squeezed it, telling her, "You're right, she is a very special girl." Though in his mind his words continued, "Almost as special as you."

* * * * *

Alex bounded down the steps from his dormitory and entered the Gryffindor common room. "Okay, Amanda, let's get started. Where's Jamie?"

Amanda turned her head and pointed to the lengthy study table along the far wall. There sat Jamie encircled by all ten first years Gryffindors.

Alex looked at Amanada with sad puppy eyes. "The three of us aren't doing anything together tonight, are we?"

"I'm afraid not, unless it's assisting Mother Hen help the first years with their homework." She looked at Alex as if she had already resigned herself to spending the evening in that fashion.

"She'll never change will she?" Alex already knew the answer he would be given.

"I definitely hope not. Come on, let's get acquainted with the Gryffindor Newbies."

The evening passed unexpectedly fast and although Amanda and Alex would never want to acknowledge it; they had a great time. As the youngest Gryffindors gathered their belongs they thanked the trio for their help. Jamie went over and whispered in Caitlin's ear. "Give Pureheart a big kiss and hug for me."

"Only if you give me one first," Caitlin teased. Jamie kissed her on the cheek and gave her a big hug before she joined her friends.

"How did you two become so close so fast?" Amanda inquired.

"We share a history," was all Jamie replied.

"So what do you say? Do you guys want to play a little exploding snaps before you turn in?" Alex said challenging.

The tired look in Jamie's eyes could have answered for her. "Not tonight Alex, I just want to get out of my clothes and relax a little. You can come up for a while if you want. I'm sure the other girls won't mind."

"Nah! Thanks, but I think I'll get to bed early, too. See you both in the morning."

As Alex headed toward the staircase for the boys dorm, Jamie and Amanda turned and walked toward the stairs for their room. The dormitory door had barely closed behind them before Jamie started removing her clothes.

Amanda shook her head and laughed. "You really hate wearing clothes, don't you?"

"It's not so much that I hate clothes, but that I feel so much more comfortable without them. Thank god I can come in here and take them all off. I had feared that I would have to hide myself for the whole seven years." Jamie gave her friend a smile in appreciation. "I'm so relieved that you and the others are so understanding. Thankfully you figured it out fast in first year that I was a naturist and you are all so supportive of me being nude in the dorm."

"Jamie, it didn't take a brain surgeon to put two and two together. First I saw that plastic bag from Cap D'agde. Then there was that day you were so preoccupied with Quidditch tryouts that you sort of forgot I was here when you got out of the shower and just tossed the towel in the laundry. You must have strolled around the room five minutes before you realized you were nude. I bet you must have said I'm sorry fifty times. What really clinched it was noticing that full coverage tan of yours."

"A life time of doing something makes it seem quit natural. I know it's still difficult for you to understand, but we never wore clothes at home. For years when my parents took me someplace, I thought I was being punished because they made me get dressed. I'm as self-conscious putting clothes on as you are taking them off. Amanda, you and Alex are my best friends. You guys know me better than anyone, else in the world. You know I'm basically shy and certainly no exhibitionist, but you also know I would be more comfortable sitting in the common room nude then with clothes on. It wouldn't matter to me that everyone else was dressed or even if they stared. They'd get over it."

Amanda shook her head. "Your right, I'll never understand it, but I love you and I accept it." Suddenly their conversation was interrupted by a knock on the dormitory door. Jamie and Amanda looked at each other puzzlingly as to who would be knocking on the door.

"Jamie its Caitlin. Can Pureheart and I come visit?" Caitlin called through the door.

Jamie and Amanda looked at each other.

"Sure come on in." Jamie reached for her robe, but Caitlin opened the door before she had it completely on and closed.

Jamie could tell by how quick Caitlin's face turned red that she was embarrassed. But when she noticed the first year start looking back and forth between herself and Amanda, Jamie started to worry about what conclusion Caitlin was jumping to, especially considering her revelations the night before.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you.... I'm sorry, I'll come back later."

"No, please Caitlin don't go. Come in. Its not what you think." Jamie rush to the door and grabbed Caitlin's hand. "Please, let me explain. I wouldn't lie to you. Please don't go."

Initially Caitlin tried to slip out of Jamie's grasp, but then she stopped. *Jamie's been so nice to me. I have to trust her. I have to.* She slowly waked into the room and sat next to Jamie on the bed. "Are you gay, Jamie?" Caitlin asked.

Amanda looked at Jamie as if to say now what? Jamie bit her lip and looked at Amanda. "Amanda can I talk to Caitlin alone for a little bit."

Amanda rose from her bed, grabbed her nightclothes and headed to the bathroom. Once she had closed the door behind her, Jamie turned to Caitlin wondering just what to tell her. She didn't want to lie to the young girl, but apart from Alex, only her dorm mates knew of her lifestyle. The last thing she wanted was for it to scare Caitlin away. Suddenly her father's words, telling her to trust her instincts came back to her. In the end she decided to trust them, hoping that they didn't let her down for the first time.

"Caitlin, I am not gay. I have gay friends, but I am 100% heterosexual. Do you know what a naturists is?"

"No, not really. Does it have something to do with nature?"

"Sort of. Have you ever heard the term nudist?"

"Oh yes!" Caitlin quickly responded. "Aren't they those weird people that run around outside without their clothes."

Jamie looked at Caitlin. "Caitlin do you think I'm a weird person?"

"Oh! Heavens no. You're one of the nicest people I've ever met."

"Caitlin, I'm a nudist." Caitlin's jaw dropped slightly and she hung her head realizing she had just call Jamie weird. Jamie continued. "I've been a naturist or nudist; take you pick, ever since I can remember. At home my parents and sister never wear clothes. We find it more comfortable, more natural. When I first came to Hogwarts I was miserable here because I had to wear clothing all the time, even to sleep. Fortunately my dorm mates discovered my secret and found it in their hearts to allow me to be nude in the dorm."

"Do they stroll about nude, too?"

"No"

"Do you mean that they sit around and talk entirely dressed while you're in your birthday suit?"

"That what I mean, Caitlin."

"So you and Amanda aren't lesbians? You were just sitting talking. She had clothes on, but you were more comfortable naked?"

"That's correct."

"If one of your dorm mates had walked in, you would have just kept talking, correct? Why did you cover up for me?"

"Most people have difficulty accepting our life style. Even though we're the ones without clothes they become all disturbed and uncomfortable. I didn't want to embarrass you, so I put my robes on, but you got in the door a little too swiftly"

Caitlin took a minute to soak up all this and then said. "I have a lot more questions I'd like to ask, but first I want to be sure I understand what you just said. If I state that I don't mind you being nude, are you going to take off your robes and sit down there naked?"

Jamie smiled. "Yes, I'd feel a lot more comfortable without these robes, but only if you say it's alright."

"Will you get angry or think I'm perverted if I look at you? It's just that I've never seen a grown woman naked."

Jamie laughed as she leaned over and gave Caitlin a hug. "Caitlin, the last thing I would ever think is that you were perverted. You can stare at me, as much as you desire and ask as many questions as you want. I'm completely comfortable with my body and being seen nude."

Jamie stood up and removed her robes laying them over the end of the bed. She remained standing as she said to Caitlin, "We can keep this our little secret, can't we?"

As much as she knew she shouldn't; Caitlin couldn't stop gazing at Jamie. "Your stunning, no wonder you're comfortable with your body."

"Comfort with your body has nothing to do with how you look. Nudists come in every age, size and shape. I felt comfortable when I was 8 and I'll feel comfortable when I'm 188. It's all about freedom and being one with nature. Its hard to explain, a person has to experience it."

Caitlin hadn't been able to take her eyes off Jamie's breasts. "They're beautiful. Do you think I'll ever have breasts as full and beautiful as yours?" She looked down at her chest. "I'm as flat as a board."

"I want to show you something," Jamie said as she walked over to her dresser and opened the second drawer. She removed a picture and brought it back to the bed. "This is a picture of my family taken at Cap D'agde the summer before I started Hogwarts. I'm the skinny flat as a board one on the left. As far as you are concerned, you're beautiful already and will become more beautiful every year." Jamie put her hand on her breast. "You don't want breasts this big, they have a tendency to get in the way."

Caitlin smiled as she looked at 10-year-old Jamie waving to her from the picture. Suddenly her face turned as red as a beet and she looked away from the picture as she returned it to Jamie. Jamie saw the stunned expression on Caitlin face. "Sorry about that. I didn't mean to turn this into a sex education class. I forgot that most girls your age have never seen a naked man."

"I guess you've seen a lot," Caitlin questioned in admiration. Her eyes were as big as saucers.

"Hundreds. Hundreds of guys have seen me nude, too. It's really no big deal."

Caitlin shivered. "I can't imagine being naked in front of a boy."

"It's actually no different, at least not if the boys are nudists. Some times younger boys who aren't naturists can be a little silly when they see someone naked."

Now Caitlin was confused. "Have you been nude in front of boys that aren't naturists; boys that are fully dressed?"

"Yes, often we have parties at home and undoubtedly all of our friends aren't naturists. We always warn anyone coming to the house that we will be nude. We leave it up to them whether they want to attend under those circumstances or not."

Jamie sat on the bed brushing Pureheart's hair as Caitlin asked yet another question. "But aren't you embarrassed to be nude in front of someone that's fully clothed. Doesn't it make you wish you had something to cover yourself with?"

"Caitlin I know your not going to be able to understand what I'm about to say, but it is totally true. Last night when you had to go up and be sorted did you feel all sweaty and nervous?" Caitlin nodded her head yes.

"The night I was sorted; I was petrified. My hands were all sweaty; my clothes were sticking to me. I was scared to death. I kept thinking that if only I could be void of those terrible clothes and feel the air against my skin; then I could calm down. To me being nude is being

relaxed and a part of nature. In that room, in front of all those fully clothed strangers, I would have been much more comfortable and at ease if I had been able to be nude.

Caitlin just shook her head. "It must be wonderful to be so confident. Obviously you wear clothing in the winter outside because of the cold, but aren't there any other times you feel the need for them; for instance if you were climbing or exercising?"

Jamie laughed. "Do you mean am I ashamed to have people see what's between my legs? It's just another part of my body; all girls have one. It's only a big deal because people make it one. Caitlin, I play Twister at parties all the time. I'm not ashamed of any one seeing any part of my body."

"Well, its good to see that you two are getting along," Amanda said as she reentered the dorm. "I see at least one of you is comfortable and relaxed."

"We're both comfortable with Jamie being nude," Caitlin responded defensively.

"It's getting late and you should be off to bed; especially if you're running with us in the morning," Jamie said. "One more question and off you go."

Caitlin thought a minute before saying. "I would like to ask something else, but it's not really about nudity in general, it's about you, about down there." She pointed to Jamie's pubic area. "You're 15, shouldn't you have hair down there by now."

Amanada looked at Jamie and smiled. Then she walked over to Caitlin and ruffled her hair. "I can see why Jamie likes you. You don't pull any punches. If it's on your mind you speak it. Good for you."

It made Jamie feel good that Amanda was getting to like Caitlin. "Caitlin, I use magic to prevent it from growing; it makes me feel cleaner. I like the air to be able to circulate freely there. That's why even though I'm forced to where clothing I will never ever wear knickers. I never wear a bra either. Clothing is bad enough, but underclothing is way to restrictive."

Caitlin shrugged her shoulders and laughed, "I never wear a bra either, but it's mainly for lack of anything to put in it."

Amanada chuckled. "Don't feel bad Caitlin, most of us don't have 56EEEEEs."

Jamie stood up and threw her pillow at Amanda. "I'd never get in the door if they were that big. Caitlin, I think you and Pureheart best be getting back to your dorm so you can spend some time with your housemates. Thank you for bringing him to visit. Do I get a hug tonight?"

Caitlin left Pureheart on the bed and practically leaped the distance between her and Jamie as they both threw their arms around each other. Somehow, probably because of their differences in height, when they embraced, Jamie's one breast hit Caitlin in the nose and rubbed against her cheek. "Oh, I'm sorry Caitlin," Jamie quickly responded as she pulled away from the younger girl.

Caitlin got the strangest grin on her face and said. "No problem. I guess things like that happen when you're dealing with a nudist that doesn't know enough to keep her 56EEEEEs on a leash."

Amanda roared with laughter. Jamie looked at Caitlin. They both had huge smiles on their faces. They hugged each other again and with the same disastrous results only this time they held the embrace. Until Caitlin said, "Well at least now I know what to get you for Christmas. What size harness do you need for them?"

Amanda almost fell off the bed she laughed so hard. Caitlin grabbed Pureheart and Jamie walked her to the door before saying, "Do you want me to walk you to your dorm."

Caitlin eyes went to Jamie's feet and then brushed her whole body until they reached her eyes. "I think not. You'd do it, and just like that. The last thing I want is you getting expelled. Jamie." Caitlin indicated for Jamie to lean her head down and she whispered in her ear.

Jamie stood up at once with a stunned look on her face. She just stared at Caitlin's eyes for a few moments and then whispered something back in Caitlin's ear. Caitlin smiled as she leaned over and yelled good night to the still giggling Amanda and then said good night to Jamie.

After the door closed behind her, Caitlin stood for a moment hugging Pureheart and then turned toward her dorm. *I've never had a father. I never knew my mother, but now I know what its like to have a big sister and I want to be just like her. I love her.*

As Jamie returned to her bed, Amanda said, "You know for an eleven year old first year she's pretty cool. "

"Yeah," Jamie replied. "I like her a lot."

"So, what was the whispering all about or is it a big secret."

"No, Amanda, its no big secret, but it was an unbelievable surprise; something I would never have anticipated especially with her history. Caitlin wants my help doing something, but I told her to think about it for a week while she gets to know her dorm mates a little better. I don't want her spending too much time with me and not having any friends in her own class."

"So do I have to yank it out of you or are you going to enlighten me."

"Caitlin wishes me to ask my roommates if it's all right with them if she spends some time in here with them and me. She wants to feel what its like to be a nudist, especially around dressed people."

Amanda jumped to her feet with her pillow in hand and started hitting Jamie with it. "Kill! Kill! Destroy the wicked naturist before she infects the entire first year class and we have naked pre-teens running the halls of Hogwarts. Kill! Destroy!"

Susan, Lisa and Mandy entered the room to find Amanda and Jamie rolling around the floor doing a combination of wrestling, pillow fighting and tickling.

Lisa looked at Susan and Mandy and shook her head in a mock disgusted fashion before yelling, "Pillow fight." In a matter of seconds all five girls were rolling around the floor. Four girls were wearing clothes and one was utterly naked. The naked girl had rapidly come to the conclusion that being nude is a definite disadvantage when people are trying to tickle you.

Chapter 6 Choices

Wednesday, September 3, 2003 6:30 AM

Jamie looked toward the Castle door; an appearance of disillusionment was in her eyes. Although she was pleased to see that their workout group had expanded to twenty members this morning, she was saddened that Caitlin hadn't joined them.

Just as Hermione was about to start pairing people off, the castle door burst open and ten Gryffindor first years ran out to join them. "I'm sorry we're late Professor Granger!" Caitlin shouted. "Some people have a hard time getting out of bed in the morning." Her eyes fixed on Matt Hallowell.

Hermione looked at the Gryffindor's in amazement. "You do realize that this is not a compulsory program. You are not required to be here."

"We realize that Professor," Matt Hallowell responded. "We all want to be a part of the group. We do things as a family."

Hermione face broke into a huge smile. *Someone in this class is definitely a strong organizer and motivator.*

Caitlin looked in Jamie's direction and was rewarded with a smile that had "way to go girl" printed all over it.

"Since we have a lot of new members this mornings I suggest each person who has experience pair off with a new runner to help them with the calisthenics?"

Hermione's proposal was meet with varied emotions. Draco was not pleased. He had hoped to pair himself with Hermione. He rather liked watching her do her exercises close up.

Harry was grateful. He was worried he would be paired with Jamie once more. It wasn't that Harry didn't like Jamie. Actually the contrary was true; he thought she was a fantastic girl and exceedingly good-looking. It was just that he was a guy and after all human. Knowing he would in all probability stare made him feel like he was evil; therefore he was thankful he wouldn't have the opportunity.

Jamie had hoped to match up with Caitlin, but Matt Hallowell asked her first and she didn't have the heart to turn him down. Caitlin ended up opposite Harry and she was petrified.

Today would be Caitlin's first Defense against the Dark Arts class so she hadn't met Professor Potter up until now. They introduced themselves, but that was the extent of their chat. They just went about their exercises in quiet except for Harry giving instruction where necessary. When they finally reached sit-ups Caitlin couldn't believe she was actually touching Harry Potter, the boy who lived and the teenager that along with Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley had defeated Lord Voldemort. His history plus the fact that he was extremely attractive made her hands begin to sweat. *Oh my God! He's actually going to touch me next. He's going to put his hands on my skinny, bony legs.*

As Caitlin started her sit-ups Harry couldn't help but consider how different she was from the girl he worked with yesterday; the girl who reminded him so much of the lady he loved, but would never have.

Caitlin was a petite blonde. She had a good-looking face, but her body was definitely that of a little girl. Caitlin had worn a little short tee shirt, which exposed her flat stomach. She didn't bother wearing a bra because her chest was as flat as her stomach.

As Harry watched her reach number twenty-five in her sit-ups, he reflected to himself. It's amazing what happens to a girl between the ages of eleven and fifteen. He thought back to Hermione and how when he met her she was a flat chested, scrawny little girl just like Caitlin. He smiled as he realized that back then he never even thought of Hermione as a girl. She was just his best friend that happened to wear skirts. *I didn't even notice she had developed breasts until the night of the Yule Ball when she wore that dress. She looked so dazzling. Ron and I both feel in love with our best friend that night.*

Harry's eyes fell down to Caitlin's twig like legs as he thought of Hermione fine-looking legs. He remembered how when they were a couple he would stroke those legs and work his way up to her thighs and then on to....

Harry froze. As he had thought of Hermione legs, his eyes had traveled up Caitlin's to where they entered her baggy shorts. He hesitated a moment and then turned his head away.

Suddenly Harry mind returned to his body as Caitlin said, "You may let go now Professor. That's all I can do."

As everyone stood and listened to Hermione give the same instructions about running as she gave the previous day; Harry was deep in thought. *Am I turning into a pervert? I was just staring at a little girl. Okay, I was staring at her but I was thinking of Hermione. I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm not sick, but what the hell goes with these girls? Did all the knickers factories go out of business while I was living in the muggle world.*

Two days, two girls without knickers. Maybe I better play it safe and exercise with Draco tomorrow. Suddenly Harry had a horrible vision and quickly decided he would take his chances and stick with girls as partners.

* * * * *

As Jamie, Alex and Amanada entered the Great Hall for dinner, Caitlin got out of her seat and hurried over to Jamie. "May I speak with you a minute?"

"Sure. Alex, Amanda, save me a seat; I'll be right back. What's up Caitlin?"

Caitlin looked about to make sure no one was listening and then in a soft voice said. "Jamie, I tried it today. I don't have any knickers on."

Jamie smiled at the younger girl. "You know I'm beginning to think you are serious about wanting to give naturism a try. How did it go? How does it feel?"

"Well," Caitlin explained, "At first I was very nervous and felt I was doing something ghastly. Even though I had my robes on I was self-conscious how I sat. After awhile the nervousness

wore off and I realized that no one knew I didn't have any knickers on. That's when I started to feel the benefits. My knickers always seemed to be so tight and ride up; it bothered me. I used to feel like I wanted to pull them away, but couldn't. Today I felt so comfortable. The best part was when we went outside for Care of Magical Creatures. It was warm out, and the robes were hot, but there was a breeze blowing. It went right up my skirt and it felt so pleasant. I felt so much cleaner; not sweaty down there; it was great I didn't have knickers on all day and not one person was aware of it."

"It is a great feeling. Now you know why I never wear them. Going nude, however, is a much bigger step than going without under clothing. People might not realize you don't have knickers on, but they will certainly know when you're naked."

"I know, but I really want to try it. I know I'll be okay with just you, but I'm not sure about the other girls."

"My dorm mates said it okay for you to be nude there, although they did tease me about starting my own nudist camp. Hey, by the way, how did you get all the Gryffindors to come running this morning?"

"It was simple. I just told them you would be there and that Professor Granger was in charge. They all love you and think Professor Granger is really nice. Are you and the professor related? You look so much alike."

"No, do you really think we look alike? She's so attractive."

"You could easily pass for sisters. I have to get back to my friends. I just wanted you to know that I'm chucking all my knickers in the trash."

Jamie smiled as Caitlin ran back to her friends.

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Harry was frustrated when he entered the great hall to see that the chairs on either side of Hermione were taken. He wanted to talk to her about Ron's discharge from Azkaban, but it seemed she was forever with Severus, Draco or Neville. *Something is going on between Hermione and one of those blokes, but I'll be blasted if I can figure out which one. Looks like I'm eating another meal with Ginny and Sybil.*

Harry suffered through yet another conversation about tealeaves and Tarot cards. He didn't know how many more meals he could handle sitting next to these two ridiculous women. *I must have been crazy. What did I ever see in Ginny Weasley?* Finally after desert was completed, he excused himself almost immediately when he saw that Hermione was getting ready to depart.

"Hermione!" Harry called as he rushed over to catch up with her. "Do you have a few moments? There's something I'd like to discuss with you."

"Sure, why don't you walk me back to my quarters. Crookshanks will be waiting for his dinner."

As they left the great hall four pair of eyes watched their departure. None of the faces attached to those eyes looked very happy.

Harry knew he had to discuss this with Hermione, but he didn't know quite how to start. "I received an owl from Fred and George today."

"How are they? It's been ages since I've seen either of them."

"Oh! They are fine. They wrote me about Ron. Did you know he was getting out of Azkaban next Wednesday?"

Hermione face grew pale. "Ginny mentioned it on the train ride. I understand he is going to run their Hogsmeade store."

"That's correct. He gets out on the tenth, but that is a full moon. He's going to stay at the Burrow with George and Fred and then start at the store on the fifteenth. Herm, how do you feel about Ron and his living here in Hogsmeade?"

Hermione looked at Harry angrily and responded sharply. "If you're asking whether I am going to go running back to his arms. The answer is no."

"Please don't become irritated. Fred and George wanted me to talk to you, but if it upsets you, I won't. I've missed you too much to risk losing our friendship again over this."

Hermione realize she was taking her anger out on the wrong person. "I'm sorry, Harry. I didn't mean to yell at you. I don't want to lose you again either. It's just that Ron treated me so rotten. He never called. He never even bothered to break up with me. He just started sleeping with every girl that threw her knickers in his direction. You at least had the decency to leave me a note. He treated me as if I no longer mattered or even existed."

Girls threw knickers at Ron. "So they still do make knickers?"

"Of course, they still make knickers." Hermione looked at Harry as if he had lost his mind. "What made you ask such a bizarre question?"

"Its not important, just something strange that happened." Harry quickly changed the topic back to Ron. "Fred and George hope that I will sort of keep an eye on Ron. I thought I would get together with him for dinner his first night here. Under the circumstances I wouldn't imagine you have any desire to go with me."

Their exchange had brought them to Hermione's quarters. "I'm not sure Harry. Up until Saturday when you suddenly popped back into my life I would have said definitely not. Now I just don't know. Would you like to come in for a drink and to finish our talk?"

"Are you sure?"

"Of course, Harry. We're just talking, it's not like I'm inviting you in for sex. *Although I certainly wish I were.*

Harry's face blushed at the mention of sex. *I know you're not. That only happens in my dreams.* "If you're sure no one will talk about you for having me in your room?"

"Harry, I don't worry about gossip. I know who I've done what with and it's no one else's business." She did an unlocking charm and they walked into her lodgings. "Let me feed Crookshanks and get us something to drink. Have a seat."

Harry looked around the spacious room. Hermione's quarters seemed much larger than his. It seemed like hers were designed for a married Professor with a family. In a few moments Hermione returned with some ice-cold butter beer.

Harry took a sip. "It's been a long time since I had one of these. I forgot how good they tasted."

"Harry were you in the muggle world the entire five years? What did you do to support yourself?"

Harry face reddened. "Yes, I was a muggle for five years. Left my wand with Sirius. Five years with no magic." *It was five lonely years without your beautiful face. You can't possibly imagine how much I've missed you.* "I tried getting a lot of different jobs, but without a muggle education I was turned down. What we teach at Hogwarts doesn't lend itself well to securing employment in the muggle world."

"I never thought about it much, but you're right. A Hogwarts education is useless in the muggle world. What did you do?"

"Does the phrase, 'Would you like fries with that', ring a bell?"

"Oh! Harry. You spent five years selling hamburgers."

"That and equally glamorous jobs. The last year I worked doing landscaping. That I actually enjoyed."

Hermione smiled. "I remember you were doing that the summer after our fourth year when I came to live with you at the Dursley's. That was both a horrible and a wonderful summer. I miss those days." *I wish we had stayed a couple. Maybe we'd be married with children now.* "Harry I missed our friendship so much. The three of us had something wonderful, something special. How could we let it slip away?"

Harry looked at her, his heart breaking because he loved her so much. "You didn't let it slip away. Ron and I were stupid and threw it away. We both walked out on you and I'll never forgive myself for that."

"But I forgive you Harry." Hermione leaned over and gave him a brief kiss on the cheek. "I'd like to forgive Ron too, but he has to make the first step. As much as I want us to all be best friends again, I do have pride. I'm not asking him to crawl back, just admit he treated me poorly."

"I understand."

They spent the next two hours reliving the wonderful times they had in their youth. Finally Harry said, "This was fun Hermione. I really enjoyed being with you and reminiscing about our school days. Maybe we can do it again?"

Hermione gave Harry a big smile. " I had a nice time, too. Butter beer tastes so much better when you share it with a wonderful friend." *What I'd really like to share with you is my bed. If only you loved me half as much as I love you.*

When they reached the door Hermione gave Harry a hug, which he returned. "I've really missed you Harry."

"I've missed you, too." He gave her a light kiss on the cheek. "See you bright and early in the morning." As Harry walked back to his room he remembered the times Hermione and him had slept together during their fifth year. *If only I could hold her and be with her like that again.*

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Saturday, September 13, 2003 9:00 AM

"Great One, the Weasel was released from Azkaban on the 10th. He is moving to Hogsmeade. What if the friendship between him and Granger and Potter is reestablished? If the Great Lord Voldemort was unable to defeat the Covenant of three, what chance will we have?"

"Voldemort was a fool to take on all three. What is that trite muggle phrase? `United we stand, divided we fall.' We will divide them. The pigeon will either see the light and join us or die before we see the start of a new year."

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Saturday, September 13, 2003 1:00 PM

"We'll be in the library till about three o'clock. Don't do anything I wouldn't do." Amanada giggled as she and the other Gryffindor fifth years got up from the lunch table and left the Great Hall.

Jamie glanced at Caitlin who looked extremely uneasy. "Caitlin, you don't have to do this. I'll definitely still be your friend. Maybe we should give it some more time?"

"No, no. Jamie I want to do it. I'm excited about it. Actually I've been looking forward to it. It's just that...."

"Just that what?"

"Its just that you're so pretty and have such a great body and I'm so skinny and my chest looks like a piece of cardboard with two nipples pasted on it. You won't laugh at me will you?"

"I would never laugh at you. True naturists look past the physical body and at the person inside. Being a nudist isn't about checking people out and comparing bodies. Physical appearance and sex are not a part on being a nudist. We feel that nudity is just another aspect of the lives of very normal people. A desire to be naked is not perverse or wrong but a perfectly natural feeling that one should not feel ashamed to explore."

Caitlin still looked nervous, but as her blue eyes looked directly into Jamie's green eyes she said. "We're wasting time. Lets go get naked."

Jamie had to remind Caitlin that she was a prefect and not allowed to run back to Gryffindor Tower. They quickly gave the password to the fat lady and rushed through the common room to the fifth year girl dorm. Once inside Caitlin looked at Jamie as if seeking instructions, but Jamie was already pulling her sweater over her head exposing her beautiful chest. Next she slipped off her mini skirt and sat down on her bed to take off her shoes and socks.

Jamie was out of her clothes so fast it caught Caitlin off guard; she was still totally dressed. She sat down on the bed next to Jamie and took off her sneakers and socks. Next she stood up and took a deep breath. "Well here goes nothing. I mean that literally." She slipped her sweatshirt over her head and without looking to see Jamie's reaction opened her jeans and left them slip to her knees. After sitting on the bed to slide the jeans off her feet, she stood up and shook her head. "I can't believe I've done this. I've never been naked in front of anyone in my entire life and here I stand butt naked in front of you and it doesn't even feel weird. It actually feels natural."

"That's why we're called naturists. Are you ready to go for a walk outside?"

Caitlin looked at Jamie with an expression of horror on her face. "Outside, we can't go outside like this. We'd get expelled."

Jamie looked at Caitlin and smiled. "No, you're correct we can't because the world says that would be perverted and we probably would be expelled. Being nude inside is nothing like the experience of being with nature. I love it."

"What was it like for you being naked outside for the first time?"

"Actually I don't have any idea. Growing up as a nudist, most of our vacations were to places where we could be nude. I can't remember my first time nude outside. I can, however, remember the first time I went hiking nude near home."

"But you told me most of your neighbours were muggles and that none of them were nudists." How could you hike outside nude?"

"It's a long story. I have some nice cold butter beer. Let's each grab one and I'll tell you all about it.

"I imagine that by now you've realized that I'm kind of an addict when it comes to exercise. I've been running since I was ten. The story I'm about to tell you took place when I was twelve during summer break.

"The route I often run takes me outside of town into the country. About a mile and a half out of town is a pasture with a creek that zigzags through it heading mostly straight away from the road. There are lots of trees along this creek and I sometimes take a break from running on my way back to town and go into this secluded area for some nude sunbathing. I hadn't really planned to do that on that day because I had so much to do, but the weather was good for it (partly cloudy and the temp was up around 75) and well, I just couldn't resist the urge to indulge my nudist proclivities for a little while.

"I climbed over the gate and headed back along the creek through the trees to where I was out of sight from the road. All the while I'd been thinking about how some people that I'd read about in situations such as this are so bold that they venture out nude a long, long way leaving their clothes behind. But I had never done that. If I was just sunbathing, my clothes were always near by - only a few feet away. And if I was exploring (never very far), I always carried enough clothes for a quick cover-up (sports bra and running shorts). I thought that I would feel way too vulnerable if I didn't have my clothes immediately at hand. It's not that I would be embarrassed to be seen nude, but I had no way of knowing what type of person might see me. Also, I wasn't quite sure if my parents would take too kindly to me being nude without their protection.

"But that day my confidence was bolstered by the apparent confidence of these others that I had read about. That, combined with the fact that I felt I was in a very low risk area (private land and I'd never seen anyone out here), I decided that it was time for me to take action in becoming bolder - that it was time for me to venture out a ways and leave my clothes behind.

"I went to my hidey place down by the creek and peeled off my sweaty clothes like I always do. But this time I left everything hidden there. I stepped out and started to walk on down through the trees along the creek. The new spring grass felt so good under my bare feet and the breeze felt so good blowing over me and through my hair. But I was scared! Really scared!! In order to not give in to my fear, I told myself to just keep moving and don't stop to think. Besides, I could turn around and run back anytime I wanted. So I just kept walking and watching to see if anyone appeared (very unlikely) and planning escape routes (there were plenty of places to hide).

"Before I knew it, I had reached the farthest point in the pasture that I had ever been. So far, so good, I was probably about a quarter of a mile from my clothes by now. But instead of turning back, I decided to go a little farther and explore some new territory even though I was still very scared. (Keep moving! Don't think!)

"There were fewer trees now and they were in little groves along the creek with open areas in between. Am I bold enough to cross that wide-open area? There was absolutely no cover for me between where I was and the next grove of trees. I looked around and then ran for it. When I got there, I looked back and realized that was no big deal. Then I looked out into the next clearing and thought that I may as well go for the next one. That led to the next and the next! When I came to a fence I realized that I had completely crossed this part of the pasture and that all my clothes were back on the other side about a half-mile away (I'm guessing). What a feeling of freedom!

"I wasn't about to cross that fence (rusty old barbwire), but on down the fence about a hundred yards (another guess), it turned a corner. That corner post would be a good end point for my daring adventure, but it was way out in the open and more visible than any place I had been so far. Am I bold enough? (Keep moving! Don't think!) I jogged along the fence getting farther and farther from the tree cover. When I reached the corner post, I stopped and put my hand on the top of it like I was claiming it as mine. Actually, it represented an accomplishment - a victory over fear - that *was* mine.

"I stood there beside that post for a moment or so reveling in my feelings - feeling the grass, the wind, the warmth of the sunshine that had just come out, and the openness of the grassy hills surrounding me. I tried to picture in my mind what I must look like standing there in the open like that -just me as nature intended - not even a scrunchie in my hair. At that point a

certain feeling of confidence came over me. I've always enjoyed being nude, but now I realized that I could be nude outdoors and not just at nudist camps and without the necessity of having clothes near by.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the walk back to my hidey place. It was a lot more leisurely and a lot less fearful.

"I've never told my parents about this so you keep hushed when you meet them."

"Wow! I realized you went naked at nudists camps and at home, but I didn't realize you did it places where you could possibly get in trouble." Caitlin was still taking in everything Jamie had told her while answering.

"That is what is irritating about being a nudist. Who was I hurting by walking in that field naked; yet I could be arrested for it."

Suddenly the door to the dorm opened. Was it past three o'clock already? Jamie had lost track of the time. Her intention was to warn Caitlin when it was three so that she could get dressed if she preferred before the other girls returned. They were here and Caitlin was still nude.

As Amanada and the other girls entered the room Caitlin jumped to her feet. Jamie thought it was to put her clothes on, but instead she ran over to Amanda and gave her a hug. "I did it! I did it! Look at me! I'm naked and not the least bit embarrassed."

"Gee! I would have never noticed." Amanda smiled as she glanced at Jamie and shook her head.

"Caitlin, suppose you get us four of those butter beers and we'll teach you how to do a cooling charm on them," Susan suggested.

"I have an idea!" Lisa announced. "Let's play a game of Wizard Monopoly."

"Great idea. Are we going to play on the bed or go down to the common room?" Mandy looked at Jamie and Caitlin's faces. "Okay its settled we play here since the common room doesn't allow nudists."

Caitlin asked, "Can I be banker?"

"Sounds like a great idea!" Amanada exclaimed. "You'd have a difficult time concealing money. Oh! Jamie please this time don't knock the playing pieces off the board with your 56 EEEEEs."

Jamie punched Amanda in the arm.

As the other girls were setting up the board Caitlin went over to Jamie and whispered in her ear, "You have great friends."

"I know I'm very lucky. I especially like my new friend. We have something special in common. We're both nudist." Jamie put her arm around Caitlin.

"Jamie can I ask you another question?"

Unfortunately Amanda heard this. "Quiet everyone, Caitlin has a question for Jamie and believe me she asks the best questions."

Caitlin wasn't sure what to do so she looked at Jamie for guidance. Jamie nodded for her to go ahead with her question. The other girls all gathered around in anticipation. "You said you never wear any knickers, but yet you wear mini skirts. Aren't you concerned you will give a show?"

The other girl looked back and forth at each other. They wanted to hear the answer to this question, too. "I prefer skirts to jeans for the same reason that I don't wear knickers. I like the freedom. I like the feel of the air on my vagina. I try to bend and lean properly so that I'm not exposing myself, but if someone should see me, I don't think of it as that big a deal. After all if I had my rathers, they'd be seeing all of me naked. Usually if a person sees that part of me, it's just a quick glance and they think they are mistaken."

"You mean like Alex before Trelawney's class two years ago?" Amanda laughed.

"That was an unusual circumstance. I'm glad it wasn't someone like Dick Bancroft or I never would have heard the end of it."

"What happened?" Caitlin asked.

"It was June of our 3rd year. The temperature was predicted to be in the high nineties, so I had worn as little as possible under my robes. I had on a thin mesh white half tee that barely covered my breasts and the shortest mini I owned. Still I was dying through most of the day, as was everyone else. You can't believe how hot those black robes can get. We had Divinations with Trelawney the last period and her class is held in the North Tower. You have to climb a silvery ladder to get to it and the room is normally hot because of all the candles she burns. We hadn't even reached the ladder and every one was complaining how hot they were. I could feel that my tee was completely soaked."

"When we reached the bottom of the ladder Professor Trelawney yelled down for us to take off our robes and leave them at the bottom of the ladder because the temperature was well over 100 degrees in her room. I was concerned what type of reaction I would get as I dropped my robes. No one said a word, but Amanda told me later that I might as well have taken the tee off too because there was no mystery, it was totally transparent."

"Now Alex and Amanda are used to seeing me naked so they told me that I should go up the ladder first and they would cover my flank."

Caitlin stopped Jamie for verification. "Alex has seen you naked? Is he a naturist?"

"Alex a naturist! Not hardly. I think he takes a shower with his clothes on, but he's been cool about me being nude every since he found out in first year. He's seen me naked dozens of times. Anyway I started up the ladder with Alex behind me, followed by Amanda. Now Alex, of course, was being the perfect gentleman by looking straight ahead and not up my skirt until I asked him a question and he automatically looked up as I was lifting my right leg to the next step of the ladder. He later told me that he could have easily given me a gynecological exam."

Caitlin turned red. "You mean he saw up inside you. That must have embarrassed you."

"Why should it? It's just another part of my body. Guys have their sex organ out on display. Girls have theirs inside. I don't feel it's a big deal."

Caitlin nodded her head, obviously now in agreement with what Jamie had said.

"How did Professor Trelawney handle you being virtually topless?"

"That was one of the biggest surprises of my life. I thought she would send me out of the tower or give me detention. I know Professor Granger would have. Trelawney just looked at me and smiled. Then she commented that thanks to me she wouldn't have to worry about any of the boys closing their eyes in class today."

What with Jamie's stories and the Monopoly game the balance of the afternoon passed quickly and it was soon 5:50. "Oh goodness, I promised to meet Matt and Randy for the evening meal. I have to go." Caitlin jumped up and headed for the door, but realized she had forgotten to thank Jamie and the other girls for a wonderful afternoon. "Thanks for everything. I really had a wonderful time. I hope you'll let me come again."

Caitlin opened the door and was ready to step out of the room when Jamie yelled to her. "Caitlin, don't you want these?" Jamie was holding Caitlin's jeans and sweatshirt and the other girls were breaking up with laughter.

Caitlin turned fifty shades of red as Jamie walked over to the door with her clothes and sneakers. "I was here first young lady. If anyone is going to streak the common room it's going to be me." They both hugged. "That would have been one meal that Matt and Randy would have never forgotten."

"Jamie I had a wonderful time. Do you think we can do this again? Maybe Alex could come?"

Jamie couldn't believe her ears. "Maybe you're rushing things just a little, after all this was just your first time nude. Doing it in front of a boy, even one as nice and understanding as Alex is a big step."

Caitlin face was flooded with disappointment. "Don't you think I did good?"

"Actually I've never seen a first timer take to it like you. You were so comfortable being naked that you completely forgot about it. If I hadn't stopped you, you would have actually walked into the common room starkers; you were that relaxed." Jamie watched Caitlin as she quickly dressed. "Okay, I think it's too soon, but I'll ask Alex. The final decision is his. After all he's the one that will need the cold shower."

Chapter 7 Caring

Monday, September 15, 2003 7:00 PM

Harry sat at the out-of-the-way dinner table admiring the beautiful witch seated across from him. It was a warm late summer evening and Hermione had worn a plain ankle length summer dress. Although Harry felt she had good-looking legs, he couldn't remember ever seeing her in anything that would display this asset to its fullest. Although the back of the dress was bare to her shoulders, the front completely covered her ample chest that seemed to be straining against the cloth to be free. He wanted to tell her that he thought she was gorgeous, but simply said, "You look very nice tonight. You haven't changed a bit since our fifth year."

"Thank you Harry, but actually I've only aged slightly over a muggle year, so I shouldn't really look much different."

Harry looked at her quite confused. "But it's been five years. How could you have aged only a year? Hermione, you're not taking some kind of drug, are you?"

Hermione shook her head no and smiled at Harry. "Hasn't anyone ever explained the aging process of witches and wizards to you? We age quite different than muggles."

"I know we live twice as long, but I thought it was something the reverse of dog years. You know how a one-year-old dog is actually seven in human years. I thought we just aged half as fast as muggles."

"You have the theory correct, but it doesn't work on a strict two to one ratio, if it did we would have looked like ten year old kids when we were twenty years old. Something in our genes that gives us magical powers also affects our aging."

Harry stared into those intelligent brown eyes. A lot of wizards would have difficulty dealing with such a gifted witch. Many wizards feel they must be dominating. Harry never felt a competition between Hermione and himself. They both had their own special abilities. Harry always considered Hermione his equal. Yes, she was smarter, but it was one of her qualities he loved. He wanted to be challenged. He could never be happy with a beautiful witch whose head was full of feathers.

"From birth until age fifteen we age exactly the same as a muggle. That makes it much easier for our children to blend in with muggles. Imagine how difficult a time you or I would have had growing up in the muggle world if we hadn't aged the same as them."

"At age fifteen magically our aging slows dramatically. From fifteen to seventy-five we only age at one fourth the rate of a muggle. That is why a seventy-five year old witch is only in her prime and can still easily have children. In muggle years she is only thirty. After age 75 our rate of aging increases to six months for every muggle year. It continues at that rate until we die."

Suddenly Harry understood why Hermione was in as good a physical shape as Jamie. "That means that even though you and I are twenty-three in muggle years our bodies have only aged to seventeen in muggle years."

"Exactly, that's also why although in the muggle world a twenty year age difference between partners seems like a lot; in the wizard world it's quite normal and acceptable."

Suddenly Harry shivered. Had Hermione had a reason for explaining how witches age? Was she trying to justify a relationship between her and Snape? Harry knew something was going on between them, but he had hoped they weren't having sex. Now he wasn't certain.

He didn't want to think about that possibility so he decided to change the subject. "Herm, thank you for agreeing to come tonight."

"I still have my reservations, Harry, but you and Ginny were so persistent. I'm hesitant how Ron will receive my being here. Instead of the three of us getting back together again, it could cause more of a division."

"I certainly hope that's not the case, but we'll know before long; they just walked in the door."

Hermione glanced toward the main entrance of the tavern. There stood Ginny and Ron talking to the hostess. Ginny looked quite beautiful and extremely sexy. Hermione was positive the outfit she wore had not been selected for her brother's benefit. She had on a micro-mini sundress that was completely backless from the waist up and the front only consisted of two four-inch wide straps of material that were sewn to the waist and tied behind the neck after crisscrossing her chest. Unless those straps were magically charmed, which Hermione seriously doubted, Ginny would positively be giving a show to someone before the evening was over. She had little doubt that Ginny wanted Harry on the receiving end of that show.

Next to Ginny stood Ron, he looked the same, but yet so different. He looked tall and handsome just as he had in fifth year. He was dressed smartly and evidently he had just had his hair styled. It was no wonder girls had lined up to throw their knickers and room keys to him. But his face, it had changed. The childish grin was gone; it had been replaced by a somber blank stare. This wasn't the Ron she remembered.

As Ron and Ginny approached the table, Harry and Hermione rose to greet them. As she stood, Hermione shifted herself around the table to Harry's left.

Harry and Hermione both acknowledged Ginny's presence and then Harry put out his hand to shake Ron's, but instead pulled Ron into an embrace. "I've missed you pal."

Ron returned the hug, but not nearly as enthusiastic as it was given. All the while he hugged Harry he stared off into space.

"I missed you too brother, " he finally commented. As Harry broke the hug, Ron seemed to look in Hermione's direction for the first time. "I never expected to see you here tonight," his eyes glistening as he spoke.

Hermione had planned to only shake Ron's hand. After all he had dropped out of her life long before the trial that sent him to Azkaban. He had kissed her good-bye as he left for his first Professional Quidditch game. That was the last she saw him; he had never sent one owl nor answered hers. Yet when she looked at him she didn't see the person who had hurt her so horribly; she saw her best friend. She saw the boy with the smudged mark on his face and the mouth stuffed with chocolate frog. She calmly walked over to him and looked him directly in the face.

"What? Am I not allowed to miss my best friend, too? Even if he is a huge jerk." Hermione threw her arms around his neck and gave him a hug, which threw him completely off guard. As she broke the hug she kissed his cheek and whispered something quickly and softly in his ear.

When Hermione returned to his side, Harry pulled out the chair for her to be seated. Ron took the seat on the other side of Hermione as Ginny stood waiting to see if anyone would seat her. Harry before sitting went over to help her. "You have to forgive him, they don't teach manners where he's been."

Ron looked at Harry and almost looked like he was going to smile. Meanwhile Hermione was holding her breath. She couldn't believe that Ginny was able to move in that dress without one of her breasts popping out.

They were no more than seated when the waiter appeared with menus. He stood behind Ginny's chair as he gave them instructions on how to order. From the look on his face he seemed to be enjoying the view from his level. "When you decide what you would like please simply tell your plate. Likewise if you desire a mixed drink or coffee please advise the glass or cup. If you need any assistance please inform the centerpiece and also let the centerpiece know when you are ready for you cheque."

As the evening moved forward everyone tried to avoid the subject of Azkaban. If Ron wanted to discuss it sometime in the future they would certainly listen, but this was a time to renew friendships and not a time to talk about that horrible place. Sitting across from Ginny, Hermione was both amused and at the same time irritated. She noted that Ginny's cleavage kept getting wider and wider. *It's just a matter of time.*

Hermione was sure Harry could have gotten quite a nice view from where he was sitting, but his eyes seemed to be totaling ignoring the spectacular view Ginny was offering. She was sure it was her imagination, but every time she looked in his direction he seemed to be looking at her. *He still likes Ginny. Why would he look at me, especially when I'm not exposing myself?*

After they finished their desserts Ron looked at Harry. "Harry could you and Ginny possibly have a drink together at the bar. I'd like to speak with Hermione alone for a few moments if she'll allow me."

Ginny seemed ecstatic with this idea and practically jumped to her feet. Jumping was definitely something she shouldn't do in that dress.

Hermione marveled at how Ron had changed. If Ginny had worn that dress eight years ago he would have had a fit and started screaming at her. Tonight he just shook his head in disgust. Harry looked at Ginny, but certainly didn't react either like he would have eight years ago. He seemed quite disinterested; one could have gotten the idea that Harry was looking at various female body parts all the time. It didn't seem to faze him in the least.

Hermione was amused as she watched Harry and Ginny walk to the bar. Ginny had tired to get his attention all evening, but instead it seemed he was the only one in the restaurant that wasn't watching her hoping for a peek.

Ron looked at Hermione, not knowing quite where to start. "My sister has become quite a tart hasn't she?"

"Oh! She's not a tart. Well maybe sort of. She has a beautiful body and she's trying to use it to get her man."

"That man isn't interested in Ginny. He didn't look at her all evening. Even with her breasts hanging out. He couldn't take his eyes off you."

"No, I'm sure your mistaken, Harry and I are just friends."

"If you say so, but that's not what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Hermione, why did you come tonight? You have to hate me after what I did to you. How could you hug and kiss me?"

"Ron before I answer you; will you answer a question for me. What happened? Why did you do what you did?"

Ron hesitated and then began to speak. "Its awful when you're in Azkaban. The worst part isn't being in prison; it's not having any happy memories. The memories are still in your mind, but you can't access them. The Dementors seem to be feeding off the happy thoughts, so all you are left with are the sad thoughts, the terrible memories."

"The good memories of you and Harry were gone. I could only remember and think about the fights you and I had over the years and the way I treated Harry during our fourth year when I thought he had put his name in the Goblet of Fire."

"I couldn't remember the good times when you and I dated, only that I knew I had hurt you. I had visions of you crying and hating me every day I was there. That's why I couldn't believe you would ever want to see me again, yet alone hug me."

"Hermione, lets be honest with each other. You never loved me and I never loved you." Hermione looked at Ron in shock. "You may not admit it to yourself, but I think you and Harry were destined to be with each other since the day you met. You both may take side trips, but eventually you'll both wake up. You would have never have left Harry in sixth year if he hadn't broken up with you. I was a second choice. A poor second choice and then when Remus bit me you tried so hard to make our relationship work."

"I was bitter over what you and Harry had and did all I could to get you away from him. He was the hero, the boy who lived. He was the Quidditch star and now he had you. I was jealous of Harry. I feel I wanted you more because he had you than because I loved you."

Hermione thought back to those days and how Ron had always been resentful of Harry.

"I believe all along you knew we weren't meant to be and that is why you wisely held off being intimate with me. Then because of my werewolf strength I became a Professional Quidditch player. After my very first game a beautiful girl approached me. She said that she thought I was an awesome player and would be famous some day. She asked me if I would sleep with her. She only wanted a one-night stand. No commitment. I did it and never looked back. I couldn't look back because I knew what I was doing was hurting one of my best friends."

"I had turned into a person I didn't like. If I had at least told you after the first time and broke up with you, maybe... But I didn't do anything right. I was having what seemed like a wonderful time. Getting drunk, having more sex than I dreamed possible. I felt invincible. What did I need friends for? I had fame, money and more girls than I dreamed possible. Then the championship game came.

"I kept saying to myself that we could win if only I held out another minute and then another minute. Finally it was too late. I had changed and then I saw that girl. Hermione, I would have killed her if they hadn't stopped me. As it is I can still hear her screams and see the terror in her eyes. I ruined her life so that I could stay in a silly Quidditch game. So that I could continue to be a highly paid spoiled brat shagging every girl that came along.

"There is no word that describes how I feel about what I've done. Telling you I'm sorry comes nowhere never describing how I feel about the way I treated you. Can saying I'm sorry to that beautiful girl I changed into a hideous creature like myself repair the damage? What I'm the most sorry for is that I wasn't given the kiss of death by the Dementors."

Hermione looked at Ron with tears in her beautiful brown eyes. "Ron when I whispered in your ear, 'just say you're sorry' I meant it. I agree you've done some despicable things, but you certainly don't deserve the Dementor's kiss. You are human and we all make mistakes. I've made many, one horrible one, which I hope to partially atone for next Tuesday. You're right! Just saying you're sorry doesn't make up for our mistakes or correct the wrongs we've done. But it's a beginning.

"Ron we can't go back and correct our mistakes, but I for one want to do all I can to prevent making them again or hurting anyone else. We, and I mean all three of us, will probably never have as wonderful a friendship as we had those seven school years, but I want to try. I've missed you and Harry tremendously. I want us to be close again. It may not seem enough, but saying you're sorry is a tremendous start."

Ron looked at Hermione and then at Harry, who was crossing the room with Ginny. "I don't deserve friends like you and Harry. Hermione, I'm sorry."

"That's all I wanted to hear." Hermione went over to Ron's side of the table and gave him a great hug, which he returned. "Lets make the most of our second chance."

Harry looked at Ron and Hermione and smiled broadly. "It looks like we need another round of drinks for a toast."

Hermione and Ron took their seats, but this time as Ginny sat down both breasts sprung out from behind their straps. Ginny went to cover them, but Hermione yelled, "Don't move!"

For some unknown reason, Ginny froze; she didn't move.

"Harry, please do me a favor. Look at Ginny's breasts!" Harry followed Hermione's direction as Ron sat there with his mouth open. "Aren't they lovely? Now Ginny, you have a choice." Hermione took out her wand. "We are not going to continue playing peek a boo. I can either perform a spell that will keep those girls of yours hidden behind those straps for the rest of the night or I can do a spell that removes the straps completely so that you can spend the rest of the night topless. What will it be?"

Ginny answered meekly, "Please cover them."

As Hermione did the spell, Ron finally laughed. "You're easy Hermione. I think you should have made the tart walk back to Hogwarts topless. I'm sure Headmaster Snape would have enjoyed that." Ginny reached over and punched Ron on the arm. Her breasts stayed completely covered when she did that and for the rest of the evening.

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Tuesday, September 23, 2003 Breakfast

Jamie hadn't gotten to talk to Caitlin during their exercise session so made it a point to sit next to her at breakfast. Alex and Amanda totally understood because this would be a rough day for Caitlin. "How are you feeling sister?" Jamie said as she sat down next to Caitlin.

"I'm okay. A little scared. It's going to be hard seeing her again."

"HER!" You mean the person that did that was a she? A witch left you to die after doing that to you?"

"Yes, I just hope she is found guilty. If not she'll get to come back here."

Jamie brain quickly processed this new information and her jaw dropped to the table as she whispered, "Madam Hooch! Madam Hooch, is the person that attacked you? She mainly teaches innocent first years. She can't be allowed back." Jamie was horrified at the possibility that Hooch could return to Hogwarts.

"If she is found innocent, not only will she be allowed to come back, but I'll be in one of her classes." Caitlin began to tremble at the thought.

"They have to find her guilty. They just must. Try to eat some breakfast; you'll need your strength today. Who is going to London with you on the train?"

"The Headmaster and Professor Granger."

"Professor Granger? I wonder why she is going? Oh! It's probably because you are in her House and because she is a woman. It would be odd to travel alone to London with a man especially considering the type of trial it is."

"I like Professor Granger. She reminds me of an older you."

"I'll take that as a complement, Caitlin. Professor Granger is my role model." Jamie looked up from her breakfast to see the Professor motioning to Caitlin. "Looks like they are ready to go. Can I give you a hug for good luck or would that embarrass you in front of all the other houses?"

"It will never embarrass me to be hugged by my big sister."

"You know what? I think of you as a sister, too. You have to meet Emily. I know you two would get along famously. Then you'd have both an older and a younger sister."

"I'd like that."

Jamie gave Caitlin a big hug and then smiled as she whispered, " Since you're traveling all the way to London by train today, did you wear knickers?"

Caitlin gave Jamie a big smile. "Of course, I didn't. Knickers will never touch this body again."

Jamie smiled as Caitlin rushed to where Professor Granger was waiting. *Good luck sister. I love you.*

"Good morning Miss Garrison. It would seem that you and Miss Zacherley have become quite close friends in the last few weeks."

"Yes we have. I like Jamie a lot. We have a lot in common and share many of the same interests."

Hermione smiled at the little girl next to her. "You are both very special girls and choose your friends wisely. Now, you and I must hurry. The Headmaster is waiting with a carriage to take us to the train station."

The first hour of the trip passed relatively quickly. Caitlin spent most of her time looking out the window at the passing scenery as Severus and Hermione talked about school matters that were of no consequence to Caitlin.

Then Caitlin noticed the Headmaster make a gesture toward the door and Professor Granger nodded her head yes. "If you ladies will excuse me, I think I'll take a stroll about the train. I need the exercise and perhaps I'll run into some old acquaintances."

Professor Snape was barely out the door when Caitlin looked at Professor Granger in a quizzing manner. "Is there a particular reason the Headmaster left us alone?"

"You're quite observant, Miss Garrison. Yes, there is. I wanted to talk to you about the trial and felt we would both be more comfortable if the Headmaster wasn't here. I want to talk to your parents also, but that may have to wait until after the trial. Will you introduce me to them?"

Caitlin looked at Hermione as if ashamed to answer. "Professor, I don't have any parents. I've lived in an orphanage for the last three years."

"I'm sorry Caitlin, I didn't know. *I'm going to kill Severus. Why didn't he inform me she lost her parents? Were they killed in an accident?*"

"I never had any parents. I lived with my grandmother until she died three years ago. Granny said my dad was a muggle, but that he left my mother before I was born. Granny said he left when my Mon told him she was a witch, but I think he left because she was pregnant with me. I don't think he wanted me."

Hermione had been seated across from Caitlin, but upon hearing this comment moved and sat next to her. "I'm sure that's not true. Someday I'd love to have a daughter just like you."

Caitlin looked Hermione straight in the eyes and said. "That's what she told me, too. But all she wanted was to molest me."

Hermione was extremely distressed. This conversation was not going well at all. "Please believe me Caitlin. I would never do anything like that to you."

"Oh, I know that Professor Granger. I trust you. Jamie considers you her role model and I would trust Jamie with my life."

"How old were you when your mother died, Honey?"

"I wasn't born yet. My mother died giving me life. Her time of death was listed as 9:03 AM; my birth was at 9:05AM. My Granny and Pop Pop took me in, but they were really old so they had to hire a nurse to take care of me. Pop Pop died when I was six and Granny died two years later."

"You've lived in an orphanage since then?" Hermione felt so sorry for this little girl.

"Yes. No one wants to adopt a child over three years old. Everybody wants a little baby. Nobody wants a scrawny preteen. The people at the orphanage told me my grandparents were rich; that's why I got to go to summer camp and why I'm able to attend Hogwarts. They said I'll be rich when I turn fifteen, but I'd give every galleon of it to have a mother to love."

Hermione was seething. If Madam Hooch had been in reach she would have killed her with her bared hands. What she had done was vile, but to do it to this poor child who had never been loved was revolting. "Caitlin, I'm so sorry."

"It's not your fault. You didn't cause my Dad to leave or my Mom or Grandparents to die. You have no reason to be sorry."

"Yes. I do." Hermione looked at the precious little girl next to her. *She is going to hate me, but I have to tell her the truth.* "If I had done what was correct, what Professor Snape asked me to do five years ago, Madam Hooch would never have been able to harm you."

Hermione told Caitlin how Madam Hooch had perused her and about the night of the attack. She left out the details of exactly what Hooch had done to her and how the now Headmaster had healed her, but she did describe how she had fled naked from her attacker and how she tripped over Professor Snape. Caitlin sort of giggled at that part and then apologized. "I'm sorry Professor Granger. I shouldn't be laughing about something so grave and depraved, but picturing you naked on top of the Headmaster. Its..."

"I know, I even laugh about that part on occasion now, but if I had turned her in you would have never been attacked."

"You don't know that for a fact. She was older than you. She has influential friends in elevated places. She would have lied. You actually could have been the individual that lost her post."

Hermione was amazed at how this little girl's mind worked. She herself had never considered that Hooch could have twisted the facts to give the impression that the new teacher was the aggressor and in the wrong.

"I know why you didn't report her? She told you she loved you and that made you feel sorry for her and not want to see her hurt or lose her job."

"Yes, but how could you know?"

"She told me the same thing the first year and I actually believed she loved me and was going to adopt me. We would meet me after lights out and talk about how much she wanted a daughter like me. She told me what it would be like to live in the teachers' quarters at Hogwarts. She scratched my back. I loved having my back scratched. After the first time she asked me to take my shirt off because it would be easier for her. I trusted her. Besides there wasn't anything to hide. I was nine. I still looked like a boy."

Hermione put her arm tenderly around Caitlin's shoulder. She was nervous that the little girl might feel invaded, but there was no negative reaction, so she gave her a gentle hug.

Caitlin continued with her story. "Once my shirt was off she increased the area she scratched. I really enjoyed how it felt. Then she asked me if I wanted her to do my front. I was hesitant, but didn't want her to think I mistrusted her. She scratched my belly, blew kisses in my belly button and caressed my sides. It all felt kind of neat especially when she caressed my sides and came close to my little...." Caitlin seemed to be straining to keep her composure. "She kept going further and further and I let her because she kept telling me how much she loved me and how wonderful it would be having me as her little girl."

Hermione abhorrence of Madam Hooch was mounting with each word Caitlin spoke. She noticed that Caitlin's eyes were starting to water and that her voice was cracking as she continued. "Then one night she tried to put her hand in my knickers. I jumped off her lap and said no! That's bad. No one should touch you down there. That's wrong."

"How did she respond to you saying that?"

"She said I was partially right. That a girl should never let a boy touch her down there at least not until they were married, but it was okay for a mother to touch her daughter and I was going to be her daughter. I wanted to believe and trust her, but I had no intentions of letting her touch me there."

Caitlin started crying. "Professor I'm a good girl, really I am, but I trusted her. I wanted a mommy so much and she had promised to adopt me."

Hermione held Caitlin tighter as her tears moistened her robes. "Honey, just for today lets forget the Professor. While we're alone, why don't you call me Hermione?"

Somehow through all those tears Hermione caught a glimpse of a brief smile until Caitlin continued speaking and then it was gone as quickly as it had appeared. "The last day of camp Madam Hooch came to me and apologized. She said how much she loved me and that she was sorry. She still wanted me to be her little girl, but if I told anyone she would lose her job and not be able to adopt me. I never told anyone, but she never adopted me, either. I didn't see or hear from her until camp this year."

Hermione sat there in tears thinking of what this little girl had been through in her short life and yet she had the strength to testify against the animal that had hurt her so much. *If only I could hold her during the trial and let her know that someone cares.*

"I didn't want to go back this summer, but I had no way to get out of it without telling what had happened. By now I realized that she had no intention of adopting me. Actually, I would have been terrified if she did; I knew what she was now."

"I tried to stay away from her, but she taught both swimming and flying so that was impossible. Every time she tried to talk to me, I walked away. It became apparent to the other campers that I hated her, but no one knew why."

"Then the next to last day of camp we had our lifeguard swimming tests, but instead of all the girls taking them together; she had us do them individually. I was scheduled last. By the time I had completed the other girls were gone."

Caitlin's tear filled eyes looked up at Hermione. "I didn't have a chance to get away, Professor. She was so strong. She grabbed me as I climbed out of the pool and shoved my face to the ground. After putting a gagging charm on my mouth so I couldn't scream, she drug me into the forest."

"She secured me to a tree and then did a spell that removed my bathing suit. It was terrible the things she did to me and it hurt so dreadfully. I just wanted to die so the pain would end. Then she just left me there."

And then Caitlin said something that broke Hermione's heart. "As I hung there in agony, hurting so much and knowing I was going to leave this life, I realized that no one would care, no one would even miss me. I had absolutely no one in this world that loved me. I might as well be dead. I gave up and prayed death would come soon. Death had to be better than my life had been."

Professor Snape returned from his stroll, but before entering the compartment he looked through the window. He saw two young women holding each other tightly as tears streamed from their eyes. He decided to take another walk through the train.

Chapter 8 A New Life

Tuesday, September 23, 2003, 12 Noon

Lunch!

Most people look forward to this break in their workday, but not Ron Weasley. He hated the crowd that stormed the Three Broomsticks each day at this time, but as he had to eat, it was either fight the crowd or pack a lunch. And packing a lunch just seemed so unwizardly to him.

It wasn't the waiting in line to order food that bothered him, nor the difficult search for a place to sit and eat. It was once seated that what he really hated about lunchtime occurred. That was when the staring and pointing would start. Now he knew why Harry had hated being famous. The big difference being that when people had looked at Harry, it was with awe and respect; when they looked at him it was with anger and disgust.

It was exceptionally busy today and it took Ron quite awhile before he found a table. He felt guilty occupying a table meant for four, but it wasn't his fault that most of the tables were set up that way. He had only just sat down when something he was definitely not expecting happened. A woman approached the table, or more aptly, him. While she wasn't stunningly beautiful, she was certainly intriguing, actually quite attractive, in an interesting sort of way. She pushed some of her blonde hair out of her eyes and said. "Would you mind terribly if I shared your table? It's extremely busy here today and I don't have long for lunch."

Ron looked into her blue eyes. "No, not at all. Actually I wish you would. I always feel so guilty sitting at a table designed for four. You're from America, aren't you?"

"Yes, I guess my accent will always give me away. I moved to England over two years ago, but I'll probably never quite blend in completely."

Actually Ron found her American accent quite appealing, but avoided saying so because it would probably sound like a pickup line. "What made you decide to move to this side of the pond?"

She hesitated as if not sure she wanted to share too much personal information with this stranger. "I originally came here looking for someone, but fell in love with the country and decide to remain."

"It is beautiful, especially this area. I used to attend school here, but have been away for a few years. I just returned a couple of weeks ago."

Her eyes had a twinkle in them as she excitedly responded. "Did you go to Hogwarts? It looks so beautiful. I imagine that it's quite impressive inside. We have three schools in the US that teach witchcraft and wizardry, but none anywhere close to that impressive."

"It is quite amazing inside. My friends and I still managed to get lost sometimes even after spending seven years there. I completed my education the summer of nineteen ninety-eight. My sister and my two best friends teach there now."

"Ninety-eight! That means you were in the same class as Harry Potter." The blonde girl for the first time truly looked at the ruggedly handsome stranger she was lunching with. She looked at his freckled face and the nicely styled red hair; she dropped her fork in her salad. "Are your friends Hermione Granger and Harry Potter? Are you Ron Weasley?"

Ron was never good at divination, but knew or at least had a good idea what would happen when he answered her questions. "Yes they are and yes I am."

Without thinking she responded. "But you seem so nice."

Ron abruptly stood up from the table, but before stomping off he replied. "That's how us hideous beasts trap or prey. We lure them with our charm and then slash their throats." He left her sitting there as he deposited his trash and made his way to the door. *They're all the same. No one can see that there is still a human being inside this body with feelings.*

* * * * *

Hermione stormed out of the courtroom, Caitlin almost running to keep up as Severus called to her, from behind. "Hermione calm down. Yelling at the Inquisitor like that will only serve to get you reprimanded. They won't change their decision no matter what we say."

Hermione stopped abruptly and turned to face the Headmaster who almost ran into her, not having much time to react. She wrapped her arm around Caitlin's shoulder. "Three months, they gave her three months after what she did. Severus, the wizard legal system is corrupt. First Lucius Malfoy and now Madam Hooch. I've been involved in two trials where the defendant was as guilty as sin and in both instances they got off with basically a slap on the wrist. Malfoy was given two life sentences, but only served two years. Now that horrible woman has her sentence reduced to three months. Three months is nothing, Severus." Hermione drew Caitlin closer to her and hugged the girl.

Severus seemed at a loss for words, but Caitlin looked up at Hermione and brushed the tears out of her eyes. "But Hermi...I mean Professor Granger, they found her guilty. The important thing is they found her guilty. She won't be able to return to Hogwarts, she won't be able to teach children. Isn't that correct Professor Snape?"

Severus smiled at the little girl. "That is correct Miss Garrison. As much as I agree that the sentence was quite insufficient; what is most important in this case is that she was found guilty. Her friends and connections bought her a minimum sentence, but the jury delivered the proper verdict. Those witches and wizards saw through her lies and realized you and Professor Granger were innocent victims."

Hermione just shook her head. "But three months, Severus. That's hardly a proper punishment for what she did. Caitlin could have...." She drew the girl close again and hugged her firmly. "Severus, she could have died."

"Hermione, I'm not arguing with you. The punishment was much too lenient, but it will do us no good to dwell on that. The important thing is that both you and Miss Garrison survived to testify against that wicked witch. Not only that, but she has been found guilty and will no longer be able to work or frequent places where children congregate. I for one will sleep better knowing that none of our first years will have contact with that woman."

Caitlin pulled herself free from Hermione's embrace. She looked up at the two adults. "Professor Granger, Professor Snape, thank you for caring. You can't imagine how wonderful it makes me feel to know that someone actually cares whether I live or die." Hermione started crying again as Caitlin threw her arms around Professor Snape. The Headmaster was caught totally off guard. No student had ever in all his years of teaching hugged him. At first he just stood there and then slowly he draped his arm over the girl's shoulder and held her. Hermione's vision was blurred because of the tears in her own eyes, but she was sure Severus' eyes were watering.

Just then the Inquisitor entered the hallway. "Caitlin, please stay with Professor Snape. I must talk to the Inquisitor." She quickly ran to catch up with him.

Professor Snape reached out to grab her, but she was too fast for him. "Hermione please don't." It was too late; Hermione was already following the Inquisitor into his chambers.

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The trip back on the train was very quiet. It had been a long exhausting day and the train had barely left the station when Caitlin fell asleep cuddled up next to Hermione. Severus watched as Hermione stroked the little girl's hair. *She'd make a wonderful mother and a beautiful wife.* Hermione seemed deep in thought as he dozed off watching her.

It was nine-thirty when they returned to the castle. Severus had no more than entered the door when Fitch whisked him off to correct some emergency or other.

Caitlin was about to say good night to her professor when Hermione said, "I'm a little hungry, how about you? Would you like to come up to my quarters for a small bite to eat?"

Caitlin wasn't really that hungry, but she didn't want the day to end. It had felt so wonderful being held and hugged by the Professor. For the first time in her life she had actually felt loved and she didn't want that feeling to end. Besides it was also a chance to see where the teachers lived. The students all knew they lived somewhere in the castle, but no one knew where their quarters were. "I'd like that. Thank you, Professor Granger."

Caitlin memorized each corridor they walked and every turn that they made. Soon they were in a part of the castle that she had never seen before. Finally the Professor pulled a drapery aside revealing a staircase that led up to the staff quarters.

"Have a seat at the table. I'll make us some sandwiches. Would you like pumpkin juice or would you like to try a butter beer?"

"A butter beer please. I find them quite good."

"When have you had a butter beer? I never had one before my first trip to Hogsmeade as a third year."

"Oh! Jamie gave me one the first day we were nu.... The first day we spent together in her dormitory."

Hermione looked at Caitlin questioningly. *It sounded like she was about to say nude. No, that's impossible. What would Jamie and Caitlin be doing together nude.*

Suddenly Crookshanks bound onto Caitlin's lap. She was quite startled because Crookshanks is quite a large cat. Hermione looked in surprise as she finished placing the food on the table and sat down with Caitlin to eat. "That is quite unusual. Crookshanks doesn't normally take well to strangers."

Crookshanks purred as Caitlin scratched the cat's head. "I think he likes me." Caitlin seemed quite pleased. I can't believe that wicked witch threatened him. "What did Hooch say to you? I'll get you my deary and your little kitty too."

"Yes, but lets not talk about her anymore. I asked you up here to talk about you." Hermione pulled a parchment out of her robes and laid it on the table in front of Caitlin. "Please read this and let me know what you think. The decision is completely yours."

Caitlin picked up the very official looking document. It already had a ministry seal on it and had been sign by the Inquisitor right next to the signature of Hermione Granger. Caitlin went back to the top of the parchment and began reading. She hadn't made it half way through the document before she realized what it was and burst into tears. "This is the real thing! This is a legal document. Does this mean...? Are you sure? Do you really...?"

Hermione smiled through the tears in her eyes. "It's a legal magical adoption paper. It has already been signed and approved by the court. I have never been surer of anything in my life. Because of your age, all that is needed is your signature and it will be official."

Caitlin was at a total loss for words. She just looked at her Professor, soon to be mother, and broke into tears. Tears of joy that she neither could nor wanted to hold back. The food was forgotten as Caitlin sat on Hermione's lap and wrapped her arms around her. They sat like that crying and hugging until Caitlin once more asked, "Are you absolutely sure?"

"Yes, I'm absolutely sure."

Caitlin slid off her lap and took the parchment over to Hermione's desk. She dipped the quill in ink and signed her name to the document. She no more than finished when the documents disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Hermione looked at her daughter. "Its official. We belong to each other."

Caitlin was crying and yet she was the happiest she had been in her entire life. *First I find a sister and now a mother. I love Hogwarts.* Suddenly she was troubled by a question. "What should I call you?"

"That's a little tricky. As far as school is concerned you shall remain Miss Garrison and I will remain Professor Granger. It would be best for you if our relationship was not well known." Upon hearing she must keep such great news a secret, Caitlin looked as if she were about to cry. "Not known to the entire student body. You may certainly tell Miss Zacherley with whom I have noticed you have formed a strong friendship. Use sound judgment as to whom else you tell."

"As far as when we are together that is totally up to you. You may call me Hermione or Aunt Hermione, whatever feels right to you."

"I never knew my real mother, but I always visualized her as someone like you. Would I be showing disrespect to her if I called you mum? My whole life I've dreamed of having someone I could call mum."

Hermione was both stunned and delighted. She had wanted to be called mum, but hadn't dared ask. "I'm sure your real mother is looking down on us right now and would understand. I'd like nothing better than for you to call me mum."

"Do I sleep here or in the dormitory?"

"Sadly we won't get to spend a lot of time together during the school term. School rules require that you sleep in the dormitory and take your meals with your classmates. It's probably best so that you establish bonds with your peers, but I really wish it were possible for us to spend more time together so that we could get to know each other better. You can come visit me anytime and I hope you will, especially on weekends. You do remember the password and how to get here?"

Caitlin nodded her head yes.

"It's getting quite late so I'm sure it will be alright with the Headmaster if you sleep here tonight. That will be your room." Hermione indicated a door just off the living area. "It has its own bath. Why don't we finish our snack and then we should be off to bed. Becoming my daughter means you will be required to run every morning." Hermione smiled and Caitlin knew she was not serious, nevertheless Caitlin intended to be there every morning.

"When you get a chance, you may want to bring a change of clothing up here. We'll get out and buy you a few more things so you can have clothing to wear both places. For tonight, I'm afraid you'll have to sleep in your bra and knickers."

Bra and knickers! I don't own a bra and I threw all my knickers in the trash. What should I do? I've had a mum for five minutes; am I going to start lying to her already. No, we are going to have an open and honest relationship. I want her to be honest and open with me and I'm going to be honest and open with her. "Mum can we have a discussion before we go to bed. There is something significant I have to tell you."

Caitlin said she was going to be honest with her new mum and she was that and more. She was totally frank. She told her about her first night at Hogwarts and how she had confided to Jamie about her nightmares. Hermione cried when she heard about Jamie's experience at the Quidditch match. Hermione had been there and seen the Dark Mark herself. She had witnessed the panic. Caitlin told Hermione about Pureheart and how he had helped her sleep. Then she told her new mum about walking in on Jamie nude and at first thinking she was a lesbian, but finding out that she was actually a nudist.

Hermione was shocked by the revelation that Jamie was a naturist and especially that she actually walked around her dorm naked.

Caitlin tried to remember all the things Jamie had said about naturism and how it had nothing to do with sex. That nudity is just another aspect of the lives of very normal people. A desire to be naked is not perverse or wrong, but a perfectly natural feeling that one should not feel ashamed to explore. Hermione had listened intently. Then Caitlin astonished Hermione by telling her that she had asked Jamie to arrange an opportunity for her to be nude. She told her

how she felt being nude and how much she loved it. "So you see, I can't sleep in my bra and knickers because I don't have any on. What I'd really like to do if you don't mind is sleep nude."

Hermione didn't say a word, as she seemed to be deep in thought. "Actually if you would allow it, I would be exceedingly happy if you would give your blessing for me to be naked whenever I am here."

"Caitlin, I don't know what to say. First I want to thank you for being so candid with me. That took a lot of courage. I hope we can always have a relationship where we don't feel the need to have secrets from each other.

"I frankly don't understand nudism. My parents brought me up totally different than Jamie's did. I never saw either of my parent's naked and once I was old enough to wash and dress myself, my parents never saw me nude. Only one person has ever seen me without my clothes and that was someone I loved very much. I would die of embarrassment if I were naked in front of a group of people like you were in Jamie's dorm. What Jamie does and what you want to do is completely alien to me.

"Yet, I've always considered Jamie a very special girl. She is brilliant and beautiful, but doesn't have a trace of conceit. I'm sure you especially have noticed how kind and loving she is to everyone. Jamie is pure and wholesome. You two are a lot alike. I doubt that being a nudist made Jamie the wonderful person she is, but I would never want to see her change, just like I would never want to change anything about you.

"There is no way I could ever do something like that, but I have to agree that it certainly doesn't harm anyone if a person is nude, especially in their own home. This is now your home Caitlin. It's going to be extremely hard for me to get used to, but if you feel more comfortable and really would like to be nude when you're here, somehow I'll get accustomed to it."

"You mean it. I don't have to wear clothes whenever I'm here? I love you, Mum!"

What have I gotten myself into? I love her, but I never expected anything like this. Suddenly she realized Caitlin was taking off her shoes and stockings. "Are you going to bed? I thought we could talk a little longer."

"I want to talk more. It's just that I've really gotten to hate clothes and since you said it was alright, I thought I would take them off."

Hermione got up from the table, not wanting to watch Caitlin undress. "Would you like another butter beer?"

"Yes please, I'll be right back. I have to go to the bathroom."

Hermione got two butter beers and did a cooling charm on them. She had no more than sat down at the table when she heard a door close. She looked up to see Caitlin crossing the room as naked as the day she was born. *This is going to take a lot of getting use to.*

Caitlin sat down and took a sip of her butter beer. "I guess you know this is the happiest day of my entire life. Mum, I promise I'll make you proud of me."

Hermione looked at her newly adopted naked daughter. "I already am proud of you. How about us exchanging our first official mum and daughter hug?"

Caitlin got that devilish look on her face. "I'm sorry, but now that I'm officially your daughter, I have to tell you that I feel I'm too old to be hugged."

Hermione looked grief stricken.

"OH! Mum I'm sorry. I was just joking. I love you and I'll never be too old for you to hug. I hope you'll always want to hug me." Caitlin plopped herself on Hermione's lap again as they both hugged each other tightly.

* * * * *

Wednesday September 24, 2003 Noon Hogwarts

It wasn't necessary for Hermione to advise Severus or the other members of the staff that she had adopted Caitlin; the *Daily Profit* took care of that for her with their front-page headline. The writer of the article evidently was not someone who was intimidated by Hooch's powerful friends.

GRANGER ADOPTS ABUSE VICTIM

By Justin Finch

Hogwarts Professor Hermione Granger proved to the wizard world today that her beauty is a great deal more than skin deep. Granger was a surprise witness in the abuse trial of fellow Hogwarts Professor Grouchy Hooch. Madam Hooch was accused of sexually abusing a young orphan girl this July and leaving her tied to a tree to die.

This reporter was on the verge of tears as he listened to the petit eleven year olds' testimony. The child often broke into tears as she described how Hooch had gained her trust by indicating that she desired to adopt the girl. When this approach proved futile, Hooch viciously attacked the innocent youngster and left her to die in the forest tied naked to a tree.

Hooch denied all charges. She claimed the child had always disliked her and had staged the entire sham in order to cause her to lose her job. When challenged by the Inquisitor as to how the young girl received her injuries or tied herself to the tree, Hooch replied that she obviously had help that got carried away trying to create realistic looking injuries.

If any juror believed Madam Hooch, they certainly changed their mind when the greatly respected Hermione Granger testified against her. Miss Granger, who along with Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley defeated the Dark Lord, is listed in 'Hogwarts a History' as having achieve the highest marks ever by a student of that school.

Professor Granger testified that during her first year as an instructor Hooch had made advances toward her. When Granger refused these advances she was attacked. Hogwarts Headmaster, Severus Snape collaborated her testimony by saying that he had treated Miss Granger's injuries, but that the attack had not been reported at Miss Granger's request.

Although the jury found Hooch guilty of all charges, she received a minimum sentence. This writer feels that this trial is but yet another example of the corruption in our Legal System. Professor Granger evidently shared my disgust with the sentence because she practically attacked the Inquisitor when the sentence was read.

The lovely Professor five years ago was approached by Playwizard magazine to grace their magazine. The Professor is still as beautiful as she was then, but today she proved that she is as beautiful inside as she is outside. The single woman last evening adopted the young orphan. She shall always remain a hero to this reporter.

Hermione looked toward the Gryffindor table and saw her daughter happily chatting with her friends. Just then Caitlin looked toward the faculty table. As one they raised their hands to their ear and pulled on their lobe.

Jamie looked questioningly at Caitlin. "What's with the yanking on your ear?"

Caitlin eyes glistened. "It's a signal mum and I have. It means 'I love you.'"

Hermione had been floating on a cloud all day despite some of the comments that members of the staff had made to her. Severus had asked her if she had thought about all the consequences and if she was sure about what she was doing.

Ginny had told her she was crazy to adopt a child. She had suggested that no wizard would ever marry a twenty-three year old witch with an eleven-year-old child.

Neville had more or less echoed Ginny's remarks.

Draco had been the bluntest, of course. He had asked her if she was trying to save the world. He had said, "You can't adopt every child that's been abused. Why ruin your life adopting this one, it won't make a difference?"

Hermione had answered him by saying, "Draco, I know I can't adopt every child, but it did make a difference in one's life. Ask Caitlin how she feels."

Hermione didn't really care what the others thought. She was happy; she was the happiest she had ever been except for when she had been with Harry. I wonder what he will have to say about Caitlin and I.

She didn't have to wait long for the answer to her question because at that moment Harry sat down in the vacant seat next to her. His beautiful green eyes looked straight into her happy brown eyes. "Justin's right. You are as beautiful inside as you are outside."

She wanted to kiss him, but knew she couldn't especially not in front of the students. She put two fingers to her lips and kissed them and then placed them against Harry's cheek. "Thank you, Harry."

Lunch passed quickly because Harry and Hermione had gotten involved in a debate.

"Will you ask him to meet with us?"

"I'll ask him Harry and I'll support you in this, but I don't think we have a chance of convincing him. Normally he is free the hour before dinner. Suppose you meet me at my quarters at four-thirty and we'll go meet with him. If I'm running late, just leave yourself in; I haven't changed the charm."

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Wednesday, September 24, 2003, Noon, Hogsmeade

As he placed his plate on the table, Ron looked around the room. *I wonder where everyone is today; this place is normally packed.* Yesterday he was fortunate to find a table; today he had his choice of many.

He had just started eating when he was interrupted by a pleasant voice. "Would you mind terribly if I shared your table? It's extremely busy here today and I don't have long for lunch." It was the blonde American from yesterday.

"Ron, I thought possibly we could start over. I'm afraid you misunderstood me yesterday."

He didn't know why, but for some reason he said, "Please, sit down."

"Ron, I don't think you are a hideous beast. Just the opposite, I think you are a very nice person. I guess you could consider me a fan of the covenant of three. I think I've read everything ever published about the three of you and I've always thought the press treated you cruelly after the accident. Yesterday, after actually meeting you I knew they were wide of the mark. I just wanted to set the record straight. Now I'll go locate a different table." She stood up to leave.

"Please stay. I detest eating alone. Further, you can't leave until you've at least told me your name." There was something about her that undeniably peaked Ron's curiosity, but he couldn't figure out what it was.

"My name is Samantha, Samantha Bowman, but my friends back home used to call me Sam."

"Should I call you Sam or Samantha?"

"That depends, are we going to be friends?"

"I certainly hope so."

* * * * *

This without a doubt was the happiest day in Caitlin life. She still couldn't believe that after all these years finally she had someone who loved her, someone that cared about her. Someone she could call mother. She hated the fact that school rules would not permit her to live with her mother in the faculty quarters. The reasons for the rule certainly made sense, but that didn't lessen her desire to be with her new mother.

After her last class Caitlin had gathered a few things together from her dorm room and hurried up to the faculty quarters. The first think she did after the door closed behind her was to strip off her clothes. Caitlin couldn't believe how in such a brief time she had come to abhor clothes so greatly. It just felt so much better to be naked.

As she waited for her mom she helped herself to a butter beer and started decorating her bedroom. The room had just felt too barren last evening. She wanted to give it that personal touch. As she was hanging her last poster on the wall she heard a door close. Mum is here she thought. She ran to the living area to greet her mum.

She burst through the door, and looked up ready to give her Mum a big hug, when she found herself riveted to the floor, staring at someone who was definitely not Hermione Granger.

Caitlin did not need the glasses, bright green eyes or famous scar to realize that.

Chapter 9 Not All Slytherins Are Evil, Or Are They?

Hermione hastily walked through the halls toward the stairs leading to the teachers' quarters. She'd lost total track of time after the last lesson as she dealt with a number of students' questions. The date she'd made with Harry gave her just a little more reason than usual to get back to her quarters, even though she knew, unless he too was delayed, that he would no doubt be there already. She didn't expect that he would wait outside for her, they'd already exchanged passwords to each others quarters and she imagined that he would have already made his way inside to sit comfortably waiting for her.

She had been very happy at Harry's reaction to the news of Caitlin's adoption. Unlike most of her fellow teachers, he'd seemed genuinely happy and supportive and she couldn't deny, not that she wanted to, the warm feeling she got inside remembering it.

Though she did wonder what he would think of Caitlin's surprise from yesterday.

Suddenly Hermione came to a brief stop, and shuddered wondering if Caitlin was planning on visiting her this afternoon, before taking off even quicker than before.

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Harry arrived at Hermione's quarters at exactly four thirty. He felt strange leaving himself into a woman's quarters, but she had told him it was all right. Besides she knew he was coming, so its wasn't like he might walk in and see her naked. Harry closed the door behind him and turned around to see Caitlin Garrison run into the room.

Which wasn't the most surprising thing. That was what she was wearing. Or more accurately what she wasn't wearing.

She was totally nude.

Harry froze. He didn't know what to do. Should he turn and leave? Should he cover his eyes? He did one thing without thinking. Harry turned a bright shade of red, as he stood there frozen.

"Professor Potter, I'm sorry, if I've embarrassed you. Mum, Professor Granger, said it was all right for me to be naked in our quarters. I'm a naturist. I didn't realize anyone besides her would be here this evening. I'll go put something on so you aren't uncomfortable." Caitlin suddenly realized that she was only concerned about Professor Potter being ill at ease. She was the one that was standing in the room naked, but it didn't bother her in the least. *This is amazing, I'm actually standing here starkers in front of the famous Harry Potter and I don't feel the least bit eerie about it.*

Harry didn't know what to say, but he knew standing there, glowing red with a permanent shocked look etched on his face wasn't the right thing. "No, wait. This is your home now. You have every right to remain as you are. I will wait in the hall until Professor Granger arrives. I'm very sorry that I just burst in like that and humiliated you." Harry turned to leave.

"Wait, Professor Potter. I'm not the least self-conscious that you saw me like this. Please stay here till Mum arrives."

* * * * *

Hermione hastily opened the door to her residence and at once saw Harry sitting on the sofa drinking a butter beer. He appeared to be talking to someone who was seated in Hermione's high back easy chair, but from the door she couldn't make out who it was. Suddenly Caitlin jumped from the chair and ran to the door to welcome her.

"Mum, Professor Potter thinks I am very plucky. He said it takes a lot of nerve to stand by you convictions when you know many people will make fun of you. He's nice. I like him a lot."

Hermione whispered in Caitlin's ear, "So do I"

Hermione sat down on the sofa next to Harry as Caitlin plopped herself back in the chair.

"I'm sorry I won't be able to spend any time with you tonight honey. Professor Potter and I must meet with the Headmaster before dinner." Hermione couldn't get over the innocence and confidence that Caitlin showed. She's seen much elder students go quiet in the presence of Harry, even just in the last week. And unlike her daughter they were fully clothed.

Though she still felt a little weird at Caitlin's choice, she couldn't help but be proud at the way her daughter was talking to the most famous wizard in the world, as if he was the guy next door. "Harry we best be going or we will be late"

Hermione gave Caitlin another hug before they left and Harry gave her a big smile as he said. "I'll see you in class tomorrow Miss Garrison."

"Yes Professor, but you won't see quite as much of me as tonight." Caitlin had that devilish look in her eye again.

Harry surprised both Caitlin and Hermione as he kissed the top of Caitlin's head before saying. "I certainly hope not."

"See you at dinner Mum." Caitlin pulled on her ear lobe.

Hermione did the same as she left the room.

Caitlin watched the door close and then went to her room to dress for dinner. *Mum likes him a lot; I can tell. I wonder if he likes her. What if they got married! Oh! That would be so terrific.*

As soon as they were out the door Hermione said. "I'm sorry Harry, I didn't think Caitlin would be there today. I imagine she gave you quite a surprise."

"That's an understatement!" Harry exclaimed. "At first I wasn't certain what to do, but she was so confident and at ease with the situation that she made me feel at ease with it, also. Of course, I have to be truthful. The fact that she is an eleven-year-old girl made managing the fact that she was nude a lot easier. Now when she convinces you to practice nudism, I'm not so confident I'll be quite as at ease."

Hermione blushed as she hit Harry on the arm. "Don't hold your breath Mr. Potter. That's something I can guarantee you wouldn't see in this lifetime."

"Well, You can blame a guy for dreaming."

"Harry, your awful." Hermione blushed deeper as she changed the subject. "Exactly how do you propose to talk Severus into hiring Ron?"

"I have no idea. Do you think begging on bended knees will work?"

"Only if you intend to ask him to marry you." It was Harry's turn to give Hermione a slap on the arm.

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Severus Snape rubbed his hand over his face and shook his head. "I can't believe you two are serious. You actually expect me to ask the board of governors to appoint Ron Weasley as a replacement for Madam Hooch. Have you forgotten that he is a werewolf? May I also remind you that he was only recently released from Azkaban? Are you in reality interested in Weasley being hired or the governors having me declared insane? Besides, there are already two Weasleys on the faculty. While we are at it should we change the name from Hogwarts to the Weasley School of Witchcraft and Wizardry?"

Hermione looked at the Headmaster with annoyance. "Severus, don't be ridiculous! Adding Ron to the staff will only mean that three Weasleys will be here provisionally. You know very well that Charlie has already informed you that he will be returning to Romania next year."

"Besides," added Harry. "The position is only part time. He would only be teaching first years and officiating Quidditch matches this year."

"Lupin was a werewolf and Dumbledore hired him," Hermione interjected. "He was a wonderful teacher. The fact that Ron is a werewolf should not be held against him and he unquestionably won't be out evenings for the duration of the full moon. Harry and I will see to that."

"Severus, he has served his time. Azkaban changed him considerably. Remember he was a professional Quidditch player and he's the third member of the Covenant that defeated Voldemort. Many of the governors might be pleased that you secured all three of us as part of your staff," Harry added.

The Headmaster seemed to be weakening. "I have thought how impressive it would be to have all three of the Covenant members on the staff. Yes, he was an impressive Quidditch player. Will you both consent to stay with him in your Animagi forms during the full moon period?"

Harry looked at Hermione and they both nodded their heads yes.

"I, in all probability, should have my head examined, but I will present it to the Governors when they meet on the first of October. They have been quite displeased at the prospect of the Quidditch season being canceled. That very well could be the deciding issue. If this gets approved, you two will owe me a huge favor, so don't make any plans for December twenty-seventh."

Harry looked at Hermione incredulously as she questioned Severus. "That's the night of the Yule Ball, isn't it? Can I assume that Harry and I have just volunteered to be the chaperones?"

The Headmaster only smiled and nodded his head.

* * * * *

Caitlin's eyes scanned the common room as she entered through the round hole behind the portrait of the fat lady. As soon as she saw Jamie seated with Alex and Amanda, she ran toward them. "You won't believe what just happened."

Amanda glanced from Alex to Jamie, "I don't know why, but something tells me this is going to be first-rate."

Caitlin's face glistened. "Jamie did you talk to Alex about me yet?"

"No, I didn't," Jamie answered. "I wanted to wait until you were absolutely sure you wanted to go through with it."

"Okay. Well, I don't need him any more I already did it."

"Excuse me, please!" Alex responded quite annoyed. "I am sitting here while you are all talking about me. Would someone care to inform me exactly what Caitlin no longer needs me for anymore."

Jamie spoke up. "I told you about Caitlin wanting to be a nudist and how she spent the afternoon with me nude. She had asked me to talk to you about her being nude with you in the room."

Alex blushed slightly. "I'm not sure if I"

"Oh! Its okay, I don't need you anymore. I've already been nude in front of a man and it went terrific." Caitlin had a glow of accomplishment on her face.

Simultaneously Jamie, Amanda and Alex said, "You have! Who?"

"Professor Potter."

The three just looked at her. Their eyes were wide with disbelief.

"I had gone up to my mum's quarter's this afternoon to hang some poster in my bedroom. You know, I wanted to make it more like homey. As soon as I got there I had undressed. I feel so much more comfortable now without clothes."

Amanda looked at Jamie. "Are you sure you two aren't real sisters?"

Jamie just smiled as Caitlin continued her story. "I was just hanging the last poster when I heard the main door to the apartment open. I thought it was mum, Professor Granger, so I ran out to greet her. It was Professor Potter. He and mum were going to a meeting with the Headmaster and she had told him to let himself in if she was running late. Neither of them expected me to be there."

Alex looked flabbergasted. "How did he react?"

"At first he seemed distressed and uneasy. He wanted to leave because he thought he had embarrassed me. Once I told him I was a nudist and that him seeing me unclothed was no huge deal, he was real cool about it. We sat and talked for about fifteen minutes before mum got there. He is really nice. I was so relaxed talking to him that I didn't even notice the time going by till Mum arrived a little while later."

Amanda just sat there shaking her head. "I can't get over how much you two are similar. Now Professor Potter has seen you both naked."

Caitlin was startled by this comment. She looked at Jamie. "Professor Potter saw you naked?"

"He wasn't a Professor at the time. He was just Harry Potter, the boy who lived. Harry Potter was my Knight." Upon hearing this Caitlin reached out and hugged Jamie.

"How did Professor Granger handle walking in and finding you sitting naked with Professor Potter?" Amanda wondered aloud.

"She didn't say a word. Her and Professor Potter seem very close."

"They have quite a history. Have you ever read Harry Potter, a History?" Jamie inquired.

"No I haven't," answered Caitlin.

"Since Hermione Granger is now your mum, it might be a good idea if you did," Jamie said. "The book is actually as much about your mother as it is Professor Potter. I have a copy in my dorm that I'll let you borrow."

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Tuesday, October 7. 2003 Noon

When Ron was sent to Azkaban he felt like his life was over. He had lost his parents at the end of the war, Harry had disappeared to who knew where and he had walked out on the only girl that ever really cared for him. His brothers and sister were disgusted with him and after the incident at the championship game even his groupie "friends" had deserted him. It was a lonely friendless man that had entered Azkaban.

It was a depressed man that was released four years later. His biggest fear would be that nothing had changed, and he would have just spent four miserable years in a God forsaken place, only to come out to a world that was just as cold. But when his brothers and sister welcomed him back, and then Hermione and Harry, he could see a little light at the end of the tunnel. It was wonderful to have his two best friends back, but he knew it could never be quite the same. Certainly they could be friends, but they weren't kids anymore. Harry and Hermione would someday admit they were in love. Where would that leave him? He doubted very much that they would invite him on the honeymoon.

Then two weeks ago today she walked into his life and finally he had a reason to live. At the time she didn't seem all that special. Now he actually felt that for the first time in his life he was in love. He was never in love with Hermione, not this way. The other girls were just sex.

He didn't even remember their names the next morning. Sam was different. He had no idea what it was about her, but when she walked into the room his stomach did flip-flops and when she left at the conclusion of lunch his heart ached.

He was scared. They have had lunch together every day since meeting, but he had no idea whether she had any feelings for him. He knew he had them for her. Today he was going to ask her for a real date. What would he do if she turned him down? No time to think about that now; she was here.

"Hi Ron, How was your morning?" Sam was always so cheerful.

"Fairly quiet. People don't seem to wake up thinking about practical jokes. We do the bulk of our business in the afternoon. How has your day been so far?"

"It suddenly got a lot better when I walked in the door."

Well, here goes everything. "Sam, we've known each other for two weeks now and we've been having lunch together every day. I was wondering..." Suddenly an owl flew through the open door and landed on the table next to Ron.

"Were you expecting an important message?"

"No this is a complete surprise." Ron gave the owl a treat and sent it on its way. The letter that had been delivered contained the Hogwarts seal. "I wonder who from Hogwarts is writing me."

"I don't know Ron, but it's always seemed to me that the easiest way to find out what was in a letter was to read it."

Dear Ron,

I'm sure by now you are aware that Madam Hooch is no longer on the staff at Hogwarts.

Her absence has thus far caused a cancellation of all first year flying lessons and if an instructor is not found soon the Quidditch season that is scheduled to start on October twenty-fifth might be lost as well.

Perhaps Hermione and I stepped out of line by doing so, but without your approval we approached Headmaster Snape about the possibility of you being selected to fill this vacancy.

He approached the governors last Wednesday and they have agreed to hire you part time on a trial basis for the balance of this school year. Should they be pleased with your performance the position would become full time and permanent next year.

Hermione and I both apologize for not contacting you first, but we didn't want to raise your hopes falsely. We both hope you will accept the position so that we can all once again be together.

The Headmaster would like you to come for orientation on Sunday and start on Monday the sixth.

I hope you can work this out with George and Fred.

Please respond as soon as possible.

Your Friend Harry

Ron handed the letter to Sam to read.

"Ron, that's wonderful. You're going to be part of the Hogwarts staff. I'm so happy for you." Suddenly Sam realized that Ron didn't look happy. "Don't you want to work with your friends?"

"Yes, It's a dream come true. I love Quidditch and being able to teach young witches and wizards to fly will be wonderful, but...."

"But what?"

"Sam, I look forward to lunch with you. It keeps me going from day to day. I don't want to give that up."

"Ron, you're so sweet. I'll miss you, too. Maybe we could switch to dinner? Not every night, but once in awhile."

"You mean like a date. Would you actually go out with me knowing what I am?"

"Only if you promise not to bite."

If Sam had said something like that two weeks ago, Ron would have stormed out. Now he knew her and had learned to laugh at himself. "I never bite on a first date."

At first Sam laughed, but then her face became quite serious. "Ron, I haven't been totally honest with you. I know everything there is to know about you, but I've avoided telling you some things about me. After you hear them, you may want to withdraw that dinner invitation. I like you Ron; I like you a lot, but I can't let our relationship go beyond simple friendship without being entirely honest."

"I can't think of anything you can tell me that is so awful that I wouldn't want to see you again."

"Oh! It's not awful. Not to me anyway, but most wizards are turned off by the situation. Ron, I have a little boy. Timmy was two on April third."

Before he had been in Azkaban this would have mattered a great deal to Ron. He would have never considered dating a woman that had a child. Four years had matured him. Plus, there was something too special about Sam to let her slip away. If this worked out he'd just have to learn how to be a good husband and a good father at the same time.

"What I can't understand is how someone could leave you and leave their son, too."

Sam blushed with embarrassment. "Ron, he never left me because we were never really together. He doesn't even know Timmy exists. He was a handsome foreign gentleman that

swept a silly country girl off her feet. For three days he treated me like I was a Princess and I thought he was my Prince. On the third night I gave my virginity to him only to awaken and find him gone the next morning."

"You must have been devastated. I could never do anything like that to you. Would I be pushing it if I asked you to dinner tonight?"

"Ron, I loved to see you tonight, but that's only possible if you let me cook it for you. I can't get a sitter on this short notice."

"Does that mean we have a date."

"It means we have a date, but remember...."

Ron interrupted. "I know! I know! No biting on the first date."

"Well, if you're good, maybe just a little nibble."

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Sunday, October 12, 2003

Draco Malfoy rushed down the hall toward the Great Hall. He had taken a short nap after his last class and was now late for dinner. As he entered the hall from behind the teachers' table, the fate he had avoided for five weeks confronted him. The only seat empty at the faculty table was next to Virginia Weasley. *Well, Draco. You either sit next to the bitch or go hungry, which will it be?* His stomach growled the answer to his question.

Headmaster Snape stood up and bellowed. "May I have silence please?" The room was instantly quiet. "Before we eat this evening, I have a few announcements to make."

"First I would like to introduce Mr. Ronald Weasley. Mr. Weasley will be giving flying instructions to the first years starting tomorrow." The reaction to this announcement was mixed. Some students were politely applauding the new instructor while others were discussing the fact that he was a werewolf and ex-resident of Azkaban. The first years didn't care who the instructor was. They just wanted to learn to fly.

"Since we now have a flying instructor the Quidditch season will be able to commence on schedule. I hope all teams have been practicing. The first game of the season on October twenty-fifth will feature my former house Slytherin against Gryffindor." Cheers filled the room at the news that the Quidditch season would take place.

"Next I would like to discuss the Yule Ball which will be held this year on December twenty-seventh. As you know the first Yule Ball was held in 1994 as a part of the Triwizard tournament. It became an annual event in 1998 to celebrate the defeat of the Dark Lord Voldemort.

"This year there will be a slight change. In the past we have limited the event to year four and above. Effective this year it will be open to all students that care to attend. Professors Granger and Potter have graciously volunteered to chaperone." Harry and Hermione gave each other a knowing glance.

The Headmaster took his seat and the evening meal appeared on the table. Hermione who was seated between Harry and the Headmaster leaned over toward Severus. "What prompted the inclusion of the younger year students?"

Severus looked at Hermione and gave her a brief smile. "I was presented with a formal request which was signed by over one hundred fifty students. The petition applauded the school for holding an annual dance that celebrated the defeat of Voldemort, a Dark Lord who had practiced discrimination against muggles, muggle borns, and anyone not pureblood. At the same time the letter denounced the school for practicing its own form of discrimination by not allowing first, second and third years to attend unless invited."

Hermione was amazed. "I never thought about it before Severus, but they're correct. Though most of the younger students probably won't attend, it should be their choice to make, not ours. Whoever started that petition should be commended. Do you have any idea who it was?"

Severus now had a huge grin on his face. "Oh! I most certainly do. I believe taking up causes runs in the family. If I'm not mistaken her mother founded a group called S.P.E.W during her fourth year."

Hermione face burst into a proud smile as she spied Caitlin at the Gryffindor table. Caitlin smiled back at her as they exchanged ear pulls. *She may not have my genes, but she's certainly my daughter.*

Draco had eaten his entire dinner without looking in Ginny's direction, yet alone speaking to her. Finally Ginny couldn't take it any longer. "Draco, we've been working together on this staff for over a month and you have avoided me and not spoken with me that entire time. We can't go on like this."

Draco looked her directly in the eye. "Precisely why can't we go on in this manner, Miss Weasley? I would have been quite content if I had lived the remainder of my life without ever seeing your face again. I certainly don't see the necessity for us to take part in needless banter. Before you suggest it again; no, we can't just be friends." Draco left the table without bidding anyone a good evening.

Neville who had been seated on the other side of Draco looked incredulously at Ginny. "What's his problem?"

"He hates me and in all probability always will. Our love gave him the power to betray his father and have the court sentence him to Azkaban, but the legal system also took the family fortune and because of that his mother disowned him. I can understand why he felt deceived when I left him for Harry. I thought that perhaps in time we could at least be friends, but he's even more bitter now than when we broke up."

Neville looked at her sadly. "Is it totally over between you and Harry?"

"It was over before it started. I had been smitten with Harry since I was ten, but when we were finally together I realized that's all it was; it was never love."

"What about Harry? He broke up with Hermione to be with you."

"Physical lust is all it was. When Harry and I were finally together I believe he realized that he lost his true love to be with me. They won't admit it, but Harry and Hermione love each other. I hope if anyone ever loves me as much as they love each other I will realize it and not be blind like they are to it."

Neville looked tenderly at Ginny. "You're quite beautiful. It's only a matter of time until someone realizes just how beautiful and wonderful you are."

"Thank you Neville. You're sweet. You always have been."

* * * * *

It was much later that evening when Ginny Weasley found herself climbing the winding staircase that led to the Astronomy Tower. Several years and numerous shattered dreams had passed since she last ascended those stairs. The tower held some fond memories for her, but tonight she was only in quest of a place of solitude. In her brief life she had loved twice and lost twice. *Whoever said it is better to have loved and lost, then never to have loved at all is full of shit.*

Ginny had fallen in love with Draco during her fourth year. It certainly wasn't deliberate and it was a romance reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet. Although his father for all his life had physically abused Draco, it was his love for Ginny that lastly gave him the strength to rebuff his father's evil ways and give the testimony that sent Lucius Malfoy to Azkaban. His mother had disowned him at the time probably more due to the court seizing the family fortune than Draco helping send his father to prison.

Then as Ginny became insecure in their relationship, Harry finally noticed that she existed. He had broke up with Hermione and although Ginny was torn; she left Draco. Finally the little girl's dream had come true; she was with the boy that lived. Unfortunately the dream was short lived once Harry realized his feelings were more lust than love. They had parted on friendly terms just prior to the Covenant defeating Voldemort. In the years since, Ginny dated many men; mainly Muggles during college, but had still held feelings for both Harry and Draco. The few past weeks, however, had shown that neither of them any longer desired her.

As she lifted the trap door and entered the Astronomy classroom she was startled to find the room was occupied. "Oh! I'm sorry Professor Snape; I didn't expect to find anyone here."

"Ginny, you are a Professor now. It's time you called me Severus."

"I'm sorry Prof... Severus. It's just that after seven years of calling you Professor Snape, it's difficult to call you by your first name."

"Don't apologize. Harry and Draco are having the same problem, as did Hermione and Neville their first years. You'll get use to it in time. What brings you to the tower? Usually the only people I find here are students that have snuck up here to snog."

"I just came to look at the stars. It's such a beautiful night. Do you come up here often?"

"Whenever I want to talk to her. For some reason I feel so much closer to her here."

The slight waver in Severus's voice wasn't necessary for Ginny to tell how much he missed her older sister. It was all too clear in his eyes. It was the same haunted look that Ginny knew she had when she remembered her family that died that horrible day.

"I miss Maggie, too. I miss them both. It just seems so unfair that after all those years I finally got to know my sisters just to have them die in the attack."

"Yes, one's existence can be incredibly brutal, particularly when you lose someone you cherish so much and just before...." Severus tried to hold back the tears. He didn't want to cry in front of his youngest teacher.

"She thought the world of you, too. She talked constantly about the wedding and how fortunate she would be to have someone as wonderful as you for a husband."

They stood there for a time, not speaking just looking at the stars.

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Monday, October 13, 2003 6:00 PM

Ron nervously knocked on the door of Sam's apartment. He hadn't seen her since lunch on the eighth and it was mind-boggling how much he had missed her. Ron had been afraid to be around Sam even during daylight hours on the day of and the days surrounding the full moon. He had always avoided Hermione on these days. It was unbelievable how the sexual craving of a werewolf heightened at that time of the month. No woman, man nor beast was safe, therefore Ron remained medicated and behind locked doors.

Sam had seemed so understanding when he explained all this to her. Ron marveled that this woman seemed to care for him despite his problems. He was quite insecure and not seeing her for four days certainly didn't make him feel any better.

Ron's insecurity vanished when the door flew open and Sam wrapped her arms around him. "Ron I've missed you so much. Please come in. There's someone special I want you to meet."

As Ron entered the room he had to duck to avoid being struck in the nose by a flying Cho Chang action figure. Immediately a handsome two year old ran over to him. "Are you Mr. Weasel? My mommy told me you were a great Quidditch player. Will you learn me how to fly?"

Sam shrugged. "I'm sorry Ron. I keep telling him your name is Weasley, but he insists on saying Weasel. Timmy, you are too young for anyone to teach you to fly."

Ron looked at the fine-looking youngster that stood before him. *The man that walked out on Sam and Timmy was most certainly a dupe.*

Ron bent over and picked up the blonde haired boy. "You may be too young to fly on a broom, but how about flying without one." Ron held the little tike in his arms and zoomed him around the room as if he were as light as a feather.

Sam gave Ron a smile that oozed love. "I think you may have started something that you'll live to regret."

The three of them sat and enjoyed a delicious home cooked dinner. It reminded Ron of the wonderful meals his mother used to cook and a tear came to his eye. After Timmy was put to bed Ron and Sam sat and talked. They talked about their pasts and they talked about the present. They were both afraid to discuss the future.

Unfortunately much too quickly the time came for Ron to leave. They stood at the door holding each other as one gentle kiss led to another. Neither wanted to say good night and break the embrace. Finally Sam whispered, "Ron, are you at the joke shop tomorrow or Hogwarts?"

"I'm opening the shop, but Clarence is taking over at noon. I have a one o'clock class."

"Since you have to be in the village early, why don't you spend the night here?"

Ron's heart sputtered as it jumped into passing gear. "Sam, you don't have a spare bedroom."

"No, I don't, but I have a couch."

Ron heart came to a screeching halt.

"I also have a king size bed that I'd be happy to share as long as you promise not to go straight away to sleep."

It was quite late before they ever thought about sleep. Timmy would have only needed three fingers to count the hours that Sam and Ron sleep their first night together. It would be a night that neither of them would ever forget. Ron had been with more women than he wanted to remember, but it was never like this. At the time he had referred to those joinings as making love when in actuality there was no love involved. His sex organ had controlled all of his previous experience. Tonight his mind was in charge. Tonight he wasn't having random sex with a groupie. Tonight he was making love to someone quite special. As he laid there caressing her as she drifted off into a pleasant sleep, Ron realized that he had found his love. He had no desire to ever share a bed with anyone else. This was the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. He wanted to raise her son as if he were his own. *How will she feel about that?* Ron fell asleep and for the first time since he had become a prisoner in Azkaban he had pleasant dreams.

* * * * *

Saturday, October 25, 2003

The cold morning had dawned quite brightly. As Jamie, Alex and Amanda entered the Great Hall they were greeted by the delicious smell of fried sausages. The first Quidditch match of the season was always a highly anticipated event, but especially when the opponents were archrivals Slytherin and Gryffindor.

Alex and Jamie each had their own dissimilar ways of approaching breakfast on a game day. Jamie was always relatively nervous and just picked at her food hardly eating anything. Alex, on the other hand, seemed to treat the meal as if it were the very last he would have and ate with gusto.

"Jamie you should really eat a little breakfast," Amanda coaxed.

"I know, but I'm too jumpy to eat.

By the time eleven o'clock rolled around it seemed the whole school had assembled in the stands surrounding the Quidditch pitch. In the locker room, Alex, Jamie and the balance of the team were changing into their scarlet Quidditch robes.

Team captain and keeper, Kevin Stern, loudly cleared his throat for silence. "Okay, team," he said. "We know which house has the best team. It's time we show the rest of the school."

The rest of the team shouted their agreement. "Be careful out there." Kevin's eyes surveyed the entire team, but seemed to finally focus on Jamie. "We, are better than they are, but they have a high disregard for the rules. Don't get hurt. Good luck, all of you. We're going to win. Let's go Gryffindor!"

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Meanwhile Richard Bancroft, the Slytherin captain, was addressing his team, which was dressed in green. "I'm really tired of losing to Gryffindor. They are a bunch of losers; without Zacherley they don't stand a chance. Play the game, put on a good show, but our main goal has to be to get that bitch out of the game." He looked around at the team. "I mean permanently out."

Beater, Tony Marburger, looked at the dazed expressions on his teammates faces.

"Now lets go out there and beat those f...ing pussies."

The team players weren't the only ones with butterflies in their stomachs. Ron Weasley was refereeing his first Quidditch match. He stood in the middle of the field waiting for the two teams, his broom in his hand.

"Now, I want a nice fair cleanly played game, all of you," he said as the teams gathered around him. The comment seemed to be more directed at the Slytherins.

"Mount your brooms."

Ron gave a loud blast on his whistle and fifteen brooms rose up, high into the air. The game had begun.

"The Quaffle is immediately taken by Gryffindor Chaser, Lindsey Sellers!" shouted Ravenclaw announcer Jason Turner.

"What this, it looks like Gryffindor Seeker, Jamie Zacherley, has already spotted the Snitch. Yes, she is in pursuit___wait, here comes Dick Bancroft of Slytherin toward her from the right side of the field, but he doesn't seem to be going for the Snitch. He is headed directly for Jamie!" WHAM! "Ouch that must have hurt. Bancroft seemed to have purposely flown directly into Zacherley. I have no idea how she managed to stay on her broom."

Hermione who was seated next to Harry grabbed his arm. "That was done on purpose," Harry commented. "He was trying to run the point of his broom right into her side."

Hermione winced with pain just thinking of the possible result.

The Gryffindors screamed, "Foul!"

Ron blew his whistle to stop the game, but as he did Slytherin Beater Dennis Crow sent the Bludger hurling in Jamie's direction just barely missing her head.

Ron was livid as he spoke to Bancroft and then awarded Gryffindor two free shots at the goal post. Lindsey took the first shot and Karen Walker the second. Both girls scored.

"Gryffindor 20, Slytherin 0."

Caitlin had an extremely worried look on her face. "Amanada is this the way Quidditch is always played?"

"No, Caitlin. Slytherin is on a witch-hunt. It seems they are more interested in hurting Jamie than they are in winning the game."

"Quaffle taken by the Slytherins__ that's Cherry Moore speeding off toward the goal posts, but she's blocked by a Bludger__sent her way by Alex Ward__nice play by the Gryffindor Beater__Lindsey Sellers back in possession of the Quaffle with a clear field ahead__dodges a speeding Bludger__she scores." "Gryffindor 30, Slytherin 0."

After making an early appearance, the Snitch had remained out of sight for over an hour. During that time Slytherin had taken advantage of numerous scoring opportunities and now led.

"Slytherin in possession score Gryffindor 60, Slytherin 90," Jason Turner was saying. "Wait a moment__was that the Snitch?"

Jamie saw it. In a great rush of excitement she dived after the Snitch, Slytherin Seeker Dick Bancroft had seen it, too. Soon they were side by side hurtling toward the Snitch. Jamie glanced to see Bancroft in deep concentration murmuring to himself. Suddenly Jamie realized she no longer had control of her broom.

Jamie couldn't turn, she couldn't speed up, and she couldn't slow down. No matter what she did, Jamie's broom stayed directly parallel to Bancroft's. Although they continued after the Snitch, Jamie realized Bancroft wasn't making any effort to catch the streaking gold object instead he seemed content to just follow it and wait, but wait for what.

Hermione looked at Harry. The expression on his face showed deep concern. "Harry, what's wrong?"

"Watch Jamie's broom. It's in perfect synchronism with Bancroft's. He's performing some sort of Dark Magic. He's controlling her broom."

Suddenly the Snitch turned and so did Jamie as Bancroft maintained power over her broom. The speed was increasing. Jamie yelled at Bancroft as they followed the Snitch on a path that would have them collide with one of the viewing towers. Faster and faster they sped. *Was he crazy? They were going to hit the tower. At the speed they were traveling they would certainly both be killed.* As they got closer and closer to the tower, Jamie realized she was wrong they wouldn't both be killed. Bancroft would barely brush the side of the tower. She would be the only one killed.

Chapter 10 Plans

Suddenly the Snitch turned and so did Jamie as Bancroft maintained power over her broom. The speed was increasing. Jamie yelled at Bancroft as they followed the Snitch on a path that would have them collide with one of the viewing towers. Faster and faster they sped. *Was he crazy? They were going to hit the tower. At the speed they were traveling they would certainly both be killed.* As they got closer and closer to the tower, Jamie realized she was wrong they wouldn't both be killed. Bancroft would barely brush the side of the tower. She would be the only one killed.

Caitlin and Amanda watched in anguish as the two players came closer and closer to the tower.

Hermione clung to Harry. "Harry do something; she's going to be killed."

Harry looked at her helplessly. "There's nothing I'm able to do, not from here. If only...."

Suddenly a Bludger hit Bancroft from behind so solidly that he was almost toppled from his broom. He struggled to maintain his balance, but his concentration on Jamie's broom was broken.

Jamie had been fighting to regain control and suddenly she had it. Just a few meters away from the tower both the Snitch and Jamie went into a dive. As she hurtled toward the ground Jamie realized she was still in a dilemma. She had absolutely no room to maneuver. She obviously couldn't break the dive by going forward because of the tower just meters away. Turning to her left or right was also out of the question because both those options involved some forward movement; more than her proximity to tower would allow.

Jamie had to do a backward flip, something she had never done before and didn't even know if it was possible to do especially at this speed. The wind billowed through the sleeves of her robes as she clung to her broom. She felt her long hair actually brush the ground as she struggled to regain an upright position. Just when she thought she would succeed, she lost her grip and went tumbling across the green pitch.

The crowd was all on their feet. Hermione held her hands to her face in horror. "Oh my God!"

Momentarily Jamie just laid there as the multitude looked on in dismay. Then she got to her knees and waved. "She's okay! Caitlin yelled.

Suddenly Jamie jumped to her feet and pulled her arm tightly to her side. Slowly and very carefully she reached her right arm into her left sleeve and pulled out the Snitch.

As Jamie waved the Snitch in the air, Jason Turner declared Gryffindor the winner.

Harry just looked at Hermione and shook his head in astonishment. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. She did a Plumpton Pass upside down coming out of that incredible dive. That's inconceivable!"

Hermione smiled at Harry, "No that's Jamie Zacherley."

The balance of the team landed to congratulate Jamie as Amanda and Caitlin ran onto the field.

"Jamie!" Amanada yelled. "What happened? Why did you and Bancroft keep flying so close to each other and directly at that tower?"

"He used some sort of Dark Magic. I had no control of my broom. I have no idea what caused him to break the spell, but if he hadn't; I would have been killed."

Alex answered her question. "He got hit by a Bludger. Almost knock the prat off his broom. Wish it had."

Jamie looked at Alex and threw her arms around his shoulders. "My hero! Told you that I didn't have to watch my back as long as I had you as a Beater."

"Believe me, I'd love to take the credit for hitting that jerk, but it wasn't me." Alex indicated Tony Marburger the Slytherin Beater. "Marburger threw it and I don't think it was an accident."

As the Gryffindors celebrated their victory the Slytherin team entered the locker room.

Dick Bancroft disgustingly spoke first, "I know you meant well by throwing that Bludger at Zacherley, but I wish you hadn't. I had everything under control. If the collision with that tower hadn't killed her the fall to the ground would have definitely done the trick."

Tony just looked at Dick. "This is our fourth year playing Quidditch together. When have you known me to miss my target with a Bludger at a range as close as I was to the two of you?"

Bancroft's face looked like it would explode with rage. "You bastard! You threw that Bludger at me in order to save that Gryffindor bitch. You're no Slytherin! The Sorting Hat certainly screwed up when it placed you. We may be stuck with you in our house, but you're off this team as of right now."

"I have absolutely no problem with that! I joined this team to play Quidditch not to murder innocent people. Or have you forgotten that this is supposed to be a game? What is your problem with Zacherley anyway? I think she's a great person."

"Oh! Now it becomes crystal clear." Bancroft eyed the balance of the team that was listening to the conversation in silence. "Marburger here is smitten with Zacherley; wants to get in her pants."

"I want to do no such thing. It's just that I don't understand the problem you have with her. She'd even save your ass if it were in trouble. Why should I hate her just because she is in Gryffindor? Last winter she didn't hesitate to save my sister because I was a Slytherin. I noticed you didn't get your feet wet."

Doris Burke, the only female on the Slytherin team, pulled the other players to a corner as Marburger and Bancroft continued arguing.

Bancroft ignored this comment. "Zacherley is an idiot. Almost killed herself saving a toy baby doll."

"Well, in my opinion the world would be a lot better off if it had a lot more Jamie Zacherleys and a lot less bigoted types like you. I'm out of here."

As Tony headed toward the door, Doris rushed over and stopped him. "Don't go anywhere Tony. This team is composed of seven players. Dick doesn't speak for all of us. We want you on the team."

Bancroft stared angrily at Doris. "It doesn't matter what you want. I'm the team captain and I pick the players."

"Your right, the captain picks the players, but the players pick the captain. You are no longer the Slytherin captain."

"You can't do that! The whole team gets to vote. I get a vote."

"You can have your vote, but it won't change the out come. I was just made captain by a vote of four to one. No matter how you or Tony vote, it won't change that. As captain, I say Tony stays."

"Well, if that turn coat stays, you can find yourselves a new Seeker because I quit."

Doris looked Dick straight in the eyes. "Dick, you're a good Seeker and we don't want you to leave, but that's your choice."

Bancroft threw his Quidditch robes of the floor as he stormed out of the locker room. "You losers won't win a single game this season without me."

Doris Burke looked at her teammates. "We do have a tough road ahead of us. Our first challenge is to find a new Seeker, and fast."

* * * * *

Amanda had gone to the Gryffindor girls' locker room to discuss the Halloween party with Jamie. As she left to return to the dorm where homework awaited her, she saw Alex sitting in the corner of the team room. "Jamie isn't ready yet. That long hair takes forever to dry. Everyone else has left. She told me to send you in if you were still waiting."

Alex looked at Amanda, "Is she...?"

"As naked as the day she was born. But you're accustomed to seeing her that way."

As Amanda scooted off, Alex slowly open the door to the locker room. I don't understand why lately this bothers me so much. Since first year I've seen Jamie nude over a hundred times. It was no big deal; actually I had gotten so comfortable with it that I didn't even take notice when she first started to develop. But lately its different, something has changed.

As soon as Alex entered the room, he spotted her sitting on a bench brushing her hair. He couldn't get over how beautiful she was or how much she had changed since that first time he saw her nude in the spring of their first year.

It was a beautiful day. It was quite warm for early May. The sky was a bright blue with nary a cloud present. The three of them had spent most of the day outside enjoying the unseasonable weather. Unfortunately Amanda had to return to Gryffindor tower to complete a Transfiguration essay that she had put off for weeks.

Since there were no classes on a Sunday, they had left their robes inside and were dressed comfortably. Alex had on a pair of jeans and a tee shirt and Jamie was wearing a cut off top and a pair of white short shorts. Alex had noted to himself that her lack of clothing really accentuated the fact that Jamie was quite thin.

They had been walking quite awhile when they decide to take a brief rest under some trees near the Quidditch changing rooms. They both plopped down facing each other with their backs against tree trunks. Jamie, Amanda and Alex had grown to be quite close friends. Because she was a girl, Jamie tended to share more with Amanda, but she loved and trusted Alex just as much. They were both enjoying this time alone together.

As they were talking Jamie stretched as if reaching for the sky and yawned. As she did this, her top rode up exposing her.... Well, there wasn't really anything to expose, but Alex looked away anyway. As his eyes looked down he saw that the crotch of Jamie's shorts was red with blood. Excitedly he yelled, "Jamie, you're bleeding. There's blood on your shorts."

Jamie looked down at her shorts and Alex thought he heard her swear. If she did, it was certainly out of character because Jamie never swore.

Now Jamie looked at Alex hoping he could deal with what she was about to say. "Alex, it's my menstrual period. It's my first time. I'm going to need some help from you."

Alex looked at her dumb founded. "What can I do?"

Jamie looked around in a near panic. She certainly didn't want anyone to see her like this. How could she get to her dorm? "Alex lets see if the changing rooms are open."

She led the way as they hurried to try the door. Jamie was relieved as it opened and they entered the common area. Jamie was familiar with the room because she was on the Gryffindor team, but Alex had never seen it before. The ceiling and walls were draped with banners from all four houses. There were doors on either side of the room, but Jamie led him through the one on the left. The room they entered had chairs and a chalkboard where the teams had meetings and discussed strategy before a game. On the far side of this room were two doors. One door was marked boy's locker room and the other girls. Alex hesitated as Jamie urged him into the room marked girls.

"Alex, I need you to run back to the castle. Amanda should either be in the common room or in our dorm. Get her alone and tell her that I've finally gotten my period. I need my robes and the box of tampons in my top dresser drawer. Please cover the tampons with the robe so no one sees them."

"These are my favorite shorts. I'm going to try to get the blood out of them and take a shower. Please hurry back!"

Alex simply said, "I'll be back as soon as possible."

Alex ran all the way to the castle and through the halls to Gryffindor tower thankful that Jamie made him get up in the morning to workout with Professor Granger. Upon entering the common room he saw Amanda seated alone at a table just inside the door.

He quickly informed her of the situation before she lead him up to the first year girls' dorm. After checking that no one was inside, she pulled him in behind her. "Seems like you're getting an education on the workings of the female body."

Alex didn't smile. "I have to get back to Jamie."

Amanda grabbed Jamie's robes from the hook on the side of her bed and then went to the dresser. She pulled out a blue box and handed it to Alex.

Suddenly Alex remembered that Jamie was washing her shorts and probably her knickers as well. "She'll need pants and knickers, also."

Amanada looked in Jamie's lower drawer and pulled out a pair of jeans. She then pretended to look for knickers. "Her knickers must all be in the wash."

Alex seemed confused as to what he should do. Then just said, "I have to hurry, she's waiting."

As Alex ran out of the dorm, Amanda thought to herself, 'I think this may be the day Jamie revels her secret to him.'

Except for slowing down as he passed Professor Snape at the castle entrance, Alex ran all the way back to the Quidditch changing rooms. He lightly knocked on the locker room door. "Jamie, it's Alex."

Alex slowly opened the door, not knowing quite what to expect. A girl wrapped in a towel greeted him. It was a quite small towel that barely covered all it had to cover. "Thank you Alex. I don't know what I would have done without you. Can you get out one of those for me?"

Alex carefully opened the box and then hesitated. "What color do you want; purple, green or yellow?"

Jamie was now the hesitant one. "They come in different colors?"

Alex studied the box. "If this helps any, green is super, yellow is regular and purple is lites."

Jamie's whole body had a red glow. "I don't know what I'm doing Alex. Mum sent me those in case I got my period while at Hogwarts, but she didn't explain exactly what do with them. Give me a green one, I guess."

Alex handed one of the green printed Tampax to Jamie. He seemed to be being quite careful that it didn't bite him. Jamie just looked at it with sort of a 'now what' expression on her face.

As brilliant as Jamie was, obviously no one had ever shown her how to use one of these things. Alex had no idea either, but knew he had to help her. He removed another one from the box and after studying it removed the wrapper. He handled it a few minutes before discovering the secret. His face turned a bright red as he showed Jamie how it worked.

Without saying a word Jamie handed the wrapped Tampax to Alex and took the open one with her to the nearest stall. A few moments later she exited and after washing her hands came over and gave Alex a kiss on the cheek. "Thank you. If you hadn't been here, I would have put it in wrapper and all. Alex, Please sit down. I have to talk to you."

Alex sat down on a bench and Jamie seated herself on one about four feet directly across from him. As Jamie sat down, Alex struggled to keep eye contact. He couldn't see how it would be possible for her to sit in that towel without something showing.

"Alex, you and I are best friends. In ways we are even closer than Amanda and I are and yet she knows things about me that you don't. Things you should know. Things that I haven't told you simply because you're a boy and that's wrong."

Alex sat there in bewildered silence as Jamie told him about her parents and how they had meet in one of Voldemort's prison camps and fallen in love. She told him how her parents had realized they had so much in common, one thing being that they were both nudists. Alex just sat and shook his head as he was told that she never wore clothes at home and that if it were allowed she would always be naked, even here at Hogwarts except when extremely cold weather prohibited it.

He sat there a few moments before asking, "If you were at home you wouldn't be wrapped in a towel? If I came to your house you would greet me at the door naked?" No and yes." Suddenly, Jamie broke into a huge smile. "Alex is it that you don't believe me or that you've never seen a naked girl; you haven't, have you?"

Alex hesitated. "No, I've only seen just pictures."

Jamie stood up. "Well, I can guarantee those pictures had a lot more than I do." She yank off the towel and threw it on the bench.

Alex didn't know whether to turn his head or stare. He stared as Jamie sat down and then he turned away.

"Alex, you can look all you want. As I told you before, I'm quite comfortable being nude. It's natural for a boy who has never seen a girl to want to stare. It doesn't bother me if you look."

They sat and talked for nearly two hours. During that conversation he found out why Jamie's knickers would always be "in the wash." Alex was surprised that after a time he actually got used to Jamie's nudity. It almost seemed weird when she dressed to return to the castle.

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Alex momentarily stood watching Jamie comb her hair. It's amazing how that body has changed in four years.

"Wouldn't you think after all these years some wizard would come up with a spell to dry hair?" Alex asked.

Jamie agreed. "But one that doesn't singe or set it on fire."

"Jamie, have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Slytherin canned Bancroft as captain and he quit the team."

"Really, I for one won't miss playing against him."

"Unfortunately the way his mind works he will probably blame this all on you."

"Yeah, I guess I should have left him kill me. Look at my breast. Do you think it will get black and blue where he ran into me."

Alex took a close look at Jamie's side. "Does it hurt, I don't see any bruising."

"It felt like I was hit by a truck when he collided with me. I wish I knew why he hated me so much."

"That's easy. You're everything he's not and never will be; he's jealous."

Jamie giggled. "Do you really think he wants to be a girl? How do you think he would look with breasts?"

"You know what I mean." Alex pretended he was going to smack Jamie's butt.

"Naughty, naughty. Remember the first rule when dealing with a nudist. Never touch normally covered body parts. Now you, however, are fair territory." Jamie slapped Alex on the butt.

"Oh! Its war you want." Alex went to grab Jamie, but she was too fast for him. Suddenly the race was on as Jamie ran around lockers and jumped over benches finally running out of the locker room and through the team meeting room to the front door.

"Now I've got you," Alex declared. Jamie had her back to the exit door. "You have no place to go. Prepare to be tickled."

"Don't bet on it, the world is at my door." Jamie opened the door and ran outside.

Momentarily, Alex was frozen in place. *That was the exit door. She just ran outside starkers.* Alex was out the door. He couldn't believe his eyes. He expected Jamie to be huddled by the door, but instead she was running toward the deserted Quidditch pitch. Alex took off after her, but she was a faster runner. *She is mad, absolutely mad.*

As Jamie ran, she thought. *I must be mad. I can't believe I'm actually doing this. One lap just let me run one lap around the pitch. This is heaven. Why can't I always run like this?*

Alex ran his hardest, but Jamie was headed back toward the changing room by the time he completed the lap.

She was standing in the middle of the room when he finally entered and threw his arms around her naked body. "Are you nutters? Are you trying to get yourself expelled? What if you had been seen?"

He held her tight in his arms realizing how much he would miss her if she were forced to leave school.

"Alex, you can't imagine how wonderful that felt. Every morning I wish I could exercise and run like that. I have to do that again and soon."

Suddenly Jamie realized Alex was hugging her tightly to his body. She was naked. He had never hugged her naked before. Something unfamiliar was pressing against her body. She abruptly pulled away from Alex. Without looking at him, she said, "It's getting late, I best get dressed now so that we can head back to the castle. Amanda will be worried."

Sunday, October 26, 2003 3:00 PM

It had been an extremely quiet day, but then that was normal for the day after a Quidditch match. Their dorm mates had gone to the library, but Jamie and Amanda had remained behind just being lazy as they lay on their beds and chatted.

"I've made up my mind Amanda. This Friday while everyone is at the house Halloween party I'm going to do it."

"You're going to do what Jamie?"

"Give myself to Harry Potter."

"Oh!" Amanda said timidly. "I had hoped that you changed your mind about that."

"You think I have some kind of school girl crush on him, don't you?"

"No, not at all. I understand your motives totally. Not only that, but I have the same opinion. If it weren't for him, in all likelihood I wouldn't have my best friend. It's just what you want to give him. What are you going to do? Walk up to him and say, 'Hi Professor Potter, you saved my life 5 years ago, want to shag.'"

Jamie got off her bed and walked toward the window; then turned back toward Amanda with tears in her eyes. "Amanda you make what I want to do sound so dirty. You make it sound like its something from a filthy porno movie.

"My dad always told me that I was extremely lucky because I had a sort of a sixth sense when it came to judging people. He said I always knew whom I could and couldn't trust. He must be right. Look at the wonderful relationships I have with you and Alex and now with Caitlin. He also felt that I would be able to tell when the right person came along: the guy I wanted to give my special gift.

"Amanda, this won't be the first time I've made love to Harry Potter. I've lost count of how many times we've been together in my dreams and each time was better than the previous.

"I sense we were destined to be together. The rebounding of Voldemort's curse spared my parents lives so that they could marry and conceive me. Then he comes out of an exit at the Quidditch Patch that no one else was using just it time to save me from being raped and killed. Now just as I've turned fifteen, he returns from the Muggle world to be my professor. I can't picture anyone being more deserving of my love.

"If it weren't for him, I wouldn't even be thinking about a true love. I want to give him what is most important to me. I want to make love to him, because I love him for being who he is and making it possible for me to be who I am. I love him for giving me my parents, my life and making it possible for me to have wonderful friends like you. Please don't make my wanting to be with him sound dirty and cheap."

Amanda approached Jamie and put her arms around her. "I'm sorry Jamie. It's not at all dirty. What you want to do is beautiful everything about you is beautiful. I hope he realizes how lucky he is and how special you are."

They hugged for a few moments before Amanda spoke. "How exactly do you intend to do this?"

"That night that he rescued me, he left me wrapped in his Quidditch robes. I saved them these years and asked my parents to owl them to me. Caitlin has given me the password to the staircase entrance that leads to the teacher's quarters. She's also shown me which room belongs to Professor Potter.

"Friday I intend to wear those Wales Quidditch robes as my costume for the party, but slip out about nine o'clock and sneak up to his room. When he answers his door I'll refresh his memory of our past, tell him how much I love him for giving me the opportunity to live and offer him my gift as I return his robes."

"I imagine you intend to be naked under the robes."

Jamie nodded yes.

"Won't you be frightened?"

"Only that he'll turn me down and report me to the Headmaster."

"Jamie, he's human and a man. There is no way he'll say no to your face and body."

"I wish I was as confident of that as you."

* * * * *

"How are our plans progressing? Will her chamber be ready and properly fitted in time?"

"All will be as you have ordered Great One. The chamber itself is prepared, however, much of the décor must be hand made. Sadly most of the embellishments that we ordered are not manufactured. They are being hand man made to exactly match the style of that era. In regards to that, the crafter of the Cage had a question. Did you want the band between the legs with or without the sharp iron spike? "

"Without. If it is determined that any mutilation is necessary, I want us to have the enjoyment. I regret I can not be there to oversee, but I have the greatest confidence in you, Damien."

"Thank you Great One. My goal is to serve you dependably. The others appreciate your lack of ability to be with us currently, but will celebrate your return."

"Damien, you have proved your faithfulness on many occasions. When I rule you shall be justly rewarded."

"I seek not reward Great One. Having you rule will be my greatest reward."

"Do you have any questions?"

"Yes, if I may be so bold. If the pigeon agrees to join us how will you discern she is speaking the truth?"

"She will be given two tests. The first will be to pleasure you."

"Me! You are too kind my lord. What if she refuses?"

"Dismember her and send the pieces to Potter."

"What if she should pass that trial? What will be her final challenge?"

"She will be required to torture and kill the little bitch that now refers to her as Mum."

Damien smiled. "How wicked. How beautifully wicked."

Chapter Eleven Trick or Treat

Monday, October 26, 2003 Breakfast

Amanda and Jamie hustled down the corridor toward the Great Hall. As they approached the huge double doors, the aroma of breakfast made their mouths water. "I don't know about you, but I'm famished," remarked Jamie.

Just then Jamie spied Tony Marburger approaching them from the opposite direction. He was unaccompanied. "Amanda, I want to thank Tony for what he did on Saturday. Do you want to come with me or join the others for breakfast?"

"I'll go with you; it shouldn't take that long. Besides, he's kind of cute."

"Can I believe my ears? Amanda Pierce just referred to a Slytherin as cute."

Amanda blushed as Jamie continued. "You're right, actually he's more than cutie; he's a hunk."

Jamie and Amanda hurried to intercept Tony. "Tony may I speak with you please?"

"Sure, Zacherley. What's up?"

"Tony, I didn't get a chance to thank you on Saturday. If you hadn't hit Bancroft with that Bludger, I could have been killed."

"Think nothing of it; it was my pleasure. Dick certainly lives up to his name, doesn't he? I can't believe I once hung out with that jerk. Besides, I owed you big time for what you did last winter."

"I notice you're alone. Is the balance of the house giving you a rough time because of what you did?"

Tony looked at Jamie with a big grin. "No, Jamie. Surprisingly most of them are treating me half decent. Oh! Don't get me wrong, Bancroft and Crow hate my guts, but most of the others are being pretty decent. Slytherin house isn't the same as it used to be. Not everyone hates Gryffindors, especially not you."

Jamie blushed at the 'especially not you' comment. "I'm glad they haven't banded together against you."

As Jamie and Tony continued their conversation, Jamie realized Tony and Amanda kept glancing at each other. Of course, as soon as one saw the other looking, they turned away.

Tony's expression turned serious. "Jamie, if I ask you a question, will you answer it truthfully?"

"That, my friend, depends on the question."

Tony looked at Jamie questioningly. "Now I have two questions. Did you just refer to me as a

friend?"

"Yes. I've read the school code, plus *Hogwarts: A History*. No where does it say that a Gryffindor and a Slytherin can't be friends. Do you want to give it a try or would that be pushing your luck with the rest of the house?"

"Does that include you Amanda? Can we be friends, too?" Tony inquired.

Amanda must have been daydreaming because Tony's question caught her completely off guard. "What? Fine. Sure!"

Tony gave Amanda a big grin as she blushed deeply. "I'd like to test the waters. Maybe the three of us can eliminate some of the prejudice between our two houses."

As Jamie began to speak, she saw Amanda staring in Tony's direction again. "What was your original question?"

"Yesterday in the Quidditch game did you really try to catch the Snitch in your sleeve or was it a complete accident?"

Jamie had expected someone to ask this question long before now. "Roderick Plumpton went to his grave maintaining that he meant to catch the Snitch in his sleeve and that it was no accident. Do you really think I was still concentrating on the Snitch? All I was trying to do was live to play another game. I had absolutely no idea what had flown into my sleeve. I was afraid it was something that would sting and I just wanted it out on my clothes."

Amanda and Tony both laughed. "I can see why you have so many friends," Tony said. "I'm proud to be one of them."

"Thanks Tony. Come on, let's get something to eat while we still have time."

"Could you go ahead, Jamie? I'd like to ask Amanda something."

Jamie and Amanda exchanged questioning glances before Amanda indicated for Jamie to go ahead into the Great Hall.

"Where's Amanda?" Alex asked as Jamie took a seat next to him.

"She'll be along soon. She stopped to talk to someone."

In a few minutes Amanda entered the hall. Jamie noticed at once that she was as pallid as a ghost and was noticeably shivering. Meanwhile as Tony Marburger went to locate a place at the Slytherin table, he had a grin on his face that extended from ear to ear.

Jamie's voice trembled with concern. "Amanda, are you okay? What did he do to you?"

"I'm fine. I'll be fine. It's just that... Jamie, he asked me to the Yule Ball."

Alex, who had been sitting calmly feeding his face, suddenly jerked to awareness, practically spitting his food across the table as he virtually shouted, "Who? Who asked you to the Yule Ball? It's two months away. Who would ask anyone this early?"

Jamie looked at Alex in alarm. "Alex, calm down; don't shout. Everyone is looking at us."

Alex looked around at the staring faces and then at the still whitish Amanda before quietly asking, "Who asked you to the Yule Ball?"

"Tony Marburger," was Amanda's shy response.

"But he's a Slytherin!" Alex retorted.

"A very nice Slytherin who just happened to save my life, or did you forget?" Jamie snapped.

"Okay, I'm calm. I'm cool. How did all this come about and what was your answer?"

Amanda told a deep breath. "Jamie and I had stopped to speak with Tony so that she could express her gratitude to him for what he did on Saturday. He kept glancing at me as he talked to Jamie and I guess I sort of stared at him, too. As we were about to come in for breakfast he asked me to linger behind so that he might speak with me."

Amanda looked toward Jamie. "He told me that he'd been trying to get up the nerve to talk to me since last year, but there were always so many people around. What with us being Gryffindor and Slytherin he didn't have the nerve until this morning. He said it was probably ridiculously early to ask me, but he didn't want to take the chance of anyone else getting to me first."

Alex just stared as Jamie sighed. "He's liked you since we were in fourth year. How dreamy! So, what did you say?"

"I was so nervous, but somehow I managed to say yes. He told me that he couldn't put it into words how happy I had made him. Then he kissed me lightly on the cheek and we came in to eat." Color was finally coming back to Amanda's cheeks.

Alex looked at Amanda. "What about Jamie and I? I thought the three of us were going together again like we did last year."

Amanda looked back and forth between Jamie and Alex. "I'm sorry, I know we discussed that, but I really wanted to say yes to Tony. I want to go with him."

Jamie didn't blame Amanda for saying yes. She could see that her friend was attracted to Tony. It would have been foolish for her to say no. She also understood where Alex was coming from. She really loathed the whole concept of dating. She hated turning anyone down and hurting their feelings, yet she didn't like the thought of having to say yes to the first guy that asked her either and possibly having a miserable time. It had been Jamie's idea for the three of them to go together last year. That way no feelings got hurt and they danced with everyone during the evening.

This year if she wanted to go it would have to be as someone's date. Unless...." Alex, I just had an idea. Is there anyone special you want to ask to the Ball this year?"

"No, I was hoping to just go with you two like we did last year."

"I really don't want to go through the being asked out thing either. Why don't we just let it be known that the two of us are going together? You know, as just friends. That way neither of us has to worry about dates."

Amanada looked at Jamie. "That's a fabulous idea. Could the four of us go together? I'm faintly nervous about the thought of being alone with Tony."

Jamie thought to herself that Amanada might be a lot more than slightly nervous. "What do you say Alex? Do you and I have a date?"

Alex just shook his head, yes. *It's not a real date. We are just going as friends. So why is my stomach doing flip-flops at the thought of holding her when we dance?*

* * * * *

Friday, October 31, 2003

Amanda put her arm around Caitlin. "This is going to be the finest Halloween party ever. I can't believe the magnificent job that you and your group did decorating the common room. I've never seen it look so frightening."

"Actually we can't take all the credit. Mum helped. She showed me how to enchant the ceiling to look like at cloudy night. It was also her idea to have the full moon be the only light in the room."

"That does make the whole thing look creepier, but the way you guys transfigured the carpeting and all the furnishings. This place truly looks like a cemetery. I could have done without the repulsive spiders though. I'm not fond of spiders. Maybe some nice butterflies instead."

Caitlin stared at Amanda in disbelief. "Butterflies! Yeah! I always think of butterflies when I think of Halloween."

Just then Jamie entered through the portrait hole. "Wow! This is incredible. You really out did yourselves. Have Alex and the others returned from Hogsmeade with the butter beer yet?"

"No," responded Amanda, "but they should be back soon. It was quite nice of Professor Potter to okay a pass so they could go to Hogsmeade for party necessities."

Amanda lowered her voice, "Speaking of Professor Potter, are you still...."

Jamie nervously nodded her head, yes.

Just then Caitlin interrupted their conversation. "We're going to practically have the castle to ourselves tonight. A good part of the staff will be gone and those that will be here never much leave their quarters."

"What do you mean Caitlin?" Jamie questioned.

"Shortly after last period I saw Professors Vector, Malfoy and Weasley along with the

Headmaster get in carriages that headed for the train station. They'll probably all be gone until Monday morning."

"Which Professor Weasley?" Jamie asked.

"It is complicated with three of them, isn't it? It was Virginia Weasley. I never see her brothers around here except for class. Charles seems to spend all his time in that shack and Ron never eats breakfast or dinner here. He always heads to Hogsmeade after his last class." Suddenly Caitlin had a sickened look on her face. "My Mum left a little while ago. She is having dinner with Professor Longbottom and then going to a concert."

Jamie had a look of astonishment on her face. "Does your mum fancy Professor Longbottom?"

"She says not and I believe her. They are just friends. He may want more than friendship, but Mum's not interested. I think she likes Professor Potter. That book you gave me said that Mum and Professor Potter lost their virginity to each other. I think she still fancies him."

Jamie was suddenly overcome with guilt. She admired and loved Professor Granger almost as much as she loved her own mother. Could she go through with her plans knowing she may still care for Professor Potter?

"Do you think Professor Potter likes your Mum?"

"Oh, he likes her a lot. They are close friends, but unfortunately I don't think his feelings go any further than friendship. If they do, he is very good at hiding it."

Suddenly Jamie had to be alone. She had to think. "Will you excuse me, please? I'm feeling quite tired. I believe I'll skip dinner and lie down so I'm rested in time for the party."

Caitlin was concerned. "Are you all right Jamie? You're not sick are you?"

"I'm fine. I'm just a little knackered. Give me a couple hours and I'll be as good as new."

Caitlin and Amanda watch as Jamie headed toward the dormitory. Amanda knew Jamie. She knew what was troubling her best friend. *You'll make the right choice, Jamie.*

* * * * *

The elves must have just been in the dormitory before Jamie entered because the fire was warm and crackling. Jamie removed her clothes and laid down on top on her bed covers. The room was toasty so she had no need for covers. She just looked up at her canopy and pictured herself laying in a green meadow. She tried to relax. *Do I go through with this or not?*

I adore Professor Granger. I can't do anything that will hurt her. Yet I love Professor Potter and owe him so much. Do I ignore my debt and feelings for him on the chance that he might still have feelings for her? What if he doesn't? Is that fair to him or I? Should I ignore what we could have because of what she wants, but may never have?

Perhaps she never stopped loving him. After all it was him that broke off the relationship.

Maybe she only went to Ron Weasley on the rebound.

Professor Potter can't still love her? Certainly if he realized she was his true love. He would have tried to get her back, not go live with Muggles for five years.

What if I do nothing and someone else enters the picture and takes him? Then I've lost my chance at being with him.

Jamie dozed off with tears in her eyes.

Jamie woke up giggling. Alex was sitting on the side of her bed tickling her side just below her armpit. "Are you dressing for the party or is that your costume?"

Jamie gave Alex a big smile. "This is my costume. I decided to go as Lady Godiva."

"That would make from an interesting party. Actually it would be an appropriate costume if my memory of history is correct. Wasn't her ride in protest of high taxes her husband had levied on the peasants? Sounds very much like something you would do."

"I'll take that as a complement. Actually I'm wearing those Wales Quidditch Robes." She pointed to the robes lying on her dresser. "Would you hand them to me." Jamie sat up and slipped her shoes on her bare feet. She then stood and put the robes on that Alex handed her.

Alex looked on in astonishment. "Aren't you going to wear anything under them?"

"No, the material is quite warm and the Common Room is really hot."

"Well, be careful. The only thing that holds them shut is that sash."

Alex and Jamie entered the Common Room to find the party well underway.

Jamie had no doubt that this was going to be the best party Gryffindor ever held. She regretted that she would miss most of it, for she had decided to go through with her plan.

Jamie had come to the realisation that it didn't matter what either her or Professor Granger sought. It only mattered what Professor Potter desired. His acceptance of her gift could happen in one of two ways. She hoped it wouldn't be a one-night coupling, but if that were the case she would live with it without shame. She would have given her gift to the person who she felt most deserved it.

If they actually became a couple, she would do everything in her power to make him never regret the decision. Hopefully Professor Granger would understand and they could continue a strong relationship.

She was also ready to except rejection because she realized that her being rejected could signal that Harry Potter still loved Hermione Granger. How could she be sad if her rejection might mean that the two people she cared for so much would end up together?

It was nine o'clock.

* * * * *

Caitlin had been correct. Most of the staff was either out of the castle or in their quarters and because all the houses were having parties; the halls were empty. Jamie made it to Professor Potter's room without seeing a soul; not even the ghosts were about.

Jamie took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

After a few moments the door swung open and there stood Harry Potter in a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt. Without his robes he could have easily passed for a seventh year student. His face wore quite a surprised expression. "Miss Zacherley, what brings you to the teachers quarters. There is no problem in Gryffindor tower is there?"

"No, Professor. I have something important to discuss with you. Would it be possible for me to come in for a short time?"

Harry hesitated, wondering if it was quite proper for a male teacher to have a female student in his room. If anyone saw her leave they might think something improper had occurred.

"Miss Zacherley couldn't we discuss this in my office tomorrow? I'm not sure if the Headmaster would approved of me having a female student in my quarters."

"Please Professor, it has taken me weeks to work up the nerve to discuss this. Don't send me away."

Harry didn't know if it was his poor judgment, the fact that it was Jamie Zacherley or the anxious look on her face that caused him to usher her into the room. As he sat down he indicated a chair to Jamie. "If it's all right, I'll stand," she said.

Actually that suited Harry just fine. That probably meant that whatever Jamie wanted to say would take only a brief time. Harry didn't know why, but Jamie made him rather edgy. Quite possibly it was the physical similarities between her and Hermione. "What is so important that it tore you away from the Halloween party? The Halloween feast and house party afterwards were always favorites of mine when I was a student." Then Harry took notice of the robes Jamie was wearing. "Is that your costume for the evening? They are quite a good copy of the actual thing. The robes I wore in the England vs. Wales game in 1997 were quite similar."

"I know, I got to see you play in that game."

"Really, I'm sorry I didn't do better for you."

"Actually, you were wonderful. Absolutely wonderful."

"Thank you, but I'm sure you didn't come here to talk about my showing in that game. Exactly what can I do for you?"

"Actually what I want to talk about started back on August 15, 1981, my parents, in reality my parents to be, were captured in a Death Eater raid and sent to one of Voldemort's death camps. That is where they met and fell in love. It didn't seem they would get to consummate that love because on October 31 they were told they would be put to death the next morning. They spent what they expected to be their last night on earth in each other's arms praying for

a miracle. That evening Voldemort's curse rebounded off you. They were rescued and married two months later."

"Miss Zacherley, I was a one year old baby. I'm quite pleased your parents lived, but..."

Jamie had tears in her eyes. "Please, Professor Potter. Please let me complete my story. You can throw me out if you want afterward, but please let me finish.

"I'm sorry Miss.... I'm sorry Jamie. I won't interrupt you again."

"You were about to say you had no control over Voldemort dying and that I shouldn't credit you with my parents being alive. The fact remains Professor that if that curse had not rebounded off you they would have died and I wouldn't be standing here now."

"My parents were going to name me Harrietta." Jamie noticed that Harry had a look of horror on his face. "Fortunately instead I was named Jamie Lily in respect to your parents."

Harry thought of the parents he had never known. He was glad that this girl had been born and granted time with her parents.

"As I grew up I read everything I could about you. My favorite book is Harry Potter, a History." Harry couldn't believe his ears. He had promised to let Jamie finish and he would, but later he had to know more about that book. Exactly what was in it?

"My parents are great and I love them. They've taught me to respect others and myself. My father tells me I have a special ability. It's the skill to be able to judge whether people are trustworthy or not. Because of this gift I've never had a friend that's lied or betrayed me. I consider myself quite fortunate. Dad told me this ability would also allow me to recognize the person who I should give my love and myself to one day; my true love."

Harry became quite nervous as Jamie discussed love and giving herself, but relaxed slightly when she continued.

"There was a day over six years ago when I thought I'd never have the opportunity to love or be loved. A horrible man was about to rape and kill me, but my Knight saved me.

"Tonight I'd like to return his robes and give him a gift, that I consider my most precious gift.

"If it weren't you I would never have existed. If it weren't for you I would have died a horrible death. You not only gave me my life, but you saved it. Please let me return your robes and give you my love."

It all happened so fast Harry had no time to react. Totally engrossed in her story, Harry had only begun to realize that Jamie Zacherley was the same young girl he'd rescued six years ago when the vision of her naked immediately stopped all logical thought. It was a different part of his mind that switched into gear.

Can this actually be that little girl? She is absolutely gorgeous; it's like seeing Hermione for the first time all over again. She is totally naked waiting for me to take her in my arms and make love to her. Can she possibly realize what she is doing to me? I haven't been with a woman since Ginny in seventh year. She'd never tell a soul; she's not the type.

It took a few moments for Harry to come out of the trance like state, and once he did he knew what the first thing he needed to do was. He reached down for the robe and holding it in his arms stepped forward and wrapped it around the naked schoolgirl, not only hoping to make her feel more comfortable, but also to provide a much needed physical barrier to the sight of her naked body.

Harry wrapped his arms around her as she buried her head into his chest and he tenderly stroked his hands up and down her back. Jamie's arms, much like six years ago, had placed themselves around his neck, and Harry's memories of that day came flooding back to him in spades.

Has it really been six years since I held you like this? You have grown into such a beautiful young lady.

He felt her raise her head off his chest and when he looked down, he was met with her eyes staring into his, looking for acceptance of her offer. "Jamie, you don't know how happy I am to know that you are not only okay, but that you have grown into such a wonderful person." He could see the glimmer of hope flash across her features, before he continued. "But this just can't and won't happen."

Jamie looked into his beautiful green eyes as tears filled hers. "Why? I love you."

Harry warmly smiled at her words. He understood them, and hoped she would understand his. "I know, but you don't really know me, and I don't know you. I had wondered for years what happened to you. Even after that horrible event, you had this spark in your eyes that gave me hope in a very dark time of our lives, and part of me loved that little girl for that, but..." Harry paused looking down at her. "You aren't that little girl anymore. And it would be so easy to take advantage of your offer, but I'm not that sort of person."

"But I..."

"I'm one of your teachers, Jamie. Even if there weren't other reasons, that would be enough," Harry said firmly but warmly, not wanting to upset her.

Jamie took a slight step back from Harry. "I guess it would be best if I left?"

Harry couldn't help but notice that as Jamie took a step back, the robe he'd slung around her shoulders parted at the center giving his eyes yet another view of her ample body.

"Actually, I'd like you to stay. There is more we should talk about," Harry replied as nonchalantly as possible as he reached out to close the robe. There was part of him that thought it would be dangerous to continue the conversation, but he felt like he had a responsibility to make sure she was okay. "Just to make you more comfortable," he said lightly, hoping to keep the girl's embarrassment at a controlled level.

"Actually, Professor, I'm a nudist. Truthfully I'm more comfortable as I am."

A few of the strange occurrences Harry had witnessed since his return came into focus all of the sudden. "Well, you might be a nudist, but I'm a red blooded guy who hasn't had sex with a girl in over five years. Under different circumstance I might be able to handle your nudity.

Tonight well...I'm afraid your staying naked might be asking for trouble. Would you like something to drink?"

"Yes please, Professor Potter."

Harry motioned for Jamie to have a seat at the table. "I think that perhaps you and I have come to know each other well enough that you can drop the Professor when other students are not around. Shall we call each other Harry and Jamie from now on?"

"I'd like that."

"Jamie, I understand you jumped through the ice last winter and saved a little girl from certain death. You almost most died in the process. Is that true?"

Jamie blushed as she said, "Yes."

"What do you expect from her in return for saying her life?"

"I don't expect anything."

"Then why did you do it?"

Jamie didn't quite know what Harry was trying to prove, but if it was that he could make her angry; he was succeeding.

"She was in trouble, what did you expect me to do just stand there and watch her drown?"

"No, certainly not. You wouldn't be capable of such an act."

"When do you plan on giving yourself to Alex?"

"Alex and I are just friends. I have no intentions of having sex with him. Exactly what are you trying to prove?"

"But I thought Alex saved your life. Why are you willing to sleep with me and not him?"

"Because, because. Because you were a little girl's hero and I'm not a little girl anymore, am I?"

"No, you're not. You are a very beautiful young lady and you almost gave something that is very precious to you away for the wrong reasons.

"Love, especially true love is impossible to define or to describe. Sometimes you don't even realize you've had it until you've lost it. Hold on to your special gift until you found the right person. I believe your dad is right. You will know. Just don't make the same mistake that I did?"

Jamie looked into Harry's eyes. They were sad and lonely. "Harry, when you found your true love was it the first time for you both?"

Harry shook his head yes, wondering if maybe the informal nature of the conversation was

getting was too informal. "Unfortunately, I was too blind to see what I had and cast her love aside. Don't you let that happen to you."

"Your first love was Hermione Granger, does that mean...? You still love Professor Granger don't you?"

Now Harry was sure it had gone too far. "How would you know who my first love was? I think perhaps we should call it a night."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you Professor, but it's in Harry Potter, a History. It says that Harry Potter and Hermione Granger gave their virginity to each other."

"That's in a book?! My god, isn't anything private in this world!"

"Professor, its not too late. Caitlin says she thinks her mum fancies you."

Harry could tell that he wasn't being all that successful in hiding his joy at Jamie's words. Even as he was trying to regain the authority of his position, he knew his face would be a dead give away. "You are supposed to be calling me Harry and students should not be discussing who teachers do or don't fancy. Perhaps you should be getting back to the party."

Harry walked Jamie to the door. "Thank you Harry. I'm glad you stopped me, but somehow I don't think I would have ever regretted it."

Harry opened the door. "I assume you've decided to keep my Quidditch Robes."

Jamie grinned, "Would you like them back?"

"No, I think you might find the Halls a bit chilly without them."

"Thank you." Jamie stretched on her toes and kissed Harry, not on the cheek, but on the lips. "Follow your own words Professor. Don't let her get away this time." Jamie turned and walked toward the stairs.

Harry watched as she walked away. Wondering just how much this night would come back to haunt him, or if it was the start of a special friendship. Either way, he had no idea on how to explain to Hermione what had occurred.

* * * * *

Jamie hurried back to Gryffindor tower. As she scurried down the corridors she felt as if a heavy weight had been lifted from her shoulders. It was amazing. Just an hour ago she had stood naked in front of Harry Potter offering herself to him and truly expecting to lose her virginity. He had rejected her and yet she couldn't remember ever being happier. Maybe it was because he had held her again. Maybe it was because she had kissed him. Maybe it was because he had made her realize that people don't save lives for rewards, but because it is just the right thing to do. It was probably for all of those reasons and none of those reasons. *He still loves Professor Granger. He's come back to Hogwarts to claim his true love.*

Since it was only 10:00 o'clock the party was still going strong. Jamie gave the password to

the Fat Lady as she opened the sash on her robes in order to readjust them and close them tighter. The picture swung open quickly so she simply held the robe closed as she stepped through the hole. She had to stop right inside because a couple was passing close by and she wanted to inconspicuously tighten the sash before proceeding. Unfortunately Jamie was not aware that she had stopped with the bottom of her robes and the sash still hanging outside the picture.

The transfigured spider hanging above the opening picked this very time to slide down its web and land on Jamie's hair.

Jamie screamed as she lunged forward and out of the Quidditch Robes.

Chapter 12 Revelations

Friday, October 31, 2003 10:00 PM

"We made it Sam. It's been thirty minutes since anyone knocked on the door and we have six bags of candy left."

"Yes Ron, I think the little ones have called it a night. No more `Trick or Treat" until next year."

"There may be one more." Ron went over to the couch and picked up Timmy's Spider Man masked and held it over his face. "Trick or Treat," he said.

Sam gave Ron a questioning look. "Ron, if you want some candy, just help yourself."

"That wasn't exactly the kind of treat I had in mind.

Sam looked at Ron and blushed. "Let me check on Timmy first and then I'll see what I can do about that treat."

Ron looked at Sam hungrily. He knew that she was his forever girl. His appetite for her would never be filled. Ron followed her into Timmy's room.

The young boy was sound asleep, but had a great smile on his face. Ron commented, "He must be thinking about all that candy he collected tonight."

"Thanks, for taking him around while I handed candy out here."

"No problem. We had a great time. Some people even gave me candy."

"I think he is beginning to like you quite a bit."

"I hope so because I really like him. Now if, as the Americans say, I could only get to first base with his Mum."

Sam looked at Ron with an expression that left no doubt how she felt about the tall red headed wizard. "First base! Every time we're together you hit a home run. I figured you were going for the season record."

"Only if the prize is you."

They melted into each other's arms as one kiss led to another and another and yet another.

"Ron, we could stand here all night kissing like this, but if you want a treat...."

Ron scooped Sam into his arms and carried her to the bedroom. As they undressed, Ron looked at her lovingly and said, "Sam, are you available next Saturday night?"

"For you handsome, I'm always available. What did you have in mind?"

"If Hermione and Harry can make it, I'd like to go out to dinner. There is someone very special I'd like them to meet. Someone I love very much."

"That sounds nice. Do I know the girl?"

"Yes, quite intimately. Speaking of intimate." Ron started spreading kisses all over Sam's body. The trail of his lips travelled all over her skin till each path led to her most intimate of places.

* * * * *

Why is it impossible for men to accept that you just want to be their friend and no more? They don't want to go to bed with their male friends. Why do they always feel a relationship with a woman must head in that direction?

Hermione Granger leaned against the inside of the door to her quarters. *It was such a nice enjoyable evening. Why did he have to ruin it?*

Neville and Hermione had departed by carriage for Hogsmeade a little past five o'clock. The concert was scheduled to start at 7:30 and they had resolved to leave early so that rushing dinner wouldn't be required.

Hermione had thought the dinner went quite fine. The meal was first-rate and she was of the opinion that the conversation had flowed quite effortlessly. Neville hadn't even given Hermione an argument when she gave him her share of the dinner tab. They had arrived at the concert with more than sufficient time to spare. After checking out the list of coming events they decide to take their seats.

The concert started exactly on time and the performance of the first two numbers was fabulous. Then it happened? Without warning Neville placed his hand on Hermione's leg.

The audience had thus far been particularly quiet in respect to the performing artists and Hermione didn't want to verbalize her discomfort for fear of annoying the other patrons. If he had simply laid his hand on hers, she could have just pulled it away. However, she had been geared up for that prospect and had kept her hand out of his reach, which in hindsight she reflected was probably why he went for her leg. And as much as she wanted to mover her leg away, the way they were sitting made it impossible without causing attention to be focussed on them. That was something Hermione wanted to avoid at all costs.

Reluctantly, Hermione decided she would try her best to ignore the hand and enjoy the concert. Unfortunately after a brief time that hand seemed to have become bored with just laying there doing nothing and thus began to stroke her leg. This made her extremely uncomfortable and she shifted in her seat, hoping that Neville would get the message and stop.

Neville got the message. Regrettably it wasn't the same message Hermione was sending because instead of stopping, he moved his hand closer and closer to her crotch. It seemed that with ever selection he got bolder and bolder. She tried staring at him and even softly grunting to get his attention, but he kept his eyes glued to the performers as his hand finally came to rest on his objective area just as the group started their final lively number.

Hermione wanted to kill. If he or anyone else had tried something like this under different circumstances she would have slapped them so hard that her hand would have left a permanent impression. He had her trapped. Did she put up with the humiliation of him touching her there for one more number or did she stand up and slap him in the face while everyone focused his or her attention on her instead of the performance.

Her decision was made when she realized that just two rows in front of her were both a reporter and a photographer from the *Daily Prophet*.

The livelier the music became the faster and deeper Neville tried to grope.

Hermione could tell that her face was a deep red from both embarrassment and rage.

The last note of the final number was barely played when Hermione jumped to her feet roughly pushing Neville's arm aside and giving the group a standing ovation. Neville made some comment, but Hermione ignored it and refused to look his direction.

After the curtain had closed and the applause was subsiding, Hermione turned and excused herself as she pushed past people. She was out of the concert hall before some of the audience was even out of their seats. Neville struggled to close the distance between them.

As he reached the door he saw her already walking down the main street to the road that led to Hogwarts. He yelled to her, "Hermione! Hermione. Stop! Wait for me!"

Hermione abruptly stopped and turned toward the fast approaching wizard. When Neville finally reached her, he imploringly asked, "Hermione, what is the matter? Didn't you like the concert?"

She didn't say a word, but slapped him with all the strength she could assemble. Neville staggered backwards as if he had been socked instead of slapped. "The concert would have been brilliant if it hadn't been for the ass sitting next to me, who groped and fondled me. Neville you're twenty-three, not thirteen. What you did in there was extremely juvenile."

"I thought you were enjoying it. You seemed like you were turned on as much as I was by it."

"You bastard. I was not turned on. I was embarrassed and humiliated."

"But you didn't tell me to stop. You were even moaning."

"You are a perverted egotist. I kept grunting and shifting in the seat because I wanted you to stop. I wanted to slap your damn face and tell you to get your filthy hands off me, but the only choices you afforded me were either ruining the concert and humiliating myself in public or sitting there and allow you to humiliate me with your groping."

"You must have liked it. You were getting all hot and moist."

"You dick. I was hot because I was being embarrassed and humiliated and I was sweating for the same reason. I'm not your damn blow up sex doll. What have I ever done or said to you that would make you think I would ever want you to touch me in such an intimate place?"

"I thought that once you let me touch and hold you that...."

"You thought that once you groped me I would be so turned on that I would jump in bed and beg for you to shag me. Neville you need help. That is the same mentality possessed by a rapist."

"Love comes first. Until two people have come to the mutual agreement that it's okay; you keep your hands to yourself. Neville, I'm sorry, but I don't see me ever feeling that way about you. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm walking home."

"Hermione! Can't we take a carriage and talk about this?" As Hermione started to walk away Neville reached out for her arm.

Hermione drew her wand. "Neville, I'm walking back to the school and I'm walking back alone. Unless you want to spend the balance of your life living with Trevor's relatives; I suggest you never put your hands on me again."

As Hermione leaned against the door she reminisced about her relationship with Harry. Harry would have never been so bold. He was always a gentleman. Hermione couldn't help but smile as she thought of Harry. *Sometimes he was too much of a gentleman.*

I wonder if I should go check on the Gryffindors. No, McGonagall always trusted us. I have to trust them. It's a Halloween party. It's not like they're running around naked in their tower. Go to bed, Hermione.

* * * * *

Jamie stood there as if time had frozen between two seconds as she tried to figure out what had just happened. The portrait had closed on her robes as she had lingered at the opening. When she leaped away from the spider she had practically jumped out of them. All of her body that remained covered was a shoulder and one arm. The robes' hem and sash remained firmly trapped between the portrait and the opening.

Had she not screamed, it might have been possible to retrieve the robes with a minimum number of people having seen her. As it was, she had drawn the attention of everyone in the room. The room being so crowded that she assumed all of Gryffindor was now staring at her.

Jamie had always felt at ease naked. Just recently she had told Caitlin that she would be comfortable being naked in the Great Hall even if the balance of the student body was there and fully clothed. However, this was only Gryffindor House and she was frightened.

It didn't make sense. She been at parties where most of the participants were clothed and she wasn't embarrassed. The only difference was that she wasn't the only person nude and the clothed people had been warned ahead of time.

Suddenly Jamie realized she wasn't embarrassed. She didn't care about anyone seeing her nude. That wasn't the problem. She was frightened of losing her friends. She was afraid that like Caitlin they would think she was weird. In Caitlin's case she was able to sit and explain naturism and Caitlin had accepted her. Six of the people in this room had accepted her life style. There was no way she could explain this to the other sixty-three, but she had to try.

Alex knew Jamie so well that they could finish each other's sentences. As soon as he heard her scream and realized what had happened he moved toward the wireless. He knew Jamie was about to make a most important statement and she didn't need to shout above loud music.

Jamie left the robe slip off her other arm as Alex turned off the music. The atmosphere in the room was quite strange compared to what one would normally have expected under the present circumstances. No one was giggling or laughing. No one was making catcalls or yelling obscene comments. There was quiet conversation. Most of it was about Jamie's body and how gorgeous it was. Some were, of course, wondering why she was naked under her robes. The first, second and third years all seemed to be staring in awe. The girls were dreaming and hoping. The boys were looking at a living breathing Playwizzard Centerfold.

Probably what shocked everyone the most was that Jamie didn't try to cover her body or run off crying to the dormitory? She just stood there, but as she started to speak the room became completely silent.

"Now that I have your attention." There was a mixture of giggles and out right laughs. "There is something I should have shared with you before and because I didn't I'm sure some of you are quite embarrassed by what you see right now. I'm sorry if my being nude causes any of you to feel weird or offended. I didn't intend for my robes to get caught in the portrait hole. Since they did and since you've seen all of me it is only fair that you also know all about me.

"The reason that I'm not crying and running to my room is because I'm not the least bit embarrassed to be standing in front of you like this; nude. Honestly this is the most comfortable I have ever been in the Common Room.

"I'm a naturist; some people call us nudists. My parents were nudists and I've lived as one my entire life. When I'm at home I never wear clothes; neither do my sister or parents. To me being naked is as natural as wearing clothes is to you.

"Many of you relate nudity to sex. I am not standing here naked to try and be sexy. I'm not trying to turn anyone on, although since most of you guys, with the exception of Alex, don't normally see girls naked, I imagine it could have that effect. I also apologize for that." Suddenly everyone in the room was looking at Alex.

"Up until today, I've had six secret keepers. My dorm mates are quite clever witches and early in our first year figured out that I was a naturist. They have been very understanding and supportive by allowing me to be nude in our dorm."

"Near the end of my first year Alex came to my rescue when I had my first menstrual flow. He saw me naked that day and dozens of times since." Jamie hesitated for a moment until the private discussions subsided. It seemed the girls were shocked that Jamie was talking so causally in mixed company about periods. Meanwhile the guys couldn't believe that Alex had not bragged about seeing Jamie nude at eleven and ever since.

Jamie smiled at Caitlin who was standing with Matt and Randy listening proudly to her "sister". "My adopted sister, Caitlin, has only known since the second day of this year, but has been especially supportive." Jamie felt it wasn't in her place to tell the others that Caitlin was a nudist.

As Jamie had been talking Alex got her robes from the portrait hole. "I love you all. I always will. Please, don't treat me now like I have a disease. I'm just like you. I just feel more comfortable without clothes. Again, I'm sorry for embarrassing you and ruining the party." Jamie walked through the silent room and then to her dorm. Not a word was uttered until she left the room and then it seemed like everyone had something to say.

Alex followed Jamie into her dorm. "No more secrets."

Jamie turned and hugged Alex, as she said, "No more secrets. Alex, am I peculiar? Do you realize how much simpler my life would be if I just forgot about being a nudist?"

Alex put his arms around Jamie and pulled her tightly to him. "But then you wouldn't be our Jamie." Alex began to caress Jamie's back with his right hand as he held her tightly with his left arm.

As Alex started to break the embrace Jamie said, "Alex, please hold me just a little longer." She felt so secure in his arms and the way he caressed her back reminded her so much of when Harry had held her.

Could it be possible that Alex is my... No, he's my best friend. He couldn't possible be the one that I'll give my gift.

They stood like that a few minutes before Jamie broke the embrace and indicated for Alex to come sit next to her on her bed. They talked for about almost an hour, mainly about Jamie facing the Gryffindors again.

Suddenly Amanda burst into the room. "Jamie, they want you downstairs."

"Who wants me?"

"The Gryffindors all of them and they want you like you are."

"You mean naked? But why? How?"

"Caitlin!" Amanda just smiled and nodded her head. "Jamie, she was wonderful. I wish you could have been there. I literally wanted to kiss her."

"Amanda, what did she do?"

"After you left the Common Room everybody started talking about what happened. A few people, myself included, tried to get an organized meeting started. I mainly wanted to get everyone to agree to keep it quiet so that Bancroft and his stooges didn't get wind of it and give you grief."

"I've had to handle worse," Jamie responded

"By that time there were about a dozen groups talking. It started to look like the only way to get everyone's attention was to do what you did."

"Your not telling me that Caitlin stripped in front of all those people."

"Those two friends of hers, Matt and Randy sort of shielded her until she had all her clothes off. The problems was she was so short that no one saw her except the people right next to her." Amanda trembled "I still can't believe what she did next."

"She had Matt lean over slightly in front of her. Then she leaned on his back and had Randy lift her by her butt up onto Matt's shoulders until she was able to wrap her legs around Matt's neck."

"It didn't take long until she was noticed. Once everyone was looking she said, 'It looks like the only way to get attention in this house is to take your clothes off.' She was so cool about it. Totally relaxed."

What exactly are we all debating about? What difference does it make whether Jamie is a nudist or not? Does it change the person inside? Why do people continually look for a reason to discriminate against someone? First it was religion, then race or color and now are we going to add being a nudist.

Jamie is a gorgeous girl. I hope I mature to be just half as pretty as she is, but Jamie's true beauty lies beneath her skin. Has Jamie ever said a nasty or mean word to anyone in this room? Jamie doesn't know how to be mean or hurt a person. The hat had an easy job deciding that she belonged in Gryffindor.

We are more than schoolmates we are a family know for its loyalty. Jamie is comfortable without clothes. I understand because I feel the same way. How does Jamie not wearing clothes hurt any of you? She has spent four years being miserable so that she wouldn't embarrass or make you feel uncomfortable. Lets let her be comfortable for a change. Either look the other way or stare if you want, but let her be nude.

This has to be something the whole house agrees on because it has to be kept quiet. You can't even tell your parents because most of them would see the act of her being nude as sexual and dirty. There is nothing dirty about being nude.

"Jamie the vote was unanimous you can be nude in Gryffindor Tower any time you want. And if you decide to do it, you'll have company. They told Caitlin she could do it too."

Jamie couldn't believe her ears. "I don't know what to say."

"I don't believe they want anymore speeches. They just want you at the party with them."

"Jamie, this time you get to wear your Godiva costume," joked Alex.

As they headed for the stairs, Amanda stopped Jamie. "Be sure to ask Caitlin about her little accident."

Jamie couldn't help, but smile as she enter the Common Room and saw Caitlin standing naked in the corner drinking a butter beer with her fully dressed honor guard on either side. *Someday she's going to have a tough choice to make.*

Jamie had barely entered the room when a line started to form. By the end of the evening Jamie felt like she had either shook hands or kissed everyone in Gryffindor. She knew for a fact that some of the first year boys had gotten in line more than once.

It was near 1:00 AM when Caitlin finally came up to Jamie to say good night. Jamie looked at Caitlin with pride in her eyes. "They tell me I owe you big time."

"Hey! That's what little sisters are for."

"Were you nervous being naked in front of everyone?"

"Actually not at all. I love being nude. I'm so glad they said I could be naked, too. The only thing that made me nervous was being on Matt's shoulders. That and getting up there, it felt weird having Randy's hands on my cheeks."

"You are one ahead of me there. I've been a nudist all my life and no boy has ever touched my bare butt. Which reminds me, Amanda said you had an accident."

Jamie never saw Caitlin's face turn so red. "It wasn't his fault; it was mine, but all the first years saw it happen and Randy got very upset."

Jamie's curiosity was peaked. "What happened?"

"I was sitting on Matt's shoulders and my not-so-private part was right against his neck the whole time I was talking. It felt weird having contact with his skin there, but he was really cool about it. Anyway, when I was done talking he said thanks and I said what for. He said for not peeing down my neck."

"I wasn't angry or anything because I knew he was joking, but I teasingly hit him over the head. And said, 'Fine, I'm off of here.' I should have waited for Randy's help, but I was pretending to be upset with Matt. I tried to swing around to the front and jump off. I must have looked as graceful as an ox. I lost my balance and fell, but Matt reached out and grabbed me. He saved me from possibly really hurting myself."

Jamie looked puzzled. "That doesn't sound so bad."

Caitlin squirmed. "His left arm kept me from falling backwards, but he stopped my fall by grabbing me with his right hand. Jamie, it was just a reaction he didn't mean to do it, but he caught me between my legs. He just held me long enough to be sure I was okay and then he left me down. But everybody saw it. He was scared as could be and apologized so much; I thought he was going to cry."

Jamie looked at Caitlin reassuringly and put her arm around her shoulder. "All rules have gray areas. Nothing in life is black or white. You could have fallen on the hard stone floor and hurt your back or even received a concussion. He was thinking about saving you. He wasn't being fresh or perverted. You're not angry with him or you?"

"No, just embarrassed that he touched me there. I thought Randy was going to hit him."

"Don't be embarrassed. Matt didn't do it on purpose." Jamie looked at Caitlin. "Your two friends seem to like you quite a bit; that could give you problems in the future."

Caitlin looked up at Jamie. "It already has. They both asked me to the Yule ball. What am I going to do?"

"First ask your mum if you're even allowed to go. Then if you are, I have a suggestion. It's one the boys might not like, but what I think is the appropriate solution at your age."

"What would you do Jamie?"

"I think you should tell them that you are only eleven years old. You want to go to the dance and have fun. That you think you are too young to have to make decisions about what boy to go with and that besides you don't want to hurt their feelings. You'll go, but only as friends and only with the two of them."

"Do you think they will go along with that?"

"If one of them doesn't then he made the choice for you. If neither of them does, than perhaps you'll miss this year's ball, but you are only eleven. I didn't get to go until last year and then as a fourth year. Both Amanda and I went with Alex."

Jamie and Caitlin stood talking for quite awhile about boys and about all that had occurred that evening. When they finally hugged each other good night they had agreed on what they must do next.

* * * * *

Saturday, November 1, 2003

They had just about finished their cool down exercises before Jamie worked up the nerve to ask her Professor. "Professor Granger, may Caitlin and I come up to your quarters after breakfast. We have something to discuss with you. It's quite important."

"Certainly Miss Zacherley, but if its that important perhaps we should discuss it now."

"It may take awhile and I don't want you to miss breakfast. Besides, it's rather private and I'd rather if no one from any of the other houses heard."

"Certainly. In that case, I'll see you two shortly after breakfast is finished."

As Hermione walked toward the castle all sorts of extreme thoughts went through her head. *I hate it when people leave you hanging like that. What could be so imperative that they want to talk about it on a Saturday morning?*

Hermione was still wondering as Caitlin and Jamie entered her quarters. The door had barely closed when Caitlin started removing her clothes. Jamie and Professor Granger just sort of looked back and forth at each other. Finally when Caitlin looked at her Mum she was greeted by a strange look. "Is something wrong Mum? I thought it was okay for me to be naked whenever I was here."

"It is honey, but we have company."

"Mum, Professor Potter was company and now he is okay with me being nude around him. Jamie isn't company. She's seen me nude. Actually I was hoping that at times when she came up here with me it would be okay for her to be naked."

Caitlin had completely caught Hermione off guard. Of course, she realized Jamie was a nudist, she had just never considered the possibility that Caitlin would have any of her friends up to the faculty quarters, especially not any naked friends. Hermione glanced at Jamie. She may only be fifteen, but she's no little girl like Caitlin. She's a full-grown woman.

Jamie saw the torment in Hermione's face. "Professor Granger its okay. I totally understand. The last thing I want to do is embarrass you or make you feel uncomfortable. I don't mind staying dressed. Really I don't"

Hermione smiled at Jamie in relief, but then was startled to see Caitlin starting to get dressed. "Honey you can stay nude. I know you feel more relaxed and comfortable like that." Suddenly Hermione realized what she had just said. It was fine for Caitlin to be naked, but not Jamie. Jamie shouldn't be comfortable and relaxed because it would make Hermione feel ill at ease. Hermione was disgusted with herself.

"Jamie. Take your clothes off." Hermione flushed. "I'm sorry Miss Zacherley. I didn't mean that as an order. Caitlin is my daughter now and I love her. You are both very special girls and I wouldn't want to change one thing about either of you. It's I who has to change. I'm getting accustomed to Caitlin's nudity and since you two have become such good friends its only fair you be allowed to be nude also when you are together."

"Are you sure Professor Granger?" Jamie inquired.

Hermione shook her head. "No. This is totally new to me, but I know how strongly you both feel about this. Please relax and be comfortable."

"Thank you," was all Jamie said as she first took off her shoes and socks. She was glad that the Professor had decided to let her be nude, but what really made her happy was the slip of tongue that the Professor had made. She had called her Jamie and not Miss Zacherley.

Hermione was dumb struck as Jamie undressed. *She is more at ease than I am when I undress for a shower in an empty room.*

Hermione knew Caitlin didn't wear a bra or knickers, but was surprised to find that Jamie also evidently abhorred under garments. Hermione was embarrassed when she realized that she was staring at the now naked girl. "I'm sorry Jamie I was staring. You're a beautiful girl. Can I get you both something to drink?"

Both girls responded yes as Hermione went to get three beverages.

As Hermione handed the drink to Jamie, the young girl said, "Thank you five times."

"Five times?" Hermione questioned.

"For the drink, for the complement, for allowing me to be nude, for being more than just a Professor and most of all for finally calling me Jamie instead of Miss Zacherley."

"I did call you Jamie, didn't I? Miss Zacherley sounds quite formal when you're talking to someone who is naked. Professor Granger is rather pompous under the circumstances, also. Why don't you call me Hermione when we are alone."

"I'd like that," Jamie was quick to respond.

"Alone?" Caitlin remarked. "What am I, a piece of furniture? Does her being able to call you Hermione mean you are going to get naked?"

"The only place I get naked is in the shower young lady. You best be careful what you say or else I just may turn you into a piece of furniture."

Caitlin got that mischievous look in her eyes. "How about a love seat for you and Professor Potter?"

Hermione turned red as she grabbed Caitlin and started tickling her. She didn't stop until the 11 year old pleaded for pity.

Jamie couldn't help but grin as she watched the new mother and daughter. *It took you eleven years, Caitlin, but you ended up with a terrific Mum. I just wonder how she'll handle what we're about to say.*

After settling down and chatting for a bit, Hermione asked, "Jamie, you said you had something important to discuss?"

"Actually I have two things," Jamie said. Caitlin had a questioning look on her face. "Let me start with what happened last night in the Gryffindor Common Room because the other doesn't involve Caitlin."

Hermione sat in horror as in turn the girls told about the events of the previous evening. "Both of you spend the balance of the evening naked while everyone else was clothed?"

Both girls shyly nodded their heads. From the tone in Hermione's voice it was evident she was not pleased.

"Are you both that naïve? Surely you must realize that the only reason the boys want you naked is so that they can stare at you. How long do you think it will be before they start touching and groping you?"

Caitlin blushed as she looked at Jamie. They hadn't included the accident in their summary of the night's events.

Hermione continued, "Being nude in your dormitory is one thing. Those are all girls."

"But you didn't get upset when Professor Potter saw me naked," Caitlin responded.

"Professor Potter is a grown man who I know and trust. He would never look at you and think of you in a sexual way."

"I won't always have a little girl's body. I hope to someday look like Jamie. If when I'm fifteen I look like her will you make me get dressed if he comes here to visit?"

"No because I have faith in Harry. He is not the type of person that would ever touch you."

Jamie interjected. "Alex has been around me when I was naked since we were both eleven. He has never tried to touch me improperly."

"I suppose he has never looked at you either."

"Certainly he has looked at me. He's human. I'm a girl. But he doesn't spend every hour we are together staring at my breasts or between my legs. Most of the time he looks at me just like he would if I had clothes on. People can think and say sexually dirty things about you whether you have clothes on or not. Whether you realize it or not Professor most of the male students find you quite attractive. I've heard plenty of dirty comments about getting you in bed, despite the fact you dress like a nun except when we run." Jamie suddenly realized how awful that sounded.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean that the way it sounded. I think you are beautiful. It's just that some guys can be trusted and some can't. It doesn't matter whether the girl is dressed or naked. I had robes on the day that guy tried to rape me, yet I've spent fifteen years being nude in front of hundreds of men and not one has ever as much as tried to touch my leg."

Hermione thought back to her experience the previous night. Her clothing hadn't been the least bit provocative.

Jamie looked Hermione in the eye. "I'm sure there have been Gryffindors who have gone bad, but I believe I'm a good judge of people. I probably talked to every Gryffindor last night and I trust them. I trust them to keep Caitlin and I a house secret and I trust that none of them will ever try anything."

Caitlin looked at her Mum. "I trust them, too. Besides we'll be there for each other."

Hermione stared at the girls. "There are school rules to be considered. What would the parents think if they knew girls were naked in front of their sons?"

Jamie answered, "I don't think anyone will tell them."

Caitlin jumped in. "Mum everyone in the House loves Jamie. They'd never do anything to hurt her."

"What if someone does find out?" Caitlin questioned her Mum. "Would we be expelled if it were found out?"

"Hardly, probably a few nights detention. Technically you wouldn't be hurting anyone by being nude, especially since they gave their consent."

"Does that mean you are okay with it Mum?" Caitlin asked excitedly.

"I didn't say that. I was discussing whether you would be expelled or not."

Hermione held her head. "Caitlin, being a mother is hard. I feel I'm wrong if I say yes and wrong if I say no. I love you. I think in this situation you aren't old enough or experienced enough with naturism or the world to make an educated decision."

"Despite the fact that both of you have been the subject of sexual attacks, you adhere to a naive picture of the world. I realize as naturists you see yourselves being naked as totally innocent. And in fact you are. The problem is that not everyone that sees you is as innocent in his or her thoughts. In a perfect world conceivably I could see myself allowing such a thing, but not in today's world. Not even here at Hogwarts.

"If the girls in both your dorms are not troubled by your nudity, then you may be nude there if you wish. Caitlin you can continue to be nude at any time in our quarters and if Jamie visits you here she may do the same. But under no circumstances do I want a repeat of last evening's performance."

"But what about the house members? They all said it was acceptable. What should we tell them?" Caitlin argued.

Hermione stared at her daughter. "Some of your peers may not be as comfortable with your nudity as you think. They may have felt pressured to go along with the majority. I would suggest the truth. Tell them you both came to me to discuss the situation. Say you were worried what would happen if it were found out. Put the blame on me. Inform them that I'm not punishing anyone for last evening, but that I've prohibited either of you to go naked in the common room."

Jamie looked at Hermione and then at Caitlin. "She's correct. It's not proper. Some of our housemates may have felt compelled to go along with the majority. Besides, next year there would be a new group of first years causing us to stop anyway. I hope in years to come the world will change and nudism will be an acceptable practice, but right now we are doubtless asking too much too soon."

Hermione glanced at Caitlin. "Do you hate me now?"

"Of course not mum. I'm saddened, but I understand. What's more I don't think I could ever hate you." Caitlin gave her mum a great hug.

"How about you?" Hermione glanced toward Jamie.

"I could never hate you either." Jamie started toward Hermione as if to hug her and then stopped. "Is it okay?"

"Jamie whether our relationship is right or wrong it's been a long time since we were just Professor and student. There's nothing wrong with friends hugging."

After they all sat down and had a sip of their drink, Hermione looked at Jamie and smiled. "You said you had two things to discuss. Will I need another butter beer before we move on?"

Jamie looked at Hermione as she shook her head yes. "You might want Caitlin to leave the room."

Both Hermione and Caitlin looked at Jamie and then at each other. Hermione remembered how honest Caitlin had been to her their first night as mother and daughter and how they had pledged to not have secrets. "Unless it will embarrass you to have her here, Caitlin and I have no secrets."

Jamie started at the beginning telling how her parents would have never lived to marry and conceive her had it not been for Voldemort's curse being deflected by baby Harry.

Although Caitlin had told her that someone had tried to rape Jamie at the Quidditch match, Hermione was shocked to find out that Harry had saved her. It was so like Harry not to brag about something like that.

Hermione became nervous as Jamie discussed her feelings for the boy who lived. Caitlin dropped her butter beer when Jamie revealed her plan to give herself to Harry.

Caitlin and Hermione just looked at each other when Jamie told how she had taken off the robes and handed it to Harry leaving herself standing there naked. Hermione had no idea what was going to happen next and regretted her decision to have Caitlin remain in the room.

Hermione herself wanted to leave the room and cry when she heard how Harry had held Jamie in his arms. Hermione hid her smile of relief as Jamie talked of Harry wrapping the robes around her and their discussion about no one owing someone for saving their life.

"There isn't that much difference in our ages and at a different time under different circumstances I think perhaps it would have worked out. He told me he couldn't make love to me because he was my teacher and I was his student, and even if that wasn't so, he still wouldn't. He loves someone else."

Caitlin had a look on her face like she was reading a sexy paperback. Hermione looked depressed. *He still loves Ginny. He's been thinking of her all these years.* "He told me he still loved his true love, they had given their virginity to each other."

Caitlin shouted with joy. "Mum, he still loves you. You were the first one to ever sleep with him."

Hermione had never heard such good news, nor had she ever been so shocked. "How did you know? Who told you that? I mean what makes you think that...?"

Caitlin looked at her mother and meekly said, "It's in Harry Potter a History."

Jamie added, "It goes quite into detail. There are even artist drawings."

"Oh My God!" There are drawings of Harry and I making love and you have both seen them? You have both read the book?" Hermione's face was bright red. "I can't believe this. How can there be drawing?"

Jamie looked guiltily at Hermione. "I'm sure that part is the author's imagination of what happened."

Caitlin agreed. "You would have had to be a fly on the wall watching to know all the details the writer has in the book."

Hermione went from being as red as a beet to as white as a ghost. "Do either of you remember the authors name?"

Jamie shook her head no as Caitlin said, "I believe it was Rita somebody or other."

Hermione face was twisted in anger. "Rita Skeeter? She is a Beetle Animagus."

Caitlin looked at Jamie in amazement. "Mum, you mean that you and Professor Potter actually did all those things to each other." It was Caitlin's turn to blush.

"I have to read the book!" Hermione nervously announced.

They all sat there for a few minutes. No one knew quite what to say next. Finally Jamie gathered the nerve to ask, "Are you angry with me Professor Granger?"

"I thought we agreed that you would call me Hermione? I'm angry with that woman, Rita Skeeter, not you, Jamie. You're a young girl who thought she had found her true love. I don't necessarily agree with what you did, but I understand your motives for doing it. I'm glad it was someone like Harry who wouldn't take advantage of you. If you girls will excuse me for a little while; I have to go to the library."

"Hermione," Jamie felt weird calling her professor by her first name. "Before you leave. Is everything set for Monday evening?"

Hermione smiled, "Yes, I'll meet you after dinner. Are you nervous?"

"Not really, but very anxious. I've been looking forward to this for so long."

Chapter Thirteen Confessions

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

For Harry Potter the last three days had been extremely exasperating. He wanted to speak with Hermione. Actually, he needed to talk to her. His sense of right and wrong demanded that he tell her about what happened with Jamie.

However, getting Hermione Granger alone was much easier said than done. It seemed she was always with a student or in a conference. Harry had even gone to her quarters last evening, but she wasn't there. Harry was beginning to sense she was avoiding him until today when he lastly got to talk to her for a moment after lunch.

That short meeting left him with even more apprehension than before when she informed him that she wanted to speak with him as well. Had she somehow found out about Jamie? Was she irritated with him? It was eight o'clock and he was stationed outside her door. Hermione had told him she would be back by then, but there was no response to his knock.

Harry decided to wait in the hall. Mainly because Hermione hadn't suggested this time that he let himself in, but also for fear that Caitlin might be present. It wasn't that he had a problem with her nudity or that he didn't like Caitlin. Actually the opposite was true, Harry had grown fond of the young girl. He simply felt it wasn't proper for a single male teacher to be alone with a young female student. Especially one that was naked. He had made that mistake with Jamie, but wasn't about to make it again.

Unexpectedly Hermione rounded the corner looking somewhat out of breath as if she had been running. "Harry, I'm glad I caught you before you left. I'm sorry for being late."

"No apology necessary. I'm just glad that I'm finally getting to talk with you."

Hermione removed the locking charm and they entered her living quarters. "I could use something to drink. I ran all the way from Charlie's cabin. May I get you something?"

"No thanks. I'm fine." As Hermione poured herself a large glass of spring water, Harry went to take a seat on the couch. As he moved the shawl that was lying there he spied the book that Hermione had been reading. "Hermione, have you finished this? I just heard about it on Friday, but when I went to the library on Saturday afternoon it was out."

Entering the room, Hermione couldn't help but blush when she noticed Harry looking at the copy of *Harry Potter - A History*, she's loaned out from Saturday morning. "I evidently just beat you to the library."

"How dreadful is it?"

"The book taken as a whole is very complementary. It tells your life story and discusses in detail your rapport with Ron and I. It actually makes us all out to be quite extraordinary people and heroes. It's just that.... Harry it's written by Rita Skeeter."

Hermione's face turned scarlet red. "Harry she must have been there every time we made love. She has every facet of everything we ever did to each other in that book."

"The whole lot?" Harry's face was suddenly as red as Hermione's.

"It even has realistic drawings of you and I ... Harry, Jamie and Caitlin have read this book. Who knows who else may have read it? The whole world knows how intimate we were with each other. I intend to talk to Madam Pince. The book does have literary merit in that it tells your life story, but I feel someone was very slack, by allowing it to be in the general section where young children could see those drawing and read about you and I making love"

Harry gave Hermione a gentle hug. "Herm, I unquestionably don't want the world reading about my sex life, but we never did anything of which I'm ashamed. I loved you." *I still love you. I'll always love you.*

"I'm not ashamed either Harry. We were in love, but it's embarrassing to know that Caitlin has read about the most personal things we have done."

"Don't underestimate that daughter of yours. I think she can differentiate between sex and love. She may be eleven physically, but her life experiences have matured her beyond her teens." Speaking of Caitlin reminded Harry of another girl. The purpose of meeting with Hermione was to tell her about what occurred between Jamie and him. He should get on with that. "Jamie and her are both special girls. They are very special like you. That's why you three are so great together."

"Hermione, Ietween Jamie and I."

Hermione melted every time she looked in Harry's innocent green eyes. She could be mean and make him tell the whole story, but she loved him too much to make him suffer through that.

"Harry, Jamie told me everything. I know nothing happened."

"She told you that she wanted to give herself to me. That she had dropped her robes in front of me and that I held her while she was practically naked?"

"Harry, she misread her deep gratitude as love. She understands now. I think you handled it beautifully. She still thinks highly of you and you didn't make her feel ashamed or embarrassed for her actions."

"Then you believe Jamie and I? You believe we didn't have sex?"

"I believe it took a great deal of strength on your part to resist her. Jamie is a beautiful girl. I trust you and I trust Jamie. I also know you, Harry Potter. Jamie is a student and you are her Professor. You would never cross the line and violate the sacred trust that exists between a student and their teacher. You both came to me and I believe you both. It was also confirmed by a third party that you didn't have sex."

Harry looked rather perplexed as he said, "A third party?"

Hermione laughed. "No, there wasn't anybody in the room Harry. Jamie is in the final phase of her Animagus training. Certainly you remember how you sleep next to the Golden Griffin to bond with it. Jamie slept with her chosen animal last night."

Harry was still bewildered. "How does that establish that we didn't have sex?"

"Jamie's selected animal is a unicorn."

Harry nodded. "Of course, if she had sex a unicorn would not let her anywhere near. Jamie is only starting her fifth year. Did you start training her already last year? How did you know she had the ability?"

"Jamie approached me in third year, but at first we didn't think she had the abilities necessary to become an A when playing the cello and how you were able to make your hair grow? She didn't think she had any of these abilities at first. A month later she came back to me exclaiming that she had been controlling hair growth and didn't realize it."

"How could she not be conscious of controlling her hair length?"

"Harry I'm talking about her pubic hair, not the hair on her head." Harry looked uncomfortable. "I'm sure you noticed on Friday that Jamie is smooth down there."

Harry hoped this wasn't a trick question that he would later lament answering, but shyly nodded yes.

"She has never had hair there. She never knew why until I talked to her about how you had made your hair grow. She tried making it grow and was successful. It seems that the rationale for her never having it was because she didn't fancy it and willed it not to develop."

As Harry looked at Hermione his eyes grew enormous. "Hermione, before McGonagall left you or I start training, we had to show our aptitude. Did you make Jamie show you her, her you know what? "

Hermione japed Harry in the arm. "Of course not. I trusted Jamie. Besides the first night of training I knew she had the capability. I never saw Jamie undressed until Saturday."

"You saw her nude?" The shock was evident in Harry's voice.

"Caitlin and she were both here on Saturday and Caitlin made me feel quite guilty letting her be naked, but requiring Jamie to remain dressed. I'm having a thorny time with this whole naturist thing, but eventually I told Jamie she could be naked. Extraordinarily by the time she left I had in fact gotten used to her being bare. I don't even give Caitlin a second glance anymore."

Hermione looked at Harry. "Harry, Jamie is stunning. She is exceptionally intelligent and the age difference is insignificant. If she weren't your student, would you have had sex with her?"

"Hermione, she is exceedingly beautiful in love with her and I believe she could have learned to love me, too. At that time on that night, she wasn't in love with me, but felt in my debt. I was her Professor, someone who shouldn't be using his position to take advantage of a student. But truthfully Hermione, the main reason was that it would have been unjust to her. She reminds me so much of someone I love. I couldn't make physical love to that engaging girl and have my mind make-believe I was with someone else."

Hermione took a deep breath and prayed. "Jamie told me that you still loved your first love,

the girl to whom you had given your virginity and who had given hers to you. Harry, I don't need a book. I was there. Do you still love me?"

Tears trickled down Harry's face. "I'm sorry Hermione. I wanted to keep it a secret. I know you're involved with someone else and I've lost my chance. I just wanted to be near you; be friends again. Yes, I still love you. I've never stopped loving you. I was a fool to ever leave you."

"You're not a fool, but you're misguided. Harry, there is no one else. There never has been and there never could be. Even Ron was just a rebound, that's why I could never bring myself to have sex with him. Harry, I still love you. I've never stopped loving you." Hermione threw her arms around Harry and held him closely.

Harry couldn't describe the emotion that rushed through his body as he hugged and kissed his true love.

They just stood there in each other's arms, both afraid that if they broke the embrace it would cause the dream to end. They kissed ravenously, desiring more. Finally Hermione broke her lips free long enough to verbalize.

"Harry, you are the only person I have ever made love to and the only person I ever wanted to make love with. I was prepared to die never feeling you inside of me again. It's been over six years. Are we going to stand here all night or do you intend to carry me into the next room and the sound of that." Harry lifted Hermione into his arms and carried her into the bedroom as he unrelentingly overwhelmed her with kisses.

"Professor Potter, disregard the foreplay the first time. I've been dreaming about that the last six years. Just make it hard and fast. You'll have plenty of time for foreplay the second, third, fourth and fifth times."

"Now that sounds like a challenge. My sort of challenge."

* * * * *

Caitlin rushed hastily through the halls to the drapes hiding the staircase leading to the staff quarters. She had fifteen minutes to get her DADA journal and get back to Gryffindor tower before curfew. She ran up the stairs, down the hall and after giving the unlocking charm into the living area. The room was dark therefore she figured her mother was either out or asleep. She quickly went to her bedroom, grabbed her journal and was prepared to depart when she heard her mother's voice.

The sound was coming from her mother's open bedroom door. It sounded like she was talking to someone. She silently walked to the door, which was standing open. Her mother was naked. She was dazzling. Caitlin knew she shouldn't watch, but the sight hypnotized her. Her mother was lying on top of someone. *She's shagging.*

The foot end of the bed faced the door. Suddenly Hermione looked like she was getting up and Caitlin was startled, but Hermione only got on her hands and knees. "Mr. Potter, have I ever told you how much I love you? I love every single part of you. I love your head, I love

your nose, and I loved your ears." As she named each part she kissed it.

Caitlin watched and listened as Hermione proceeded down Harry's chest and past his waist. "And I especially love you." Caitlin waited, but Hermione didn't continue any further. She was concentrating on that area. Suddenly Caitlin realized what her mother was doing. She wut rather ill at ease. *This is wrong. This is private between two people who love each other. I shouldn't be watching.*

Caitlin turned and silently exited the room. As Caitlin rushed back to Gryffindor tower, her body ran the gambit of emotions. She was irritated with herself for having watched, but pleased she had seen how beautiful her mother was. She was frustrated she hadn't gotten to see Professor Potter, but pleased that her mother and him were together.

Actually Caitlin was more than pleased; she was ecstatic that the Professor and her mother were together. *Wouldn't it wonderful if they got married. They'd make such a beautiful couple. I'd have a dad!*

But, what if Professor Potter doesn't want me? What if he won't marry Mum because of me? My real dad left my birth mother because she was pregnant with me. I can't let Mum lose Professor Potter because of me. I won't come between them.

* * * * *

Thursday, November 6, 2003

"Professor Potter!" Harry heard the voice call out as he left his quarters after showering.

"Yes, Professor Snape? What can I do for you?"

"Harry, I'll be away on Hogwarts business this weekend. I'll see that Ron gets his potion up until Thursday; here is a supply for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. You and Hermione will be staying with him?"

"Yes. Charlie will be locking us in the same dungeon we used in sixth year when Ron was first bitten by Remus." Strangely, Harry was looking forward to the weekend. Certainly it was not because Ron would be suffering the transformation to a werewolf, but rather because it would be the first time the trio would be alone together since seventh year.

"Are you and Hermione up for this? It has been a while since either of you used your Animagus skills; especially for so long a period of time." The Headmaster was concerned for the sagree that he had considered canceling his weekend plans.

"We've both practiced during the past month. Ron is usually quite out of it when he's had the potion the entire week. Hermione and I will look out for one another."

"Good. Don't want to lose two of my best professors."

* * * * *

"Amanda, will you wait for me before you go down to the common room?"

"Sure Jamie. Is there a special reason? Why did you want me to wait?"

"I want you to check out the first years when I enter the common room. They seemed grand about me being nude Friday night, but since Saturday they've acted strange. I want you to tell me if it's just my imagination or if something weird is going on."

Jamie had been quite close to them and now they seemed to be avoiding her. Amanda watched the first years as Jamie and she entered the room. Jamie's attention, however, was drawn to Caitlin who sat in a corner chair with her chin propped on her drawn up knees. Something was definitely the matter and Jamie had to talk to her before the evening was over.

"You're right, Jamie," Amanda said. "They are definitely acting weird. They waited until you sat down and then they all changed seats so that the girls were facing you, but so that all the boys had their back to you. The boys sort of acted afraid to look at you."

"Thanks Amanda. That's the same way it seemed to me. I have to find out what is wrong. Why don't you join Alex? I have to talk to them."

Jamie got up and walked over to the table that the first years except for Caitlin were all congregated around. She slid a chair up to an empty spot and sat down. "Okay, who is going to be honest and tell me what the problem is?"

Jennifer looked at Jamie with a fake questioning stare. "What do you mean Jamie? There is no problem. We're just doing our homework."

"Matt, do you guys have a problem with me?"

Matt refused to look at Jamie, but responded. "We all love you and Caitlin. We want you to be comfortable and relaxed. We're sorry if we stared when you were naked."

Jamie quickly put two and two together. "Do you guys think that Caitlin and I are wearing clothes because you stared at us?"

"We're not sure," Matt answered, "but Jennifer said it could be the reason. We thought if we, especially the boys, didn't look at you, maybe you'd go back to being nude."

"It has nothing to do with you guys. The school just has certain rules. We checked with Professor Granger. She said we could practice nudism in our dorms if our roommates didn't mind, but that doing it in the Common Room was forbidden, even if you guys agreed."

"Were you guys avoiding Caitlin for the same reason?"

Matt looked shyly at Jamie. "No, Caitlin's been avoiding us since Tuesday night. She seems to be preoccupied."

"I have to go talk to Caitlin. Will you promise not to play musical chairs anymore?"

They all promised as Jamie headed off toward the steps to the first year girl's dorm.

Jamie slowly opened the door and spied Caitlin sitting on her bed brushing Pureheart. "May I come in and say hello to Pureheart?"

Caitlin sadly said, "Yes."

Pureheart gave Jamie an enthusiastic welcome as she came and sat next to Caitlin.

"What's wrong, Sis?" Jamie asked sympathetically.

"Nothing."

"Caitlin, I know you better than that. We may not be sisters by birth, but our hearts are linked. I can tell when you're hurting. Open up and share."

As Caitlin started crying Jamie put her arm around her and drew her closer until the young girl's head was actually lying on her chest. Jamie didn't worry about how this might look to someone that walked in the room. Caitlin was hurting and pained? What's the matter?

"Tuesday night I realized I needed my DADA journal and it was in my Mum's quarters. I ran up to get it and walked in on my mum and Professor Potter. They were making love."

"Oh My God! What did they say?"

"They never saw me. I got the journal and then I heard talking. The door to my mother's bedroom was open and I walked toward it. I couldn't see him, but I saw my Mum lying on top of him. She was naked. Jamie she is beautiful. I can't get over how much you physically look like each other.

"She got up on her hands and knees and started kissing him. First his forehead, then his nose and ears. Then she kissed his lips. She kept naming his parts and saying she loved them until she got down there and then she, well you know what she did."

"Did you see it? Did you actually watch?"

"No, Mum's body blocked my view, but I knew what she was doing. I left because it seemed so wrong to watch. Jamie, I heard of men and women doing that in porno movies and always thought it was such a dirty thing. It's not when two people are in love. I wish I could have stayed and watched everything they did."

"That would have been wrong. Making love is a very private and intimate event. I've seen a couple of those movies you refer to and I agree. Those movies make sex seem very dirty. But the way my parents described it made it sound so wonderful and beautiful."

"Your parents told you what they do in bed."

"My parents are very open and loving. They want me to be prepared for life. I had asked them if I could watch, but they said, no. They said someone watching turns a beautiful act into something dirty."

"Do you mean that by watching I made what they did dirty?"

"No. They didn't know and it was just a quick peek. Doing something that should be a private thing between lovers for an audience makes it dirty."

Jamie hesitated as if confused you wanted him and your mum to get together. It looks like you're getting your wish. Why are you upset?"

"They won't want me. My real father didn't want a baby. Why would Professor Potter want a skinny eleven year old? If he doesn't marry Mum it will be my fault. Somehow I have to disappear so they can be happy together."

"Have you talked to your mum about this?"

"No."

"Caitlin, I think you are not giving your mum and Professor Potter enough credit. He would never not marry her because of you."

"You and Hermione have such a fantastic and close rapport. Look how you talked to her about being a nudist and how she accepted it. She never once lost her cool when we told her about Halloween. Give her more credit. Talk to her."

"I'll think about it," Caitlin tentatively replied.

"No you won't. We are going to see your mum right now. Get your robes. You're not going to fret about this another night."

Caitlin gave Jamie a sheepish smile. "Who died and made you boss?"

"The bossiness comes with being a prefect. Now are we going to go see your Mum or do you want to lose Gryffindor 20 points."

"We're going boss lady," Caitlin reluctantly agreed.

Fifteen minutes later Hermione was surprised by a knock on her door. "What are you girls doing up here at this time on a school night?"

"I'm sorry to bother you Professor, but it's Gryffindor House business," Jamie said. "It seems one of the first years was out of bounds on Tuesday evening and saw something they shouldn't have? She's very upset about it."

"Which student? Where were they and what did they see?"

"It was Caitlin. She was here and I think it would be best if I left and let her tell you what she saw and what has been troubling her since."

Hermione's face glowed brighter than Rudolph's nose as Jamie turned and left.

Then Hermione spoke. "Caitlin, I think you and I got off to a remarkable start with our relationship because you were so straightforward with me. First you didn't try to hide your desires to be a nudist. Then you and Jamie came to me and divulged what happened on

Halloween. Both those acts took a lot of courage on your part. Perhaps it's time that I showed the same courage and was honest and open with you. Suppose you tell me exactly what happened and what you saw on Tuesday and then we can talk about it."

Caitlin hastily told Hermione how she had run up to the quarters for her journal. "At first I thought you were asleep and I was just going to depart, but then I heard your voice and I looked in your bedroom. You were lying on Professor Potter and then you got on your hands and knees and started kissing him all over until you got to his penis and then, well you know what you did. I left because I knew watching was wrong and what you were doing was private."

Hermione felt extremely guilty and mortified. "It's my fault that you saw that. I should have closed the bedroom door and put on a locking charm. I'm sorry you were discomfited."

"Mum, I hope this doesn't make you think poorly of me, but I wasn't embarrassed. I'm glad I saw you together like that. I got to see that something I thought was dirty really isn't when you love someone. Does he do things like that to you down there, too?"

Hermione nodded her head as she continued to blush deeply. "Harry is a very special lover. He never thinks of his own pleasure, just of mine. I hope when your time comes that you have some one as special as him."

"Do you want to marry him?"

"If he ever asks me, I'll say yes, but I'm not sure if Harry is ready for marriage and a family."

"Especially not an already made family with an eleven-year-old daughter. He loves you, but he doesn't want to be stuck with me. I've ruined your chances of happiness. Haven't I?" Caitlin burst into tears as Hermione threw her arms around the young girl.

"Caitlin, the day I adopted you was one of the happiest days in my life. Not once have I regretted it. You underestimate Harry Potter. He is a very unique man. He knows what it's like to spend your life feeling as if no one loves you or cares if you live or die. I've seen how he looks at you. I think you've already wormed your way into his heart. Harry wouldn't consider you as a reason not to marry me; he'd consider you a bonus. What do you think of him?"

Caitlin looked up at her mum as a smile came to her face. "I think I'd be the luckiest girl in the world to not only have you as a mother, but him as my dad." Caitlin hesitated as if not sure she should continue and then said, "Mum, what does it feel like to make love; to have that part of a boy actually inside of you. Does it hurt awfully bad?"

"It doesn't hurt at all. Actually it's the most wonderful feeling in the world, but only if it's the right person and at the right time in your life. That means never before fifteen young lady. That's the wizard age of consent." Hermione hoped Caitlin would be older.

"I probably couldn't have picked a poorer time to ask you this, but am I allowed to go to the Yule Ball?"

"Have you been asked already?" Hermione was surprised. She hadn't expected many first years to attend. Now here was Caitlin wanting to attend.

"Yes, by two real nice boys in my class, but I haven't given them an answer yet."

Hermione thought a moment. "Suppose you tell me how you are going to handle the fact that two boys have asked you to the same dance and based on the maturity of your decision, I'll decide whether you can attend."

"Well, I'm only eleven. I really don't want a boyfriend, but I like them both as friends and don't want to hurt either's feelings. I was going to suggest to them that the three of us like you and I both need to go shopping. Are you available Saturday morning?"

Caitlin hugged her mum. "You bet I am. Can Jamie go with us?"

"Sure if she's not busy. Best if we go this weekend since there is a Quidditch match next week."

"Mum, buy something short and sexy that will knock Professor Potter off his feet."

"I'm afraid your mum is more the long and plain type. Do you have all your homework done?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you break a rule and spend the night here? I'm sure your head of house will let it slide."

"That would be great. You can tell me all about Tuesday night. How many times did you make love?"

Hermione rolled her eyes, as she turned red. She couldn't believe she was discussing her sex life with eleven-year-old Caitlin. Perhaps the open and honest conversation had gone too far. Or maybe they were more than mother and daughter. Perchance they were also good friends. "Five, we never went to sleep. I was dead tired all day Wednesday."

This was Caitlin's opportunity to ask her mum to do something special, if she dared. "Mum would you try something, just once, for me? Can we spend the rest of the night together nude? I want you to experience how wonderful it feels."

Hermione was mortified "Caitlin, that's something I can't do. I'd be too embarrassed." Hermione tried to change the subject. "I'm going to go get ready for bed. Why don't you do the same and then I'll make us some hot chocolate?"

Caitlin headed to her bedroom to take off her clothes, but before entering the room turned and said, "You didn't seem embarrassed the other night and you shouldn't be, you're beautiful."

Hermione momentarily watched Caitlin through the open door as she started to remove her robes. Hermione wished she could share Caitlin's passion with naturism, but it went totally against her rearing. *I envy her. She's life feeling mediocre.*

As the door closed to her bedroom, Hermione went over and stared at her reflection. She felt badly that she had turned down Caitlin's request.

Suddenly the mirror spoke. "It's quite out of character for you to stare. You rarely give yourself a glance unlike some of those stuck up princesses I've served."

Hermione was a first started. She realized the mirror spoke, but they seldom talked. "You never told me you served princesses before?" Hermione got her pajamas out of the drawer and started to undress as she talked to the mirror.

"There are a lot of things I've never told you. We've hardly talked in the five years you've been in the castle. I've never served someone who looked so little at herself. It certainly can't be because you're unhappy with your reflection?"

By this time Hermione was naked. "I'm hardly anything special. Just a nerdy little girl that's grown into a nerdy woman."

"Perhaps it's time you take a good long look at that woman. Do you think that magazine wanted you for your brains?"

"They just did that for publicity."

"You are incredible. I've had owners who saw attractiveness where there wasn't any, but I've never had one who so vocally denied beauty that is so obvious to the rest of the world. Do you think that hunk the other night was turned on by your brains?"

Hermione looked at her reflection. "I think he loves all of me and accepts my face and body for what they are."

"And what they are Professor Granger is drop dead gorgeous. By the way, that young lady that you adopted is quite like you."

"What do you mean by that?" Hermione had become extremely defensive when it came to Caitlin.

"She has no vision of the future. She is unable to picture how lovely she will become."

"How do you know how she will look in the future?"

"Because I can rattle girl and a beautiful bride. Do you remember this young girl?"

Hermione couldn't believe her eyes. Suddenly, instead of looking at her reflection she was looking at an eleven-year-old buck toothed bushy-haired Hermione.

"I'm impressed, but couldn't you have shown me a reflection of my past with some clothes on."

The mirror responded, "Your present condition determines whether the past or future image is clothed or not. Would you care to venture into your future?"

"How far?"

"Sadly, I am not calendar programmed. The images can be from the past or future, but I have

no control over how far in the past or future."

"I'd rather not see a one hundred fifty year old naked me, but let's try."

Suddenly Hermione was looking at a reflection of herself that hadn't aged, but she was pregnant, quite pregnant and nude. She wasn't alone in the reflection. Caitlin was there leaning with her ear against Hermione's stomach. Jamie was there. It looked like she was getting ready to take a picture. Suddenly another naked girl about Caitlin's age entered the reflection and started rubbing Hermione's belly.

"Who is that other young girl? Why are we all naked?" Hermione couldn't believe that her future could possibly involve her being naked in a room with three young girls. Even worse it looked like she was about to allow Jamie to take a picture of her both naked and pregnant.

"You ask questions a simple mirror cannot answer. I only reflect the actual past and a possible future."

"Possible future? Why do you say possible?"

"Each day humans are faced with decisions. Sometimes the simplest most insignificant decision can have a tremendous effect on the future. The reflection you are currently viewing shows you quite happy, but you are also pregnant and in this room with three other nude girls. The woman who has looked into me for the last five years will be."

Suddenly there was a knock on the door. "Mum is everything all right. You've been in there talking to yourself for fifteen minutes."

"Professor Granger, I know I'm just a mirror, but could I make a suggestion?"

"I'm listening, but please make it fast. My daughter thinks I've gone crazy."

"The reflection you are looking at seems to me to be quite pleasant. The young ladies all look extremely happy and you certainly look pleased being pregnant."

"You're correct. That looks like it's a happy picture." Hermione had to admit that the girls were smiling and laughing. What shocked her was that she was, too. She looked as comfortable being naked as Jamie and Caitlin. She was bothered most by not knowing the identity of the third girl. Who was she and why was she with them and nude?

"Perhaps now is a time for one of those life changing decisions. May I suggest you remain as you are and let the young girl into view this image? Perhaps I can also show her one that will make her happier with her body."

"Are you suggesting I let Caitlin see me naked?"

"I'm suggesting that in order for that reflection to have a chance of becoming a reality you must do it sometime. You putting it off may have no effect on the future or it might make that reflected future impossible. Do you want to gamble?" The mirror had her there. She couldn't stop looking at the smiling faces in the reflection. Could she risk losing the chance of this being her actual future? Would it be that awful for Caitlin to see her nude?

"Mum, you're scaring me. If you don't let me in, I'm going for Professor Potter."

"They tell me I'm the smartest witch alive and yet here I am about to take the advice of a mirror."

"Perhaps that's why you're the smartest witch alive?"

"MUM, I'm going, now!" Caitlin turned and head for the door, not even thinking that she was n at this mirror."

Caitlin rushed into the room. "Mum are you all right you.... You're nak.... You're beautiful. I love you so much. I'm glad you changed your mind. Thank you" Caitlin threw her arms around Hermione and hugged her.

"I love you too honey" Hermione was amazed at how much her being naked meant to Caitlin. The warmth of the good feeling helped diminish her embarrassment. Look in the mirror."

Caitlin slowly turned and her jaw dropped in astonishment. "Mum, it's you, but you're pregnant. That's me. Mum look at my chest, I have little puffy breasts."

Hermione smiled. "Yes, you do. Do you know the other girl in the reflection?"

"No, but she looks to be about my age. There's Jamie. We're all nude. Does that mean you're going to become a naturist." Caitlin wondered who the third girl was, but soon forgot her as she reveled in the fact that her Mum seemed to be joining her in a pursuit she so loved.

"Hardly, the mirror said this is not necessarily the future, but a possible future based on decisions we make. We look so happy and the mirror suggested that perhaps as a safety precaution I should let you see me like this."

Caitlin gave Hermione the saddest look. She couldn't explain why, but she very much wanted her mum to be a naturist like her and Jamie. "Does that mean you are going to get dressed now?"

Hermione could see the disappointment in Caitlin's eyes and decided it wouldn't kill her to remain like this till they went to bed. "It's almost time for bed. I'll stay this way the rest of the night, but I'm not cut out to be a naturist. I feel quite awkward being naked in front of you."

The mirror decided it had been quiet long enough. "You shouldn't feel awkward. You are quite stunning. Are you finished with this reflection? If so both of you please look into me."

The reflection slowly dissolved and was replaced by the actual image of a beautiful young blue-eyed girl with blonde hair almost touching her waist. Hermione was brushing the girl's hair.

"Mum, is that me? You haven't changed; you're as gorgeous as ever, but look at me. I'm pretty and I have a great figure."

"Caitlin, look at my face in the reflection. The night we adopted each other you said you wanted to make me proud. From the look on my face I believe you will do just that."

"Mum look at the bed post, is that a wedding robe. Do you think I'm getting married?"

"I think so. Look at the engagement ring on your finger." Tears started to fall from Hermione's eyes.

"Mum, that's years away. Besides I'll always be your little girl." Caitlin smirked. "Did you notice we were naked again?"

Hermione couldn't believe she was once again naked. She wondered if in time she would possibly adopt nudism. She wiped the ridiculous thought from her mind "Yes, I noticed something else, too." Hermione was stunned to see that her pubic area was total void of hair.

"So did I" Caitlin wished she could see the reflection of her mum pregnant again. She had been so engrossed in the mystery girl and her own little breasts that she hadn't looked that closely at her pregnant mum. She wondered when and what caused the tremendous change in her mum. Caitlin was definitely sure of one thing, she liked this future.

Hermione looked into the mirror. "Thank you."

"You are quite welcome. It is seldom one of my masters has thanked me. Sadly I must remind you that what you have just seen is not necessarily the future you will live. Many, many decisions affect your future. I prefer to reflect pleasantly. The boys' camp leader mistakenly turned left instead of right. Make the most of every day you both have."

Caitlin looked at Hermione with horror in her eyes. "Did the mirror mean that if the camp leader hadn't made a wrong turn, I would be deI think the mirror wanted to impress upon us how important the decisions we make during our life are, not only to ourselves, but also to others. Are you ready for some hot chocolate?"

Hermione and Caitlin talked about their experience with the mirror for about an hour, before going off to bed. Hermione thought about putting her pajamas on, but decided against it.

Midway through the night Hermione woke up to find a trembling Caitlin nuzzled up tight against her. Softly she asked, "What's wrong sweetheart?"

"I dreamt about this summer and Pureheart wasn't there to protect me. May I please sleep with you?"

"Of course." Hermione wrapped her arm around the young girl and drew her close. It was only when Caitlin's cheek touched Hermione's breast that she remembered that they were both naked. The young girl seemed to find instant comfort as she draped her leg over Hermione's and drifted into a quiet sleep.

For a time Hermione laid there unable to go back to sleep. Somehow them lying together like this seemed so wrong and yet so right. No one would think twice of a mother comforting her child if they were both dressed. She certainly had no intentions of touching Caitlin inappropriately. All she wanted to do was hold her and make the bad dreams go away. *Just because were naked doesn't mean we're twisted. This has nothing to do with sex in any way. Being naked has nothing to do with sex.*

Suddenly Hermione understood what Jamie and Caitlin had been telling her these last few weeks.

* * * * *

Hermione, as usual, woke up a few minutes before her alarm went off. She carefully slid away from Caitlin before waking her.

"Ready to do some running sweetheart?"

Caitlin stretched and as she opened her eyes seemed to be trying to figure out where she was. "I'm sorry I woke you last night. I didn't think I nut I guess the mirror made me think of that day. I didn't hog the bed. Did I?"

"No. You kicked me a few times, but other than that you stayed on your side"

"I'm glad we bought me extra clothes so I don't have to run all the way up to Gryffindor tower. I'll be ready as soon as I pee and brush my teeth."

Hermione watched as Caitlin skipped toward her room. *If only I could have been there for you those first eleven years.* Suddenly Hermione realized how impossible that would have been. She was only a second year when Caitlin was born.

Hermione got out of bed and headed for the bathroom. She actually forgot she was naked until she went to pull her knickers down. *I'll never admit this to the girls, but being naked does feel kind of nice.*

She didn't fully realize how nice until she put her bicycle shorts on for running and again later when she dressed for breakfast.

* * * * *

Friday, November 7, 2003, just before moon rise

. "Hermione, you are a spoiled witch. Have you ever seen a wolf sleep on a rug?" Harry inquired.

"I don't care if I will be in my Animagus form, it's still a dungeon and these stone floors can get awfully cold."

Harry looked at Ron. "You've been taking the potion all week?"

"Yes. It's good of Severus to still go to the trouble to brew it for me. It makes a great difference in how I feel during the days of the moon. Without the potion I'd be trying to shag every man, woman or beast within my scent. I almost felt normal yesterday. Sam said I didn't seem any different."

Harry and Hermione looked at each other questioningly before both saying, "Sam?"

"I've wanted to tell you about Sam. I believe I've finally met the person I want to be with for the rest of my life. I've never been this happy. If possible I'd like for uHermione both looked like they were in a stupor. Finally, Harry spoke, "I'm free, how about you, Herm?"

Hermione just nodded her head in agreement. "I've noticed how happy you have been the last couple of weeks. If Sam is responsible, I'm happy you found each other."

Hermione's head was still nodding as if it had come loose. "Yes, Ron. The important thing is that you are happy. If being with Sam makes you happy, that's all that matters." Hermione looked at Harry who just shrugged his shoulders. Neither could believe what Ron was saying. Could Ron actually be gay?

"Sorry, I'm late!" Charlie Weasley yelled as he ran flat-out down the torch-lit corridor. When he reached the group he was panting. He briefly bent over trying to catch his breath.

Ron looked at his brother. "Did you bring the revolver? And the bullets in case of an emergency?"

Harry was taken aback. "Ron, do you really think that is necessary? The dungeon is quite secure. I'm sure that the locks and bar will hold. Besides, Charlie will also place some very effective locking charms."

"Harry. You and Hermione will be in there with me. Although you are both accomplished Animagi there is always the possibility something could go wrong. If it should I want you to have the gun. I couldn't live with myself if I hurt either of you."

Hermione gave Harry a look that indicated that now was not the time to argue with Ron. Harry took the gun as Hermione, looked at Ron. His hair seemed to be growing longer and his fingernails were beginning to look quite claw like. "I think it might be best if we get inside," Hermione suggested.

The three friends stepped through the doorway and Harry and Ron pushed the heavy door closed. Inside they could hear the sound of the locks being secured by Charlie and then the enormous bar being put through the metal supports. Charlie had to use a levitation charm to lift the bar.

"It will be sbr> Hermione and Harry positioned themselves near the door and watched, as Ron seemed to become quite nervous. Soon he began twitching and pacing the floor. The closer moonrise grew the longer Ron's hair became and he was now sporting a beard.

"I think we should change now, Harry."

Harry was soon staring at a female wolf where Hermione had stood. Harry changed to his Golden Griffin form. Hermione settled next to Harry as they watched their friend suddenly cry out in agony and then begin to shake uncontrollably as his shoulders hunched and his hands curled into paws. Suddenly Ron was a wolf, but unlike Hermione his eyes were a glowing red. The wolf tongue hung out and saliva dripped from his mouth.

Harry remembered the first night he had spent with Ron and Remus at the end of sixth year.

Sirius had been with him. That night Remus and Ron had not had the benefit of receiving the potion the entire week and both Harry and Sirius were attacked. Tonight was quite different, as Ron just seemed to quietly pace the room. He glanced at Harry a few times and sniffed Hermione, but then went over in a corner and lay down. Hermione came over and nudged Harry toward her rug where they both snuggled next to each other.

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Harry awoke to see Ron sitting across the cell staring in the direction of him and Hermione who was still sleeping in her wolf form.

Ron had a smile on his face. "You two have finally gotten back together, haven't you?"

Harry had a guilty look on his face. "Yeah. She thought I liked someone else and I thought she was involved. With the help of a unique young lady, we straightened things out,"

"Ron, I love her. I want to make it a life commitment if she'll have me."

"What about Caitlin? How do you feel about her?"

"She's grand. I'm looking forward to being her dad. I just hope they'll both fall from the eye of the wolf lying beside Harry. Wolves don't usually cry or smile, but this one did.

Harry nudged Hermione awake as he heard the bar being drawn back from the door.

Chapter Fourteen Changes

Harry and Hermione watched as Ron and Charlie disappeared around the corner; then they turned and started the long trek toward their quarters. Harry looked at Hermione, "Are you running this morning?"

"No, it's already near seven. I told Jamie and Draco to take charge this morning. I thought we might be a little late. Besides I want to take a shower and do a few other things this morning before going into Hogsmeade."

"You're going to Hogsmeade?" Harry asked with surprise.

"Yes, I promised Caitlin and Jamie that we would go look at dress robes for the Yule Ball. I have to look good for my fellow chaperone."

"You'd look great to me if you came dressed in a bath towel." Harry's eyes lighted up at the thought. "Actually that sounds appealing. It would show off those beautiful legs that you always hide except when we run."

"Harry, you're dreadful." Hermione gave him a loving nudge.

"Only when I'm on the subject of you, Mione."

Hermione stopped and looked into Harry's face. "I love when you call me that." She gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"Hermione, what would the staff and students say if we held hands walking through the castle?"

"I'm sure some of them might get the idea that we liked each other. Others might think we were dating. Some would probably think we were shagging each other."

"Are we doing all those things?"

"Well, I prefer the term 'making love' over shagging, but yes, we are."

"May I hold your hand?"

"Oh! The tongues will wag," Hermione said, mock chastising Harry. She paused, grinning at him, "Yes, Mr. Potter, you may." Harry was suddenly serious. "Do you think Ron and Sam are open about their relationship?"

"Harry, I would have never believed Ron was gay, but now that I think about it; it all makes sense."

"It does?" Harry certainly didn't understand how.

"It explains why he never pushed me for sex when we were together and why despite shagging all those girls, he never found one he cared for. Girls couldn't give him what he

needed."

"In school Ron always seemed quite interested in girls," argued Harry.

"Yes, but that was before he was bitten. Remember, Remus never realized he was bisexual until after he departed Hogwarts."

"I wonder if Sam was ever tested for Animagus ability?"

"Harry, what a wonderful idea! We'll have to bring it up at dinner," Hermione excitedly suggested. "If he has the ability, I'd be happy to tutor him. You and I would, of course, still stay with Ron. But it would be wonderful if his friend could, too."

They had already arrived at Hermione's quarters. As Hermione undid the locking charms Harry just stood there gazing, thinking about her soon to be naked body in the shower. "I'd be happy to scrub your back."

"Hmm! That sounds inviting, but just my back?"

"Well, I'd probably get around to the balance presently."

"Come on then," she said as they stepped inside. "But make sure you put a locking charm on the bathroom. I don't want Caitlin seeing us in the shower together, if she gets here early."

"What time are you leaving for Hogsmeade?"

"I told the girls to be here at 10:00 o'clock."

"That gives us three hours. Maybe we could do more than take a shower?"

Hermione looked at Harry and winked. "Exactly what did you have in mind Mr. Potter?"

Harry took Hermione in his arms and began kissing her lips and cheeks and neck. Then he started unbuttoning her blouse. "I'll give you a hint. It involves your bed and both of us being naked."

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It was a rather nippy November morning, but Hermione had suggested nonetheless to the girls that they walk to Hogsmeade rather than take a carriage. Caitlin was quite wound up because she had never been to Hogsmeade before and wouldn't be allowed to go on a student day until she was a third year.

Jamie pointed out all the places of significance and Hermione promised that they would visit both Honeydukes and the Three Broomsticks before returning to the castle. "I want us to look at the evening dress robes at Gladrags Wizardwear and Madam Malkin's before we do any other shopping."

The three were quite frustrated with the choice offered at Gladrags Wizardwear. They must

have spent a whole ten minutes in the store with no one even having a yearning to try anything on. As they left the store, Hermione shook her head in disgust. "I certainly hope Madam Malkin's has a better selection or we'll all be going naked."

Jamie and Caitlin looked at each other laughingly. Then Hermione said, "I was joking. I can't believe you two."

Hermione had never been in Madam Malkin's before and she was stunned by the size of the store and the number of gowns on display. As soon as they walked in, Caitlin ran over to the wedding robes. "Mum, you'd look beautiful in this."

Hermione blushed slightly. "Let's not rush things."

Jamie gazed at the robes and then at her Professor. "Would you say yes if he asked you?"

Hermione's blush turned a deeper red. "In an instant, but neither of you girls breathe a word about that to him." Jamie and Caitlin nodded their heads in concurrence as the trio tore themselves away from the wedding segment of the store and walked toward the part containing ball robes.

There were literally thousands of robes ranging from heavy-collared, black, and floor length to mini-length, diaphanous robes with matching thongs.

"Why don't we each try on something for sizing purposes?" suggested Hermione. They each selected robes and a few minutes later stepped out of their dressing rooms.

They all looked at each other in horror. Jamie was the first to speak. "I think we should all be completely honest and tell the others what we think of the robes they have on." Hermione and Caitlin nodded their agreement. Jamie continued, "Caitlin, you look like a little tart. Being a nudist is one thing; wearing a see-through dress to a ball is quite a different matter."

Hermione frowned at Caitlin, "You don't think for a moment that I'd let you wear something like that?"

"I thought we were just trying them on for size. This fits great, but I don't want it. Just like I'm sure you don't want to wear that nun's habit you have on."

Jamie and Caitlin looked at the somewhat hurt expression on Hermione face. "You weren't actually considering that were you? You're so beautiful. I'm sure Professor Potter would love to see you in something sexy," Jamie remarked.

"Well, certainly not as sexy as what you have on. This is a school dance. You can't wear robes that only cover one breast and have a pasty on the other. Perhaps we should all try on something that the others suggest?"

Caitlin had wandered off to another rack and suddenly shouted, "Mum, Jamie, come look at this robe gown and its in all sizes and colors."

Jamie swiftly went over to where Caitlin stood. "I love it; it's beautiful. We could get it in different colors."

"Mum what do you think? Will you try it on?" Caitlin implored.

Hermione looked at the little robes. "I think you girls would look rather attractive in them, but they're way too short for me."

Caitlin suddenly had a beseeching look in her eyes. "Would you at least try one on so that Jamie and I can see you in it and give you our opinion?"

"I'll try it on, but I could never wear it. What colors do you girls like?"

Caitlin exclaimed, "They have a light blue in my size. That would go nicely with my hair."

"I kind of like the yellow," said Jamie. "It would go with my green eyes and light brown hair. What color do you like?"

Hermione couldn't take her eyes off the little red robes hanging on the rack in front of her. She had always wished she had robes like that when she was younger, but she was now twenty-three and a professor. She couldn't wear anything like that. But maybe she could try it on. "Not that I'd ever wear anything that short, but the red is pretty."

Caitlin started jumping about. "What are we waiting on? Let's try them on."

They had been in the dressing rooms for a few minutes when Hermione questioned Jamie. "Do they make a special bra for this type of dress? Mine shows."

"I believe it's designed to be worn without a bra," Jamie responded.

A quiet sigh was Hermione's only answer.

Jamie and Caitlin stepped out of their dressing rooms. "I love it," Jamie said as she admired the beautiful robes in the mirror.

"I do, too!" Caitlin replied. "But I wish it had straps. I'm afraid if I take a deep breath it will fall down. Mum, aren't you coming out?"

"I'm not sure if I should. I feel quite exposed."

"Mum, it's just Jamie and me and I've seen you nude. Please, come out." Jamie looked quizzically at Caitlin. "I'll tell you later," she whispered.

Slowly, the door open and Hermione hesitantly stepped out, looking a tad uncomfortable with her choice of dress robes.

"Mum, you look gorgeous! You must buy it; Professor Potter will love it!" Caitlin grinned at her mother, clasping her hands in front of her excitedly.

"She's not lying," Jamie added. "If you don't believe us, ask the dressing room mirror, they're not allowed to lie."

Hermione looked at herself in the mirror. The robes were a good 5 inches above her knees. Any shorter and her knickers would show. It was cut straight across the front just below the

armpits, but the back was bare to slightly below the natural waist. "Mum what holds it up in the front?" Caitlin asked.

Madam Malkin, the owner of the shop, was just approaching them to see if they needed any assistance and heard Caitlin's question. "The fabric above the waist is charmed to cling to your body, as if it was a second skin. The skirt is made of modesty-charmed material."

Caitlin looked at Madam Malkin questioningly. The older woman smiled. "Let me demonstrate." She walked over to Jamie and said, "*Modestio*. Please bend over and touch your toes."

Jamie delayed. Like Hermione her dress was quite short. If she bent over in that way she knew her bare butt would be exposed. Madam Malkin just smiled. "Please trust me." Jamie doubted whether it was the proper thing to do, but she bent and touched her toes.

Hermione just watched in awe as Caitlin exclaimed, "The dress lengthened as she bent."

The Madam explained. "The *Modestio* charm remembers where the hem of the dress falls against your leg when you stand up straight. If you bend, stoop or sit, it maintains that length. Of course, the charm has to be renewed every hour." Hermione seemed puzzled. "Why not a longer time duration?"

"In case you want to go to the loo or remove the dress. The design of the dress requires it being removed over your head. With the charm in place you would never be able to get it off. It would continue to get longer and longer.

"The three of you look lovely in those dresses. Are you all sisters?"

Caitlin giggled as she first indicated Jamie and then Hermione. "No, this is my best friend and that's my mother."

Madam Malkin looked astonished. She glanced back and forth between Jamie and Hermione. "You two look so much like sisters and," she looked at Hermione, "how could this possibly be your daughter?"

"I'm adopted," Caitlin answered. "Professor Granger adopted me."

Madam Malkin was taken aback. "You're 'the' Hermione Granger! I'm so honored to have you in my humble establishment. You make me so proud to be a woman. You first being a part of the Covenant that defeated Voldemort and now how've you stood up against our corrupt legal system to help this young lady." She smiled at Caitlin. "If you ladies like those robes it would honor me if you would accept them as a gift."

Hermione was quick to speak, "That is totally unnecessary, but greatly appreciated. Besides, this just isn't me. I could never wear it."

Madam Malkin shook her head as she glared at Hermione. "I've seen many women try on those robes and none have looked as lovely as you. Am I not correct, mirror?"

The mirror responded, "I'd be quite content to reflect her image all day. She looks stunning in those robes."

"Please, Mum. It would be so neat for us all to dress alike and you do look terrific," Caitlin urged.

"You do look great in them. I'm sure Professor Potter would be of the same opinion," Jamie added.

Hermione blushed as she looked in the mirror. She really did love them. She'd treasured these two girls and wanted to please them by dressing the same. Harry would probably like them because they exposed so much leg, but she was a Professor and these robes were so not her.

Madam Malkin laughed. "Well, Professor, what do you say?"

Hermione looked at Caitlin and then at Jamie. They both cheered as she said, "We'll take all three."

"Wonderful! This time is on me," Madam Malkin insisted. "I do have a couple of suggestions for you, however, Professor Granger. First the dress will hold you quite firmly. Wearing a bra detracts greatly from the effect of the open back." Hermione bashfully nodded her head. "Secondly the back cuts quite low. I would suggest quite tiny low-rise knickers or none at all. The other two ladies look fine from the back, but quite a bit of your knickers show."

Hermione hadn't realized that her knickers extended two inches above the bottom of the v-cut back. The Madam continued, "The modesty charm will keep the robes from exposing you when you sit as long as your legs are kept together. Stairs could be a slight problem."

The girls were extremely excited and happy as they left the shop. Not only had they gotten dress robes that they loved, but also they were free. That left them with plenty of money to accessorize. They had finished their shopping by one o'clock, after which they stopped at the Three Broomsticks for lunch and then Honeydukes for some treats to take back to the castle. Jamie and Caitlin dropped their purchases, except for candy, off at Hermione's quarters before heading back to Gryffindor tower.

"You don't think your Mum will back out and wear something else to the ball?" Jamie asked.

"I certainly hope not. Those robes were made for her and you," Caitlin replied.

"What about you? You looked great."

"Nothing like you guys. It's charmed to hug the curves of your body and I don't have any curves to hug."

"You looked beautiful. Give your body time. The curves will come."

Caitlin thought back to the evening when the mirror reflected one of her possible futures. "I hope so, but I wish they'd get a move on."

The girls had just left their purchases lying on Hermione's couch. She had said she would hang everything up, but first she decided to take a quick shower before Harry arrived. The two of them would be staying with Ron again tonight and tomorrow evening.

Just as Hermione had stepped out of the shower and started drying off, she heard a knock at the door. She wrapped the towel around her and then answered. "Who is it?"

"Just me, Herm. I can come back if you're not ready yet," Harry answered.

When Hermione opened the door Harry stood momentarily mesmerized before he said, "You're wearing my second most favorite outfit."

As he closed the door and took her in his arms, she asked between kisses, "What is your favorite outfit?"

Harry pulled the towel loose and it dropped to the ground. "This is my favorite outfit."

Harry kissed her lips and then kissed her neck. He proceeded down her body kissing her breasts and stomach until finally he was in front of her on his knees. "Harry, you have such poor timing. You're driving me crazy, but we have to meet Ron in less than an hour. I have to get dressed."

"I'm sure he wouldn't mind if you came like this," Harry joked.

"He might not, but I would," Hermione answered as her face turned red. "Now let me get dressed."

Harry reluctantly got off his knees and gave her a kiss and one last embrace before releasing her.

As Hermione went to her room and started to dress, Harry walked over to the couch. "Are these the robes you girls bought today?"

"Yes, but we didn't actually buy them. Madam Malkin insisted on giving them to us for free. It seems I have somewhat of a fan in her."

The robes were on hangers wrapped in a clear plastic. Harry easily figured out which was Caitlin's because it was much smaller. He examined the blue dress and was rather surprised that Hermione would let her wear such a short backless dress. He then looked at the yellow and red dress robes, which were the identical style. He held the red one up in front of himself and tried to picture where it would fall on Jamie. Wow he thought to himself, She is going to look gorgeous in that. She'll have to beat the boys off. I wonder why she got two dresses in the same style. "Didn't you find a dress you liked, Mione?"

"Oh Harry. You're so nosy. Now you spoiled the surprise. The red one is mine."

Harry looked at the red dress robes and turned them side to side trying to picture his Mione in them. The image his mind created caused him to have an abrupt physical reaction, just as Hermione entered the room.

Hermione straight away noticed the protrusion in Harry's pants. "I had misgivings whether or not I should buy those robes, but if they get that kind of reaction on a hanger, I can't wait to see your reaction when I wear them."

"Mine and every other male over ten years old. You three girls will have every chap in

Hogwarts taking cold showers." As they talked Hermione finished dressing.

"I think I can come up with a much better solution to your problem rather than taking a cold shower. Perhaps the night of the ball you could stay here."

"Hermione, I've been thinking about that very topic. What would you think of us moving in together? I know it's been done before."

Hermione hesitated as she looked at Harry. "I'd like to Harry, but I'm not sure. Caitlin knows we've had sex together, but I'm not confident how she'd react to us living together."

"I'm willing to put my fate in her hands. Who asks her? You or me?"

"Much as I'd love to say you, it's better if I talk to her about it," her mood shifted as she smiled at him, "Now if you'll stop modeling my dress robes, I think we best get to the dungeon before Ron starts with out us."

"Speaking of Ron, are you as nervous about Friday night as I am?" Harry asked.

"Yes, and I don't know why," Hermione said as Harry and her left her quarters and started the long trek to the dungeon. "We both knew Seamus and Dean were gay and it never bothered us in the least Remember how you and I even got them back together after they had that spat?"

"How could I forget? I can't believe you talked me into dancing with Dean. Then you took your good old time getting Seamus out on the floor with you. I thought you were never going to ask to change partners."

"I almost didn't cut in. You and Dean looked so cute, both trying to lead. Harry, I think it's because we always thought that they were gay. When they finally came out about it, we just accepted it because they were our friends. With Ron it's a total shock. We had no advance warning. If anything we had every reason to believe he was heterosexual."

"I agree; it's a total surprise, but he's our best friend so we have to accept Sam."

"And we will. I wonder what he's like?"

"I don't know. I thought about asking Ginny, but didn't even know if Ron had told her."

"Yes, I considered that, too, but decided against it. Friday will be here before we realize it. Then we'll know first hand."

* * * * *

Friday, November 14, 2003

Harry and Hermione Apparated to the door of the Three Broomsticks ten minutes late for the meeting with Ron. They were supposed to have met Ron and Sam at 7:00. They had no more then entered the tavern when they spotted Ron waving to them from an out-of-the-way corner table.

"I'm sorry we're late Ron. We were delayed by a couple of students. I guess we should be more like Snape was when we were students.. No one ever approached him in the halls with a question. Where is Sam?" questioned Hermione.

"In the loo, we just arrived ourselves."

"We're quite anxious to meet Sam," Harry commented as he noticed an attractive young woman headed their direction. Now that's the type of girl I always thought would capture Ron's fancy.

"Yes", added Hermione with a big smile. "We have to see if we approve."

"So that's what this dinner is about. I have to be given a stamp of approval."

Hermione was startled to find an attractive young lady addressing her.

Ron stood up to pull out her chair and as he did he said, "Harry and Hermione, I'd like you to meet Sam Bowman."

Harry nearly choked on the sip of water he had just taken. Hermione's face broke into a large grin as she looked at Harry and neither could hold back laughter. "You're Sam?" Hermione questioned through her giggles.

Sam looked quite embarrassed to be the subject of the laughter, and Ron's face turned bright red with anger. "Just what do you two find so amusing about Samantha?"

Hermione and Harry both jumped to their feet and Hermione threw her arms around Sam. "I'm so sorry. Harry and I aren't laughing at you. We're laughing at ourselves. Ron told us he had met someone special. That the person's name was Sam and we jumped...."

Suddenly a big smile came to Samantha's face. "You thought Sam was a guy! You thought Ronnie was gay?"

Ron's face turned an even brighter red as he practically shouted, "You thought I was gay? You both considered that I was gay? I thought you guys knew me better than anyone else on the planet."

"Calm down Ron," coaxed Harry as he went over and put his arm around Ron. "We both couldn't believe it, but we haven't seen you in years. What with the werewolf thing and being in Azkaban, we thought maybe you had changed."

Sam looked over at Ron and giggled as she said, "My big, strong, gay werewolf."

"Oh! Fine! Now it's going to be three against one. What chance do I have?"

Samantha leaned over and gave Ron a kiss. "With me the odds are 100% in your favor." She looked at Harry and Hermione smiling. "You guys certainly know how to get an evening off to a fast start."

"And you are the best looking Sam I've ever met," responded Harry.

"I'm very pleased to meet you, too," Hermione added.

"I'm happy to meet both of you, also. I'm sorry I disappointed you by not being a guy."

"Well, I'm certainly not," Ron growled.

As the evening progressed, it became obvious that Sam liked Harry and Hermione and that they in turn liked her.

"How do you keep such beautiful long finger nails?" Hermione inquired. "I'm constantly breaking mine."

"Mine get broken, too. It's a trick my grandmother taught my mother and in turn she taught me. Actually it's all done with concentration. Watch, I'll show you."

They all watched as Sam concentrated on her fingers and suddenly the nails began to grow. Then they stopped growing and as she concentrated more, they returned to their original length.

Hermione and Harry exchanged smiles as Ron looked on with disbelief. "You never told me you had Animagus abilities!"

"Ron, you know there are no such things as Animagi. That's just an old American folk tale. People can make their hair or nails grow, but they can't turn into an animal."

Ron looked questioningly at Harry and Hermione and they both nodded, yes. "Samantha, there are real Animagi in the world. I've personally known four and you're sitting at a table with two of them."

Sam turned and first looked at Hermione and Harry. "You're not kidding are you? You're serious. There are really witches and wizards that can turn into animals?"

Hermione studied Sam's expression. "Harry can transform into a golden griffin and I can transform into a wolf. I believe you have the abilities to be an Animagus. It's difficult and painful at times, but I believe you could be taught. Harry and I would be happy to work with you so that possibly in time you could do as us and stay with Ron when he changes."

Suddenly Sam's eyes filled with tears. "Ron, we wouldn't have to be apart; would you mind if I tried?"

Ron's eyes now teared as he once again realized how lucky he was that this wonderful person had stepped into his life. "It would only be another reason for me to love you." Suddenly as if the world love shocked him into consciousness, Ron continued, "Speaking of love and not to charge the subject but is my sister back with that Slytherin bastard Malfoy?" Ron seemed disgusted at the thought.

Hermione was surprised by the question. "I don't believe so, Ron. They avoid each other as if they each had the plague."

Harry interjected. "They only talk about school matters and then only when absolutely

necessary. What makes you ask?"

"Well, you know that when my parents died Fred and George moved into the burrow in order to keep it in the family. While Ginny was studying in the States she always spent the summer with them. When she started teaching at Hogwarts, Snape gave her that cushy schedule that gets her done at noon on Thursday. She spent each weekend at the Burrow up until a few weeks ago. Now, no one knows where she goes. She leaves Hogwarts practically every weekend, but never goes to the Burrow. Fred and George thought she might be off shagging the ferret again."

"Draco does leave Hogwarts, most weekends, but then so does Neville, and about fifty percent of the staff. Even the Headmaster has been occupied elsewhere the past few weekends. Ginny may be seeing a Muggle in London. She did date a number of Muggles when she went to university in the States. I don't get to talk to her often; she's always with 'bats in the belfry' Trelawney," Hermione answered.

"We'll see if we can find anything out," Harry interjected. "How does it feel to be a teacher at Hogwarts?"

Ron smiled. "I owe you both big time for sticking your necks out for me. The job is a dream come true. I love teaching the first years flying and next year I'll have a say in the Quidditch schedule. I hope to do away with the current 5 game schedule and go to six games so we have a true champion."

"I'll support you on that. It's never seemed fair to me that the houses didn't all play each other. How can you have a true champion when two houses don't play against each other?"

Hermione leaned over to Sam. "We may as well take a walk to the ladies room and discuss your training. Once they've started talking Quidditch, we've lost them for the balance of the evening."

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Saturday, November 22, 2003

Amanda quizzed Jamie as they left the Quidditch pitch. "Is it just me or was that a boring Quidditch game?"

"It's not that it was boring, both teams played excellent games, it's just that you didn't have anyone to cheer for, like when Slytherin or Gryffindor are playing. When Gryffindor plays we want to win. When Slytherin plays we want them to lose. When Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw play against each other, I don't care who wins. I have friends in both houses and I like all the players. You need someone to root for or against to really enjoy the game."

"Amanda, are your parents still going to be spending Christmas in the United States?"

"Yeah. They're visiting friends with whom they went to school. I was welcome to go with them, but I think I'd rather stay here. I've never met the people and they have no children. Here, at least I'll have someone to talk with."

"My parents told me it was okay if I had a friend or two spend the holiday. Would you like to come to my home for the Christmas holiday?"

Amanda hesitated. "You'd all be nude; wouldn't you? You don't expect me to do that?"

"Of course not. Have I ever tried to talk any of you girls into being naturists? Even with Caitlin, it was entirely her idea."

"What about Caitlin? Are you going to invite her?"

"I intend to offer, but I doubt that she will come. Caitlin will unquestionably want to spend Christmas with Professor Granger. Alex is coming for a day. He is going to come on the twenty-sixth and then ride back to school with me on the day of the ball."

Amanda couldn't believe her ears. "Take-a-shower-with-his-clothes-on Alex is going to spend a day at your house? You just made my decision for me. I have to be there to see that. Your Mum and Dad will be there and nude?"

"Yes. My dad will probably treat Alex as if he's my boyfriend and embarrass him."

"Now that you brought up the subject, are you two ever going to admit that there is more going on between you than just friendship?"

"I don't know if there is or not. I like Alex an awful lot, but saying you love someone is a big step. I don't want to risk jeopardizing our friendship on false signals." Jamie tried to change the subject, "Did you get your daily note from Tony yet?"

Amanda blushed as she nodded her head yes. "Tony's really nice. I'll never figure out how he was sorted into Slytherin. He's not like the rest of them."

"There are probably a lot of decent Slytherins. Unfortunately the Dick Bancrofts of the world get all the attention."

By this point in their conversation they had reached the castle entrance.

"I promised to meet Alex in the library to help him with his History of Magic homework. Do you want to come with me?" Jamie asked.

Amanda hesitated for a moment as she tried to come up with an excuse, but finally decided it was best to just tell her best friend the truth. "I'm meeting Tony."

Jamie gave her friend a knowing glance. "Is it true that snogging gets better the more you practice?"

Amanda blushed deeply. "Some things you have to find out for yourself."

* * * * *

Sunday, November 30, 2003

Hermione laid down the book she was reading and stared at the young girl cuddled on the sofa. *I couldn't love you more if you were my very own child.* Hermione Granger was not one for making rash decisions. Probably the quickest decision she had ever made was the one to adopt Caitlin. A decision she had not once regretted.

She had been wrestling with another decision for a number of weeks. Harry had suggested that they share quarters and this was something she wanted. They spent most nights together anyway. It seemed the logical next step, but what would Caitlin think?

"Sweetheart, could you come sit with me? There's something I'd like to discuss with you."

Caitlin gave her mum a quick smile. "Sure, Mum." Caitlin nudged Crookshanks aside as she laid down her book and went over to Hermione. Quickly, she squirmed onto Hermione's lap and put her arm around her neck as she gave her a kiss on the cheek. "I'm not in some kind of trouble, am I?"

"Not that I know of." Hermione wrapped her arm around the thin girl's body. Unbelievably, Hermione had grown quite accustomed to Caitlin being nude. Although she was fully dressed today, Hermione actually occasionally walked around her quarters naked now. She wasn't sure what had caused the change in her attitude. It could have been Caitlin, or the discussion with her bedroom mirror or it could have been Harry.

Harry made her feel so good about herself. He treated her like she was the most precious and beautiful creature of earth. Mr. Potter also seemed to be constantly undressing her. He would spend hours touching and kissing her body and then when she went to get dressed he would complain that he was just getting started and that she shouldn't cover up God's most beautiful creation. Hermione had grown up thinking she was an ugly duckling. Maybe she actually had turned into a swan like people claimed. It wasn't really important. Harry made her feel beautiful and that's all that mattered.

"Caitlin, I've been putting off asking you something. This is quite illogical. I'm the mother and you're the daughter, but I wouldn't do this without your permission. Professor Potter and I would like to share quarters. How would you feel about that?"

There seemed to be a trace of bitterness in Caitlin's voice as she said, "Might as well. You guys shag each other every night of the week anyway."

Hermione looked shattered as she took Caitlin's hand in her own. "Please don't call it shagging honey. That makes it sound so dirty. I love Harry and he loves me. We make love together; we don't shag. I thought you liked Professor Potter. Don't you want us to be together?"

Caitlin looked at her mother's face. She had just hurt the person in this world that she loved the most. "I'm an awful selfish little brat. I don't deserve someone as wonderful as you for a mother." Caitlin jumped up off of Hermione's lap and ran to her room, slamming the door behind her.

Hermione was both hurt and confused as she knocked on Caitlin's door. "Caitlin, you and I don't have secrets. Something about my relationship with Professor Potter is bothering you.

Can I please come in and talk about it with you?"

After a few moments Caitlin responded, "The door isn't locked."

Hermione entered the room and found Caitlin lying on her bed with her face buried in her pillow. She sat down on the side of the bed and started lightly scratching the young girl's back. "Can we talk honey? What's the problem?"

Caitlin sniffled through her tears. "I'm selfish. If you give a man free milk he won't buy the cow."

Hermione was totally confused. "What exactly does a man not buying a cow have to do with you being selfish?"

"It means that if you live with someone and have sex with them; then there is no reason for them to marry you. I want Professor Potter to marry you so that I can have him as a dad. That's why I'm selfish. Instead of thinking about you being happy; I'm thinking about what I'm losing if you just live together."

Hermione leaned over and kissed the back of Caitlin's head as she continued to stroke her back. "Do you consider me your mum?"

"Of course."

"If I don't have to be married for you to think of me as your mother, why does Professor Potter have to marry me for you to think of him as a father? He already cares for you and I know that his love for you will grow the more the two of you are together just as my love for you has grown.

"Marriage is just a piece of paper. It's far less binding than the love you hold in your heart for someone. If your adoption papers became lost, do you think I would stop loving you or you stop loving me?"

Caitlin sheepishly responded, "No."

"It would be nice if some day Harry made us a legal family, but for now it's more important that he loves me and I love him and that we both love you."

Caitlin rolled over and put her arms around Hermione's neck. "I love you Mum and I want you to be happy. Will we live in his quarters or here?"

"We'll continue to live here. These quarters were originally designed for a married professor with three children. These rooms are much larger than Harry's and can actually be magically expanded if ever necessary."

Caitlin hesitated and then said, "Will I still be able to be nude when I'm here?"

Hermione grinned teasingly at Caitlin. "Only if you promise not to try to lure Professor Potter away from me."

Chapter Fifteen Christmas

Wednesday, December 24, 2003

Harry, Hermione and Caitlin brushed the snow off their robes as they rushed up the stairs to the staff quarters. The three had just spent the last two hours frocking in the new fallen snow that now blanketed Hogwarts.

"I don't know about you guys, but I'm freezing. I'm going to take a quick, hot shower and then I'll make us all some hot chocolate." Hermione looked like a human snowman, as her hair and robes were still matted with snow.

"No one told you to roll down that hill," Caitlin giggled as she spoke.

"You tripped me, you little traitor and then your bully friend pushed me. Some gentleman you are, Harry Potter!" Hermione first looked at Caitlin and then at Harry who both gave her innocent angelic looks.

After Hermione closed the bedroom door Caitlin and Harry smiled at each other and gave one another high fives. "I'm going to take my garments off. Be right back," Caitlin said as she scurried into her bedroom.

Harry stood for a moment thinking of how fortunate he was to have these two lovely ladies in his life. He loved them both. It seemed like he had always loved Hermione, his feelings for Caitlin had taken him completely by surprise. He only knew he looking forward to being her dad.

He had only gotten as far as finding the chocolate when Caitlin popped out of her room. "How's the hot chocolate coming?"

"I haven't even started yet. You're welcome to help," Harry responded.

Just then Caitlin heard the water shut off in Hermione's shower. "I'll be right back. I want to ask Mum something." She rushed over to Harry and Hermione's bedroom and knocked on the door. "Mum, may I come in please?" As soon as her mum answered, she entered the room.

Caitlin saw her mother standing in the doorway of the bath drying off. She had seen her mum naked on a number of occasions since that first night, but she never ceased to marvel at how attractive she was. "Mum, would you do me a special favor tonight?"

"Sure honey," Hermione quickly answered.

"Will you stay naked with me tonight? We haven't done it together since Harry moved in and I miss it."

Hermione sighed. She knew how much Caitlin enjoyed it when they shared quality time in at state of undress, but it still made her feel somewhat odd. It was so contrary to her prudish upbringing. "Don't you think Harry might feel out of place being fully clothed while we are both nude?"

"Mum, I'm naked all the time when you're both dressed and I don't feel out of place. If it bothers him, he can always get undressed. I've never seen a man without his clothes on. It

might be quite fascinating."

Hermione just shook her head as she beamed at her daughter. "Are you sure that you're only eleven? I never gave boys a second thought till fourth year and even then I never thought about seeing one naked. Okay, it Christmas Eve, I'll do it tonight, but don't expect this to be a regular occurrence. After all, you're the naturist, not me. Although I must admit that it will be fun to watch Harry's expression when we both enter the room naked."

Caitlin looked devilishly at her mum. "I bet you being naked will get him all excited."

Hermione gave her daughter a playful smack on her rear. "You, young lady, know too much for a girl so young."

"Don't worry Mum. Just because I know about sex doesn't mean I'd ever consider having it. I'm not even sure if I'll be ready when I reach fifteen."

"There is no reason to hurry it. Wait until you're sure. Just because you're legal at fifteen doesn't mean you have to rush."

Hermione finished drying her hair and ran a comb through it. "Shall we see if we can get a reaction out of the Boy That Lived?"

Hermione put her arm around Caitlin's shoulder as they both walked out of the bedroom as naked as the day they were born. Caitlin was quite relaxed, but Hermione felt nervous and blushed intensely.

Harry had just finished making the hot chocolate and was about to take a sip from his when he heard the girls talking and turned in the direction of their voices. When he saw Hermione, the cup slipped from his hand and went crashing to the floor.

Hermione looked at Caitlin and smiled. "Not bad for starters."

Caitlin giggled.

Hermione quickly repaired the cup and did a spell that cleansed the floor as Harry stood, watching her, his mouth moving in a very similar matter to that of a goldfish.

As they stood drinking their chocolate, Harry was finally able to articulate. "To whom do I express gratitude for having two good-looking naked women with whom to spend the night?"

Hermione looked at Harry with a bogus severe expression. "It was Caitlin's proposal that we give you a double show, but you best restrict your ogling to the legal woman in the room."

As they went to sit on the couch, Harry put his arms around the charming ladies on either side of him. "I must be the luckiest wizard alive.

Neither Harry nor Hermione could believe the words that came out of Caitlin's mouth next. "If you feel odd sitting here with your clothes on, I don't mind if you take them off. Actually I think it would be neat if you did."

Hermione looked at her daughter in alarm not believing what she just heard. "Caitlin!"

Harry removed his arm from around Hermione's shoulder and patted her leg as if to say, 'Let me handle this.'

"Caitlin, it wouldn't be proper for me to do something like that."

"Why not? Jamie's dad is always naked around her."

"There is a big difference. First, they are nudists."

Caitlin interrupted, "And secondly, he is her real dad, not just someone who lives with her mum and let's Jamie call him dad.">BR>

Hermione was appalled at what Caitlin said. She thought they had straightened all this out, but plainly Caitlin was still concerned by the fact that Harry and she weren't married. "Caitlin, I think you and I better go to your room and--"

Harry stopped Hermione in mid sentence with a kiss on the lips. "Hermione, she's right, I'm not her real father. I can never be that, but I can and should be more than a man that sleeps with her mother."

Harry got up off the couch and walked over to the mantel where he withdrew two boxes that were hidden behind the clock. "I anticipated giving these to you both tomorrow, but I think now is a more appropriate time. Would you please slide together?"

Caitlin and Hermione looked at each other as if questioning whether the other knew what was going on. Harry handed them each a box. "Please open them," he instructed.

As they opened the boxes Harry got down on his knees in front of them and placed a hand on each girl's thigh. Caitlin felt like her body was crawling with goose bumps. Each box contained a smaller box and each smaller box contained a ring. Hermione and Caitlin both looked at their rings as Harry said. "Hermione Granger, I love you. I always have and I always will. Please say you will become my wife?" The expression on Hermione's face left little doubt that Harry could proceed to Caitlin. "Caitlin, you only just entered my life three months ago, but in that time I've come to know you and love you very much. Will you allow me to adopt you? Will you please become my daughter?"

Caitlin had always dreamed of having both a mother and father. It seemed unbelievable that the vision she had always considered impossible was about to come true. And four months ago Hermione had given up hope of ever even seeing Harry again and now he was asking her to be his wife.

Hermione and Caitlin briefly looked at each other before Caitlin vigorously nodded her head and Hermione and she exchanged hugs. Hermione then slide off the couch and onto her knees next to the still kneeling Harry. "You won't disappear on me again, will you Harry Potter?"

"Never," Harry responded nervously. "Even a fool learns from his mistakes."

"Yes, I'll marry you." Hermione's face was one incredible smile. "You can't imagine how long I have waited and hoped you would return and ask me that question."

They kissed and then they hugged and then they kissed some more. Had they been alone they

most assuredly would have made love then and there on the floor. Actually, Hermione was suddenly embarrassed that they might have already done more than appropriate in front of Caitlin, but then she realized that Caitlin wasn't watching them. She was curled in a ball crying her heart out.

Hermione sat on the couch and nestled the young girl against her as Harry sat next to them and gently stroked Caitlin's back. "What's the matter, honey? Aren't you happy?"

"Mum, I was so dumb. What if he had answered my prayers?"

"I don't understand Honey. What do you mean?"

"Last July when I was tied to that tree, I prayed that I would die. Now, five months later I'm the luckiest girl in the world. I have you as a mum, Professor Potter as a dad and Jamie as my best friend. What if he had answered my prayers?"

Hermione held Caitlin tightly and tried her best to comfort her. Harry finally spoke. "In a way he did answer your prayer. That horrible life that you were living ended and now you're with us. Your mum and I can't promise you everlasting bliss, but we'll do our best to help you forget that other life ever existed."

Caitlin wiped away her tears as she said, "I love you both so much." She in turn hugged and kissed them both and then got to her feet. "It's Christmas Eve; I should be getting to bed so Santa can come. Although I can't imagine what he could bring me that would compare to my two wonderful parents and fantastic new life. Besides, I have a feeling there is something the two of you would rather be doing now than sitting with me."

Caitlin kissed them both good night and then went to her room. She even closed her door, which she had never done before. Harry looked at Hermione coyly before picking her up and carrying her to their bedroom. "Are you sure she's only eleven?"

"Eleven going on twenty-three." Those were the last words either of them spoke. For the next three hours, no words were necessary to explain how they felt about each other. Their bodies said it all repeatedly.

* * * * *

Friday, December 26, 2003

Alex got out of the taxi and sat his suitcase on the pavement as he paid the driver before looking up and down the busy street. The houses all looked the same on Devon Drive, quite modest. He stood in front of number 6, building up the courage to ring the bell as the cab drove off. Alex knew there were four naked people on the other side of that door. *I'm certainly glad Amanda will be here with me. At least I won't be the only one wearing clothes.*

Finally, he took a deep breath and rang the doorbell. Almost instantaneously the door flew open. "Hello! You must be Alex!" The ten-year-old girl extending the greeting was standing in the doorway totally nude.

"I'm Emily, Jamie's sister. Come on in; we've been waiting with lunch for you." As Alex

stepped in the door the girl exclaimed, "Is that your suitcase?"

Alex turned to see that owing to his apprehension he had left his suitcase sitting at the curbside. "I'll get it for you." Emily was out the door before Alex could stop her. She didn't rush either, despite the cold and the fact that numerous people on the busy street were staring at her.

"Do you do that often?" Alex asked as she finally closed the door behind her.

Emily looked at Alex sweetly. "Please, don't tell Mum. She gets quite put out with me when I go outside nude. Says, I'm getting too old, but I love being naked outside. Nobody ever complains; so what's the harm?"

Alex made no comment. He had no intention of getting in the middle of a family argument before he even met the family. Just then Jamie literally came bouncing down the steps. Alex was briefly mesmerized as he took in the site of her descending the stairs. That was until she took him in her arms and gave him a big hug and a peck on the cheek.

Just then a couple, which Alex assumed were Jamie's parents, entered the sitting room. Alex tried desperately to maintain eye contact. He especially did not want to be caught staring at the man.

"Mum, Dad, this is my good friend Alex. Alex, I'd like you to meet my parents." Jamie's dad firmly grasped Alex's hand and shook it. Then Mrs. Zacherley gave him a hug followed by a kiss on the cheek. Being hugged by nude women was beginning to take its toll on Alex.

"Jamie's told us many wonderful things about you over the years. I'm delighted we finally get to meet you," Mr. Zacherley said with sincerity.

Emily eyes moved from Alex to Jamie and then she added, "But you never told us he was so hot."

Jamie smiled at her sister. "Conduct yourself properly."

Suddenly Alex missed someone. "Where is Amanda? I thought she had spent the entire vacation with you?"

Jamie gave Emily a sneaky little smile. "Amanda and I have a surprise for you. Emily, will you show Alex where he can wash his hands and then bring him in for lunch? I want to make sure Amanda is ready."

Emily waited for Alex as he washed up and then escorted him to the room where everyone else was already seated for lunch. As they entered the room Alex was startled beyond belief by what he saw. Sitting at the table with her arms discreetly covering her bare breasts was Amanda. "You're naked!" Was all Alex could think to say in greeting.

Amanda smiled meekly. "Everybody else was, so I decided to give it a try on Monday and have stuck with it most of the week. In some ways I really like it, but I don't think I could ever do it in front of strangers. I'm shaking like a leaf now being this way if front of you."

Alex looked at Amanda while trying to look like he wasn't checking out her body. "You have

nothing to be nervous about. If anyone should feel weird it's me, somehow I feel like I'm intruder being clothed while you're all nude."

Mr. Zacherley quickly spoke up. "Alex, please. The last thing we want is for you to feel awkward. We know you are not a nudist and no one expects you to undress. I'm sure being in a room full of naked people feels strange to you. It's no different than what Jamie does everyday at school, but there she faces possible mockery because she is a nudist. You will never be ridiculed in our home for wearing clothes."

Jamie's eyes glistened, "Alex, I'm sorry. Would you feel better if Amanda and I got dressed? I didn't invite you to make you feel ill at ease."

"I don't want anyone getting dressed. This is your home. Actually I admire you, all of you. Especially you, Amanda, you have a lot of pluck, girl. You're also very attractive. I wish I had the nerve to undress like you."

Amanda blushed shyly because of Alex's complement as Mr. Zacherley stared at Alex. "Are you just saying that to be polite, or would you actually like to try nudism? There is a big difference between not wanting to do something because you think it is a fanatical practice and not trying it because you're nervous."

"Sir, I've wanted to try it since Jamie was first naked in front of me in first year," Alex answered.

Mr. Zacherley looked first at his wife who raised her eyebrows, then at Jamie who blushed and then back at Alex. "How often since then have you been around Jamie when she was naked?"

Jamie held her breath because she knew the answer her dad would be given, wincing as Alex answered, "Easily over a hundred times."

Mr. Zacherley was stunned by Alex's reply. He gave his wife a surprised look and then turned to Jamie.

"Dad! Alex and Amanda were both my best friends. She knew and had seen me nude. Alex helped me with the tampon when I got my first period. I trust him," Jamie quickly responded.

Emily suddenly looked aghast. "Alex helped you put a tampon in your--"

"No! No!" Jamie interrupted. "He didn't actually help me stick it in. He just unwrapped it and figured out how it worked."

Jamie's dad had a huge smile on his face as he winked at his wife. "Calm down, Jamie. You've made another good choice in friends. Mum and I aren't angry, but please, learn to trust us as we trust you. Alex, after lunch I'd like to talk to you privately about naturism."

Alex nodded to Mr. Zacherley as he whispered to Jamie, "Did I say something wrong?"

"No. You were honest and truthful. I'm the one that lied. I told them that the first time you ever saw me nude was on Halloween. Back when I was eleven I thought they might have been upset with me for displaying myself to you, so I never told them about it."

Alex just nodded his head as they all finally started their lunch. There was no more talk about nudism during lunch, but as soon as lunch was complete Mr. Zacherley ushered Alex into the sitting room while ordering the girls to help their mother clean up.

After about thirty minutes Alex returned to the kitchen. He inquired, "Jamie may I speak to you in private?"

"Sure, Alex." Jamie looked at Amanda and Emily. "I'll be back in a few minutes. Emily, will you please keep Amanda company?"

Jamie asked Alex to follow her as she ascended the stairs to her bedroom. Once there, she closed the door and motioned for Alex to take a seat on the bed where she joined him.

Alex looked at Jamie hesitantly unable to figure out why his stomach seemed to always flutter lately when he was near her. "Your dad said that if I was serious about trying naturism, you were an expert with first timers."

Jamie smiled at Alex as she put a hand on his knee. "I don't know if I'd call myself an expert, but I've helped a few people get over the first day jitters. Before we start, are you sure about this? You and I have been friends for five years. It certainly isn't necessary for you to do this to remain my friend. Naturism isn't for everyone."

"I know and this could very well be my first and last try, but I'd still like to attempt."

"Do you trust me?"

"Of course, I trust you Jamie."

"Okay, I want you to go in my bathroom and get a large bath towel. I will lay here with my face buried in a pillow while you get undressed and wrap the towel around yourself. Please, try to get done before I suffocate myself," she said jokingly.

Alex walked to the bathroom and grabbed a clean towel. It was difficult not to gaze at Jamie as she lay there. Alex quickly took off all his clothes and wrapped himself in the towel. "Okay, I guess."

Jamie turned around and sat up. "Okay, you are going to keep that towel with you the rest of the day. When we first go downstairs, I want you to keep it wrapped around you. After a time, I'll encourage you to unwrap yourself, but keep the towel on your lap. Eventually you'll feel comfortable enough to lay it aside, but keep it with you at all times in case you have an erection."

Jamie never ceased to amaze Alex. She had so calmly mentioned erection as if it were something fifteen year olds discussed every day in mixed company. "Alex, it happens sometimes with guys, especially their first time. It's no big deal. Just lay or hold the towel in front of you. No one will make a big deal about it." Suddenly Jamie stopped. "I have to be honest. Emily will make a big deal about it if you get one. My little sister loves to embarrass men when they lose control. Try to ignore her. Are you ready to go downstairs?"

Alex looked at Jamie as if she had just asked him if he was ready to jump off a skyscraper.

"Can't we just try it here? Just you and I?"

"Alex, my dad likes you. I can tell. He also trusts me, but I doubt he would want you and me spending the balance of the day together in my bedroom. Just keep telling yourself that you have a bathing costume on under that towel. You can do this, I know you can." Jamie opened the door and led the way down the stairs.

When they reached the living room they found Amanda and Emily seated at a table setting up the Wizard Monopoly game. Evidently Mr. Zacherley had talked with them because they both seemed to ignore the fact that all Alex had on was a towel.

Amanda was the first to speak. "Emily thought perhaps we could play some games this afternoon."

"I'm up for that," Alex replied. "Wizard Monopoly is my favorite board game."

As they were about to take their seats, Jamie whispered in Alex's ear, "Take it off and lay it on your lap."

As he sat down Alex followed Jamie's instructions. He had the towel on his lap, but he felt extremely naked.

About an hour into the game Jamie whispered to Alex, "I'm going to take the towel." He looked at her helplessly as he felt her slowly pull the towel off his lap. Like it or not, Alex was now nude.

Shortly after that, Jamie suggested they take a short break. "I'm thirsty. Amanda, will you help me get some beverages and snacks. We'll only be a minute." She told Alex and Emily.

Alex watched as Jamie tossed the towel he had been using on her chair and headed for the kitchen accompanied by Amanda.

They had no more than left the room when Emily questioned Alex, "Do you fancy my sister?"

"Jamie and I are just best friends, nothing more," Alex answered, flustered. "What made you ask?"

"It's the way you look at her, almost as if she were a veela that had you under her spell." Suddenly, Emily asked, "Would you like to see my Kneazle?"

Alex looked at Emily questioningly, "What's a Kneazle?"

"Sort of like a cat, only much more intelligent and independent. Alfred's basket is behind the couch, come have a look."

Alex went to reach for the towel, but before he touched it, Emily scolded him. "If you really want to try nudism, you have to forget about that security blanket. You don't have anything I haven't seen before in every size and shape imaginable."

Suddenly Alex had a surge of confidence. He realized Emily was familiar with seeing naked men and also that it was highly unlikely he would be aroused by a ten year old. He took a

deep breath and got out of his chair to follow Emily over to the couch. They leaned over the back of the couch and found Alfred curled in a ball. Alfred was black, flecked with white. He had outsize ears and a tail much like a lion.

Alfred purred and first went to Emily to be scratched and then sauntered over to Alex and rubbed against his outstretched hand. Emily looked at Alex and gave him a smile. "If Alfred likes you, then you must be a bit of all right."

Jamie and Amanda had reentered the room as Emily and Alex were leaning over petting Alfred. Jamie and Amanda both seemed to check out Alex's butt and then looked at each other with an approving glance. Jamie laughed, "Would you rather we leave you two alone?"

Emily and Alex both jumped up. "Sounds like a plan," Emily responded.

Jamie just looked at her little sister without responding. *Was Emily smitten with Alex?*

Alex realized that he was quite a distance from his chair and the towel. He was about to be on display for Jamie and Amanda. Deciding to brave it, he turned and walked toward the table, but mistakenly checked out Amanda in route. This was his first opportunity to observe a front view of her from the waist down. The rear view had looked quite fine as Jamie and she had gone for refreshments, but he was slightly disappointed upon seeing her from the front. It wasn't that she was unattractive, she was well shaped and had nice legs, but he was accustomed to looking at Jamie. He liked the smooth clean look Jamie had versus the bikini made of curly hair that Amanda sported.

Doing a side-by-side comparison of the two girls' attributes was obviously not a good idea because suddenly he realized he was becoming aroused. Obviously, Jamie must have been checking him out south of the border because she immediately picked up the towel and threw it to him. He loosely held the towel in front of himself as he took his seat.

Jamie laughingly whispered in his ear. "Be careful what you think about."

The balance of the afternoon went without incident. Alex actually conjured enough nerve to make a trip to the loo and back. Soon they heard the clatter of pans in the kitchen as Jamie's mum started to prepared dinner. Fortunately Jamie's mum enjoyed cooking. They had no house elf and because they lived in a muggle area; magic could only be used sparingly.

After they put away the games and cleaned up, they all went to the kitchen to see if they could be of assistance. Alex had grown acclimatized to being nude, but honestly missed his clothes. He was given the job of dicing celery and carrots; something he had often done before. This time he realized that the vegetables often squirt juices as they're being sliced. Clothes had previously concealed this knowledge from him.

The evening meal passed quickly with the Yule Ball and Emily attending Hogwarts next year being the main topics of conversation. Alex had come to like Jamie's parents quite a lot in the few hours he had known them. It was easy to see the parental influence that had helped make Jamie the individual she was. Alex looked forward to Emily joining them next year at Hogwarts. Despite her obsession with a certain male body part, he rather liked the young girl.

Living in a muggle neighborhood meant that the Zacherleys had electricity and tele. Consequently, when the dishes were over and done with, the kids all gathered around the TV.

Alex would be spending the night sleeping on the couch in this room. Around ten o'clock Mrs. Zacherley brought in two blankets and a couple of pillows. A short time later, Emily said goodnight and went off to bed.

At ten thirty a movie came on about a muggle girl and her family going on vacation in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Jamie and Alex quickly became engrossed, but Amanda was tired and since she had seen it before, said her good nights and headed off to bed.

About midway through the movie Alex became a little chilly and wrapped the one blanket around his shoulders as he settled into the corner of the couch with a pillow behind his head. Jamie looked at him from across the room and shivered slightly. "It is getting a little chilly in here."

"I have another blanket if you want it?" Alex offered.

"I think I will," Jamie said as she walked over for the blanket, but instead of returning to the chair, she wrapped the blanket around herself and cuddled next to Alex. "You don't mind if I sit here do you?"

Alex smiled contentedly at Jamie. "That's what friends are for; to keep each other warm." He put his arm around Jamie's shoulder and drew her blanket-covered body closer to him. They both fell asleep long before "Dirty Dancing" ended.

* * * * *

Saturday, December 27, 2003

The sun peeking in her window awakened Emily. It was only six, but she was ready to get up. She sat up and slipped her feet into her slippers. After stretching, she got out of bed and went to the bathroom where after peeing and brushing her teeth, she took a quick shower.

Refreshed and ready to start the day, she headed down stairs to see if anyone else was about. She froze when she spotted Alex and Jamie and then turned and ran up to Jamie's room to wake Amanda.

"Amanda! Amanda! Come quick! You have to see this. Hurry before they move."

Amanda wasn't even awake as she felt herself being drug down the stairs. Finally as she forced her eyes open, she viewed a sight that fully awakened her. Alex was asleep at the edge of the couch with a blanket wrapped around his back. His head was leaning against a pillow. Jamie was laying the full length of the couch covered by another blanket. Her head was rested on Alex's lap; her head turned toward him; her lips less than an inch from his organ.

Emily stared at Amanda, "You don't think they..."

"No," Amanda responded without letting Emily conclude. "I think what we see are two innocent people that simply fell asleep together. I also think they are going to be tremendously embarrassed when they wake up."

At that very moment, Alex stirred and opened his eyes. Initially, he looked confused and

dazed as he looked back and forth between Amanda and Emily trying to get his bearing. All of a sudden Alex jerked as if finally realizing where he was and who was lying on his lap. The sudden movement caused Jamie to turn and sleepily yawn. As she yawned her lips barely touched target. Alex's physical reaction to the stimulus was immediate and he jumped from the couch almost knocking Jamie to the floor in the process. He ran to the loo and shut the door.

Jamie slowly sat up with a befuddled look on her face, but remained unruffled. "Amanada, please tell me that I'm dreaming and that what I think just happened, didn't actually take place."

Emily and Amanda both looked at Jamie shamefaced as Amanda answered, "It happened and I doubt Alex will come out of the loo all day."

Jamie jumped up. "I have to talk to him. It was an accident; more my fault than his."

Jamie walked over to the door and knocked as Amanda whispered 'good luck' and pulled a nosy Emily out of the room.

"Alex, please let me in; it wasn't your fault. We have to talk."

Jamie heard the door unlock, but it remained closed. She slowly opened the door until Alex became visible. He had his back turned toward her.

"Jamie, will you please get my clothes? I can't walk around fearing my emotions will be on display any second. I'm sorry. I guess I'm not like you."

"You and I are more alike then you appreciate. I just don't have to be concerned about a sex organ telling the world I'm aroused." Jamie put her hand on Alex's back. "Please turn around."

Alex turned slowly around until he finally faced her. Jamie then did something she had never done in her life before, not to a nude boy or even a fully clothed boy. She put her arms around Alex and pulled him toward her in an embrace as she leaned her head back to receive the kiss she hoped would be coming.

She wasn't disappointed as Alex's lips touched hers and they kissed Suddenly Alex tried to pull away. "Don't worry, it's natural. I'd be upset if you weren't aroused."

Alex looked down at Jamie with tears in his eyes. "Jamie, you're my best friend. I don't want to lose what we have, but yet if it can be more, I want that."

"I know what you mean. I don't want to lose you as a friend either. How can we be sure if what we feel is love or simply teenage hormones at work?"

"I'm not sure, but I know we have to avoid me being alone with you when you're naked."

"Yeah! You sort of had my blood rushing yesterday, too. Being nude in front of someone you have desire for is a lot harder than being around strangers or people who are only friends. We have to backup and start over. Take things a little slower."

Alex looked at Jamie with his puppy dog eyes. "How far do we have to back up and how

slow? I really enjoyed that kiss."

Jamie blushed, "So did I. Kissing is something I definitely want to keep doing.">BR>
"Does that mean we're sort of a couple?"

"Only if you swear to me that no matter what happens we will always be friends."

"I never want to lose that Jamie. I'll always be here for you."

"Me, too,"

"Jamie before you get my clothes, do you think we could do that again?"

"I think it can be arranged. Do you think you can make your friend behave?"

"Pressed against you? I doubt it very much."

"You're an animal, Alex Ward."

"You're beautiful, Jamie Zacherley. Which of us is going to tell Amanda?"

"It won't be necessary. She'll know as soon as she sees us together. Now if you want another hug, I suggest you get with it. I really don't want Mum and Dad catching us in here snogging, especially after what just happened this morning."

Chapter Sixteen The Yule Ball

Saturday, December 27, 2003

As Hermione sat up in bed, she looked to her left and an immediate smile covered her face. It wasn't a dream; he was there and they were going to be married. Unexpectedly, there was a light tapping at the bedroom door. "Are you awake Mum? Is it all right if I come in?" Caitlin asked.

"Come on in honey. You can help me wake your dad."

Caitlin rushed into the room and jumped on the outsized bed, first giving her mum a hug and kiss and then turning to Harry who was lying on his back. Caitlin moved over and sat on Harry with one leg on either side of his stomach. She then leaned down and whispered in his ear, "You better get up lazy bones or I'm going to tickle you."

All of a sudden Harry, who had been faking sleeping grabbed her and started tickling her unmercifully. He didn't stop until she pleaded for compassion.

Caitlin rolled over and looked at Hermione and Harry who were both naked to the waist. "Are you guys naked under those covers? Did you make love again last night? Don't you ever get tired of it or is it that much fun?"

Hermione blushed slightly, "You certainly are the nosy one. Yes, yes and no. Honey, it's something you won't understand until you're much older, but you never get tired of making love to someone you adore as much as we do each other."

Harry added, "Your mum and I missed a lot of time we could have been together and don't want to waste another day. One never knows what tomorrow may bring."

"As for it being fun, yes it's fun, but not fun like going to a party or riding a roller coaster. Being together with someone you love is a feeling of fulfillment. It's hard to describe, but the more you love a person the greater it feels."

Caitlin looked at her parents and smiled. "Then it must feel terribly special for you two because I can't believe anyone could love someone more than you love each other."

Hermione looked at Harry and smiled. "Me either."

Harry took Hermione in his arms and kissed her intensely. Caitlin adored her parents and loved to watch them show affection for each other. She hoped that some day she would experience that type of fondness for someone. But even good things could be overdone and this morning they showed no signs of stopping. "Okay! Enough already. Do I have to throw a bucket of cold water on you two? Are we going running this morning or are you both going to spend the day in here snogging?"

Hermione slid out of bed. "We're going running young lady. Get out of here so your dad can get ready."

As greatly as Caitlin was looking forward to the Yule Ball that evening, she was regretful that

a lot of the students would be returning and the school would be getting back to normal. She had very much enjoyed spending the holiday in the staff quarters with her new parents. Even meals had been super because in place of sitting at separate tables, all the staff and students that had remained for the holidays ate collectively. It had been nice to sit flanked by her mum and dad instead of at a table ostensibly miles away.

Yesterday had been a most awesome day. If Caitlin had any qualms about how renowned and admired her parents were, they were totally erased. Hermione had worn her engagement ring to breakfast where Madam Pomfrey immediately noticed it and made the balance of the staff aware of the momentous event. Since the staff was eating at the same table as the students, the exchange was unquestionably overheard. By ten o'clock owls started arriving congratulating the couple.

Justin Finch-Fletchley's head appeared in Hermione's fireplace shortly before noon expressing his best wishes and asking if Harry and Hermione would be agreeable to sit for an interview; something neither had ever granted prior. Because of the fine piece Justin had written pertaining to the trial, Harry and Hermione decided to oblige just this once.

Justin's interview became the focal point of a special edition of the Daily Prophet that was rushed to press and available Friday afternoon. It was only the third time in the 300 plus years of publication that the Prophet put out a special edition. The previous two times were to announce the defeat of Voldemort.

Then, last evening at dinner the ceiling of the Great Hall turned black as thousands of owls swooped in and literally buried Harry and Hermione to their necks in congratulatory letters. Caitlin had beamed with pride realizing just how much the wizard world revered and loved the two people she now referred to as Mum and Dad. Emma Wrong had gone so far as to declare their wedding day a wizard holiday.

* * * * *

Saturday, December 27, 2003

It was a curious morning in the Zacherley household. Everyone was wearing clothes for breakfast. Not that they had given up naturism, but they had to make a train by ten o'clock. Just as they were about to start eating, the family owl tapped on the window.

Mr. Zacherley gave her a snack and the owl flew off after delivering two copies of the Daily Prophet. Mr. Zacherley studied the two papers as a broad smile came to his face. He turned to his wife, "Jennifer, they're getting married. The Minister of Magic has declared their wedding day a national wizard holiday."

Mrs. Zacherley looked quizzingly at her husband. "Who is getting married and why did the owl bring two copies of the paper?"

Before he could answer her, another owl tapped at the window. As soon as it was opened the large white owl flew to Jamie's shoulder with its letter. After receiving a treat the owl was on its way.

Everyone just stared at Jamie because the Hogwarts seal was quite visible on the letter. No one took a bite of his or her breakfast as Jamie read the letter.

Dear Jamie,

I sincerely hope this letter reaches you before you read the Daily Prophet. Harry and I granted Justin Finch an interview today and a number of items we mentioned to him off the record ended up in his article. Justin is a wonderful person and I'm sure he intended no harm.

Our goal was to discuss this with you privately, but now we can only hope Hedwig gets to you with this letter before you see the newspaper. Christmas Eve Harry asked me to marry him and I said yes.

You've read Harry Potter a History, so you are well aware that I spent most of my time with Harry and Ron while I attended Hogwarts and never really developed what I could call a close relationship with any of the female students.

Although some might think it improper for it to exist, I feel you and I have a particularly close bond. That attachment has grown through mutual admiration and respect. (Caitlin told me I was your role model. I'm honored.)

I would be quite pleased if you would serve as maid of honor at my wedding to Harry. It will be a quite simple affair. There will be no bride's maids; just the best man, Ronald Weasley and the maid of honor.

Caitlin will be giving me away.

I'm sorry I didn't get to discuss this in person with you first.

Love, Hermione

"She wants me to be her maid of honor. Professor Granger wants me to be in her wedding."

Jamie's dad looked as if he was ready to burst with pride. "My little girl is going to be a part of the most celebrated wedding in contemporary wizard history. That's what the special edition of the Prophet is all about. Harry Potter and Hermione Granger are going to be married in May."

Amanda, Alex and Emily all gathered around Jamie trying to read the letter over her shoulder as they patted her on the back and kissed her cheeks.

Mrs. Zacherley stared at Jamie as tears formed in her eyes. "You and Professor Granger have become quite close in the last five years haven't you?"

Jamie immediately knew what her mum was thinking and rushed to her side, giving her a kiss and throwing her arms around her. "Mum, I think a great deal of Professor Granger. She is my mentor and role model, but you're my mum and no one could ever take your place in my heart. I love you and will never stop loving you."

Mrs. Zacherley looked up at her daughter. "I'm sorry honey, it's just that I see so little of you now what with you away at school ten months of the year. I miss you, so much. Soon Emily will be leaving and your dad and I will be all alone."

Jamie placed her hand on her mum's heart and then placed her mum's hand over her heart. "We may not always be together mum, but I'll always be in yours and you'll always be in mine." Jennifer Zacherley stood up and hugged her daughter. They hugged each other tighter and longer than they had in years.

Emily looked at her mother and sister as she shook her head and commented to Amanada, "You'd think they were never going to see each other again."

* * * * *

Carl Zacherley called out, "Hurry everybody. We have to leave within fifteen minutes to catch the train."

Jamie gave her dad a calming pat on the back. "We'll make it dad, don't get excited."

"Jamie, if you're all set. I'd like to talk with you a moment." Mr. Zacherley ushered his daughter into the vacant kitchen. "Your mum and I are exceedingly proud of you, young lady."

Jamie blushed as she saw the happiness oozing from her father's face. He continued, "I've always recognized you and your sister were extraordinary, but I've always chalked some of that up to parental prejudice. For Professor Granger to take such individual interest in you, she must have seen it, too. Harry Potter and Hermione Granger are undoubtedly the greatest wizard and witch alive. Listen to what they say and trust them. They can be a strong positive influence on your life. You are extremely fortunate to not only have them as Professors, but also as friends."

"I know Dad. They are both magnificent, but so are you and Mum. You're the best parents a girl could have."

"Well, perhaps its your turn to be slightly prejudiced with that comment. I love you, honey."

Jamie kissed her Dad's cheek and they hugged tightly. As they broke the embrace Mr. Zacherley gave his daughter a solemn stare. "I like Alex. Is he the one you've chosen to receive your gift?"

It made Jamie feel good that her father and she shared such a close relationship. Not many daughters could talk to their fathers about who they may or may not have sex with. "I'm not sure. You told me I would know, but I almost gave it to Professor Potter. Alex and I are such good friends. It would be so easy, so comfortable to be with him, but I'm scared. After almost mistakenly giving myself to Professor Potter, I'm afraid what Alex and I have is more hormones than love. How can I be sure?"

"First, don't be so positive you were erroneous when you decided to give yourself to Harry Potter. You and Ms. Granger are quite comparable. Under different circumstance, Harry

Potter may well have been the correct choice. Take it slow with Alex. The doubt will eventually be removed one way or the other."

Emily burst into the kitchen and scolded her dad. "You told us to hurry and now you and Jamie are in here gabbing. Do you want them to miss the train?"

* * * * *

Caitlin had practically worn a path in the carpet as she anxiously paced back and forth. "Mum, the train just pulled into Hogsmeade. It won't be long before they're back. When can we put our robes on?" Caitlin implored.

"Not till after dinner. The dance doesn't start until eight. Those robes are made of a very special fabric. Normal spot removal charms might not work; so let's not take any chances."

Hermione gazed at her little girl. *She's actually my little girl and going to her first formal dance.* She's going to be upset with me, but I have to tell her. "Caitlin, about the robes for the dance."

Caitlin didn't like the sound of her mother's voice. She said apprehensively, "What about the them? You're wearing yours, aren't you? Please, Mum! You have to wear it. Dad's anxious to see you in it."

"I know, but I'm a professor, not a student. My shortest shorts cover more leg than those robes. I owled Madame Malkin to learn if it were possible to lengthen the hem. She wasn't precisely happy with the thought. She claimed the designer would be offended because the robes are designed to show all the leg, but she understood my circumstances."

Caitlin looked extremely disenchanted. "How long are you going to make it? Are you going to make me lengthen mine?"

"It will still be exceptionally short. Madame Malkin insisted that I could only extend the length two inches without ruining the dress. I tried it on after doing the adjustment charm. Its still three inches above my knees. Harry and everyone else will still see rather a bit of my legs. More than I'm contented with in robes."

Caitlin looked at her mum as if pleading. "Are you going to make me increase the length of my robes? I'm sure Jamie will wear hers as designed."

"I'm sure she will," Hermione wincingly agreed. "I don't see how you girls can be at ease in robes that only just cover your crotch."

"Mum, we're both nudists. If permitted, we'd both be contented attending the dance without a stitch on."

"Just your saying that gives me goose bumps. I can't envisage how the two of you could have paraded around exposed in front of the entire Gryffindor house on Halloween."

"Mum, that's ancient history. You forbade us from doing it another time and we haven't.

Being naked is not the same as wearing dress robes that are micro max."

"Not quite and I must admit that you and Jamie look astounding in them. You will promise to do the modesty charm on them every fifty minutes so that it doesn't expire. And please remember to sit like a lady with your knees together. The charm won't conceal that view."

Caitlin looked at her mum with a gigantic smile and then started laughing.

Hermione, looked exceedingly exasperated. "Just what did I say that you find so humorous?"

Caitlin hugged her mum. "I'm sorry, it's not anything comical you said; it's just that you're being so mum-like; so fretful. I love you."

Hermione returned Caitlin's hug. "I love you, too. And be careful who is around when you go up and down staircases."

* * * * *

"Well, what do you think, Dad?"

Harry Potter surveyed his daughter as if she were a new muggle car he was about to buy. "You look beautiful, but how can you move in those robes?"

"Watch this!" Caitlin grabbed the sides of her robes and lifted her arms as if she were going to take it off over her head. The hem remained just below her crotch.

Harry just shook his head as he said, "What will they think up next?" He took a deep apprehensive breath. "Are your mum's robes that short?"

"Nah! She ruined hers with an augmentation charm. They come all the way down to here now." Caitlin held her hand about mid thigh indicating the length of her mum's robes and then flopped herself down in a chair.

Harry stared at Caitlin as if unsure whether to speak or not. "You do realize that when you sit like that your pubic area is totally visible?"

"Dad, normally I'm totally nude. This certainly isn't the first time you've seen that."

"It's different tonight. You have quite short dress robes on. I'm concerned if you sit improperly now that you might do so later this evening and give someone a show."

Caitlin jumped up from the chair and gave Harry a hug and then a kiss on the cheek. "You really do think of me as your little girl now, don't you? I love you." Caitlin gave her dad an even better hug.

As Hermione entered the room she momentarily watched Caitlin and Harry hugging before she said, "I'm glad you two have become so close." Harry and Caitlin turned toward Hermione's voice. They both just stared. Neither one had ever seen her looking so attractive.

Harry was the first to speak. "Hermione, you're gorgeous. I mean, you've always been beautiful, but tonight... Wow!"

Hermione blushed as she smiled at Harry, "I'll take that as a compliment Mr. Potter. May I say that you look quite handsome yourself? What are your plans for after the dance?"

Harry smirked, "Well, it happens I skipped dessert at the evening meal."

Hermione blushed deeply, "Exactly what do you have in mind?"

"Hold it you two," Caitlin shouted. "I know we all agreed that you would treat me as an adult and not hide anything from me. And I really appreciate that you talk openly about sex in front of me, but some things should remain on a need to know basis. I just got this vision of mum nude with whip cream and chocolate syrup all over her."

Harry and Hermione turned a deep red just as they were saved by a knock on the door.

"Harry, that's probably Ron and Sam. Will you let them in? I have to get my wand," Hermione stated.

"Sure, Herm," Harry responded as he headed to the door. After greeting Ron and Sam, he showed them into the room. "Hermione and I are really delighted the two of you are helping us chaperone this evening."

"Sam would have walked over burning coals to get a look at the inside of Hogwarts. I've already given her a tour of some of the castle, but saved the Great Hall for last," Ron remarked.

Harry turned to Sam, "The great Hall is always impressive, but at Christmas it's spectacular." Caitlin had inched her way over to her dad. "Sam, you haven't met our daughter. This is Caitlin."

"Hi Caitlin, it's nice to finally meet you. Those are beautiful robes you have on. I saw them at Madame Malkin's shop. But they're so tiny. How do you manage to move without something showing?" Sam asked.

"I'm pleased to meet you, Miss Bowman. They have a modesty charm that keeps them from riding up. Watch, I'll show you how it works," Caitlin replied.

Ron and Samantha watched as Caitlin grabbed the sides of her robes and lifted the hem above her waist giving them both an excellent view of her exposed naked body just as Hermione walked into the room.

Ron's face turned as red as his hair as Caitlin apologized copiously for upsetting Ron and Sam. Hermione scolded, "Caitlin, I told you to renew that charm every 50 minutes. Is it necessary for me to do the lengthening charm?"

"No Mum! Please don't. I'll be more careful," she said as she charmed the robes.

Sam had been studying Caitlin's face and now said, "Caitlin, it's no big deal, an apology isn't necessary. I would like you to explain one thing, however. You seemed quite upset that Ron

and I might be embarrassed, but you didn't seem the least bit unsure of yourself. How is that possible?"

Caitlin looked first at Hermione and then at Harry as if asking their permission to tell the truth. They both nodded yes. "I'm comfortable with being seen naked. I'm a naturist. Mum and Dad allow me to be naked whenever I'm in our quarters."

"I thought so," Sam replied. "My best friend in school was a nudist. She loved to be nude and it didn't bother her who saw her, but she was always concerned about how other people felt. As much as she hated clothes, she would prefer to get dressed rather than have someone else feel self-conscious."

Ron seemed extremely puzzled as he looked questioningly at Harry and Hermione, "Does that mean that the two of you have become nudists?"

Harry shook his head no as Hermione responded emphatically, "Not on your life. The chances of it snowing in July are better. I could never expose myself to a stranger. I feel overexposed in this dress.

"You should feel gorgeous," Sam replied.

"Yes, Ron added. "I don't know when I've seen you look so stunning."

Hermione blushed and simply said, "Thank you."

Caitlin was very fascinated by the news that Sam's best friend was a nudist. "Miss Bowman did you ever spend any time nude with your best friend?"

Sam looked tentatively at Ron as if wondering whether to answer or not. "Yes, quite a bit. I love swimming in the nude. You and I have something else in common."

"What's that?" Caitlin quizzed.

Sam went over and whispered in Caitlin's ear.

Caitlin looked at Sam in shock, "You don't?"

Sam grinned, "Never!"

Hermione wondered to herself what Sam and Caitlin were whispering about, but when she looked at the clock she put the thought aside. "We best be on our way. The four of us should get to the Great Hall before the students start arriving and, Caitlin, you want to hurry over to Gryffindor tower and meet your friends." Hermione stared at Caitlin. "How often are you going to do the modesty charm?"

"I think maybe every half hour, just to be safe," Caitlin replied.

"Sounds like a plan," Harry answered. "And if you dance every dance you won't have to worry how you sit."

Caitlin smiled at her mum and dad, "I can't get over how fast you two got into parenting. I

love you both." Caitlin hugged Harry and Hermione and after telling Ron and Sam good-bye for now; she left for Gryffindor tower.

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"Amanda, you look fantastic. Tony will be drooling all night," Jamie commented.

"Thanks Jamie, but I just hope he notices me after he sees you almost in those cocktail robes. The way it forms to your body; it's like a second skin. Alex is going to go crazy touching your bare back all evening."

"Do you think it's too short and revealing?"

"Frankly yes, but somehow on you it looks marvelous. The guys will love it; especially if you bend over at all."

Jamie giggled, "It's charmed to lengthen so that's not a problem. I just have to remember to restore the charm every hour."

"Please do, we don't want to have a riot."

Just then they heard a knock on the dorm door. Jamie looked at Amanda and said, "That must be Caitlin."

"I'm not late, am I? I was afraid you would leave without me," Caitlin inquired as she entered the fifth year girls' dorm.

"You just made it. In your rush did you forget the bottom of your cocktail robes? You're showing an awful lot of skin," Amanda teased.

"Don't you start it, too? Mum threatened to lengthen the hem just because I had a slight accident."

"Accident? What happened?" Jamie asked.

"Professor Weasley and his date were in my parent's quarters. Her name is Samantha Bowman. She's quite nice. Anyway, I went to demonstrate how the Modesto Charm worked, but unfortunately it had been over an hour since I renewed it."

Jamie's eyes went wide. "You flashed Professor Weasley and his date?"

"Yes. I did a first rate job of it, to boot. The hem of the dress was at my waist before I realized the charm wasn't functioning."

Amanda broke into laughter. "I'd love to hear your definition of major, if that was a slight accident. Wait! I've figured out your ambition. You want to have the entire staff of Hogwarts see you naked before the end of your first year. First it was Professor Granger, then Professor Potter and now Professor Weasley. Who's next? Headmaster Snape?"

Jamie couldn't help but laugh as she put her arm around Caitlin. "Don't worry about it. By the way, did I tell you how fabulous you look? Matt and Randy are going to be the envy of all the first year boys. Speaking of which, were any of the boys in the common room yet?"

"Matt and Randy weren't, but Alex was wearing a path in the carpet. Where are we meeting Tony?" Caitlin said as she scowled at the still giggling Amanda.

"At the bottom of the steps just outside the Great Hall. We should get going. I don't want to keep him waiting," Amanda's voiced was suddenly trembling.

As the girls entered the common room, three chins simultaneously hit the floor as the three pair of eyes attached to those heads became fixed on their targets.

Alex was the first to gain a degree of composure as he walked over to Jamie and said, "You're stunning. I'm going to be the envy of the ball with you on my arm. Oh! Here I got you flowers." Alex stretched the band as Jamie slid her hand through the wrist corsage.

Matt and Randy just stood staring at Caitlin until Amanda finally cleared her throat.

"We got you flowers, too. Here, Randy." Matt handed the corsage to Randy.

Unfortunately the boys had purchased pin on flowers. Randy just looked at Caitlin dress. There were no straps and the dress was cut straight across the front just above the nipples that would some day be the focal point of her breasts. He handed the flowers back to Matt. "I told you we should have gotten one for the wrist. You do it."

Matt's hand shook as it headed toward Caitlin's chest. "Cait, I'm afraid I'll stab you unless... Am I going to get slapped if I stick my hand in there to prevent the pin from pricking you?"

Jamie had been watching the boys, while trying not to laugh. She winked at Caitlin. "I doubt Caitlin would slap you under the circumstances, but I don't think it's a good idea for you to get used to putting your hand on her chest no matter how noble the intentions. I think I have a better suggestion." Jamie drew her wand from its sheath and pointed it at the flowers. "Rubando." Suddenly Matt was holding a wrist corsage that he easily slipped over Caitlin's hand.

"Let's get going people," Amanda urged. "I'd like to see my date before the evening is over."

They quickly traversed the corridors and flights of stairs that led to the Great Hall. As they turned the corner Amanda saw Tony standing at the bottom of the tall main staircase awaiting their arrival. They got to within a few meters of the stairs when, Jamie and Caitlin both froze as if having the same thought. They couldn't descend those without giving Tony the show of shows. Being a naturist is not being an exhibitionist.

They stood there for a few moments before Matt leaned over and whispered in Caitlin's ear. "You and Jamie don't have knickers on, do you?"

Caitlin shook her head, no.

"Randy, walk down the stairs in front of Jamie. I'll walk in front of Caitlin. We don't want anyone looking up the ladies' robes," Matt suggested.

When they all reached the main level, Tony joined Amanda and gave her a kiss on the cheek before placing flowers on her wrist. "Amanda, you look dazzling tonight."

She responded, "Thank you Tony. You're looking quite handsome." Amanda felt like she was about to melt.

Tony looked again at Amanda and then noticed Jamie and Caitlin's robes. "I think it's lucky that Alex and I are both Beaters. We'll probably have to spend the entire evening defending you three beautiful women. What do you say we check out the decorations in the Great Hall?"

As they walked through the open doors of the Great Hall they saw that the House tables had vanished; instead, there were about thirty smaller, lantern-lit ones, each capable of seating about a dozen people. The walls of the Hall had all been covered in sparkling silver frost, with hundreds of garlands of mistletoe and ivy crossing the starry black ceiling.

As they walked by one table, a group of first years called to Caitlin, Matt and Randy to join them. Caitlin looked at Jamie as if in search of permission. "Go ahead and join your friends. You don't want to spend your entire evening with us old fogies. Caitlin, don't forget the charm." Jamie smiled as Caitlin and her two escorts joined their friends. Then she glanced at Amanda. "Next year, I'll have her and a real sister here."

They found an empty table and took seats just as a hushed murmur started to spread through the Hall. The intensity amplified and suddenly everyone sprang to his or her feet and started applauding. Jamie soon realized that the applause was for Professor Granger and Professor Potter who had just entered the Hall with Professor Weasley and Samantha Bowman. Most of the school had been on vacation when their engagement was announced. This was the first time the student body had the opportunity to voice their approval and they were most certainly doing so.

As Hermione and Harry just stood there stunned, Ron grabbed Sam's hand and hurried toward the stage. Sam watched as he jumped on the stage and after speaking to the lead singer a few seconds; he took the microphone in hand. "Could I please have your attention for a few moments?" The crowd slowly quieted down.

"September, twelve years ago I was a petrified first year student searching for a place to sit on the Hogwarts Express. I happened upon a compartment occupied by a solitary boy; a boy with broken glasses, unruly hair and a scar on his forehead that my Mum had helped find track 8 $\frac{3}{4}$.

"Later an obnoxious know it all little girl with messy hair and buck teeth visited our compartment. Ever since that day, the boy has been trying to get me killed and the girl has been bossing me around.

"The three of us had a truly special friendship, but for Harry and Hermione it's always been more than friendship. You'd think that two people that could figure out how to defeat Lord Voldemort, could figure out they loved each other. Especially when one of them is the smartest witch alive.

"But no, it took them twelve long years till they finally figured it out. I know these two too well. When they get married it will be a quiet affair and I won't get to make any speeches.

They also probably won't have a reception and get to dance a first dance as a husband and wife. I know we are a few months early, but let's make them dance that dance for us tonight." The students burst into applause approving the idea. "He hasn't changed much. The hair is still messy and he still has a scar, but at least he has new glasses. She's changed a lot; quite a lot. I'd like to introduce the future Mr. and Mrs. Harry Potter."

On cue The Weird Sisters started playing a slow number as the students applauded for their favorite Professors to lead off the first dance. Hermione looked into Harry eyes, "We don't have a choice sweetheart."

Harry smiled at Hermione. "Yes we do. I choose to love you more and more everyday of my life. May I have this dance, my bride to be?" Harry took her hand and led her onto the floor as the group played *Lady in Red*.

As Harry and Hermione took the floor, Tony commented to Alex, "I can't believe that's Professor Granger. I always thought she was attractive, but she's so..."

"Hot! I think the word you're looking for is hot. Potter is quite a lucky bloke," Alex remarked.

Amanda jumped in. "Professor Granger isn't doing so bad herself. Professor Potter has been on the top ten handsome bachelors list the last six years. Professor Malfoy and he usually fight it out for first place. They each have three firsts and three seconds. I guess it ends in a tie."

Jamie listened to her friends' gossip as she watched Harry and Hermione dance. Yes, they were an attractive couple, but their love went far beyond physical attributes. Their love was based on friendship and compassion. Harry fell in love with Hermione long before she transformed into the lovely swan she is today and she loved him before he grew into a handsome wizard. The kind of love they have will never die because of a few wrinkles or unwanted pounds.

Jamie's thoughts were interrupted by the voice of The Weird Sisters lead singer. "Since we're acting as if this is an early wedding reception, will the best man and the maid of honor and their companions please join the future bride and groom? Caitlin, Will you and your date please join the wedding party?"

Sam dragged Ron onto the dance floor as Jamie coaxed a hesitant Alex. Meanwhile, Caitlin was torn as to whether to dance with Matt or Randy until Matt dejectedly spoke, "Randy and I had decided that since you were here with both of us tonight, we would alternate dances. He won the toss, so he gets the first dance."

"No! This isn't the first dance; it's a special dance. You're both special to me? I'm either dancing with both of you or not dancing at all."

"You realize that we're going to look ridiculous?" Randy questioned.

"And that everyone will laugh at us?" Matt added.

"So, are we going to do it or not?" Caitlin asked.

"Of course!" Both boys responded as they each grabbed a hand and led Caitlin on to the floor.

* * * * *

Nothing makes a girl feel more like a princess than attending a ball with her prince. Amanda was having the most enjoyable evening of her life. No one had ever treated her like Tony. He literally made her feel like a princess. They had danced most of the night and when they weren't dancing he only talked about her and how he wished he had asked her out sooner.

Caitlin felt like the belle of the ball. All the Gryffindor first year boys asked her to dance at least once, as did both a second and third year boy. Even Alex and Tony asked her to dance. With the help of Jamie, she even remembered to recharm her robes thus avoiding the wrath of her mother.

If Caitlin felt like the belle of the ball, imagine how Jamie felt. She hadn't sat out one dance. Even Professor Weasley and Harry had asked her to dance. She had danced a slow number with Harry and felt like she was going to melt when he wrapped his arm around her bareback. Jamie realized that Harry and she were never intended to be lovers. She was glad that he hadn't taken advantage of a foolish girl. Yet, she felt a strong connection to Harry, much more than a teacher-student bond. She felt that somehow they would become closer.

Hermione had her prince. Life was good; life was terrific. She had a profession she venerated, an adopted daughter that she cherished, a soon to be husband that she adored and if early indications were correct perchance a child on the way.

She hadn't told Harry yet because it was too soon. She hadn't even missed a menstrual period yet; that was due Monday, but she had been experiencing a sensation of nausea for the last week.

Hermione noticed Caitlin was taking a break and had glanced in her direction. Hermione pulled on her ear lobe. Caitlin smiled and pulled on hers. "Harry, she is finally sitting out a dance. It's probably now or never." Then as an after thought she said. "Oh! Harry. If you lift her; please make sure first that she has renewed the charm."

Harry glanced over to where Caitlin was seated. "Ron, will you please entertain Hermione while I have a dance with my daughter." Ron nodded his head as Harry walked toward where Caitlin was seated.

Hermione watched as she saw Harry go into his act; a smile covered her face. Harry first bowed and then as Caitlin accepted his offer and got out of her chair, he took her hand and kissed it. "He looks like someone out of a bad B movie, doesn't he?"

"I think your husband to be is very sweet," Sam sighed and then looked at Ron. "Almost as sweet as Big Red."

Ron blushed, "If you ladies will excuse me for just a moment, I have to see a man about a horse."

Hermione looked at Sam irritated, "Why can't a man just say he has to take a pee or whatever? Why do they insist on using silly phrases that mean nothing?"

Sam laughed, "I don't know. Ron's the same way with sex. He has yet to say 'let's have sex' or 'let's make love'. He always says something corny like roll in the hay or go bowling."

Hermione blushed a deep red, "Harry never asks. He knows it isn't necessary. I'd make love to him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week if we were physically able."

It was Sam's turn to blush. "I thought Ron and I had it bad."

Out of the blue Hermione said, "Do you think the two of you will ever get married?"

Sam shook her head, "All he has to do is ask. I know he loves me, and he loves Timmy, too. You should see them together. It's the whole werewolf thing. He thinks that he is some kind of monster and that he would be ruining both Timmy's life and my own. He doesn't understand that it doesn't matter. I love him."

Suddenly Hermione turned ghastly white. "Are you alright, Hermione? You look sick."

"I'm unexpectedly feeling a little nauseous. Please, excuse me for a moment. I'm going to step outside."

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No, I'll be fine. You wait here for Ron and Harry. They'll go into a panic if they come back and find us both missing. I'll be fine if I get a little fresh air."

Sam watched as Hermione headed to the terrace doors. Just before she reached them, a young boy handed her a small box. She took the box and proceeded out the door.

Samantha stood by herself only a few moments before Ron returned. "Where's Hermione?"

Sam answered, "She stepped outside for a few moments. Had a sudden feeling of nausea. I wouldn't want to start any rumors but the way she looked reminded me of my first couple of months carrying Timmy."

"You think she's pregnant?"

"Let's not jump to conclusions, but yes."

"I wonder if Harry knows?"

"From the way those robes cling to her flat stomach, I would guess that she may not even be sure herself. Not to change the subject, but the evening is almost over. Think there is a chance of the chaperones having one more dance?"

"Excellent chance. Here comes Harry now. Let me tell him where Hermione is and then I'll step on your feet some more."

Sam giggled, "Yes, we have to work on your dancing skills a little. I believe a slow dance is known as a foxtrot, not a wolf stomp."

As soon as Harry was within conversational distance, he inquired as to Hermione's

whereabouts. Ron and Sam told him she had stepped outside for a moment and then after indicating the door through which she had exited; they went off to dance.

Caitlin had watched her father walk across the floor and as soon as she saw him hurrying to the terrace doors she scurried after him, thinking perhaps something was amiss. Jamie noticed Caitlin and followed to see what the trouble was.

Harry had only exited the hall when the girls caught up to him. "Is something wrong Dad? Where's Mum?" Caitlin asked.

"Everything's fine. Your mum just stepped out for a moment. She was feeling slightly queasy. You girls will catch your death out here dressed the way you are. Go back inside. I'll locate her."

Jamie had a sudden uneasy feeling in her stomach. Caitlin and her exchanged glances before Jamie said, "We're not cold. Let us help you locate her."

Since they were on the far end of the Great Hall, Hermione could have turned either left or right and walked to one of the long sides. Harry suggested that the girls go left and that he would go right. Harry had just reached his corner when he heard Jamie screaming, "Professor Potter, come quick!"

Harry turned and ran toward the sound of Jamie's voice. He ran past the point where they had exited the Great Hall, but when he got to the corner of the terrace, he just stopped and looked in disbelief and dismay. In front of him stood Caitlin and Jamie, both with tears flowing down their cheeks. Jamie was holding the sheath containing Hermione's wand in her left hand. In her right hand she clutched a tiny pair of red knickers and Hermione's red dress. Caitlin was kneeling next to her mum's shoes and a small box. In one hand she held a necklace and a pair of earrings. With the other hand she had just picked up her mum's engagement ring.

Hermione Granger had vanished.

Chapter Seventeen Clueless

"Caitlin, freeze! Don't touch that box," Harry shouted. "It could be a Portkey."

"What's a Portkey? What happened to Mum?" Caitlin's trembling voice asked as tears streamed from her eyes. At that instant Alex, who was alarmed by Jamie's longer than expected absence, came upon the scene.

"Mr. Ward," Harry ordered, "I need you to find Professor Weasley straight away. Tell him Professor Granger has disappeared; been taken forcibly. Have him make contact with the Ministry of Magic. Tell them to send any available Aurors." Alex momentarily hesitated as he gazed at Jamie's tear covered face. "Hurry boy; this is urgent!" Alex turned and ran.

Never before in his entire life had Harry felt so powerless. Hermione, the love of his life was gone, virtually plucked from his arms. He had no idea where to even begin searching. Not only didn't he have any idea where she was taken, but what's more he had no idea who had taken her. At least with Voldemort, he could put a face to his enemy. He didn't even know for a fact that it was his enemy. Hermione was no longer an unknown muggle girl whose main claim to fame was that she was the best friend of the boy who lived. Hermione had become a well know and powerful witch in her own right. Undoubtedly she had made some enemies of her own along the way.

Harry had other responsibilities besides finding Hermione. There were two girls crying their hearts out. They each in their own way loved Hermione as much as he did. Now they needed him. As weak as he felt at the moment, he had to be strong for them. He had to be brave, so they in turn could be brave. Harry gathered both the girls to him as he wrapped his arms around their slender waists. They leaned their heads on his shoulders and he could feel the sobs racking their bodies.

"A Portkey is an enchanted object, often a piece of supposedly worthless junk, which when touched will transport a person to a preprogrammed location. In this case I believe that whatever was in that box was a Portkey. Hermione has been transported somewhere, but we have no way of knowing where." Harry squeezed Caitlin tight.

Caitlin looked up into her dad's face as he fought to keep his own tears in check. "Can we use the Portkey to follow her; go where mum went and bring her home."

"No. Unfortunately the Portkey is transported with the person."

Jamie looked at Hermione's knickers and robes. "Professor Potter, wherever she is, she's naked. She has no clothes, no wand, no way to defend herself."

"The Portkey obviously was programmed to only transport living matter. It's probably a security precaution to prevent wands or tracking devices from being transported."

All of a sudden Ron came rushing toward them, closely followed by Sam. "They'll be here shortly Harry. The Aurors had to Apparate to Hogsmeade because of the charms around Hogwarts. Their carriages should arrive any minute. Emma Wrong is with them. She sent owls to the balance of the staff calling them back immediately due to the fact that Hogwarts security was breached. The dance is over, but all the students have been instructed to remain in the Great Hall. Alex Ward and Tony Marburger are doing a fine job of maintaining order." Ron breathlessly reported, his face displaying the anguish he felt.

Ron had barely finished talking when Emma Wrong and two Aurors ran up to them. Emma Wrong grabbed Harry's hand. "I'm so sorry Harry."

"Does anyone know where that box came from?" One of the Aurors asked.

"I do," Sam spoke up. "Hermione was feeling slightly nauseous and decided to get a breath of air. Just before she went out the door a young boy ran up to her and handed that box to her."

"Do you think you would recognize the boy that gave it to her?" The Auror asked.

"I believe so," Sam answered nervously.

"Good! Minister Wrong if you would take everyone inside. I'm sure they will be much warmer. It should only take a few minutes to examine the area here. The way it sounds, she was alone at the time the Portkey activated. Please, don't allow anyone to leave the Great Hall as yet."

Guided by Emma Wrong, Harry and the others went inside to await the Aurors. Evidently the word had already spread about Hermione's disappearance because the students were all very silent and seemed to be in a state of shock. While the others sat and waited, Sam and Ron walked around the room looking for the young boy that handed Hermione the box. Suddenly Sam stopped and said to Ron, "That's him, the cubby boy at the table to the left."

Ron looked frustrated. "I'm afraid this will be a dead end. That's Ronald Aldinger, a Hufflepuff. He wouldn't hurt a fly. He may have given the box to Hermione, but I'm sure he had no idea what was in it. I'll go talk to him and have him join our table."

Ron went over and after whispering in the boy's ear, the first year Hufflepuff timidly got to his feet and apprehensively followed Sam and Ron over to where Harry and the others were seated.

As soon as Ronald saw Caitlin crying he went over to her. "Caitlin, I'm sorry. I like Professor Granger. I'd never do anything to hurt her or you. They told me it was a gift from Professor Potter."

Caitlin smiled through her tears at the nervous boy. "Ronald, I know you wouldn't hurt her. Nobody thinks you were implicated. I'm sure the Aurors just want you to answer some questions about who gave the box to you. Come sit next to me until they're ready to talk to you." Harry watched as Caitlin held her friend's hand. He wasn't quite sure if that was making the young boy more or less nervous, but it was Caitlin intentions at this particular time that impressed Harry. In the middle of her grief and sorrow, she was reaching out with understanding to her classmate.

It was just a short time before the two Aurors completed their tests and came inside. As soon as they were informed that the young boy who had given the box to Hermione had been located, they suggested the balance of the students be allowed to return to their common rooms.

As the students made their way out of the Great Hall many hugged and patted Caitlin and Jamie as they went past. Harry had to get up and walk away for a brief time. He felt like he

was watching mourners give their condolences to the family. *Hermione isn't dead! We'll find her. She'll be fine. She has to be. I can't lose her not now, not ever.*

Once all the students with the exclusion of Jamie, Caitlin and Ronald had vacated the Great Hall, Emma Wrong requested every person to be seated. Ron gave Harry a reassuring touch on the back as he took the seat next to him. Sam sat on Ron's other side. Caitlin, of course, sat next to Harry as Jamie kindheartedly left Ronald sit between her and Caitlin.

Minster Wrong and the two somber faced Aurors took seats across from Harry. When everyone was seated Emma said, "Before we commence, it would probably be helpful if we all introduced ourselves and stated our relationship to Professor Granger. I'll begin by introducing myself and the two gentlemen to my left. I, as most of you probably know, am Emma Wrong, Minster of Magic. Next to me is Sergeant Friday and on his left Detective Smith."

The two men nodded their heads as they were introduced. Sergeant Friday was a tall thin man with a dark complexion. It looked like his face would crack if he even attempted to smile. Detective Smith was shorter and stockier, but positively not fat. He without doubt looked like the more friendly of the two Aurors.

Minster Wrong continued, "Friday and Smith are two of the finest Aurors in the department. Now then miss," she indicated Samantha, "If you would introduce yourself."

Detective Smith took out a ballpoint quill with which to take notes.

"I'm Samantha Bowman. Hermione and I just recently met, but I consider her a friend. I'm dating Ron Weasley," Sam indicated Ron. "I'm not positive, but I believe I was the last person to see the Professor."

Ron spoke next. "I'm, Ron Weasley, flying instructor for Hogwarts. Harry, Hermione and I have been best friends since our first year attending Hogwarts. Sam and I were here tonight to assist Harry and Hermione in chaperoning the Yule Ball."

Harry looked quite disheartened. "I'm Harry Potter. Hermione and I just announced our engagement. We both teach at Hogwarts. This is our adopted daughter Caitlin." Harry indicated Caitlin by messing her hair.

Caitlin looked at the Aurors as if begging, "You'll find my mum? Please say you will."

Neither Auror responded. They simply waited for Ronald to introduce himself. "I'm Ronald Aldinger." Ronald began to cry as both Caitlin and Jamie consoled him. "I didn't know it would hurt her. I like Professor Granger. They said it was a present from Professor Potter."

"Now, now Ronald." Minster Wrong said. "No one is accusing you of wanting to harm Professor Granger. You are only here so you can tell us exactly what happened. Perhaps give us a clue to who kidnapped the Professor." Emma Wrong moved her attention from Ronald to Jamie. "And who are you miss?"

"I'm Jamie Zacherley. Caitlin and I are good friends. Professor Granger had asked me to be her Maid of Honor," Jamie answered.

At this point Sergeant Friday got to his feet. "Did anyone see anything strange or notice anyone suspicious during the course of the evening?" Everyone indicated no in various ways. "Than it seems that young Ronald here was the first to have contact with the perpetrator. Ronald, please don't be nervous. As Minister Wrong stated, no one feels you were involved in the kidnapping. Please tell us exactly what happened. Try not to leave out even the smallest detail that you remember. Sometimes cases are solved with evidence that seems minute or meaningless."

Ronald's voice cracked as he began. "There really isn't much to tell. I had to go to the loo. On the way back to the Great Hall two men approached me and asked me to give a small wrapped box to Professor Granger. I took the box from them and gave it directly to her and then returned to where I was sitting with my friends."

"Two men approached you?" Sergeant Friday repeated. "What did they look like?"

"They were both big," Ronald responded.

"By the term big do you mean quite tall or are you referring to their overall size? Were they heavy?"

"One was rather tall. Over two meters and at the same time quite hefty. The other wasn't nearly as tall, but probably weighed as much."

Jamie looked in Harry's direction. He was looking at her. Obviously, they were both wondering the same thing. Were the two blokes that gave Ronald the package, the same ones that attacked her?

"How were they dressed?" Friday questioned.

"They had on yellow and black work robes. I assumed they were with the band. Although when the band packed up tonight, I didn't see them about."

"Try to remember now, exactly what did they say to you?"

"The big guy said, this is a gift for Professor Granger from Professor Potter. See that she gets it. Don't tell anyone or you'll spoil the big surprise.' I asked them why they didn't give it to Professor Granger themselves and he said they weren't allowed in the Great Hall while the concert was going on and students were there. It made sense, so I took the box."

"Did they say anything else?"

"No. Wait! As I was leaving the shorter one made a crude remark."

"What did he say?" Sergeant Friday asked.

Ronald looked at Caitlin as if not sure he want to answer in her presence, but she encouraged him to reply. "He said that he envied me being around all those tight little bitches."

Jamie again looked at Harry and shouted, "It was them! It had to be them! He has the same dirty perverted mouth."

Friday looked severely at Jamie, "Miss, do you think you know those characters?"

Harry spoke before Jamie had a chance. "Jamie was attacked after a World Cup Quidditch game just before her first year at Hogwarts. The blokes Ronald described sound like the same pair that grabbed her."

Ron interjected, "Harry, do you think it could have been Crabbe and Goyle. I realize they're not the only fat wizards in the world, but those descriptions sound a lot like them."

"I thought that possible the night Jamie was attacked. I gave their names to the Aurors then," answered Harry.

Sergeant Friday interrupted. "Do you think you know them on a personal basis?"

Harry shook his head disgustedly. "If its Crabbe and Goyle, yes. I wasn't sure the night Jamie was attacked. The one was gone before I happened on the scene and the other Apparated before I got close enough to see his face. They started Hogwarts the same year as us. The two of them were tight with Draco Malfoy until he had his dad sent to Azkaban. After that they treated him like he was diseased. They both dropped out of school after getting zeros on their Q.W.L.s. at the end of fifth year."

"No one seems to know what happened to them. They seemed to have disappeared. Draco heard they had become Death Eaters loyal to Voldemort, but if so; they were never captured or imprisoned."

"Smith, make a note to look up the files on Miss Jamie, what was your last name again?" said Sergeant Friday.

"Zacherley," Jamie replied.

"Ronald, is there anything else you can tell us?" Friday asked.

"No, sir. I took the package that I thought to be a gift and went straight away to Professor Granger. I caught her just before she went to go outside. After giving her the package I rejoined my friends."

"Very well son, I think that will be all. You may return to your Common Room."

Before Ronald left he looked at Caitlin one last time, "I'm sorry. If only"

Caitlin tried her best to give Ronald a smile. "It's not your fault, Ronald. You had no way of knowing."

As Ronald left the Great Hall, Friday focused his attention on Sam. "Did you see the two men?"

"No," Sam responded. "I'm afraid I can add nothing to what Ronald has told you. Hermione and I had been standing to the side of the Hall. Ron had run to the loo and Harry had gone to ask his daughter, Caitlin for a dance. We talked for a short time as Harry danced. Suddenly Hermione said she felt slightly nauseated and was going to get some fresh air. I offered to go with her, but she was worried that Ron and Harry wouldn't be able to locate us. I stayed

behind to wait for the guys. Just as she was about to walk out the door to the terrace, young Ronald ran up to her with the wrapped box. She took it and walked out the door."

Friday looked at the somber faces ringing the table. "I'm afraid we have little to go on. From the small shreds of evidence we have found and from what we've now been told, we have a good idea what happen to Professor Granger and even who has her, but that information leads us to a dead end."

"What do you mean dead end!" Harry shouted. "We have to find her and quickly before, before" Harry couldn't finish because he didn't want to put into words the awful thoughts he was having concerning Hermione's well being.

"Harry, Hermione is not the first to disappear like this. Let me explain what I feel has taken place tonight. I'll tell you every thing we know about this new enemy of the wizard world, but alas it is slight," Sergeant Friday responded. .

"The two men that approached young Ronald tonight, I believe were indeed the same Crabbe and Goyle with which you went to school. It would not surprise me either if it were they who created the scare at the World Cup Quidditch game and attacked Miss Zacherley. Crabbe's attraction to little girls is well documented. We cannot apprehend either of them because they rarely spend more than thirty minute at a location. They are either in hiding most of the time or wear a Glamour disguise.

"The box they gave Hermione contained a very sophisticated Portkey. Had someone else opened the box or even touched the Portkey, nothing would have happened. This exceptional type of Portkey will only operate when it identifies the accurate fingerprint. Once she touched the Portkey, she was transported, but only her. If she had been touching another person, they would not have been transported. Likewise nothing on the person is transported. Anything inside, however, would be transported."

Harry interrupted, "What do you mean by inside?"

"As I said this is a very sophisticated Portkey. If it is transporting a muggle with a heart pacemaker, it would transport the pacemaker. Somehow it can discriminate between something on the body and something in the body. We've never been able to figure out exactly how it works because we've never gotten to see one

"I can't be absolutely sure, but I feel Hermione is now being held prisoner by the person we dread is in the paramount position to replace Lord Voldemort.

"Who is he? Why does he want Hermione?" Harry urgently inquired.

"Let me try to answer that, Harry," Minster Wrong said.

"We have no idea who this person is. They are only referred to as the Great One. No Dark Wizard we have interrogated has ever seen their new leader. It could well be someone we sit next to every day. Actually many of my opponents have suggested that it could even be me. I assure you that it isn't. Whoever he or she is seems to at least for the moment want to keep their identity a secret. The Death Eaters seem to get all their orders through a person know only as Damien. I fear that is who has Hermione now."

Harry did not at all like the look that came to Emma Wrong's face as she mentioned Damien. She wasn't telling everything she knew. He would have to question her more about Damien, but when Caitlin and Jamie weren't present.

"Harry," Emma continued. "I'm not positive why Hermione was taken, but I can endeavor a knowledgeable guess. Voldemort only worried about you, and destroying you alone. He never paid attention to Ron and Hermione. He considered them as your tag along friends. Only when it was too late did he realize that you could not defeat him alone, but with Ron and Hermione by your side you were invincible. I believe the Great One is significantly concerned now that the three of you have joined together again. The Great One may feel he can handle two of you, but not all three."

"But why Hermione," questioned Ron. "Why not Harry or I?"

"I'd rather not discuss that in front of Caitlin and Jamie. Harry, I'm sorry, but we are at a dead end. We have no idea where they might have Hermione. She may not even be in this country. All we can do is wait and hope. Hope that we get a lead or that Hermione somehow finds a way to escape."

Harry looked at Minister Wrong with disbelief. "Are you saying that we are just to continue our lives as if nothing happened? Surely there must be something we can do!"

"Harry," Emma looked at Harry with compassion. "My entire staff is at your disposal. If you have any idea where we can begin to look tell me. I'm as frustrated as you. I have lost twenty-three loyal dedicated Aurors to that vermin known as the Great One. I despise the name. Do you realize how hard it is to refer to someone you hate as Great One?"

Ron just looked at Minister Wrong. "So you're saying we should do nothing. We should just sit and wait."

"No," replied Emma. "I'm not suggesting you do nothing Mr. Weasley. Do you believe in a supreme being? Do you believe in God?"

"Yes, I believe in God," Ron replied.

"Then pray." The look on her face suggested their meeting was over and the group rose to leave. She looked at Harry and Ron. "If you would please remain for just a moment."

Sam leaned over and gave Ron a kiss. "I'll wait right outside the Hall." Ron gave her a quick nod of his head. She then went over and gave Harry a kiss on the cheek. "Remember and think of the happy moments. Somehow we'll get her back."

Harry hugged Sam and then gave Jamie and Caitlin each a kiss on the cheek before the three women left the room.

As the doors closed Minister Wrong looked at Ron and Harry.

Harry saw nothing, but emptiness in her eyes. He could tell she had already given up hope of ever seeing Hermione alive again.

She began. "Twenty-four of my best Aurors have been captured by, the so called Great One."

One escaped, but only after being castrated. The other twenty-three were returned to me by the piece. Five were women. They were brutally mutilated before being dismembered. My experts feel that they were kept alive for weeks as each limb was removed. Finally I'm sure they looked forward to being behead and the misery ending. One of them, either the Great One or Damien is very sick. I'm sorry, but you have to be prepared for the worst."

* * * * *

Harry returned to his quarters after seeing Sam and Ron off. Never in his entire life had he felt so helpless. He slowly undressed down to his boxers and crawled into bed, the bed that he shared with her, and the bed in which they made love. The bed now seemed so huge without his Hermione to share it. He just lay there, looking at the ceiling and knowing he wouldn't be able to sleep. He wanted to sleep so he wouldn't think of her, think of the suffering and agony she may be going through.

He hadn't heard Caitlin enter the room. Harry only realized she was there as she crawled in bed and said, "Dad may I please sleep with you. I can't stand to be alone with my thoughts tonight?"

Before Harry had the chance to protest, Caitlin cuddled against him and asked. "Dad why don't men cry? I've been crying since Jamie and I found her dress and other possessions. I may only be eleven, but I know how much you love her. How can you keep your feelings locked inside?"

Harry drew her tight against him as he responded, "I'm afraid to start crying for fear I'll never be able to stop. Caitlin, you can't imagine how much I love her and how much I'm afraid of losing her."

"Yes, I can. Dad, please don't lose faith. God will bring her back to us. He has to, we need her too much."

Harry held Caitlin tightly as he lost the battle and tears filled his eyes. *She has to come back. I can't lose her again.*

Sometime during the night exhaustion took its toll and they both finally succumbed to sleep.

* * * * *

Monday, December 29, 2003

Hermione awoke at the sound of a slamming door. She blinked several times, trying to clear her blurry eyes. Her heart thumped as she wondered who was coming into the room. Part of her hoped it was her captor, but she also feared looking into the face of the pervert who had brought her here.

Hermione had lost all track of time since her imprisonment. She had opened the gift that young Ronald had given her thinking it was from Harry. She had barely touched it when she felt as though a hook just behind her naval had been suddenly jerked irresistibly forward. Her feet left the ground and she went speeding forward in a howl of wind and swirling color. She remembered her feet slamming into the ground and then everything went blank. When she

came to, she was in her iron body cage, totally naked.

The cage was rather simple. It consisted of an iron band that encircled the waist at the hips. From this band two additional iron bands were connected at either side in the front. These bands crossed at the chest and then bent over the shoulders again crossing in the back before connecting to the waistband. Wrist cuffs were attached to either side and a hinged iron band went between the legs and closed at the back. Attachments for chains at the shoulders secured her to the wall.

"Hello Hermione," the malicious voice echoed. "I do hope you don't mind me calling you by your first name. Professor Granger seems so formal for two people that are going to get to know each other quite intimately. My name is Damien."

Her heart beat faster and her face felt hot as she felt him looking over her naked body. He moved closer and she shivered as he stepped into the light before her. His face was sallow and covered in spots. His eyes were gray, but the parts that should be white were a very sick looking yellow. Involuntarily, she shuddered as he stared at her silently. He took a few steps forward and was now so close that she could feel his breath on her neck. She cringed and tried to move her neck as a stubby, rough finger traced along the edge of her face.

"I've always thought you were attractive, but those pictures in the Daily Prophet don't do this face justice." As he said this, his hand cupped her chin and he jerked her head so that she was looking directly at him. "The things I've imagined doing to you." He was closer now, his large, oily nose mere centimeters from her own. Her body trembled, partially in fear and partially in anger as the man took a step back and began running his eyes over her again. Feeling the fury bubble inside her at this humiliation, she waited until his eyes were once more on her face before she spat at him.

The sharp crack echoed in the dingy room and she bit back a cry as the tears formed in her eyes. Her face stung where he had struck her and he was staring at her again, a menacing look in his eyes. "You won't stay pretty for long if you keep that up." He turned on her, walking towards a low table along the far wall. He spun quickly after picking something up and as he moved slowly towards her, she was able to see that he was pulling latex gloves over his hands. "Do you think they're looking for you, Hermione? Do you think they even care?" He was standing in front of her again.

The nightmares had haunted her since she'd arrived in this place. Sleep had come to her rarely and when she slumbered there were nightmares coursing through her mind. In her darkest moments, there was only despair, knowing there was no way they'd ever find her. She shook as the gloves traced down her body and she clenched her teeth as her body shuddered against his touch. It was neither smooth, nor sexy, but the touch of a man who hated women, who looked down upon them. Women were objects to this man who was now exploring her most private parts and she felt the hot tears beginning to stream down her face as the violations came again and again.

"No tracking devices. Not a very smart group, are you?" he asked finally, his inspection apparently complete.

Her voice wavered as she replied, "Why have you brought me here?"

"Ah, you do speak. I suppose that since you have deigned to talk to me, I can answer that. The

Great One has requested your presence here. He wants you to join us."

"Join you?" she spat out.

"And of course, if you don't, then he'll leave you to my...devices." He licked his lips as he said this and she felt a sharp stab of fear in her stomach.

She heard the door creak open again and two large men entered the room.

"I imagine you're rather hungry. I'll leave my assistants to feed you. You will be fed only twice a day, Miss Granger, and I suggest you don't waste that," he said, almost gently, as he ran a hand across her stomach. "Starvation is not an option." His hand lingered on her stomach for a few moments and she felt her entire body tighten in fear as he gazed at her. "Crabbe! Goyle!" His voice was stern and loud as he beckoned the two men at the door forward.

They lumbered towards her as Damien backed out of the room.

Hermione would not have needed to hear their names in order to recognize her two new visitors. From the size of them, it was evident that they hadn't changed their eating habits. "Crabbe, Goyle have you stooped this low? How can you associate with that depraved monster?"

Goyle gave Hermione a smirk as he ignored her question. "The holier-than-thou-mudblood doesn't look so haughty anymore, does she Crabbe? Got to admit Granger, you have one hell of a body." He licked his lips as if a feast had been set before him. "Almost a pity to see Damien blemish it, but he does it in such an entertaining way. He'll leave you screaming."

Hermione shivered uncontrollably. She was cold, humiliated and terribly frightened. Never in her life had she felt so vulnerable. It had been horrible enough being exposed to Damien's eyes, but now to have these two clowns gawk at her was mortifying. She felt like an animal in a zoo being stared at by the visitors. No, the animals had it better; no one could touch them.

Crabbe gave a chuckle in response to his partner's joke. Goyle sat the tray of food on the table as he went over get a closer look at Hermione body. "Now this is workmanship," he said as he began to move his hands over her body.

Hermione struggled against her bindings to avoid his greasy hands and tried unsuccessfully to kick out at him. "Try that again Mudblood and we'll put you in leg irons.

Goyle once again left his eyes soak in her beauty before saying, "Crabbe here just doesn't appreciate a well-developed female body. He'd rather shag that little orphan bitch you adopted. Damien has promised her to him. Maybe we can have a foursome. Would you like that Granger?"

She felt the bile rising in her throat. Wasn't it enough they had her to debase? Why must they bring Caitlin into the discussion? She tried to push the thoughts from her mind and change the subject.

"I thought you where here to bring me my meal. Let me out of this contraption so I can sit and eat."

Crabbe laughed. "She thinks were going to let her sit at the table. Maybe she'd like to go to the loo and take a shower, too?"

Goyle smiled at his cohort. "Granger that cage is your new home. It's your bedroom, kitchen and loo. You never leave it. If you get so dirty you develop lice, Crabbe and I will wash you down."

Hermione cringed at the thought of these two degenerates giving her a sponge bath.

Goyle waved Crabbe over, and the other man carried over whatever her meal was. "With the help of Crabbe, I will feed you. If you don't eat, or you spit your food at us, the meal is finished. Also, if you complain about any of your extra dining experiences, don't expect us to feed you." He grinned maliciously at her and Hermione had only a moment to be confused before she understood what he meant. As Goyle fed her, her body shook with repulsion and loathing as he used his other hand to roam over her body. The food was no more than mush and her stomach jarred as she swallowed. She gagged on the spoon as he pushed it into her mouth, tears streaming down her face. Crabbe stood by, smirking at her humiliation. She attempted to glare at him, but the spoon being shoved into her mouth once more prevented this. Suddenly, a door slam echoed in the room and she cried out in pain as the spoon struck her front teeth when Goyle jumped.

"Goyle!" Damien shouted. "I see your are taking advantage of a prisoner again. Haven't I warned you before that you only touch when the Great One or myself has granted you permission? Perhaps I should cut that hand off. I'm sure that would be a lesson not soon forgotten. But, sadly, you would not be much use to the cause with a missing hand. I suppose ten lashes will have to suffice. Strip!"

Goyle looked at Damien as fear covered his face. "Here? Now? In front of her?"

"Yes!" Damien shouted. "Here and now. Don't you wish Miss Granger to see your handsome' body? You've seen hers. Don't worry! I doubt she has the desire to watch. Crabbe, you will inflict the punishment. If you hold back, I will add two lashes for everyone I feel is wielded too lightly."

Hermione turned her head. She had not desire to see Goyle's naked body, or to see a man beaten even though at the moment a part of her wished she were the one holding the whip.

She winched as she heard Goyle scream in pain, wondering just how long it would be before the screams were hers. When the punishment was complete Damien ordered both Goyle and Crabbe from the chamber, not even allowing Goyle to dress.

"Hermione, I apologize for the interruption, but one must keep the underlings in place. Shall we get back to the subject of why you were brought here? You are one third of the Covenant that defeated Lord Voldemort and temporarily slowed the Death Eater take over of the Wizard World. As you are aware, there is a new leader known only as the Great One. Voldemort was stupid, a mere insect when compared to The Great One. With the assistance of the other Death Eaters and myself, the Great One will bring to an end the wizard world as you know it."

"The Great One respects the Covenant members and realizes that together the three of you could be a roadblock to our success. If I had my way, you would already be dead. I, however,

respect my leader and will follow orders. Although you are a Mudblood, the Great One feels your assistance could greatly aid our cause. Therefore, I have been instructed to offer you a choice. Join us, or die." Damien smile was cold and evil.

"There is no choice," Hermione responded. "I would rather die than become one of you. Inflict the Avada Kedavra curse, you bastard." Hermione held her breath; prepared for the end.

"Hermione, Hermione." Damien laughed wickedly. "There will be no Avada Kedavra curse. Look around your chamber. If you decide to die it will not be a quick and easy death by use of a curse. Have you not noticed? I do not even carry a wand. Your death will be long and painful. You will actually beg for me to kill you, but I won't. I enjoy watching people suffer. Do you want to suffer, Hermione?"

One glance at Damien's face was adequate to inform Hermione that he didn't wish for her to join them. He wanted her to say no, so that he could enjoy torturing her to death.

"Don't answer that. The Great One has ordered that you be given every chance to see the error of your ways and join us. I will give you 48 hrs to think about your decision. But before I leave, let me give you a mini tour of your quarters, I want to show you the wonderful ways in which you can be made to suffer." Damien had a smile on his face, indicative of how much he would enjoy giving this tour.

There had been plenty of opportunity for Hermione to inspect the surroundings and she didn't necessarily desire a guided tour. She knew her thirteenth century history. This was plan and simply a torture chamber and Damien was a demented individual that enjoyed his work. She had also come to the realization that it was best not to fight Damien, not if she wanted to live to escape. She had to humor him. What she needed to do was get out of this cage, but how?

"Many of the items you see are originals stolen from museums, some others we had to have made to order. Many of the devices such as the Iron Maiden and the Stretching Rack can be used both to extricate information as well as to execute. One of my personal favorites for execution is the Head Crusher." Damien pointed to the device. "The victim's chin is placed on the lower bar, and the cap forced down by the screw. First the teeth are crushed into their sockets and smashed by the surrounding bone, then the eyes are forced out of their sockets, and finally the brain squirts through the fragmented skull. If you join us, I'll be sure to let you watch a demonstration."

Hermione thought that she would lose the meal she had just been force fed as the image of Damien's words materialized in her mind. What kind of mind invented such torture and how could he possibly think she would ever be able to watch such an act.

"This might interest you." Damien picked up a metal, pair-shaped device. As he held it up, light glinted off the sharp, pointed prongs. "The Pear." As he explained the torturous ways the device was used, Hermione's stomach clenched in horror. He indicated a screw at the end and as he turned it, Hermione's body broke out in a cold sweat as she imagined the excruciating pain. Her body shook in revulsion.

"Such vivid imagery," she said, her voice shaking in terror as he moved on towards a table under the window.

"I'm glad you're enjoying this."

"I didn't say that."

"Catch your tongue, Miss Granger, or I will." He gestured to three devices on the table. "The previous instruments I showed you won't be used unless you decide that you'd rather die. However, I do have permission to use these whenever I wish."

She shuddered as he picked up another device.

"Are you fond of cats Hermione?"

She nodded, swallowing nervously.

"Do you own a cat?"

She thought of Crookshanks as he continued.

"Have you ever been scratched? The claws tear into your skin, cutting away layers of flesh. Quite painful, really. Of course, as we are wont to do, human beings have improved upon that simple act of pain. This," he showed her a device known as a Cat's Paw, "rips your flesh and strips it off the bones. On any part of you." He pressed the sharp claws against her breast until a trickle of blood appeared and when he removed the device.

Tears stung her eyes as she watched him stare at the torture device, his eyes wild. He explained the other devices and the tears slid down her face, her body shuddering with violent sobs as he explicitly described the ways the flesh was mutilated. Horror invaded her mind as she wondered how it was possible to ever do that to another human being. As he finished explaining the thumbscrews he slammed them on the table and turned to her.

"You have forty-eight hours to determine your fate." His words were deadpan.

"What if I were to agree to join you?" Hermione said almost desperately. "Would I be set free?"

"If you mean free as in able to return to your beloved Harry Potter, then no! But you would not be tortured and you would get to live and serve the Great One. Of course, you would have to pass two tests in order to convince me of your sincerity."

Hermione knew that her only way to get out of here was to agree to join them, but what tests would she have to face. Coming from this sick individual, Hermione knew the tests would most likely also be sick. "May I ask what those two tests would be?"

"But, of course. The first would be for you to willingly pleasure me."

"That doesn't sound like a test," Hermione lied. "Having sex with you would I'm sure be extremely enjoyable," Hermione answered in a sweet, but unconvincing manner.

"Hermione, you are a poor liar. Should you, however, be able to push your high moral standards aside, you would still have test two."

"What would I have to do in the final test?"

"Simply assist me in an execution."

Hermione realized that this was something she could never do. "Exactly what would I have to do?"

"Do you see that four handed saw hanging over there on the wall." Damien pointed to the saw. "It is not only used for cutting large trees."

"There is an execution that some consider worse even than being burnt at the stake with a slow, small fire, or being dipped into boiling oil. The victim is hung upside down from a two by four. Their feet tied to the board. The saw is placed between their legs and they are sawed in half. Owing to the inverted position, which assures ample oxygenation of the brain and impedes the general loss of blood, the victim does not lose consciousness until the saw reaches the navel -and even sometimes the breast, if one is to believe accounts of the early eighteen-hundreds."

"My second test would be to help you saw some innocent victim in half." Hermione stated in shock. There was no way she could ever be part of such an act. Unless she could devise an escape plan, she would have no choice but to die a horrible and painfully long death.

"Not just any victim," Damien continued "but one selected by the Great One. Actually the victim will be joining us in about a week whether you decide to become part of the organization or not. You will either help with the execution and become a part of our group or you will get to witness the execution as one of your last visions before you are put to death."

Hermione didn't want to know the answer to the next question, but had to ask, "Who?"

"The one that calls you mum."

Chapter Eighteen Resolutions

Wednesday, December 31, 2003, 8 PM

"Hermione, how are you this evening?" Damien asked pleasantly, the evil smirk on his face undermining his tone.

"Just lovely. I can't think of any place I'd rather be chained," Hermione answered with venom soaked words. "Did you forget to pay the heating bill or do you purposely want me to catch pneumonia?" The dungeon was not freezing cold; to an active, clothed person, it would not be uncomfortable. Hermione, however, was neither active nor clothed."

"My dear, you can be out of those chains and warm in my bed in a matter of minutes. Just say you want to join us."

"No, thank you. I prefer to stand here in my own waste."

"Is that what I smell? I thought perhaps you were wearing a new perfume. Crabbe, Goyle, come here," Damien shouted.

Crabbe and Goyle reluctantly entered the chamber. It was obvious by their demeanor that they both feared Damien a great deal.

"Get the hose and flush that shit down the sewer. While you're at it, hose down our guest, she's beginning to reek." The two lackeys quickly attached a hose to the water outlet and turned it on full blast. After flushing the floor clean they turned the cold water on the already shivering Hermione. She quaked as the freezing water soaked her body.

After a few minutes Damien yelled, "That's enough! Hang that up and get out of here."

The two men tripped over each other as they nervously completed the task and then scurried to the door.

"When I watch those two twats, I understand why the Great One wants to solicit you. Despite the fact that you are a mudblood, you at least possess brains."

"Brains enough to know I want nothing to do with you or your so-called 'Great One'." Hermione quivered as she spoke. Not out of fear, but because she was now extremely cold. "Why don't you just kill me and get this over with?"

"My dear Hermione, you give me so little credit. Don't you think I know why you are so eager to die? You think that if you sacrifice yourself quickly that I will no longer kill the girl. You should know me better than that. I would never allow you to miss the pleasure of seeing her die. You will suffer. You will wish you were dead, but you will see her die before your wish is granted."

Damien walked over to Hermione and stroked her arm. "You look cold. This isn't a hotel; we don't supply towels. Don't worry, soon you will forget all about the cold. Your first torture will be quite mild. After I finish, you will have another forty-eight hours to consider joining us. In fairness, I should tell you that the second torture will not leave you looking quite so

attractive as you are today." Damien laughed to himself as he placed his fingers on Hermione's chest and dragged his nails toward her nipples.

Hermione knew what Damien had in mind for the second torture, but what was he going to do today? Her question was quickly answered as he walked over to the table, picked up the thumbscrews and said, "I'm not quite sure why they call these thumb screws when in fact you can crush four fingers and two thumbs at one time." Damien smiled as he looked at Hermione. "Of course, in order to do two thumbs, they have to be in close proximity. Since that isn't possible in your current situation, I think we'll just concentrate on fingers." Hermione tried not to look at either Damien or the device he held in his hands.

"To prove I'm a nice guy, I'll give you a choice. Would you prefer me to crush the fingers on your left or right hand?"

"I prefer you go to hell. You bastard." Hermione's voice was filled with hatred.

"I'm sure you'll get that wish. In reality, I think I'll feel rather at home there. Since you seem unable to make a decision, I believe we will do the left hand." Damien leaned down and quickly slipped the small viselike device over Hermione's fingers. He hastily tightened the device until the two metal bars firmly held her fingers in place.

"Not exactly how you planned to spend New Year's Eve is it? This is your last chance. Will you join us?" Hermione issued a nonverbal response as she spit in Damien's face.

He gave her a firm knee to the groin and a backhand across the face. "I was told you were smart. For someone smart, you are certainly a slow learner."

Hermione held back the tears as she winced in pain.

"You just make me enjoy my work that much more," Damien said as he slowly began to tighten the thumbscrews. Slowly more and more pressure was applied to Hermione's delicate fingers.

Hermione bit her lips as the pain became more and more excruciating. Just prior to passing out, she heard the sound of multiple bones cracking.

* * * * *

Caitlin had fallen asleep on a chair in the corner of the common room. Jamie generally would have woken the girl and recommended that she go up to her dorm, but she didn't have the heart. Jamie knew that Caitlin had gotten extremely little sleep since her mother vanished. Pureheart was able to keep the bad dreams away, but not calm her into a sleep. Madame Pomfrey had offered to give her a sleeping draught, but Caitlin was reluctant to take drugs. Understandably, Jamie felt it best that the young girl be allowed to sleep in the bustling Common Room.

It was New Year's Eve and the majority of the Gryffindors who had returned for the Yule Ball were waiting to celebrate the New Year. For those not directly affected by Professor Granger's disappearance, life, after a few days of grief, went on. For those close to her it could

never be the same, unless by some miracle she was returned to them. Harry had not told Jamie and Caitlin that there was a possibility of Hermione being tortured, but he had been honest when he told them that with each day that passed the likelihood of her ever returning to them lessened.

Harry and Ron wanted to go off searching for Hermione, but listened to rationale when Snape asked them where they would start. They realized there was no way of knowing whether Hermione was even in the country. As difficult as it was, the only practical thing to do was wait.

Classes would resume on Monday and Harry had reluctantly agreed to continue teaching. At least it would keep his mind occupied for a few hours each day. Professor McGonagall had come out of retirement to fill in until her favorite student came back. McGonagall refused to believe that Hermione would not return. No one at this juncture in time would even consider the possibility that Hermione might need to be replaced.

Harry had insisted that Caitlin return to the dormitory. He loved the young girl and he was extremely lonely without her company, but he thought it best that she be around her friends and activity and not just sitting with him crying all day.

Suddenly, Caitlin screamed out in horrifying pain. Jamie ran to her only to freeze in terror as she saw the young girl clutching her left hand. Her fingers appeared to be smashed and blood was everywhere.

"Alex, Amanda, help!" Jamie screamed. "Alex, you saw Pomfrey put me in stasis. Do you remember how to do it?"

Alex trembled, as he looked at Caitlin, who was screaming and crying, obviously in dreadful pain. "I'm not sure, Jamie. What if I get it wrong?"

"I have faith in you Alex. Please, just do it. We have to stop the pain and the bleeding."

Alex literally shook as he tried to remember exactly what Pomfrey had done. He prayed he had the words correct.

"You did it, Alex!" Jamie cried. "Quickly, you and Amanda rush her to Madame Pomfrey; I have to get Professor Potter."

Jamie hurried off toward the staff quarters as Alex and Amanda prepared to transport Caitlin's stiff body. The rest of Gryffindor looked on in astonishment wondering exactly what had happened.

Jamie ran the corridors of Hogwarts faster than she had ever sprinted in her life. As she turned a corner she ran into the Headmaster. Somehow they both managed to keep their balance, but before Snape could discipline her she shouted, "Hurry, go to the infirmary. I have to get Professor Potter. Move!"

Snape turned and ran toward the medical area, not even questioning the fact that he, the Headmaster, was following the orders of a fifth year.

When Jamie reached Harry's room she didn't even bother to knock as she burst through the

door and ran inside. Harry had no time to protest before she grabbed his hand and started pulling him. "Hurry! It's Caitlin! The Infirmary."

Jamie ran so fast that Harry had to struggle to keep up. He had no chance to ask any questions. Only when they reached the infirmary did she finally take a breath before asking Alex, "How is she?"

"I'm not sure. Madame Pomfrey wouldn't let us stay."

"Well she's not keeping me out! Caitlin's my daughter," Harry protested. "Jamie, come with me. I'm sure Pomfrey will want to know what happened. Alex, Amanda, thank you for your help."

Harry hurried in to find Madame Pomfrey leaning over Caitlin as Professor Snape looked on.

Professor Snape curled his lip as he looked at Jamie. "Perhaps now Miss Zacherley, you would be so kind as to tell me what happened?"

Jamie first looked at the Headmaster and then at Harry who was also waiting for an explanation. "I have no idea," she responded. Severus and Harry both looked at Jamie as if ready to bite her head off, but allowed her to continue. "We were all in the Common Room. As you know Ha--, Professor Potter, Caitlin has been having trouble sleeping since Herm--since Professor Granger was taken. She had curled up in the corner with a book and fell asleep. The other Gryffindors were getting ready to celebrate the New Year. I decided to let her sleep while I looked after other matters.

"Suddenly she woke up and started screaming as if she were in terrible agony. I thought she was having a nightmare, but when I ran to her she was holding her hand and there was blood everywhere. I can't envision what happened."

Madame Pomfrey looked up from the bed, "What are they doing to poor Hermione?"

Severus and Harry stared at Pomfrey fleetingly before the Headmaster asked, "What does Hermione have to do with what happened to this poor girl?"

Pomfrey sighed deeply, "Harry, I know you don't have a lot of respect for Sybill, but she is a far better source of knowledge on what I believe happen here than I am. Severus, it might be best if you summoned her before I try to bring Miss Garrison out of stasis."

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"Miss Zacherley, you may return to your House," the Headmaster instructed.

Jamie looked at Harry as if pleading to stay, "Severus, if you don't mind. Jamie is sort of a part of our family. I would like her to stay."

Severus nodded his head. "I always thought that Hermione and Miss Zacherley had more than a normal teacher-student relationship. Yes, she may stay if you so wish."

Just then Sybill Trelawney came floating into the room. The first thing she did was glance at the bed containing young Caitlin whose hand was now bandaged. "What happened to the poor girl?"

Madame Pomfrey answered as Harry looked at Trelawney with antipathy. "Her fingers were smashed."

"How awful! Will you be able to mend them?"

"Yes, but it will be quite painful. Finally, Gilderoy Lockhart's bumbling serves a good purpose."

Sybill Trelawney looked questioningly at Madame Pomfrey. "Lockhart? What does he have to do with this?"

"I never felt I would say this, but I'm grateful that because of him I know how to debone part of a person. The small bones in her tiny fingers were shattered beyond healing. I had to remove them and now I am regrowing them with Skele-Gro."

Trelawney shivered at the thought. "How did it happen?"

Headmaster Snape spoke up. "That is why we have asked you to join us. The young lady was sleeping on a soft leather chair at the time it happened. She did nothing to cause it."

Trelawney looked around the room questioningly until she got to Pomfrey who said, "This is Hermione's little girl, Caitlin."

Sybill looked at Madame Pomfrey in amazement. "Do you think...? Do you realize how rare that is? How powerful the witches must be? How strong their bond? If you're correct that means that.... Poor Hermione!"

Harry looked at Sybill in disgust. "Would you mind putting all that in terms that people who don't spend their lives with their head in the clouds could understand?"

Sybill looked at Harry as if greatly insulted, "Harry, I realize you have little respect for my area of magic and for me, but what I'm about to tell you is possible and I believe that this young lady is living proof." Trelawney glanced toward Caitlin. "Have you ever heard of what muggles refer to as telepathy?"

Harry nodded, "Isn't that when people claim to communicate from mind to mind by extrasensory means?"

Sybill smiled, "Did you actually listen during one of my lectures? I'm impressed, Harry. Many seers are able to do this. Unfortunately, I've temporarily lost this power due to sickness, but if I still had it; we could be having this conversation mind to mind without using our voices."

Harry frowned, "What exactly does this have to do with Caitlin's hand?"

"I have heard tales of very powerful witches that in times of extreme anguish are able to bond together. They share the pain. The one witch accepts because of her caring for the other half the pain so that the other can deal with it and survive. They also receive the same injury. This

can only be done by two witches with extremely strong Hyperempathic ability."

Harry just stared at Trelawney. "I know Hermione is a powerful witch, but Caitlin is just a young girl. They've only known each other three months. Only since the trial has their bonding developed. You expect me to believe that they have such a powerful and strong link that somehow that little girl is reaching out over who knows how many miles to take some of Hermione's pain so that she can cope?"

"Harry, when you were ten if someone had told you that witches and wizards were real and could do magic; you wouldn't have believed it. Once you came to Hogwarts you believed because you saw that it was true. Look at her hand."

Harry couldn't think of any other explanation. "Does that mean she can communicate mind to mind with Hermione? Does she know where she is and what is happening?"

"If only that were the case, we could find Hermione. No, she is only a vessel for accepting pain."

Harry looked hopefully at Pomfrey. "Will regrowing Caitlin's bones restore Hermione's?"

Pomfrey sadly shook her head, no. "The plus side is that we know Hermione is alive. Sadly, we know she is also being made to suffer."

Harry couldn't believe that he was asking Trelawney questions and worse was going to accept her answers as factual. "Does Caitlin feel all of Hermione's pain?"

"No. Everything I have read indicates that the receiving vessel only feels extreme or life threatening pain. She would not for instance feel a slap or a toothache. She would feel a sickness if it were possible for it to cause Hermione's death."

Abruptly Harry had a horrible thought. "Is it possible for Caitlin to die because of this connection?"

Pomfrey reluctantly decided to answer this question. "That depends on whether one thing or a number of things would cause Hermione's death. Its difficult to explain without causing you grief at the thought."

"Please explain. I have to know!" Harry practically begged.

"If Hermione were to die by having an incurable disease or being stabbed in the heart, then Caitlin would die also. If the death were a result of a number of injuries, some of which I have been able to address, then she would survive."

"So the slime that took Hermione has the opportunity of taking both the ladies I love and doesn't even realize it. Can't we break the bond?" Harry asked.

Severus looked solemnly at Harry, "Could you stop loving Hermione if it meant saving your life?" Harry indicated that he couldn't. "Neither do I believe that Caitlin could."

"What do we do now?" Harry asked

"I feel as a precaution she should be kept under constant observation. Caitlin will have to remain here at least two days anyway for her bones to regrow. A few minutes could mean the difference between life and death," warned Pomfrey.

Harry went closer to the bed and leaned over to kiss Caitlin on the cheek. *On Christmas Eve I thought my life couldn't be any better and now just one week later I'm on the verge of losing everything I love while the world celebrates a Happy New Year.*

* * * * *

Thursday, January 1, 2004 12:01 AM

"My hand." *I'm going to die. I'll never see Harry again. I can't let them kill Caitlin.*

Tears streamed down Hermione's cheeks. She couldn't stand the horrific pain. Someone had cast a spell while she was unconscious to prevent any further blood loss, but the throbbing persisted unceasingly. Hermione was amazed that the pain hadn't put her in shock. It seemed as if her strength to survive was being supplemented and that as agonizing as the pain was, it should be worse.

Hermione thought back to Emma Wrong's speech prior to the start of the school year. She realized no one could help her because no one had any idea where she was being held prisoner. She didn't even know.

She had to help herself, but how? She was trapped in this damn Cage.

The only way Damien would leave her out was if she agreed to pleasure him.

I have to agree. I have to make him believe I want to be one of them. Prostitutes make a living having sex with dirt bags. I have to do it. If I die, I at least die trying. That depraved bastard will not kill Caitlin.

Suddenly she had a plan, a horrible plan. The thought of it made her stomach feel sicker than it already did.

Please Harry! Please understand. I have to do it. I have to try to save her. She can't die. I can't watch that. Please! Please give me the strength.

* * * * *

Thursday, January 1, 2004

"Harry I'm very concerned," Madame Pomfrey said as she once again checked Caitlin's temperature.

"Do you think it could be a reaction to the Skele-Gro?"

"No. The bones have formed properly. Skele-Gro doesn't cause a fever. It could just be a coincidence, but with the connection between the two of them, I'm quite concerned. If she was thrown in a dungeon naked-- If they didn't give her any clothing she could be getting sick. She needs all her strength. This could be bad, very bad."

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Friday, January 2, 2004

"Hermione, dear you are not looking well at all," Damien said in a sarcastic fashion. "You're extremely insipid. Should I have Crabbe and Goyle move your Cage out into the sunlight? Oh! I'm sorry. We can't do that. You might deduce where you are."

Hermione tried to stay composed. If she lost her temper she might not be about to see this through.

"How is your hand? I hope I didn't clip your fingernails too short. By the way, I brought a surprise for you."

Hermione's heart stopped. If they already had Caitlin, all hope was lost.

"I brought some family pictures for you to look at. I'm very proud of these pictures and will be deeply hurt if you refuse to look at them. Let's say another finger for each time you close your eyes or turn your head. Does that sound fair?"

I have to look. I need one good hand if I'm to have any chance at all.

"This one was taken of an Auror who tried to join us to spy." He held the picture close to her face so that every detail of the man's torture was obvious. Her stomach clenched as she looked at the picture, willing herself not to turn away. The picture of the rack only made her realize that the torture of the thumbscrews was mild in comparison.

Wordlessly, Damien held up a picture of someone in the head crusher. "Rather eye popping, isn't it?"

She was unable to control the look of disgust that flashed over her face. "How can you joke about doing something like this?"

"Hermione, I'm simply a product of my environment."

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"I mean I grew up seeing killing all around me. I have no more qualms killing a person than you do killing an insect. Different people respect and value different things. You respect life. I respect power. You live to love. I live to hate. You live to give and I live to take. We balance each other; or at least we did."

Hermione knew exactly what he meant. When she died there would be one less person to fight against fiends such as Damien.

"I think you will really enjoy this series. They are all of the same person, sort of a before and after series."

Damien held up the first picture of a smiling lovely young witch. The girl appeared to be younger than Hermione; it looked like she was dressed for a special occasion as she waved to Hermione. In the second picture the smile was completely gone. Waves of nausea rolled over her as he flipped through the progression of pictures, knowing that if she didn't try something to save herself she would meet the same fate.

"Hermione, before I proceed, I will give you one more chance. Will you join the Death Eaters and pledge your loyalty to the Great One?"

Hermione slowly lifted her head as tears filled her eyes and said, "Yes."

Damien looked at Hermione in shock, "Hermione, I'm very disappointed in you. After everything I've heard about you, I certainly expected you to die for your hopeless cause."

Hermione looked at Damien pleadingly, "Isn't there something else I can do to prove I will be loyal other than execute Caitlin?"

"At first I was sure you were lying. I considered that perhaps you thought you could escape, but now you still plead for the girl. No, Hermione, the Great One was quite clear. You must help kill the girl."

"Damien, she is so young. Must she suffer? Could she please be put under a spell until death has taken her?"

Damien looked at Hermione with what could have almost passed for compassion. "If I am satisfied with your performance of the first test, I will put the girl under a spell. She will not be aware of your presence. She will simply never wake up."

"When do I pleasure you? Hermione asked emotionlessly.

"Today, after you have been scrubbed and dusted for lice."

"Can you stop the pain in my hand so that I can fully concentrate on pleasing you?"

"That must wait until after you pass the second test."

"Crabbe, Goyle!"

They tripped over each other's feet as they lumbered towards Damien.

"Take her to be showered. Give her soft sponges and good soap." He turned to Hermione. "You will wash yourself thoroughly, every crack and crevice. Wash your hair, and comb it." Again, he looked at Crabbe and Goyle. "You will help her, if she requires it. Do not damage her any further."

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"How do you feel Caitlin? Jamie inquired.

"My hand feels better, but I feel weak and Madame Pomfrey says I have a fever that she can't get to break. She thinks Mum may be sick? I hope not," answered Caitlin.

"Me, too. The bond you two have is amazing. You love her an awful lot, don't you?"

"I couldn't love her more. Jamie, she turned my world around. She just has to make it through this."

"She will. Your mum is a very strong and courageous witch. With your Hyperempathic help she'll make it."

"I'm afraid I won't be much help. My body feels all weak and achy."

"You'll be fine. I have a feeling you are going to be a very strong and powerful witch some day. I better stay on your good side."

"Jamie, I wish we were real sisters."

"So do I Caitlin. I love you as if you were."

* * * * *

Of all the humiliation she had borne throughout her capture, this was the worst. Damien had unlocked her from the Cage, but she had been shackled, both legs and arms, and Crabbe and Goyle had led her to another part of the dungeon. They had blindfolded her as well, dragging her body over the stone floor. As soon as the support of her metal prison was gone, her legs had fallen out from under her.

When the blindfold was removed she saw that they had led her to another stone room, not all that different from the one she had occupied previously. The furnishings, however, were much different. Rather than various torture devices, there was a large bed, covered in soft looking blankets. In one corner, there was a shower, partitioned off by a wall and curtain. They pulled her towards this and stood her up. She leaned against the wall as they scrubbed her down. The water was too hot and their hands were too rough. When they had finished, they pulled her out of the shower and she once more fell to the floor, her legs still unable to support her.

Crabbe pushed her down on the bed, securing more chains around her. They left quickly, closing the door behind them.

Her mind was racing, a plan formed completely. She felt the hot tears streaming down her face as her body throbbed. The blood was circulating more freely now that she was no longer in the Cage and the pins and needles feeling that she had felt countless times before now covered her entire body, and was countless times worse than she had ever experienced. She heard the door open and close again as the voice of her captor washed over her.

"Hermione, did Crabbe and Goyle do a thorough job of washing you?"

"A little too complete. Was it necessary to allow them to fondle me? And are you going to unchain me to perform the first test?" Her voice was monotone and controlled.

"Until you complete both tasks you are still a prisoner and will be treated as such. Be thankful that you are not being required to service all the Death Eaters. Are you ready?"

"Yes!" Hermione said as if sincerely meaning it.

"Crabbe and Goyle will remain on the other side of this door. If you try to escape, I will give them the orders to begin removing your limbs."

"Damien, the only thing I'm going to do is make you feel like you have never felt before."

Damien smiled wickedly, "I like the sound of that."

Hermione smiled wickedly, "If you like the sound wait until you experience the actual feeling."

Damien caressed Hermione's naked body with his eyes. He was becoming aroused just by the anticipation of her touch. He took the keys to her shackles out of his pocket.

"Wait," said Hermione. "Before you unlock me, take off your clothes. I want nothing between us once I am released."

Damien couldn't believe his good fortune. The Great One was allowing him to have this beautiful individual and she actually seemed eager to be with him. Damien hurriedly stripped and then undid the metal straps that went around Hermione's ankles.

Hermione sighed.

Those straps were tight and had been cutting into her ankles. The moisture from the shower had doubled her pain. He hoisted her to her feet and undid the chains that held her wrists to her waist. He released her some and her knees buckled again. She used this to her advantage and allowed herself to slide down, clinging to Damien's body.

She knelt in front of him, trailing her right hand over him before grasping him. "I'd prefer two hands for this." His only answer was a moan as she moved her mouth closer to him. Mentally, she was gagging, but a wave of strength washed over her.

Damien instantaneously found his feeling of ecstasy turned to one of unspeakable pain. He wanted to strangle the girl kneeling before him, but he needed his hands to pry her mouth and hand off of him. Hermione cringed as she felt warm blood touch her lips, but maintained her hold until Damien managed to send a knee into her chest knocking her on her back. Although still in agonizing pain, Damien somehow managed to pull Hermione to her feet and then slam her so hard in the jaw that she went sliding across the floor hitting her head on the table leg. Hermione lay motionless.

Damien stared at her, his hands protectively covering himself. "You damn bitch. Play me for a fool will you? You'll pray to be dead, but I'll keep you alive just so you can see your daughter

die." Hermione's body lay frozen as Damien made his way to the door, leaving his clothes behind.

Crabbe and Goyle jumped from their chairs as the door slammed behind Damien. "Come here you two morons. Go in there and take her back to the dungeon. Saw off the bitch's right leg, do a charm to stop the blood loss and put her back in the cage. I'll be back later to personally rip her breasts to shreds."

They watched as he turned the corner. Crabbe looked up at Goyle and said. "I hate that little swine. After what she did to him, I almost feel bad that we have to cut her apart."

"Yeah!" Goyle agreed. "But if we don't, we'll be joining her."

Chapter Nineteen Escape

Hermione lay completely immobile, pretending to be unconscious, as she struggled to hold back the tears. She could already feel her face being to swell. Damien had dislocated her jaw. "You damn bitch. Play me for a fool will you? You'll pray to be dead, but I'll keep you alive just so I can make you suffer." Hermione's body lay frozen as Damien made his way to the door leaving his clothes behind.

Crabbe and Doyle jumped from their chairs as the door slammed behind Damien. "Come here you two morons. Go in there and saw off the bitch's right leg. Do a charm to stop the blood lose and put her back in the Cage. I'll be back later to personally rip her breasts to shreds."

They watched as his skinny backside turned the corner. Crabbe looked up at Goyle and said. "After what she did to him, I almost feel bad that we have to cut her apart."

"Yeah!" Goyle agreed. "But if we don't, we'll be joining her."

Goyle gradually pushed opened the door for them to enter. He had barely crossed the threshold of the room when he promptly halted causing Crabbe to nearly collide with him. He surveyed the bed and then the floor. There was no sign of Hermione's nude body. "Where the hell is she!?" he shouted.

The words had barely escaped his lips when the great gray timber wolf appeared from behind the door. The wolf's teeth were bared as its growl rumbled through the air. Goyle had no time to reach for his wand before the wolf leapt, knocking him to the floor and trapping Crabbe beneath him. The wolf limped a few steps before transfiguring back to a naked woman who sped down the corridor and up the steps to what appeared to be the main floor of an ornately appointed manor.

Hermione saw at the far end of the hall what seemed to be the main foyer. She heard Crabbe and Goyle lumbering up the steps. She had to make it to the door before they reached the top of the steps. If they hit her with any spell that prevented her getaway, she was as good as dead. She dashed toward the door and reached for the handle. It was mercifully unlocked. She threw the door open and ran outside.

Immediately she once again felt as though a hook just behind her navel had suddenly jerked her irresistibly forward. Her feet left the ground and she went speeding forward in a howl of wind and swirling color. Suddenly she was lying face down in a snowdrift at the side of the road.

Hermione was completely disoriented. The last thing she remembered was opening a box containing a gift from Harry. Now she was lying naked in the snow. What more, her hand and jaw hurt terribly. Her jaw felt like it was broken and her hand; her fingers were smashed. Momentarily, Hermione just sat naked in the snow, in shock.

What happened? Where am I?

Suddenly, she shivered.

Priorities, Hermione. You'll freeze to death sitting here naked.

The transformation into her wolf Animagus form was extremely painful, greatly more so than usual, but at least she was now much warmer.

Hermione preferred being in control of her life and knowing what was happening from one minute until the next. Her life was definitely out of control and she didn't like it; not one bit. She now realized that the box wasn't from Harry, but was probably a Portkey. Had it not been for her injuries she might have thought this was her Portkey termination point. Due to the injuries she concluded she had been some place else, but where and for how long? Who had hurt her like this and why was she let go? Hermione realized she didn't have time to think about this now. She had to figure out where she was and how to get back to Hogwarts. Eating would be impossible; she couldn't possibly chew and depending on how long her fingers had been this way, Madame Pomfrey might not be able to undo the damage.

What concerned Hermione the most was that she felt extremely weak and light headed. Did she have enough strength to hold her wolf form? She could not survive this cold in her human form, most certainly not one that was naked. To make matters worse it was starting to snow and the sun was setting. Hermione looked left and then right. Finally she decide to turn left, hoping that she would come to a cross road that might give her a clue as to her current location.

* * * * *

Damien sat before the fireplace dreading the impending appearance of the Great One's face in the flames. Abruptly the face appeared.

"Great One, she has escaped."

Much to Damien's surprised the Great One remained composed. "What precisely happened?"

Damien hesitated slightly before speaking. "I was about to conduct the first loyalty test on her. She was on her knees in front of me about to give me oral pleasure. Suddenly she tried to crush my testicles and practically severed my organ when she bit it."

Damien was surprised to see the resemblance of a smile on the Great One's face. "Go on. What happened next?"

"I threw her against a table. She appeared to be unconscious. I left to obtain medical assistance, instructing Crabbe and Goyle to amputate the first limb. She had either been faking or regained consciousness before they entered the room. They claim she changed into a wolf and escaped."

"Professor Granger is quite clever, but perhaps we have not yet lost the battle. She is a long way from home. I doubt she would try Apparating in her weakened state. And obviously she will not travel the road naked. She would freeze to death. Have Crabbe and Goyle pass the word to the nearby muggle villages that an American Timber Wolf has escaped in the area. The animal is wounded and extremely dangerous. Do not try to capture. Shoot to kill. Offer a £1,000 reward for the wolf's skin."

Damien hesitated slightly.

"I imagine you are awaiting your punishment," the Great One said with little emotion. "If she

is killed you will receive no further punishment than what Professor Granger has already bestowed upon you. If she lives, you will replace her in the cage and I will ponder your fate. Give Crabbe and Goyle each 20 lashes once they have contacted the villages."

Damien watched the face disappear from the fire and then nervously summoned Crabbe and Goyle.

* * * * *

Slowly, the wolf painfully limped along the road as the sun set and the intensity of the snowstorm increased. The road was void of traffic as the wolf finally approached a signpost. Hermione was famished, having not eaten since breakfast. She had never eaten in her Animagus form before and doubted her human mind would allow her to kill and eat an animal raw. Under the present circumstances it didn't matter much. She couldn't run swiftly enough to catch anything and even if she were able, the state of her jaw made biting and chewing impossible.

The wolf stared wonderingly at the strange sign that indicated Gartley was five miles in the direction that she had just come from, but gave no indication of what town was in the direction she was headed. Then as she walked closer to the signpost, the words 'Hogsmeade twenty miles' appeared. Evidently, this information was only visible to magical beings and then only at a close proximity.

Hermione remembered Harry telling her about a muggle pub called the Clash that was located outside of Gartley. Gartley was on the opposite side of the Forbidden Forest as Hogwarts. That meant that the road Hermione was on circled the Forbidden Forest. She could probably save time and distance if she cut through the forest; she could also get lost or attacked. She had to follow the road, but at the rate she was moving it would be morning before she reached Hogwarts, even if she traveled all night.

Her wolf instincts told her to seek shelter from the snowstorm that was now becoming a blizzard. Her human side told her that if she stopped and rested she would fall asleep, a sleep from which she would likely never wake up. The wolf backed away from the sign and the directions faded.

Should she turn back to Gartley? Surely she could make 5 miles, but what then. Does she knock on a stranger's door nude? How would she explain her nudity and injuries? A muggle hospital could operate and repair the damage to her jaw, but that would take time, time away from a worried Harry and Caitlin. Muggles could not repair the damage to her fingers. They weren't broken; the bones were smashed. A muggle doctor would undoubtedly amputate the fingers. There was no choice. She had to make it back to Hogwarts. Somehow she had to make it back to the ones she loved. The wolf was limping worse as it continued its journey into the bitter, cold, dark night.

* * * * *

Jamie couldn't believe the time. It was two thirty in the morning. She was supposed to relieve Professor Potter thirty minutes ago, but had ignored her alarm. She quickly slipped on her boots and then grabbed her robes, not bothering to dress due to her lateness and the fact that no one would see her. As she ran through the halls her bare legs were exposed with each stride.

It was quarter to three when Jamie hurried through the infirmary door. Madame Pomfrey and Headmaster Snape had decided that for the girl's safety, Caitlin should stay under constant supervision. Jamie was about to apologize to Harry for being late, but one look at the sleeping girl caused tears to form in Jamie's eyes.

"Harry, what on earth happened to her?" she quietly asked so as to not wake Caitlin. The young girl had what looked like a birdcage fastened to her head.

Harry sat on a chair at the edge of the bed clutching Caitlin's tiny hand between his two much larger hands. He looked up at Jamie; his red eyes giving away the fact that he had been crying. "Her jaw is dislocated. Madame Pomfrey promises she will be okay and out of this contraption tomorrow."

Jamie put her arm around Harry's shoulder. "Does that mean this happened to Hermione?"

Harry eyes filled with tears. "Yes. I can't imagine the horrors she is being put through. I feel so powerless. Here I sit; doing nothing while some fiend is torturing Hermione and Caitlin is suffering along with her." His voice trembled, "I'm so afraid I'm going to lose them both."

Jamie tried in vain to hold back her own tears. "Hermione is the smartest witch alive; somehow she'll make it out of this. I know she will." Jamie wished she were half as confident as her words sounded. "You should try to get some sleep. I'm very sorry that I'm late."

Harry looked at Jamie as if she were asking something unfeasible. "I'll attempt, but doubt I'll be very successful. Call me if there is any change in Caitlin's condition."

"I will. Are you running in the morning?"

"I doubt any of us are. Haven't you looked outside lately?"

"No. Is it snowing, again?"

"I'm afraid so. Looks like we have a blizzard on our hands." Since the cage over Caitlin's head prevented him from kissing her, he simply caressed her hand. Then turned and head for the door. "Good night, Jamie."

"Good night."

As the door closed Jamie picked up Caitlin's hand and held it tightly. *You'll both be fine. You have to be.*

* * * * *

"The scenery on her journey had not changed and the freezing temperatures, fever, injuries and hunger were starting to take their toll as the snow piled steadily deeper. A real wolf would have sought sanctuary long before now, but Hermione wasn't a real wolf and realized if she stopped she would die. She had to make it to Hogwarts.

She hadn't even troubled to consider how she would get in the castle. Obviously she couldn't

enter as a wolf and the idea of students seeing her naked certainly didn't thrill her, but all she cared about right now was making it to the castle. "I love you Harry. I love you Caitlin."

* * * * *

"I love you Mum," Caitlin muttered in her sleep.

Jamie eyes watched Caitlin as she tossed and turned restlessly. She got up from the chair and leaned down next to the sleeping girl. "She loves you, too. So do I. I love you both. Please get better."

Jamie knelt next to the bed and stroked Caitlin's arm as tears filled her eyes. She lost track of time until she heard the door open behind her.

Madame Pomfrey gave a faint smile as she looked at Jamie. "How is she?"

"Everything seems the same except she didn't sleep well. Tossed a lot and talked in her sleep."

"I better check her temperature," Madame Pomfrey fretfully said. "You two are very close. It's quite strange for a first year and fifth year to have such a strong relationship."

"Caitlin's like a little sister to me. She's special. Plus we share a secret passion."

"Is she a naturist, also?"

Jamie stared at Madame Pomfrey, quite startled. "How did you know?"

"I'm very good at puzzles. How many times have you been in here since first year? Seven? Eight? You are my most regular patient. At least half those times you were unconscious and had to be undressed. Many times last year I had to give you sponge baths for weeks.' Jamie blushed at the thought of someone given her a bath. "Don't blush. It's all part of being a nurse. But you do notice certain things."

Jamie didn't say a word.

Pomfrey continued. "I got the idea you didn't like knickers. And two of the times you were here were directly after summer vacation. It was difficult not to notice you were tanned everywhere. You also have a very confident attitude. All signs pointed to it."

"I am, but how did you deduce Caitlin? She's only been here this once."

"Yes, but you two have a strong attachment and to be honest I was shocked to see she didn't wear knickers. I've never had an eleven year old in here before that didn't. I assume Hermione knows and approves?"

"She knows and accepts. It would be going rather far to say Professor Granger approves."

"I'm sure part of the reason she allows Caitlin to practice naturism is because you are a nudist. Hermione is quite fond of you."

"I know. She is very special. If I can become just half the woman she is, I'll be grateful."

"From what I've seen and heard these past years, you're well on your way. Speaking of which, so should you be. I'll take over now."

Jamie nodded and headed to the door, but couldn't help but notice that the minor smile Madame Pomfrey had worn as they talked entirely disappeared when she read Caitlin's temperature.

* * * * *

Ron woke up startled. For a brief moment he forgot where he was. Then he saw her lying there and a smile came to his face. She was so beautiful. Even with her hair a mess and no makeup, she was stunning. For several minutes he just watched the gentle movement of her body as she breathed until he could resist her no longer.

His tongue licked the tip on her breast and she reacted even in her sleep. He caressed her stomach and then moved down to her thighs, eventually bringing his hand to rest between her legs.

Sam woke from a contented sleep. "I just had the most wonderful dream. A handsome red haired man was caressing my boding so lovingly. It seemed like he had more in mind, but stopped. He certainly didn't think I would object did he?"

Ron didn't answer, but as she opened her eyes she heard what sounded like muffled crying. "Ron, are you all right? What's wrong?"

"Sam, I feel terrible. Being with you makes me feel so happy, but that is so wrong. How can I be happy when my best friends are suffering? Hermione, for all I know, could be dead."

Sam took Ron in her arms. "Everyday people lose the ones they love. The closer that feeling of love the stronger the hurt, but for the living life does goes on eventually. It may never be the same, but it goes on. I pray that Hermione is alive and that she makes it back to us, but she would never want you going through the rest of your life buried in sadness and remorse. She'd never want you to feel guilty about being happy."

They didn't make love, but as they held each other tightly and cried for their missing friend, they felt closer than they ever had before.

* * * * *

Hermione didn't know how much longer she could hold her Animagus form. She was growing weaker with every step she took, but at least the snow had stopped. As the sun began to rise she saw it off in the distance. Hogwarts. She was going to make it.

Somehow the sight of the castle gave her renewed strength and she quickened her pace. In her wolf form she left the road and started across the open land toward the castle. The snow was deeper and it once again slowed her pace, but the sight of the castle grew closer and closer.

* * * * *

Jamie had decided to detour by the main castle entrance before returning to Gryffindor Tower. She doubted that anyone would be there for the morning exercise program, but felt she should check.

As was normal, the number of students participating had dwindled, as the temperature had turned colder. Now with Caitlin in the infirmary most of the first years had at least temporarily dropped out. She reached the main hall to find only Alex, and he was not dressed for exercise as he stood there in a sweatshirt and jeans.

Jamie tried her best to give her friend a smile. "You don't look dressed for running."

"I'm not," he replied. "You should talk. Since when do you wear robes to exercise?"

"I was going to go change if anyone else had showed up. It seems everyone figured we would cancel because of the snow."

"Well, I only know three people crazy enough to run even in the snow and two of them are..." Alex suddenly realized what he had said. "Jamie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that the way it sounded."

Jamie gave Alex a peck on the cheek. "I know. Professor Granger, Caitlin and I are a little obsessive when it comes to exercising." Jamie's eye watered. "Alex, I'm so afraid. They both mean so much to me. I can't imagine losing either of them."

Alex put his arm around Jamie as they both stood quietly looking at the beauty of the new fallen snow covering the castle grounds.

* * * * *

The wolf stood on the crest of the hill over looking the Quidditch Pitch. *I made it. I'm home. Hogwarts, you've never looked so good.*

"Elliott, look!" Ian shouted "There, on the crest of the hill. The wolf! It looks like it's headed for the old castle ruins. Hurry before it moves."

Elliot raised his rifle and fired. All three shots hit target. The wolf fell to the ground and rolled down the hill toward the Quidditch pitch. As the wolf turn over and over, its form changed back to that of a beautiful woman. Soon Hermione lay at the bottom of the hill partly buried in snow. Motionless.

"Good shooting Elliot," Ian yelled congratulating his friend. "Lets hurry go skin that predator so we can collect our reward and get out of this cold."

Both men started to run toward the hill, but suddenly stopped and looked at each other.

"What the hell are we doing out here running in the snow?" Ian asked his friend.

"Damned if I know. I should be..." Elliott hesitated. "I know I'm supposed to be someplace. But I can't remember where."

"Me too," Ian responded. "I have to see somebody. It was important. Damn, my mind is a

blank."

Elliott looked at Ian. "It's that damn old castle. Every time I get anywhere near it, I have a memory lapse. Let's get the hell out of here."

The two men hurried off.

* * * * *

The Headmaster had stopped by the infirmary to check on Caitlin's condition, but was extremely saddened at the news.

"She is quite sick and weak," Madame Pomfrey reported. "Besides all the injuries she has sustained, I fear the girl now has pneumonia."

Severus just stared at the sleeping child. He touched her forehead, which was sweaty and hot. Suddenly, the girl was jolted awake and screamed. Her body convulsed two more times and she lost consciousness.

Madame Pomfrey ran to the young girls bed with a look of horror on her face and pulled the sheet off that was covering the girl. Caitlin's hospital gown was red with blood.

"Quickly Severus! Cut off her gown. Hermione has been shot."

* * * * *

Jamie and Alex had stood staring at the snow, not talking, just thinking. Finally, Jamie looked up at Alex and said, "I guess we should get back to Gryffindor Tower. Its still early, maybe a good long shower before breakfast will make me feel better."

As they turned Alex said, "Lets take a short run in the snow first."

"Are you crazy?" Jamie responded. "You don't even have your robes on. You'll freeze."

"No I won't. Just a short run toward the Quidditch Pitch and back."

Jamie hesitated, realizing that she too would be quite cold since she was bare under her robes, but she hated to refuse Alex. It was so seldom that he wanted to do anything spontaneous.

"Okay," she said. "But just a short run out to the Quidditch Pitch and back." She looked up at Alex and gave him a little smile. "I like it when you act on your impulses."

As they stepped out the door they both looked at each other as if maybe this wasn't such a great idea. The path had been previously plowed, but that was before last night's snow, which dumped a fresh ten centimeters.

Jamie gave Alex a little smile as she headed off down the path. "Remember, this was your idea."

Alex couldn't believe he had suggested taking a run. How he wished he had his winter robes on like Jamie. He delayed a few moments, but then figured he best catch up with Jamie. After

all, this was his crazy idea.

Some ice had remained on the path when it was plowed and now was covered with snow. As Jamie looked back to see what was keeping Alex, she stepped on one of the patches of ice and lost her balance. Before she realized what had happened, she found herself laying spread eagle on her back with her knees in the air. Her robes had flown open to the waist. Alex ran to her yelling, "Are you alright, Jamie!"

"Yeah! Nothing hurt but my pride."

As Alex went to help her up, it was impossible for his eyes to not follow her bare legs to where they connected. Immediately he found himself aroused as he turned his head away hoping Jamie wouldn't notice.

"Are you totally naked under your robes?" He asked.

"Yes, I was late to relieve Professor Potter last night and didn't take the time to dress."

Alex dropped the subject as they continued to try to run through the snow. He had seen Jamie naked at least a hundred times since first year, but lately, things had changed. Jamie had changed. He had changed.

Finally after them each falling a few times they reached the Quidditch Pitch. "I'm not nearly as cold as I thought I would be. How about you?" Jamie inquired.

Alex didn't want to admit it, but despite the weather, the thought of Jamie naked under those robes was making him quite warm. "I'm fine. Isn't the snow beautiful?"

"Yes."

They both just stood and took in the beautiful scenery. Then Jamie turned and said, "We better return to the castle. I have to shower before breakfast."

Jamie turned to leave as Alex took in the view one more time. Then he saw it. "Jamie, what is that over at the bottom of the hill? It looks like a ..."

Jamie looked in the direction Alex was pointing and before he could get the word out of his mouth, she yelled, "It is!" and began running toward the motionless figure.

Jamie threw herself on the ground grabbing Hermione's wrist and at the same time placing her ear against Hermione's chest. "She's alive, but barely." Only then did Jamie see all the blood. "Alex, quick! Put her in stasis."

As Alex put Hermione under stasis, Jamie removed her robes and put a warming charm on them and then placed them over Hermione. "Alex, do you think you can carry her? Levitation charms are so tricky. I don't want to take the chance of her floating too high or out of control."

"I can manage, but you'll have to help me lift her initially."

In seconds, Alex had Hermione in his arms and was headed toward the Castle. "Jamie, you're naked. What if you're seen?"

"Then I'm seen. It's either her or me. I'm a nudist. Professor Granger would be humiliated. I don't think she could ever face her students if they saw her naked. Besides, I might not be seen. We won't use the main entrance. We'll use the entrance that leads directly to the infirmary."

* * * * *

Harry ran through the halls and burst into the infirmary. "How is she?" He looked at the Caitlin lying there so tiny and frail exposed to the world as Madame Pomfrey and Severus worked on her.

"We've stopped the bleeding," Pomfrey said. "Severus is using his Hyperempathic powers to heal the wounds." Harry realized that Severus was in deep concentration as he held his hand just above Caitlin's right breast. "It appears Hermione was shot three times. Once in the right shoulder just above her breast. The second shot was to her extreme upper thigh. A few more inches and it would have done irreparable damage to her reproductive organs. The third shot was to her backside."

Pomfrey took a deep breath. "Harry, I promised you I wouldn't hide anything from you. Caitlin's blood loss was minimal because Severus and I were able to put her in stasis and treat her almost instantaneously, but she also has pneumonia. Her body is extremely weak.

"I would assume that wherever Hermione is, her smashed fingers and dislocated jaw have not been repaired. The pneumonia that Caitlin has originated from Hermione's body, so she is also extremely weak. If her bullet wounds go untreated it's just a matter of time before she dies."

The look on Harry's face was indescribable. "How long? What about Caitlin?"

Madame Pomfrey had tears in her eyes. "Very soon. Caitlin and Hermione will be together."

Harry knelt down and kissed Caitlin's cheek and then dropped to his knees next to the bed. He held her hand in his as he stroked her forehead with his other hand. Tears flowed freely from his eyes.

Severus strained to keep his concentration as his eyes moistened and a tear dropped on Caitlin's chest.

Abruptly, the door to the infirmary burst open. Jamie Zacherley, clad only in boots, held the door as an extremely tired Alex Ward carried Hermione into the room.

"Oh! My God!" Pomfrey cried. "Quickly bring her back here." She held the door to the emergency treatment room open as Alex carried the nearly lifeless body through and laid Hermione on the table. "Jamie, I'll need your help. Harry, I know you'll want to stay. The Headmaster will need assistance with Caitlin." Pomfrey looked questioningly at Jamie. "How would Caitlin feel about Mr. Ward seeing her without her clothes?"

"She wouldn't care. He's already seen her nude."

"Good! Alex, please go assist the headmaster."

The door closed behind Alex. Sheepishly, he walked toward the Headmaster.

Alex looked down at Caitlin, who looked to be asleep. A sheet covered her to just below her breasts. The Headmaster was just removing his hand from that area.

"Mr. Ward, as you know young Caitlin here shares the injuries and pain of her adopted mother. Professor Granger was evidently shot just before you found her. Caitlin has been put in stasis to stop the bleeding and now, as a partial Hyperempath, I am healing those wounds. As you can see there is no sign of any injury where I just had my hand. Now that I have explained what I am doing and what you will be assisting me with, I have a few questions for you." The Headmaster looked Alex directly in the eye. "Shall we start with Miss Zacherley? Could you please explain why I was the only one in the room that was shocked to see her running about without her clothes? Secondly, how is it possible that you have seen this eleven-year-old girl naked?"

Alex had never been so panicky. Jamie and he had made it all the way to the infirmary without anyone seeing her state of undress, only to find the Headmaster there. Jamie didn't think Madame Pomfrey would be upset because she knew Jamie was a nudist and after all she was only trying to protect Professor Granger's dignity. Professor Potter understood; he knew Jamie was a naturist, but the Headmaster? They hadn't expected Severus Snape to be in the infirmary. Now Alex had to explain and defend the girls. He knew he was a pathetic liar; it just wasn't his nature to lie. Hopefully the Headmaster wouldn't dwell too deep.

"Yes sir. Jamie is a naturist; has been her entire life. During first year she had an accident that caused her to tell me she was a nudist. Madame Pomfrey figured it out herself after seeing her all over tan when she was in the infirmary. Professor Potter was either told by Caitlin or perhaps saw Jamie naked in Professor Granger's quarters."

Snape knew there was much more to this story. "Is Caitlin also a nudist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Caitlin grew-up with her grandparents and then in an orphanage. I doubt very much she practiced nudity in either of those places."

Alex felt like he was being trapped. "Caitlin decided she wanted to be a nudist when she saw Jamie nude. She saw how confident and relaxed Jamie was and wanted to try it."

"Does professor Granger know about all this?"

"Yes. She allows Caitlin to remain nude in their quarters."

Severus was dumfounded. He couldn't believe this was going on at Hogwarts and he had no knowledge of it. "Every answer you give me produces at least two more questions. Instead of trying to avoid giving information, it might be best if you told me the entire story."

Alex knew the Professor was right. He wasn't helping the girls or himself by avoiding the truth. "I'm sorry sir. I wanted to protect the girls, but I think I'm hurting them more by not telling you the entire truth. I'll tell you everything, but it's a long story."

"In that case, we should probably continue with the healing of Caitlin. Once I begin the

Hyperempathic healing I cannot speak, but I can concentrate on the healing and listen to your story at the same time. I'll let you know when to begin and don't leave out anything. Please pull the cover down to her knees."

Alex did as the Headmaster instructed, but felt like it was exceedingly wrong. He felt like he was undressing Caitlin. When he saw the wound he cringed. If the bullet had hit two inches up and two inches over it would have struck her reproductive organs.

The Headmaster saw Alex's reaction. "I felt the same way when I saw it. Your job is mainly to witness that I do nothing improper. If I need anything I will make hand motions. Taking my mind off the healing process in any way will slow it, but if I talk the whole procedure must be started over."

The Headmaster placed his hand on the wound being quite careful not to touch her private area. "If you would, please let me know when thirty minutes are up. You may start the story, the whole story, whenever you are ready."

Alex looked at the clock and took a deep breath. "It all started in first year. Jamie and I had become very good friends...."

* * * * *

...and she was lying there in the snow. Jamie knew she would be naked, but couldn't allow the possibility that someone would see Professor Granger in that state."

Alex finished his story just as the thirty minutes elapsed. "Mr. Ward, please get me the alcohol off that counter and a cloth," Snape requested. Alex promptly gathered the items and then watched as the Headmaster carefully cleansed the area of Caitlin's body where the wound had been located.

Alex could not believe his eyes. There was no sign of the wound, not even a tiny, faint scar. He asked, "Are all wizards able to do that or is it a special ability?"

"All wizards have the ability, but some to only a very small degree. For some the healing of the tiniest nick can take hours. Others such as Professor Granger have the ability to absorb the pain and scars of a burn victim. All sixth year students are tested in order to determine the degree of their power."

Alex looked down at Caitlin. He was amazed at what the Headmaster had done, but he was reluctant to stare in that area for fear Professor Snape might get the wrong idea. "She has the power, doesn't she?"

"Definitely. I've never seen it so strong in one so young. She is not only a Hyperempath, but also one with telepathic powers. Let us pray she lives to use that ability for good. Now, if you would? Help me turn her over so that we can heal her third wound."

They gently slid Caitlin to one side of the bed and then turned her over on her stomach. Then they slid her back to the middle of the bed.

Alex sort of smiled when he saw that the last wound was in Caitlin's backside. The Headmaster looked at him harshly. "No injury to the human body should be taken lightly. We

are fragile creatures. Had that bullet struck a few more inches toward center, there could have been serious damage.

"Mr. Ward. I feel that to this point you have been truthful and honest with me. I also don't believe that either of the young ladies in question looks upon their nakedness as being remotely connected with flaunting their sex. I believe Professor Granger handled the Halloween situation admirably. The school could never permit nudity in the common room in front of both sexes, but if their dorm mates have no problem with it there, I don't either. As far as what happens in her quarters, that is totally up to Professor Granger.

"I do, however, have one concern and that involves you and in all probability more so Caitlin's two young male friends. You indicated that you have seen Jamie nude easily over a hundred times. Would I be correct in assuming that most of those were in the girls' dorm?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you ever there alone or was someone else always present?"

"Both. Mostly there was someone else there, but many times we were alone."

"How old were the two of you when you started having sexual relations?"

Alex looked at the Headmaster bewildered. "Sir, Jamie and I are just friends. We've never had sex. We're both virgins."

Severus studied Alex's eyes. Something he saw told him the boy wasn't lying. "I believe you. Hopefully you can understand my concern. You and Jamie are both now of legal age and should you want to enter into consensual sex that is your business. Madame Pomfrey will even supply, without question, a potion to young ladies that will prevent unwanted pregnancy. The school, however, can't be seen as promoting sex and I question whether allowing boys to be alone with girls in the dorms is proper, especially unclothed girls."

"Sir, that totally depends on the boy and girl in question. I think some could actually sleep in the same dorms without anything happening while all the security in the world would not prevent others from being intimate. Can I be completely honest?"

"Honesty is always the best road to take, Mr. Ward."

"When I was eleven and first saw Jamie nude, I couldn't take my eyes off her down there. After a few times seeing her nude, it was no big thing. I actually saw her so often that I didn't notice the change that was taking place in her. She went from a little girl to a beautiful woman. I'd be lying now if I said I never had reactions to her, but I don't think its just because she's nude.

Headmaster Snape smiled. "What about Caitlin? She has four years to go before she is legal."

"Matt and Randy seem okay, but what's more important is Caitlin and her relationship to Professor Granger. She would never do anything that would hurt or disappoint her mum."

Snape nodded his head in agreement. "Let's get this young lady finished." He looked toward

the emergency treatment room. "I wish someone would stick their head out and tell us how Hermione is doing."

* * * * *

When Professor Snape finished he said "*Wingardium Leviosa*" " and Caitlin gently rose about two feet off her bed. Alex quickly changed the sheets and then the Headmaster indicated where he could get a hospital robe for Caitlin.

Alex looked undecidedly at the Headmaster and then finally spoke. "If the rules require it, but I know Caitlin would prefer to remain as she is."

The Professor nodded his head in agreement and lowered Caitlin to the bed. Alex pulled the covers over the young girl's body before the Professor removed her from stasis. There was no change. The girl remained unconscious. Professor Snape tried to hide his concern. "There is nothing more you can do here for now. It would be best if you go to your classes now so that you don't get too far behind."

Alex wanted to wait for Jamie, but decided it would be best not to question the dictates of the Headmaster. He had barely left when Harry and Jamie came out of the treatment room followed by Madame Pomfrey. They all looked extremely solemn. Jamie was now wearing a hospital gown.

Madame Pomfrey glanced sadly at the Headmaster. "Is young Caitlin in a coma as well?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so." Severus got the distinct impression that Pomfrey wanted to discuss the condition of the two, but not with Jamie and Harry present.

"They've both been through hell." Pomfrey looked in Jamie's direction. "You've been a great help, but now you should be getting back to class." Jamie headed toward the door. "But not dressed like that!"

Jamie turned around as if to ask Madame Pomfrey what the problem was. As she turned the Headmaster became well aware of the quandary.

"I'm afraid that hospital gown has quite a southern exposure," the Headmaster said.

"I sent her robes off to be cleaned, but the elves have not returned them yet." Madame Pomfrey informed the Headmaster.

Severus replied. "I will see if I can hurry them along, meanwhile you may remain here. Harry, there is no more you can do here at the moment. I know you want to stay with Hermione, but I insist you first get yourself cleaned up and have something to eat."

Harry didn't want to leave, but realized the Headmaster was correct. "I'll be back within an hour. Please call me if there is any change."

Pomfrey nodded as Harry and the Headmaster headed out the door. Jamie went to sit next to Caitlin's bed as Madame Pomfrey went back to check on Hermione. After a few minutes Jamie heard a quiet alarm sounding. Within seconds Madame Pomfrey was calling for her assistance.

* * * * *

Harry quickly shaved and showered. He couldn't even think about food. After grabbing his robes he hurried back to the infirmary.

As soon as he opened the door he realized something was terribly wrong. Jamie was sitting in the corner crawled up in a ball crying her eyes out. Harry ran immediately toward the emergency treatment room just as Madame Pomfrey was opening the door. Her eyes were red and when she saw Harry they filled with tears. "I'm sorry Harry. Please believe me, I did everything I could. Hermione was just too weak from all the injuries and the pneumonia."

Chapter Twenty Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust

As soon as Harry opened the door he realized something was terribly wrong. Jamie was sitting in the corner crawled up in a ball, crying her eyes out. Harry ran immediately toward the emergency treatment room just as Madam Pomfrey was opening the door. Her eyes were red and when she saw Harry they filled with tears. "I'm sorry Harry. Please believe me, I did everything I could. Hermione was just too weak from all the injuries and the pneumonia. She lost the baby."

Harry turned as white as the new fallen snow that covered the Hogwarts grounds. "Hermione was pregnant? She never told me."

"It is possible she didn't even know herself for sure. In general, a miscarriage this early occurs because the pregnancy is not developing normally. I have no way to tell assertively whether her treatment while imprisoned was a factor or not."

Harry looked at Madam Pomfrey almost afraid to ask, "How is she now?"

"She is still in a coma. It's almost as if her body is frightened to awaken for fear she's still a captive."

Suddenly Harry remembered that Caitlin had been incurring Hermione's injuries and sharing her pain. "What about Caitlin? Did this effect her in any way?"

"Yes, but in a different way than previously. Caitlin clearly couldn't have a miscarriage, but did experience her first menstrual flow and with much more pain than would normally be the case."

"Is she also still in a coma? Harry questioned in a fretful manner."

"Yes. I, of course, can't be sure, but I feel strongly that Caitlin's body will continue to mimic Hermione's until a recovery takes place."

Harry looked optimistically at Pomfrey. "Does that mean they will both pull through?"

Pomfrey had a dismal expression on her face as she said, "I don't know Harry. I just don't know. They could come out of their comas in a few hours, a few days or it could be weeks." She then looked at Harry dejectedly. "Or they may never come out. We can just pray and wait."

"Harry." Madam Pomfrey nodded in the direction of the still crying Jamie. "She could use you right now. Hermione and her were quite close and she is very fond of Caitlin. You both could probably use a shoulder to cry on."

Without saying a word, Harry walked over and sat on the floor next to Jamie. He gently placed his arm around her shoulder as she buried her head in his chest. Harry leaned his chin on her head. Tears once again came to his eyes as he ever so tenderly caressed Jamie's back.

Severus Snape returned to the infirmary with Jamie's cleaned robes. Upon seeing Harry and Jamie crying in the corner of the room, he quietly laid the robes at the end of Caitlin's bed and went into the emergency treatment room to talk with Madam Pomfrey.

“What happened?” He asked in an apprehensive manner as soon as he entered the room.

“I’m sorry to say that the state of affairs has gotten even worse in your absence. Hermione has suffered a miscarriage. Possibly brought about by whatever tortures the poor girl was put through. It’s amazing she has survived this long.”

The Headmaster could sense grave concern in Pomfrey’s voice. “Is she going to make it?”

“It doesn’t look good. A body is only so strong. Hers is trying to heal injuries while fighting pneumonia and now the miscarriage just added more pain and blood loss. She is extremely weak. Were it not for the link to the young girl she would be dead.”

“What of Caitlin?”

“If Hermione dies, so will she.”

“Can’t we do something to break the link; to save the girl?”

“Severus, I doubt we would be able to do so, but if we were successful it would be the same as killing Hermione. She has absolutely no chance of recovering without Caitlin’s help. If only the girl was older and stronger.”

“Have you ever seen anything like this before? Unquestionably many of our kind have Hyperempath powers, but to find them in one so young and to such a degree. I was always amazed at Hermione’s abilities, but even she has to touch the person she is healing. Not only was Caitlin able to link without touching, but also she did it with Hermione’s location not even known; possibly many miles away.”

“Medical history talks of such healers, but I’ve not heard of any in our time. It will be a pity for such a gift to be lost.”

Severus was dismayed at Pomfrey’s words. “You don’t seem very optimistic.”

“I’m not. And the longer they remain in a coma, the greater the chance they will die.”

* * * * *

Friday, January 30, 2004

Sometimes Jamie felt like she was the only one in Hogwarts besides Harry that loved and missed Caitlin and Hermione. Most of the student body had returned to business as usual while she continued to feel like her life had been ripped apart.

Morning running and exercising was practically non-existent now. Winter had previously dwindled their numbers, but now with Hermione and Caitlin absent, it seemed like everyone lost interest.

Classes weren’t the same either. Harry was teaching, but DADA wasn’t the same anymore. Before the kidnapping, he had made the class fun, now he just lectured. Jamie hadn’t seen Harry smile once since the Yule Ball.

Even the other classes had changed; both Professors Longbottom and Malfoy were acting strange. Professor Longbottom seemed like he was preoccupied with other thoughts and Professor Malfoy seemed angry at the world

The class Jamie detested most was Transfiguration. It had been her favorite class, or maybe it was that Professor Granger was her favorite professor. Now it was just a class. Professor McGonagall had taken over and although she was an excellent teacher, she just wasn't Hermione.

Even Quidditch had lost its sparkle for Jamie. Gryffindor had played Hufflepuff last week and lost. It was Hufflepuff's first win and Jamie knew it was her fault. She just couldn't keep her mind on the game. Quidditch suddenly seemed so meaningless. She couldn't get her mind off of Hermione and Caitlin.

Madam Pomfrey had thought it would be a good idea to continue the night watches on her two patients. Although many students had volunteered and it wouldn't have been necessary, Jamie took a nightly shift. It was only two hours and Pomfrey changed her shift each night. She would probably have spent that long visiting anyway.

Harry hadn't been assigned any particular shift, but seemed to be filling them all. No matter what time Jamie was scheduled it seemed Harry was there either sitting with Hermione or Caitlin. Normally, a teacher would have been isolated in a separate room of the infirmary, but Hermione had been moved into the regular infirmary in a bed next to Caitlin at Harry's request.

Tonight, Jamie had the ten to midnight shift and was not in the least surprised to see Harry sitting holding Caitlin's hand as she entered the infirmary. "Has there been any change?" Jamie felt like she had asked that same question a million times.

She also heard the same response a million times. "No, I'm afraid not."

Jamie looked about the room. "Are you alone? Wasn't anyone scheduled before me?"

"Tony Marburger was here, but I sent him on his way a few minutes ago. He's a nice boy."

"Yes, he is." Jamie replied. "He and Amanda are dating."

"I remember seeing them dancing together at the Yule Ball." Mentioning the Yule Ball reminded Harry that was the last time he had held or truly kissed Hermione. Five long weeks without the woman he loved. He was about to make another comment when he thought he saw Hermione move just slightly. "Jamie, I believe Hermione moved! Watch Caitlin carefully."

Jamie impatiently watched for any sign of movement. Then it happened. First her eyes just flickered, but then they opened. Caitlin was still extremely weak, but managed to give Jamie a slight smile. "Welcome back sis," Jamie said. "I've missed you."

Jamie squeezed Caitlin's hand as she turned to Harry, "She's awake."

"I think Hermione's going to make it, too. Jamie, would you please wake Madam Pomfrey?"

Jamie quickly squeezed Caitlin's hand and then looked to Hermione who's eyes were still closed, but who was turning her head as if about to wake from a long sleep.

Harry momentarily went to Caitlin's bed. "Hi beautiful. You had us all scared." He touched her hand, leaned over and kissed her cheek. "I love you. Jamie and Madam Pomfrey will be right back, I have to check on your Mum."

Caitlin smiled, but didn't speak as Harry returned to Hermione who had just opened her eyes. Harry's eyes filled with tears. "Thank God you're alive. I love you so much Hermione Granger."

Hermione mouthed, "I love you." Harry leaned down and softly kissed her lips just before Madam Pomfrey scurried into the infirmary with Jamie close behind. She quickly shooed Harry and Jamie aside as she conducted tests on both Hermione and Caitlin.

After about an hour, Pomfrey looked at Harry exposing the first smile he had seen on her face in a month. "They'll need a few days to rebuild their strength, but I imagine they'll make it."

Jamie resisted the urge to shout with joy and instead kissed both Hermione and Caitlin on the cheek and then gave Harry a hug. As Harry pulled away in embarrassment, he noticed Hermione smiling.

"I know you all have a lot to discuss, but that will have to wait until tomorrow. Even though they have been in a coma they need their rest. The elves are bringing them something light to eat. You may both return in the morning."

Neither Harry nor Jamie wanted to leave, but they realized Madam Pomfrey knew best. As Harry leaned to kiss Hermione one more time before leaving, she asked him to push the beds together.

Harry glanced toward Madam Pomfrey who nodded her head in agreement. As Jamie and Harry left the room, they glanced back to see that Caitlin and Hermione fingers were intertwined. The connection that had reached out for miles and helped Hermione to survive was now complete. Mother and daughter were together once more.

* * * * *

Saturday, January 31, 2004

As the sun rose, Harry was again in his familiar position, sitting next to Hermione's bed with her hand held in his. Hermione's other hand still tenderly holding Caitlin's.

The first thing Hermione saw as she opened her eyes were a pair of green eyes tenderly watching her. "Hi," she said lovingly.

"Hi. How are you feeling, beautiful?"

"Right now? Anything but beautiful. I feel disgusting, as if I hadn't had a shower in weeks. What is the date anyway?"

Harry hesitated for a moment before saying Saturday, January thirty-first.

Hermione gasped. “Harry, a month of my life is missing. What happened?”

“Don’t you remember anything?”

“I remember feeling a little faint and nauseous at the Yule Ball. I told Sam I was going to step outside for some fresh air. Just as I was about to exit young Ronald Aldinger ran up to me with a box, saying it was a gift. He ran off before I could ask him whom it was from. I assumed you, but it wasn’t. It must have been a portkey. I barely touched it before I felt myself being pulled into space. When I landed I was in a snowdrift at the side of the road. My jaw was dislocated and my fingers had been smashed.” Hermione only then realized that her jaw felt fine. She looked at her hand, her fingers moved perfectly.

“Was it a dream Harry?”

“No.” Harry squeezed her hand. “What else do you remember?”

“I was naked. My clothes hadn’t transported with me. I realized that I must have been someplace else in order to receive my injuries, but I had no memory. I assumed my Animagus form and started walking the road, not having any idea where I was or was headed. Even as a wolf, I was cold and then it started snowing. I couldn’t eat and I knew that if I rested I would die. Harry, I felt so sick and weak. I wanted to lie down and die, but something inside me wouldn’t let me. A voice kept saying, ‘I won’t let you die. I’ve waited too long for you. I love you too much. I won’t let you die.’”

“Was that you Harry? Did you somehow reach me?”

Harry sighed as he pointed to Caitlin who was still sleeping. “She did it. Caitlin has telepathic and hyperempath powers stronger than you can imagine. She felt it every time you were hurt. She had fallen asleep in the common room and woke up screaming. Her fingers were crushed the same as yours. She received a dislocate jaw the same as you did and she had pneumonia just like you.

“Hermione, I have never felt so helpless. She was suffering. You were suffering. I had no clue as to where you were or who was holding you prisoner. I thought I was going to lose you both.”

It was Hermione's turn to tighten her grasp on Harry’s hand. “After what seemed like days, but was probably about twelve hours I had made it to the hill overlooking the Quidditch field. I was so happy to see Hogwarts. Then everything went blank.”

“You were shot, three times. Evidently, signs had been displayed offering a reward for the skin of an escaped and dangerous wolf.”

“Did Caitlin suffer the wounds? Where was I shot?”

“She suffered the wounds, but without the lodged bullets. One bullet struck just above your breast. Another hit your rump. The third ended up in your upper thigh.”

“Harry, is Caitlin all right? I can’t believe I made her suffer so.”

“She is fine, but you had nothing to do with her suffering. Whoever tortured you is responsible.”

“How did I get here?”

“Alex talked Jamie into going for a scamper in the snow. He saw you first. Alex put you into stasis and then after putting a warming charm on her robes Jamie covered you and Alex carried you here.”

“Poor Jamie, she must have been frozen in nothing but her skirt and blouse.”

“A little less than that. She had the two till four in the morning shift watching Caitlin and hadn’t dressed.”

Hermione was horrified. “She walked here in the snow naked. What if someone from another house had seen her?”

“She felt it would be better for them to see her than you. She felt you would be humiliated, possibly never be able to face the students.”

“Jamie knows me quite well. Was she seen by anyone?”

“No students. Just Pomfrey and the Headmaster.”

“What did they say?”

“Well, evidently Madam Pomfrey had figured out that Jamie and Caitlin were nudists. Plus seeing people naked is a part of her job. Poor Severus was more shocked that no one else was upset with Jamie being nude. He really gave Alex the third degree while he healed Caitlin.”

“What was the date when I was found?”

“January third.”

“I’ve been in a coma ever since?”

“Yes.”

“That accounts for everything from the afternoon of January second until today. Harry, a week of my life is unaccounted for. Where was I? What did I do? What was done to me?” Hermione began to cry.

“Herm, I love you. We don’t know what happened that week, other than the injuries to your fingers and jaw. And we aren’t sure how they happened. Hermione, there is something else we know that happened. I don’t know exactly how to tell you.”

Hermione sensed what Harry was about to say. She looked at him as tears built up ready to breach the dam when he gave the answer she knew was coming. “Harry, for a few days before the Yule Ball I was feeling nauseous; especially in the morning. I hadn’t seen Pomfrey, nor

missed a period, so I wasn't sure. Was I pregnant? Did I lose our child?"

Harry simply nodded

"Harry, help me sit up. Please hold me. Hold me tight."

Caitlin had woken in time to hear that her mother had been pregnant and lost the baby. She pretended to turn in her sleep as she cried for her lost little brother or sister.

* * * * *

Tuesday, February 3, 2004

Caitlin felt refreshed and alive as the sun awakened her. Madam Pomfrey had promised that they could start having visitors today and if they keep improving could return to normal activity next week. Caitlin glanced at her mum who was sitting up reading. "Morning Mum." The young girl practically bounced out of bed, showing no signs of the ordeal she had gone through with her mother. She hurried to her mother's bed and gave her a kiss before heading to the bath.

After a short time Caitlin was scrubbed and ready to start the day. "We get visitors today," she practically shouted excitedly to Hermione as she sat on the edge on the bed.

Hermione just smiled at the little girl. She loved her so much and she was overwhelmed to realize how much Caitlin loved her. This little girl almost died in order to save her life. "Yes, are you going to put on a hospital gown?"

"Must I Mum? You know how I hate clothes and those things are worse than clothes."

"Get back in bed then."

Caitlin quickly obeyed, anything to avoid clothes. She lay on her side reading while waiting for the elf to come with breakfast.

It was only a few minutes before she heard a pop and the elf set her breakfast on her bed table and then after placing Hermione's on her table he was gone with another pop. Caitlin pushed her pillow aside and sat up allowing the covers to fall to her waist as she pulled the table nearer.

Hermione nervously looked at the time and thought to herself that there was no problem. It was only six-thirty. Caitlin would surely be done and fully covered before they received any visitors.

After having been in a coma, Caitlin was actually now enjoying being in the hospital. She got to spend the entire day nude. She got breakfast in bed and her mum spent the day tutoring her on all her subjects trying to catch her up on everything she had missed.

Caitlin was just finishing her last piece of toast when the door opened and Matt and Randy walked in. They delayed at first when they saw Caitlin sitting exposed from the waist up.

Hermione had gone back to reading and hadn't heard the boys enter. She was unaware of their presence until Matt said, "Is it okay for us to come in?"

Hermione was about to jump out of bed and shoo the boys out of the room until she realized she was wearing a hospital gown. Why give them a bigger show? Surely Caitlin would lie down and pull her covers up.

Instead Caitlin sat up straight and said, "Come on in guys. I've really missed you two. Push this table aside and come sit here on the bed."

"Good morning, Professor Granger," both boys chanted as they took a seat on Caitlin's bed.

Part of her wanted to scream at the boys to get out, to get away from Caitlin. Another part of her wanted to play the scene out. Hermione was amazed at Caitlin's confidence and how her partial nudity didn't bother her in the least. If any boy had seen Hermione topless when she was eleven, she would have wanted to join Moaning Myrtle. What really amazed Hermione was that neither boy was burning a hole through Caitlin's chest. They actually seemed to be looking her in the eye.

They each gave her little kiss on the cheek and then went to sit at the foot end of the bed, one on either side. Hermione noticed that Randy was holding something behind his back. Matt gave him a signal and he revealed a beautiful bunch of flowers. "These are from both of us," Randy said as he handed the flowers to Caitlin.

"They're beautiful guys. Thanks. Let me put them in water before they die."

Hermione wanted to shout don't, but it was too late, Caitlin was already out of bed walking naked toward the bathroom. What was most amazing was that neither boy was drooling. They had most certainly watched Caitlin slip out of bed and even watched her parade to the bath, but then they had both turned back toward Hermione as Matt said. "Your daughter is amazing. I could never be like her."

"Me, too," said Randy. I'm embarrassed to let one of the other guys see me without clothes. I'd die if a girl saw me. Caitlin's so different from other girls."

"She is special, both her and Jamie. You can't not like them and its not because they're nudists, its because their so caring, so nice." Matt added.

Hermione was lost for words. Was it possible that these two eleven-year-old boys actually saw beyond Caitlin's nudity? Caitlin returned with the flowers in a vase and carried them to her mother's bed. "Aren't they beautiful?"

Hermione answered, "Yes." She wanted to say more, but held her words.

Instead of getting back under the covers, Caitlin jumped on top of the bed and crossed her legs Indian style to be comfortable.

The three sat talking about what had happened in school the last few weeks. It was obvious the boys were nervous, but that seemed to be much more because there was a Professor listening than that Caitlin was naked.

After a few minutes Matt and Randy said good-bye and hurried off to breakfast.

Caitlin looked at her mum nervously. "Are you going to yell at me?"

"Is there a reason I should?"

"Yes. I purposely exposed myself to Matt and Randy. I could have left one of them get water for the flower, but I wanted to prove something to you."

"And that something was what?"

"That not all boys are little perverts that gawk and grope girls. Neither of them would ever touch me against my will. I agree with what you said about the common room. Some guys probably only wanted Jamie and I naked because they wanted to stare and if they got a chance touch us. They're not all like that. Matt and Randy are special."

"You're the one that is special. They seem like nice boys. I'm not going to yell at you for what you did, but I wouldn't push my luck young lady."

"Mum, thanks for coming back to us."

"Thank you for giving me the strength to make it back."

* * * * *

Friday, February 06, 2004

"Mione, would you like me to get the elves to bring dinner to our room so you don't have to walk down to the Grand Hall?" Harry inquired.

"Harry, please stop fussing over me. I want to eat dinner in the Great Hall with everyone else. Madam Pomfrey has given me the okay to resume normal activity"

"I'm sorry. It's just that I missed you very much. I'm so glad you made it back to us safely. Which reminds me." Harry reached in his pocket and pulled out Hermione's engagement ring. "Among other things, you left this behind when the portkey activated. Would you like it back?"

Hermione reached out for the ring and then just held it tightly in her hand as she looked tenderly at Harry. "Are you sure?" The words caught in her throat. "Perhaps we should postpone the marriage until we find out what happened during that missing week, for all we know every Death Eater in Western Europe may have had his way with me."

Harry shivered at the thought of his Mione suffering in such a way and the knot in his stomach drew tighter. "Hermione, the thought of anyone touching you or doing anything like that to you against your wishes sickens me, but it would never cause me to love you less. Please believe me when I say that nothing, absolutely nothing that could have happened would change the way I feel about you.

"Mione, you are my life. You complete me. Without you I am just a mass of flesh going

through life existing. You give my life purpose. You are my life. My everything.”

Hermione’s moist brown eyes focused on Harry as a smile came to her face. “Can I assume that means you still love me and want to marry me?”

Harry took Hermione in his arms and kissed her deeply. “If you want to skip dinner, I’ll be happy to show you exactly how much I love you.”

Hermione blushed. “Madam Pomfrey did give me a full release.”

Harry scooped Hermione up in his arms and carried her toward the bedroom. “I love you Mione. You are my world.”

“I love you, Harry. No matter what obstacles life throws in our path, I will always love you and only you.”

After all this time apart, one might have anticipated clothes to be thrown hither and yon and them to assail each other in unrestrained fervor. Just the contrary was the case. They both seemed intent on this being a deliberate sweet affectionate reunion.

Harry laid Hermione gently on the bed and then cuddled next to her. As he held her in his arms, he gently smothered her with kisses. As his lips moved against hers, his fingers moved slowly to the buttons on her blouse. He gently tugged at each button before removing her shirt completely. Hermione marveled as he gazed at her. It was as if he were seeing her for the first time. She shivered slightly as he rained kisses over her shoulders. She gasped when his tongue flicked gently over her skin and his fingers caressed her arms so lightly that it felt like they were weightless. Goosebumps rose over her skin as his hands slid along her sides and he gently he kissed her chest following the outline of her bra, and then he kissed her lips. He smiled, his face covered with that ‘lost little boy’ look she so loved as if asking permission to remove her bra. She lifted herself slightly from the bed, giving him easier access to the closure.

Hermione stretched her arms above her head as Harry slipped the bra off easily. At first he just stared at her, but then said, “My god, you’re beautiful.”

See End of Chapter Note * * * * * See End of Chapter Note

Hermione was the first to speak. “I love you Harry. Thank you for still wanting me.”

“There was never any question whether I would still want you. You are my Mione. I could never feel about anyone else like I feel about you.”

Hermione smiled a smile of utter contentment. “That was quite a workout Mr. Potter. Don’t take this wrong, but I sort of wish we hadn’t skipped dinner.”

“He gave her a gentle hug and kissed her cheek. “I’m hungry, too, but didn’t have the guts to say so. Suppose I slip on some clothes and see if I can wrangle something out of Dobby?”

“I have a better idea. Let’s take a speedy shower together and I’ll go with you. It’s been ages since I visited the elves.” All of a sudden Hermione had a thought. She trembled, as she said

to Harry, "Before we shower, will you stand in front of the mirror with me? I want to show you something."

Harry had no idea what was about to happen, but shuffled to his side of the bed. He was about to reach for his pants when Hermione said, "No. Don't bother."

As they approached the mirror, Hermione said. "Good evening mirror. Would you be willing to explain to Harry how you function and perhaps show us our past and..." The words momentarily stuck in her throat. "our future."

Harry was shaken as the mirror spoke. "Mistress, you never cease to amaze me. While you occupy these quarters, I am your servant and at your command. You could command me, but you ask. How could I ever refuse you? I only hope you will be pleased with my reflections."

Harry stood listening in amazement. "Hermione, your mirror talks. Can it see? We just made love with it watching."

"Harry, its not like it watches, besides it already knew what might take place. Please explain, mirror."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Harry Potter. You are indeed a great part of Miss Granger's reflected past. If a person stands before me, I can either reflect their current appearance or I can reflect a memory of their past. If you would stand together, I think I have a memory you will enjoy seeing."

Harry and Hermione held each other tightly as their reflection dissolved and was replaced by two fifteen year olds making love in the Gryffindor girls' dorm.

Harry watched in amazement. "Hermione, it's us. Is that our first time?"

Hermione didn't know why, but she blushed. "Yes. I forgot to tell you that the mirror would only reflect the present or past in our present state of coverage."

"You mean that unless we get dressed, we will be nude in all the reflections."

"That's right," Hermione responded.

Harry laughed as he gathered Hermione closer. "In that case, I imagine all reflections of our future will be rated adults only."

Hermione, good naturedly, jabbed Harry in the ribs. "Do you remember that night?"

Harry looked deeply into Hermione eyes. "How could I ever forget it? He looked away and hung his head. "How could I have been so stupid as to ever let you go?"

Hermione pulled Harry toward her and gave him a kiss. "Harry, neither of us are perfect. We both made mistakes, but what is important is that we are together now. The mirror can also show us a possible future."

"Possible?" Harry questioned.

“Yes, possible,” the mirror responded. “As I told Professor Granger, the future has infinite possibilities. What your future holds depends on the decisions you and others make everyday. I will attempt to show you a reflection of a future I feel you will both like. You must be warned that there is no way to tell if my reflected future will ever come to be. It is only one of countless possibilities.

“As a harsh example, had Mr. Ward not acted so impetuously and convinced Miss Zacherley to run in the snow, you would not be standing before me tonight nor would Miss Garrison be alive.”

Harry trembled as he turned and took Hermione in his arms. Had it not been for Alex and Jamie running in the snow, he would have lost the woman he loved and the girl he already thought of as his daughter. “Mione, I love you so much. I don’t see how I could ever go on living without you.”

“Me either,” Hermione replied as she held and kissed the only man she had ever loved.

“I’m sorry,” said the mirror. “I didn’t mean to upset you both, but I felt it necessary to instill upon you both the fragileness of the future. What I’m about to reflect is what appears to me to be a wonderful scene from a not to distant future for you both. So many things can prevent it from happening.”

The reflection of a fifteen year old Harry and Hermione making love dissolved and was replaced by their current selves. Just as quickly a young couple walking the beach replaced that reflection.

Harry and Hermione looked at each other, both astounded by what they saw. The young couple was most certainly them. Harry could not get over how happy he looked or how beautiful Hermione looked. Hermione simply shook her head in disbelief that such a future was even possible for her. Suddenly three girls ran into the picture and in turn threw their arms around both Harry and Hermione, hugging them.

Harry simply stared at the reflection, unable to speak. All five of the people in the reflection were totally naked.

“Mirror,” Hermione spoke, “how can what you show us possibly happen? Harry and I aren’t nudists. We would never be outside on a beach naked. Certainly not in front of Caitlin, Jamie and a stranger.”

The mirror spoke, “As I said this is only one of an infinite number of possible futures that await you. I reflected this because you are currently nude and because you all looked extremely happy. I don’t say it will happen. You could both easily prevent such a future by avoiding beaches and ever being nude outside. My function is merely to show possible futures. You and those you come in contact with determine your actual future.”

“Thank you mirror,” Hermione said as she dejectedly went to sit on her bed.

“Mione, what is the matter? You were so happy and now you look so depressed,” Harry questioned as he sat holding her.

“Harry, it’s the reflections. Before I was kidnapped, Caitlin and I stood before the mirror

naked and it showed us possible futures. We were so happy, just like in the one today. Harry, I want so much for that future to be a reality, but they can't take place." Hermione sighed disgustingly.

"Why can't they?"

"Me Harry, I'm a prudish British girl. You and I were on a beach naked with Jamie, Caitlin and that other girl. That's not me. I don't know about you, but there is no way I could ever go naked in a public place. Being nude in front of you is no problem because... well, you make me feel confident about myself. I'm even getting accustomed to being naked around Caitlin, but in public, never. Could you do that?"

"I'm not sure. Am I allowed to get very drunk first?"

Hermione chuckled, "I could never get drunk enough. There is something else bothering me. Who is that other young girl? The mirror showed Caitlin and I in a reflection that took place in this very room and she was in it."

Harry just shook his head. "I don't know Mione. Perhaps we aren't meant to see the future, in this case possible future. It just gives us one more thing to concern ourselves with."

"You're probably right. It's just that--. Harry we all looked so happy. I want that future. Somehow it has to be possible." Hermione suddenly blushed. "Harry, there is something else that 's bothering me. Did you notice anything different about me?"

It was Harry's turn to turn red. "Yes, you had no pubic hair."

"Harry, all the reflected futures that I want show me like that. Please give me an honest answer. Would you prefer me with or without?"

Harry felt as if he was trapped. Was this a trick question that he would regret answering either way? He realized it was impossible for him to lie to Hermione. "I think most guys would prefer a girl to be smooth there, just like they like girls to shave their legs and underarms.

"I can't believe I'm going to do this, but if it helps make that future possible...." Hermione felt like she was humiliating herself as she focused on that area and concentrated hard. Soon it was like watching a movie in reverse. The curly hairs got shorter and shorter until they were none existent

Hermione seemed to glow red as Harry stared at her now completely exposed. It was promptly evident that the naked Harry approved of this new look.

Hermione smiled through her blush. It always amazed her that plain Hermione Granger could have such an effect on Harry Potter. "Okay, since you evidently like the new look, I'll give it a try for a while." She reached for him with a sly smile on her face. "Does this mean we won't be visiting the kitchens till later?"

"Much later," Harry responded as he wrapped his arms around his true love. "Much, much later, I think perhaps I'll have my dessert prior to dinner."

Harry had his dessert and so did Hermione, but they never did get to the kitchens.

* * * * *

Tuesday, February 11, 2004 Noon

It was Professor Granger's second day back on the job and she loved every bit of it. The memory or rather lack of memory surrounding her kidnapping still bothered her, but so many good things were happening that the concern had at least for the time being been pushed aside.

Harry, Caitlin and herself had been invited to dinner at Sam and Ron's place on Sunday. Ron had given up his flat a few weeks earlier at Sam's suggestion and moved in with her and Timmy.

Timmy, in all probability, had the most enjoyable evening of his life. From the moment they walked in the door it seemed that Caitlin and Harry were vying to play with the little guy. Hermione choked back tears as she watched Harry with the little boy. Had she possibly lost her only chance at giving Harry a son? Sam seemed to read her mind and started questioning her about being an Animagus in order to get her mind on another subject.

Just prior to eating, Timmy made a discovery, one that for a time caused Caitlin a bit of embarrassment. Caitlin had worn a blouse and short skirt. Obviously little Timmy must have noticed something as they were playing because he went over and lifted her skirt up as he shouted, "Look, Caydin doesn't have no pants."

Caitlin wasn't embarrassed to be exposed, but she blushed at the fact a little boy was lifting her skirt. Despite the fact that Sam admonished Timmy, he persisted in lifting Caitlin's skirt. "Caydin doesn't have a pee pee."

Finally, the third time he lifted Caitlin's skirt; Sam slapped his hands and made him go sit in the corner. As he sat there balling, Caitlin felt extremely bad.

Sam went over and put her arm around Caitlin's shoulder. "I forgot about you being a nudist and not wearing knickers. I know you don't know Ron and I that well, but I have no problem with you being naked here if you desire."

"Really, do you mean it? What about Timmy? Is it okay for him to see me naked?"

"Ron will probably disagree with me, but I think it's healthy."

Caitlin ran over to where Hermione was sitting. "Mum, Miss Bowman says it's acceptable for me to be nude here. May I?"

Hermione looked to Harry for advice, but only receive a noncommittal shrug of the shoulders. Herm gave him a rather disgusted 'thanks for the help' look before turning to Samantha who encouraged her to let Caitlin do her thing. Hermione gave a slight nod of her head, but that was all Caitlin needed. She couldn't have gotten out of her clothes faster if she had used a wand.

What happened next amazed all three adults in the room. Timmy started to take off his clothes. "Me no clothes, too," he said.

Hermione was astounded that instead of Sam stopping little Timmy, she went over and helped him get out of the balance of his clothes. In a few minutes, Timmy had run off to play with Caitlin again only this time they were both naked.

Hermione and Harry both looked at Sam in astonishment as she said. "I'm not a nudist, but as I told you my best friend at school was. I agree with a lot of their beliefs. I think it's healthy for children to see others naked. There is nothing dirty about being naked. There are just unclean minds."

Hermione watched as Caitlin and Timmy played together. *Sam is right. They are innocent. If only they could stay that way.* Then she thought of Jamie and the fact that somehow she had done just that.

Just then Ron who had been in the kitchen getting drinks, returned. He almost dropped the tray he was carrying when he saw Caitlin giving Timmy a piggyback ride, both of them naked. His faced turned red, but before he could say anything Timmy ran over to him.

"Daddy, Caydin has a gina and I have a pemis. That's what makes her a girl and me a big boy. Caydin never wears nothing at home. Why do I have to be pressed all the time?"

"The word is dressed. Mummy and I will talk about it later. Why don't you go play?"

Timmy ran off to join Caitlin as Ron dispersed the drinks. When he got to Sam he just looked at her and smiled. "You proved your point."

Hermione squeezed Harry's hand as she whispered, "Timmy called Ron 'Daddy'."

Harry gave his Mione a smile in return. They were both happy to see that things seemed to be working out well between Sam and Ron and that Timmy had accepted Ron as his dad.

Hermione hoped she wouldn't start an argument, but she wanted to know what point Sam had proved. "Are Harry and I missing something?"

"Nothing earth shattering," Sam answered. "Ron and I have a difference of opinion when it comes to nudity and what children should or shouldn't see. I like to wear little or nothing around the apartment and although Ronnie personally seems to like it, he feels I's wrong that Timmy sees me naked. I've been trying to convince him that nudity itself is not dirty, its people's minds that make it dirty. Caitlin and Timmy just proved how natural and innocent it is for children, because they don't equate it with sex.

Hermione wondered if that was her problem. Did she see nakedness as dirty? There was nothing dirty about Timmy and Caitlin. Why when you became an adult did nudity suddenly become dirty? Maybe it didn't. Maybe it was only people's minds that made it seem that way.

Hermione had become quite fond of Sam. She realized that the relationship that Harry, Ron and her had during school had changed and could never be the same, but now she hoped that perhaps the two couples could establish a special friendship.

* * * * *

BR> Monday at breakfast had been touching for Hermione. Before the meal was served, Severus had stood and welcomed her back to the staff. All the staff and students had stood and applauded her return. She remembered standing with tears in her eyes. Harry whispered in her ear, "They all love you, but not as much as me."

Even, Ginny, Draco and Neville seemed happy that she was back.

She thought about the last few days and how wonderful it was to be with her friends and students. Just as she was about to enter the Great Hall for lunch she saw Harry hurrying down the corridor and waited for him. They had just taken their seats when the Headmaster entered. Severus looked shaken and sad as he approached Hermione's seat.

"Hermione, I know you've just gotten back to work and under different circumstances I'd have someone else handle this, but I don't imagine you would like it that way. Please come with me. Harry, perhaps you will be good enough to join us?"

Hermione and Harry gave each other questioning glances as the Headmaster led them to a room adjoining the Great Hall. Upon entering, he indicated for them to take a seat.

Severus had a grave look on his face as he took a seat across from Harry and Hermione. He took a deep sigh before speaking. "I'm afraid there has been a tragic accident. Hermione, it concerns a Gryffindor student; therefore I thought you might want to handle it." Severus hesitated as if not wanting to tell Hermione what had occurred. "Jamie Zacherley's parents were killed this morning by a drunken muggle driver as they crossed a street near their home."

"Noooo!" Was the only response Hermione could get out before she broke into tears; Harry quickly moved to comfort her.

* * * * *

Friday, February 13, 2004

The weather was equal to the mood of those attending, both somber and dreary. Alex, Tony and Harry waited with Hermione, Caitlin and Amanda until the hearses pulled to a stop and then went to their assigned positions along with the other pallbearers to wait for further instructions.

A long black car followed the hearse. As the driver opened the passenger door, Hermione was stunned to see that only two young girls step out. Jamie and her sister, Emily stood with the funeral director. Hermione couldn't help but stare. She didn't remember ever meeting Emily, but she looked extremely familiar.

The pallbearers grasped the handles of the twin coffins, carrying them down the path and through the door of the sanctuary. Once inside the coffins were placed on two tables draped in black fabric, which sat at the front of the building. The pallbearers sat then and waited for the rest of the congregation to arrive. Hermione sat behind Harry along with Amanda and Caitlin.

The organist began to play a slow mournful selection as the church started to fill. Hermione

watch as Jamie and Emily took a seat in the first row.

The service started. The organ's drone ceased as the service began. Hermione thought to herself how close she had come to occupying a coffin.

"...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me...."

I will fear no evil.

* * * * *

Rest in Peace

"...The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and evermore. Amen."

The organ started playing again as the funeral director signaled to the pallbearers. All twelve stood and walked toward the caskets, which they hoisted onto their shoulders. They carried the coffins out of the church as the organ droned on with its sad song.

The congregation followed behind the pallbearers, led by the vicar, Jamie and Emily. At the grave, the caskets were lowered onto the boards that lay across the open graves. The pallbearers backed off as the vicar took his position between the identical caskets. Hermione reached out and took Harry's hand in hers. She had been crying.

As the vicar continued to speak men from the funeral home replaced the planks with webbing and then the caskets were lowered into the ground.

"...Unto, Almighty God we commend the soul of our sister, Jennifer and our brother, Carl.

Hermione felt so sorry for Jamie and Emily as they stood holding each other, tears streaming down their faces. They looked so alone and frightened. She wished she could hold them both in her arms.

"...and we commit these bodies to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."

Lastly, the vicar led them in the familiar words of the Lord's Prayer.

"And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil..."

"Amen."

The vicar quietly walked away from the grave as one by one the mourners walked by Jamie and Emily and offered their condolences. They then turned to walk back up the path and resume their normal lives. For Jamie and Emily that was not an option; their parents were dead.

The Hogwarts group held back until all the other mourners had left and then approached Jamie and her sister. Jamie introduced her sister and then quietly talked to all her friends as Harry and Hermione waited.

Jamie left Emily standing with Caitlin and the others as she walked over to Harry and Hermione. She fought to hold the tears back as she first put her arms around Harry. “Thank you for being my knight, my professor and a good friend.”

She then turned and hugged Hermione with all her strength. “I’m going to miss you. You always were and always will be more than a professor to me.

“Miss me?” Hermione questioned with a shocked expression on her face.

Jamie couldn’t hold the tears back any longer. “I’m leaving Hogwarts.”

Chapter Twenty-one Sisters?

"Leaving Hogwarts! What do you mean?" Hermione cried.

"I'll explain. Just a minute, please," Jamie answered.

Jamie stretched her head to get the attention of her sister and school friends. "Please, don't leave. I want to talk to you all, but first I need a few minutes with Professor Potter and Professor Granger."

Jamie guided her two professors to a nearby bench and indicated that they all sit down. For a few moments they sat there quietly as Jamie seemed to be building the courage to speak. Hermione felt so bad for the young girl who had always seemed so self-assured, happy and full of life. She now seemed totally shattered.

Jamie took a deep breath and began. "If you remember, I told you both that my parents met in one of Voldemort's prison camps. What I didn't tell you was that while awaiting execution, they were forced to be human guinea pigs by Voldemort's depraved researchers. Those people were trying to find a way to destroy magical genes. My parents' genes weren't affected, but their magical abilities were damaged.

"They couldn't perform much more than simple first year spells. They found it difficult and embarrassing to function in the wizard world. That's why we live in a muggle community. Unfortunately, their wizard training was little help when it came to procuring well-paying muggle employment."

Harry could relate to the problems that Jamie's parents probably endured. He had found his own Hogwarts education little help in securing employment when he lived with muggles.

"My parents both worked hard, but we never had a lot. Most of the money they earned went to keeping a roof over our heads and food on the table." Jamie had tears in her eyes as she thought of her now departed, beloved parents. "Emily and I never had a lot of fancy things, but we knew we were loved and that was all that mattered. My parents sacrificed a lot so that I would be able to attend Hogwarts. They knew the next two years were going to be extremely rough with both Emily and I attending. It was very important to them that we were given the opportunity to reach our full potential."

As Jamie spoke, Hermione couldn't help but think of Ron and how his parents had struggled to see all the children through school. Thinking of Molly and Arthur brought tears to her eyes and thoughts of her own parents. She would give anything to see them again.

Life, at times, seemed so cruel and heartless. Hermione had lost her parents when only seventeen. Now Jamie had lost hers when only just fifteen. She looked towards Harry who was listening to Jamie speak. His eyes were moist. Harry had lost his parents when just a baby. Poor Caitlin had not even once been held in her mother's arms.

Jamie voice began to break. "Now they're gone. We have no close relatives. What little savings they had will barely pay the funeral expenses. The house is rented. If we sell the furnishings, the money raised may pay the rent for a few months in a cheap apartment. But then what? I have no money to return to Hogwarts and even if I did; there is Emily to

consider. No way can I stand by and see her shipped off to an orphanage. I have to take care of my sister; I love her.

Jamie looked at Hermione as the tears she had struggled to hold back streamed from her eyes. "Hermione, I'm scared. I have no idea what to do or where to turn. I'm only fifteen. Who's going to hire me? I keep telling Emily that every thing will be okay; that I'll find a job and take care of her. But I know everything isn't fine. Everything is abysmal. My world is crumbling around me. I feel so helpless and alone"

Hermione drew the young girl close and held her tightly in her arms as she looked to Harry for guidance. Harry gave Hermione a reassuring nod. "Jamie," Hermione said tenderly. "You are not alone. Harry and I are here for you. We'll help you through this."

Harry put his arm around Jamie as Hermione continued to hold her. "Hermione and I have a school friend that now works in the Family Services Department at the ministry. I will contact him and see exactly where we stand and what can be done. I can promise you two things categorically. You are going back to Hogwarts and Emily will not end up in an orphanage."

"But how?" Jamie questioned.

Harry saw the look in Hermione eyes that indicated she agreed with him one hundred percent. "You let Hermione and I worry about the how. Harry turned his attention to Hermione. "Hermione, why don't you take Jamie and the others to lunch while I make a visit to the ministry?"

Hermione gave Jamie a kiss on the cheek. "We'll work things out. Why don't you get the others and decide where you want to go for lunch? I want to talk to Harry." Jamie returned Hermione's kiss and then gave Harry a quick kiss on the cheek as she ran to her sister and friends. Her cheeks were still moist with tears.

As soon as Jamie left, Harry questioned Hermione. "Am I correct in assuming that we both are willing to do whatever is necessary to help these girls?"

"Yes, their parents' sacrifices can't be in vain. How long do you think it will take you?"

"We should be able to make the four o'clock train. Besides checking with Dean on the legal issues and getting his advice, I want to contact Severus and see what aid, if any, the school can give us."

"Harry, every day you do something that makes me love you even more." Hermione pulled Harry into a close embrace.

Harry gave Hermione a kiss as he prepared to Apparate. "Make sure Jamie and Emily are on that train. I'll make arrangements to have personal items shipped. If necessary, we can come back ourselves."

* * * * *

It was ten to four as Harry paced the railroad platform. Caitlin, Alex, Amanda and Tony had

already taken seats on the train, which would leave in ten minutes. Harry kept looking at the station clock and watching for Hermione.

Finally, three minutes before the train was due to depart, just as Harry was about to get the others off the train, Jamie, Hermione and Emily came rushing through the wall that led to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters.

"You had me worried!" Harry exclaimed.

Hermione took a deep breath. "Tomorrow morning, I start running again. The last six weeks have made me weak. Girls, hurry in and grab a compartment."

As Jamie and Emily rushed toward the train with two suitcases and an animal carrier, Harry questioned Hermione. "Where were you guys?"

"We had to go back to the house. Alfred would have died. Emily also needed some clothing to tide her over."

"Who is Alfred?" Harry inquired.

"Alfred is Emily's pet Kneazle; he's a sweetheart. I just hope he and Crookshanks get along." Hermione quickly changed the subject. "I hope you have some good news because this afternoon did not go well at all."

"Let's get a compartment on the train and I'll discuss it with you first before we talk to the others. What caused your afternoon to go badly?" Harry asked with concern.

"Emily." Hermione answered with a tone of frustration. "The girl is too young to understand the complexities of life. She is angry that Jamie and her are not going to be living together as planned. Neither Jamie nor I could make her understand how unrealistic that would be."

The train whistle blew and Harry and Hermione rushed to board. The train was practically empty and they were able to get a compartment next to the young people.

As they took their seats, Hermione looked at Harry hopefully. "How did things go? Were you able to speak with Dean and Severus?"

"Yes. You and I have some large decisions to make and we only have the length of this train ride to make them." Harry had a grave expression on his face.

Hermione was concerned by the serious look on Harry's face. "What did they say?"

"Let me start with Jamie first. Her age puts her in a strange situation. Technically, in the wizarding world a person is still a minor and remains under the control of their parents until they reach the age of eighteen. However, once you reach fifteen you could legally file for emancipation and strike out on your own if you desired. Since Jamie's parents died after she was fifteen she is considered automatically liberated, her own person. She is past the age of being put in an orphanage and cannot be adopted. She is on her own."

Hermione listened in horror. "You mean to tell me that any child that is between fifteen and eighteen is literally thrown out on to the streets if their parents die? How can our world be so

cruel?"

"It might seem cruel, but actually it's not. They have choices. Of course, they can try to get a job and make a life for themselves. Obviously, the younger and less educated you are the less this becomes an option. Another option is joining a group home. There, they receive shelter and food while they train in a craft. The third option is to live with a relative or close friend while you finish your education or learn a trade and then strike out on your own."

"Harry, what did Severus say? Is there any help the school could give?"

"The school has limited funds. No scholarships are offered for first to fifth year. There is a program available for sixth and seventh years, but you must be recommended by four of your professors and receive thirteen O.W.L.s to qualify."

"Thirteen? That's a lot, but I think Jamie could do it. The fact that she has mastered being an Animagus would easily qualify her for three in Transfiguration alone. Harry I don't have a lot of savings, but I'm sure I can manage to pay the balance of this year. She could stay with us during the summers." There was optimism in Hermione voice as she looked to Harry for confirmation.

"Jamie's parents just made the final payment for this year. If Jamie can achieve thirteen O.W.L.s, this seems to be the best option. I hope Jamie will see it that way, also."

"We have to convince her that it is for her own best interest. I'm sure her parents would want her to do whatever is necessary to finish school."

Hermione was relieved that there seemed to be a workable solution to Jamie's problem. Her smile of relief quickly faded as she thought of young Emily. "What about her sister?"

Harry frowned. "That unfortunately is a much more difficult situation than Jamie's, especially given that she doesn't seem to realize the severity of their situation. Again, there are options and they must be taken quickly. Technically, Emily should have entered an orphanage immediately following the funeral. Theoretically, we are breaking the law by having her with us now. "

Hermione gasped, thinking how horrible that would have been for the child. One minute seeing your parents laid to rest and the next being plucked away from everyone you knew.

"Option one is her going to an orphanage."

Hermione interrupted. "Harry, that is not even an option under consideration." Harry could sense that Hermione was upset that he would even mention such a possibility.

"I know 'Mione. She could also be adopted by a relative or a friend." Harry was hesitant to continue. "Dean highly recommends against us taking that option considering her age and the fact that her parents just died. If you recall, Caitlin had to consent to being adopted by you. After your afternoon, I would tend to agree with Dean that adoption, at least at this point in time would not work. Emily would feel as if she were being forced into a choice between us and an orphanage."

Hermione looked pointedly at Harry. "You and Dean better have a third option."

"Guardianship. That is the route Jamie wanted to take. The problem with Jamie being Emily's guardian is that she has to prove a source of sufficient income to maintain both herself and Emily. That would require her to leave school and get a job. Dean and I both feel that ultimately this would end in Jamie's life being ruined and Emily, in the end, still being committed to an orphanage. It would seem that the best option would be for us to take guardianship of Emily at least until Jamie has finished school. That gives everyone a chance to adjust. After two years, the guardianship could be transferred to Jamie, or depending on circumstances, remain with us. Adoption may even be an alternative then, but this option has given everyone two years to adjust."

Hermione looked shyly at Harry. "Are you okay with all this? We haven't even said 'I do' and you for all intents and purposes have three daughters and a cat."

Harry laughed, "Don't forget Alfred, my only male companion. I'm okay with it Herm. Admittedly, I'm nervous about the situation, especially Emily."

"I'm sure she'll adjust. Look how wonderfully you and I get along with Caitlin."

"That's entirely different. Caitlin was searching for parents to love and be loved by. Emily had parents that she loved and loved her. Now, she is being tossed into the hands of strangers. She may well resent us." Harry had a concerned expression on his face.

Hermione seemed much more optimistic. "I'm sure she will come around. It will be tight paying for her schooling next year."

"Perhaps we should remain single so that the school would pay for both girls." Harry kidded.

"What are you talking about, Harry Potter?"

Harry smirked. "I'm just kidding Herm. It just seems unfair that the school will pay for the education of only one child or dependent from a professor's family. If we stayed single, I could take guardianship of Emily and both she and Caitlin would be covered. Once we are married only one can be covered."

"Harry, all of Caitlin's seven years have been paid for already. The school received the money from her grandparent's estate. Our daughter will never have to work a single day of her life if she doesn't desire."

Harry looked at Hermione questioningly. He had no idea what she was talking about. "What are you going on about?"

"I'm sorry, I thought Caitlin told you." Hermione thought for a moment. "No, she wouldn't have. She doesn't like to talk about it. Prefers to keep it a secret. She is afraid people will treat her differently if they find out she is going to be wealthy when she turns fifteen."

"How wealthy?" Harry asked in complete surprise.

"That's difficult to say with investments fluctuating. She's currently worth about twenty million galleons."

Harry reeled at this revelation. "Well, shall we discuss our plans with the heiress before we talk to Jamie and Emily?"

"I'll get her," Hermione said as she rose from her seat. "I'm sure Caitlin will be happy with the arrangement. Emily is another story entirely."

When Hermione returned with Caitlin, the couple quickly reviewed their plans with her. As expected, Caitlin was eager to have Jamie and her sister join their growing family. "Where will we all sleep? She asked.

"That will take a little rearranging. The room where I currently keep my books was once a bedroom and will be again. Problem is that there are three girls and only two bedrooms. We have a number of choices, but they all involve two of you sharing a room. Since Jamie will only be with us in the summer, the best solution would probably be for her to share a room with you or Emily. That would give you and Emily each your own room most of the year."

Caitlin thought for a moment. "I'm not sure how Emily would feel about it, but I think it would be neat for us to share a room. We are only a year apart in age. Plus, that way, you could keep most of your books in the other room except when Jamie came in the summer."

"That would work out well," Hermione agreed. "Suppose we leave it up to Jamie and Emily since you seem flexible." Actually Hermione loved Caitlin's idea. Perhaps Emily and Caitlin sharing a room would increase their familiarity.

Caitlin smiled as she looked back and forth between Harry and Hermione. "Guess I won't be the only one naked anymore. Now the naturists will outnumber you three to two."

Harry had a look of dismay on his face as his eyes met Hermione's. He had completely forgotten about Jamie and Emily both being nudists. He didn't picture Emily as a problem. After all, he had gotten used to Caitlin being nude. It didn't even faze him any more. Actually, now it seemed odder to see her when she was dressed.

Emily was a year younger than Caitlin; there was no reason her nudity should bother him. Jamie, now that was another story. She was only fifteen, but she was no little girl. It wasn't that Harry didn't trust himself around her. Hermione was the only person he desired to be with, but Jamie did have a great body. What if he got aroused and Hermione took it the wrong way?

It seemed as if Hermione could read his mind as she answered Caitlin, "Yes, you will outnumber us. Those girls are going through enough turmoil in their lives. Naturism is important to them and we won't be a part of causing anymore changes." She winked at Harry. "I'll be there to help you out if any problems arise."

Caitlin had no idea what her mother was talking about, but assumed it was some secret code her mum and Harry had and that it was best she not question it.

Harry gave Hermione a wink back, realizing once more how lucky he was to have this understanding, intelligent and gorgeous witch as his future wife.

"Caitlin, would you join Amanda, Tony and Alex, and at the same time ask Jamie and Emily to join us?" Hermione asked. She smiled as the young girl left the compartment. It never

ceased to amaze her how close the two of them had become in the last five months. Caitlin and Harry filled such a great part of her heart. Jamie also occupied a large area and now Emily was about to move in. That was no problem; Hermione's heart had plenty of space.

It was just a brief time before the door slid open and Emily and Jamie entered. The contrast in their expressions was startling to both Harry and Hermione. Jamie was pale and nervous, her face almost pleading to be helped out of this pit of despair that surrounded her.

Emily's face oozed hatred and anger. The phrase 'if looks could kill' aptly applied. Both girls had changed clothing after the funeral and now wore skirts and blouses. They had left their coats in the other compartment. Hermione was quite distressed when she observed the sheerness of Emily's shirt. Despite the fact that she was only ten and a year younger than Caitlin, Emily had already started to develop and the shirt she wore did nothing to hide this fact.

Hermione could only imagine what Alex and Tony had thought. She bit her lip, resisting the urge to tell the girl to get her coat and cover herself. There would be other more appropriate times to discuss Emily's clothing.

Jamie demurely took a seat next to the sliding door across from Hermione and Harry as Emily flopped herself next to the window and then turned, leaning her back against the window wall and lifting her feet to the seat. As she did so, she actually pulled her dress up so that her private area was not only exposed to Harry and Hermione, but to anyone that would walk by the compartment and look in the window.

Hermione was outraged at this behavior and started to get out of her seat, but Harry put his arm against her waist and stopped her. He gave her a look that seemed to indicate he wanted to handle this. Hermione tried to calm herself as she straightened her robes.

Harry calmly rose from his seat and went to the compartment door. He performed a locking charm on the door and then closed the curtains. "I knew you were a nudist, but I didn't realize you were an exhibitionist. I locked the door and covered the window. If you would feel more comfortable without your clothes, feel free to take them off, but either way you will sit like a young lady and not like a tramp. Understood?"

It was obvious that Emily was testing just how far she could push the situation as she got up and quickly stripped her clothes off. However, this time she sat down properly with her legs together.

Harry glanced at Jamie. "Would you like to remove your garments, also?"

Jamie shyly shook her head no as she glared at her sister. "I appreciate when someone is trying to help me out of a desperate situation. Unlike some people who seem to be doing everything they can to embarrass my friends and myself. I'm a nudist, not a little slut."

Emily just stared at Jamie, her face expressing a mixture of anger, embarrassment and hurt. She couldn't believe that her sister was calling her a slut.

"Now that everyone is settled and comfortable," Harry glared at Emily. "I'd like to explain what we propose to do. Jamie." Harry looked at the young girl with love and kindness. "You are emancipated which gives you every right to veto Hermione and my suggestions. I hope

you won't because we both feel it is the best solution for the situation you and Emily are faced with."

Emily just stared at the ceiling refusing to make eye contact with either Harry or Hermione.

"Jamie," Hermione began. "Harry spent the afternoon talking to the Headmaster and to a friend we have at legal services in the Ministry. You are fifteen and if you wish you can leave Hogwarts and seek employment. Should you be able to obtain a position paying sufficiently, you could even have guardianship of your sister."

Emily looked at Jamie as if begging her to take that option.

Hermione continued. "However, Harry lived in the Muggle world for five years after completing Hogwarts and had an extremely hard time securing employment. I doubt you would do better."

Harry leaned over with his elbows on his knees and stared at Jamie sympathetically. "In order to obtain good employment in the Muggle world you must attend what they refer to as University. Without the proper education, you end up doing menial work that pays minimum wages. I barely survived from week to week. I wouldn't want to see you living in some of the places I had to or doing some of the cruddy jobs I had to take."

"Emily, Jamie, we aren't trying to hurt either of you," Hermione said. "We only want to help you. Jamie, your parents sacrificed many things so that you could attend Hogwarts. Emily, they were prepared to sacrifice even more so that you would have the same opportunity. Don't let their dreams for you die along with them. Keep their dream alive by letting us help you."

Emily responded angrily, "My name is Zacherley, not Granger or Potter. I don't want to be adopted and lose my name or have someone try to make me forget the parents that I love."

Harry stood up and walked to the window and then turned and looked directly at Emily. "We want to help you, but we have no intention of adopting you." Emily and Jamie both looked at Harry in a state of shock and surprise. "We realize you both just lost parents you loved very much. No one can take their place and neither Hermione nor I would try. Adoption has to be a two way street. All parties must want it for it to work. At this point in time, it is quite obvious you would never let it work."

Harry moved over to Jamie and put his hand on her shoulder. "Hermione and I both have great affection for you. We feel you can become a great witch. Please don't throw your opportunity to be successful away. We both love you and care about you." He turned to Emily, but as he went to touch her shoulder, she slid away. "We care about you too, Emily. We both want to love you, but can't if you won't allow us in your life."

Hermione got to her feet and put her arm around Harry. "This is what we propose to do. Jamie, your parents have paid the balance of this year's tuition. We want you to finish the year. There is a scholarship available for the next two years that we feel you stand a good chance of obtaining. You must achieve thirteen O.W.L.s to be eligible."

Jamie's lips moved, but no words came out as she said thirteen. Her expression showed that she felt that was far from a certainty.

Hermione tried to reassure her. "I know you can do it. We have backup plans, but I'm sure they won't be necessary."

Harry looked at Hermione skeptically as if to say 'What back up plans?'

"You will stay with us during vacation." Hermione continued. "Emily." The girl refused to look at Hermione. "We intend to ask the court to give us guardianship over you. You will live with us and attend school in Hogsmeade for the balance of this year. Next September you will attend Hogwarts. After Jamie finishes school, a decision will be made as to whether we remain your guardians or Jamie accepts that responsibility."

Harry and Hermione sat down and for a few moments the compartment remained silent as everyone contemplated their future. Finally, Harry spoke. "I know that right now it all sounds like a lot of legal gibberish, quite sterile and business like. Unfortunately, it must be under these circumstances, but I want you both to believe that Hermione and I are doing this because we care about what happens to you."

"Jamie, it's all up to you," Hermione said. "Do you trust Harry and I enough to believe that what we want to do is in the best interests of both you and your sister?"

Jamie just sat, her mind going in circles. She knew Emily would hate her, but what Harry and Hermione proposed seemed like the best course of action. Out of the blue, she remembered her last conversation with her dad before returning to school.

"I've always recognized you and your sister were extraordinary, but I've always chalked some of that up to parental prejudice. For Professor Granger to take such individual interest in you, she must have seen it, too. Harry Potter and Hermione Granger are undoubtedly the greatest wizard and witch alive. Listen to what they say and trust them. They can be a strong positive influence on your life. You are extremely fortunate to not only have them as Professors, but also as friends."

Jamie looked lovingly at her sister, knowing that she would hate her for what she was about to say. "Professor Potter, Professor Granger, I had a conversation with my dad the day I returned to school. He told me that I was extremely fortunate to not only have you both as professors, but also as friends." Jamie's eyes filled with tears as she pictured her dad talking to her. "He told me that you both would be a strong positive influence on my life, but more importantly he told me to listen to what you said and trust you."

"Emily, you and I just can't make it on our own. We need help. I trust them and love them. Won't you please give them a chance?"

Jamie went to comfort her sister, but Emily pushed her out-of-the-way. "I love my parents. I haven't forgotten them already like you have. You may regard these people as gods, but to me they're meddling strangers with whom I'm being forced to live."

Emily looked harshly in Harry's direction. "Will you please unlock this door so I can go to the other compartment?"

Harry rose from his seat and opened the curtains as he did an unlocking charm. As Emily

reached for her shirt and skirt he said, "I thought you were a nudist."

Emily didn't quite know how to respond as she grabbed her clothes, but instead of dressing she simply opened the door and then slammed it on departing. In a few moments they heard another door slamming.

Hermione jaw dropped in bewilderment. "Harry, I can't believe she did that, but worse I can't believe you virtually encouraged her."

Harry seemed to ignore Hermione, and addressed Jamie. "Is she always like this?"

"No, I'm sorry. I don't know what's gotten into her." Jamie's face was red with embarrassment over the actions of her sister.

Hermione moved over to the other side of the compartment and put her arm around Jamie. "I'm sure she'll calm down and come to her senses. She is, after all, only ten. This must be dreadfully upsetting to her, as I'm sure it is to you. In your case at least you will be returning to a normal setting and be with friends. Emily is going to be attending a new school and living with Harry and I, complete strangers. I'll check with Severus to see if possibly you could sleep in our quarters for a week or two. It might help her to acclimatize to the situation."

A light tapping on the compartment door interrupted the conversation. Caitlin's quite nervous body stood on the other side. "Come on in honey," Hermione urged. "You're not interrupting anything."

Caitlin apprehensively entered the compartment. "What happened? Why is Emily naked? She won't talk to us. She just sits staring out the window."

Harry, with a concerned expression on his face, motioned for Caitlin to come and sit next to him. He put his arm around her and held her tightly. "Emily and Jamie are going through some very rough times. Jamie is a lot older and although she is hurting just as much as Emily, she understands the world better and that what we are trying to do is best for all concerned. Emily's world has been shredded to pieces. It's going to be hard for her to adjust. Remember how you and I felt when your Mum was whisked out of our life?"

Caitlin nodded her head as she looked toward her Mum with tears in her eyes.

"Emily feels the same way as we did, but worse. We had hopes that Hermione would come back to us. Emily doesn't have that hope. Her parents will never return. The life she had is gone forever. It's going to take a lot of time and love to rebuild her life. Can she count on your help?"

Caitlin nodded her head. "I'll try to make her feel loved." She looked toward Jamie. "Are you okay, Jamie?"

"No, but with the help of you and your parents I will be." Jamie gave Caitlin a little smile.

"There is another problem," Caitlin announced. "Someone is going to have to talk to Tony. He doesn't know any of us are nudists and I don't think he has ever seen a girl naked before. He's trying not to look, but not succeeding very well. Amanda and Alex just shrug their shoulders when he asks what is going on."

Suddenly Jamie had a look of horror in her eyes. "Tony is a Slytherin, what if he tells everyone we are nudists?"

Hermione stared at Jamie. "Since when are you ashamed of being a nudist?"

"I'm not ashamed. It's just that some people treat you so strange when they find out, like you are weird or have some sort of disease."

Hermione nodded her head in agreement. "You say Tony is nice and he doesn't seem to fit the normal Slytherin profile. Perhaps he wouldn't divulge your secret. But it's just a matter of time, however, before the entire school knows. The more people that know a secret, the sooner it will become common knowledge. Too many people know you girls are naturists for it to remain a secret much longer. I'm afraid you're going to have to trust him and hope for the best."

"Should I try to explain or would you rather?" Caitlin asked Jamie.

"I'll go with you and explain." Jamie replied as both girls got up from their seats. In turn, Jamie hugged Hermione and Harry. "Thank you for picking up the pieces of our lives."

They both gave each other a little nod as they gave Jamie a hug.

Jamie preceded Caitlin out of the compartment, but before leaving Caitlin stopped and questioned her mum. "Mum, Emily is only ten and she already she is getting breasts. Is there something wrong with me?"

Hermione hurried to the door and gave Caitlin a hug and then kissed her. "There is absolutely nothing wrong with you. You are perfect. Remember the mirror?"

"I remember, but that is only a possible future."

Hermione smiled, "I took out an insurance policy on that future."

Caitlin looked at her mum in surprise. "Do you mean that you...?"

"Yep! All gone."

Caitlin threw her arms around Hermione. "Mum, did I ever tell you how much I love you?"

"Every day, in many different ways."

As the door closed behind Caitlin, Hermione turned to Harry. "I know it's asking a lot, but do you think Jamie and Emily will ever feel about us the way Caitlin does?"

Harry stood and took Hermione in his arms. "Yes, I do. Jamie already thinks highly of you. Emily, I'm afraid, will take time. We have to win her love and trust. It won't be easy, but then nothing worth achieving is ever effortless."

* * * * *

By the time they returned to Hogwarts the evening meal had already concluded, so Harry escorted everyone except Hermione to the kitchen for a snack. Hermione had insisted she wasn't hungry and besides, wanted to update Severus on everything that had transpired.

After eating, Amanda, Alex and Tony headed for their dorms while Emily, Jamie and Caitlin followed Harry up to the teachers quarters. Hermione had arrived just moments earlier and met them at the door.

"Harry, if you'll help me, we have to do a little remodeling and expanding before the girls can settle in for the night."

Caitlin looked excitedly at her mother. "Does that mean we're all sleeping here tonight?"

"Yes. The headmaster has agreed to bend the rules for the next week. Now, before we do anything we need to know which of you three get her own room and which two will share a room."

The girls briefly just looked at each other before, surprisingly, Emily was the first to speak. "I don't want to share a room with Jamie, she snores."

"Do you really?" Caitlin asked.

Jamie blushed, uncomfortable that this was being discussed in front of Hermione and Harry. "So everyone tells me. I'm sure it's not that bad."

"Hah!" Was all Emily said, using the same miserable tone of voice she had been using all day.

"Mum, it would make the most sense for Emily and me to share a room. We are close in age and since I'll be sleeping in the dorm most times until summer, it would be mainly her room. If Jamie takes what is your study, she would also mainly be using it only in the summer. You could enlarge it and still keep most of your books there."

"That sounds like a workable plan. What do you other girls think?" Hermione asked with a smile.

"That sounds fine," Jamie replied. "I imagine I'll only be here July and August."

"Severus might allow you to stay some weekends with your sister, also," Hermione responded. "How does that sound to you, Emily?"

Emily frowned. "I'd rather have my own room, but as long as Caitlin doesn't snore like a lion, I guess I can live with it."

Jamie made a threatening gesture as if she were about to hit her sister and for just the briefest of moments there was the slightest hint of a smile of Emily's face, but it quickly dissolved before anyone noticed it.

"Well then, shall we get started?" Hermione pulled out her wand and walked to what until now had been solely Caitlin's room. "Would you girls prefer single or bunk beds?" In unison

they said single.

Hermione pointed her wand at Caitlin's bed as she did a duplication spell and suddenly there were two beds.

"Mum, isn't it going to be rather crowded in here?"

"You're right. It would make more sense to do the expansion spell before I create any more furniture." Hermione waved her wand and suddenly the room expanded to nearly twice its size.

Emily remained quiet, but it was evident from her appearance that she was as impressed with Hermione's magical abilities as were Jamie and Caitlin. Once Hermione had conjured enough furniture to satisfy the girls' needs, she called for Harry's assistance.

"Harry, while I do Jamie's room, will you arrange the furniture in here the way the girls desire?"

Harry made a complete sweep of the room with his wand and suddenly every piece of furniture was floating, including a carrying case holding a very shocked Kneazle. "Okay girls, tell me where you want everything placed." Caitlin and Emily both watched in astonishment as the furniture all circled the room until one by one Harry directed each piece to the location requested. In a matter of minutes, the room was arranged to the satisfaction of both girls and he left them to see if Hermione needed any assistance with Jamie's room.

"What say we get out of these miserable clothes?" Caitlin suggested to Emily.

Emily had a look of astonishment on her face. "Are we allowed? Do they actually allow you to be nude? Will it be okay with them if I am?"

"Emily, they are wonderful people. Why don't you make an effort to give them a chance?"

Emily didn't answer. She just frowned and started to remove her clothes. Once the two girls were bare, Caitlin asked if she could see Alfred.

"I'll let him out of his cage, but I doubt he'll let you near him. He's nervous from the trip."

Alfred was barely out of his cage when he jumped to the top of the tallest piece of furniture in the room. "I don't think he likes it here either," Emily said as Alfred peered over the edge of the chest at them.

"Give him time," Caitlin replied. "Once he calms down and gets to know us, I'm sure he'll settle in okay."

"Let's go look how they are progressing with Jamie's room," Caitlin suggested.

Emily didn't answer Caitlin, but rather just followed her from the room, after hurriedly checking the mirror to be sure that her scowl was properly in place.

Hermione smiled as the two girls entered Jamie's room. "I see that it didn't take you two long to get comfortable."

Neither girl answered; they were too in awe of Jamie's room.

"Wow! I can't believe what you did to this room," Caitlin said as she stared in wonder.

The room had been enlarged and a large bed was placed in the middle as a focal point. On one wall was a large closet, which faced a chest of drawers. Another wall hosted a mirrored dresser. Every other area of wall was covered with shelves bursting with books. A desk sat diagonally in one corner with a chair behind it.

Jamie smiled the first smile Caitlin had seen the entire day. "It did come out great, didn't it? I love it as a bedroom, but at the same time it's a functional office and library for Harry and Hermione."

Emily looked strangely at Jamie, "You just called the professors by their first names?"

"Yes, I have their permission."

Emily didn't respond, but simply continued to look around the room.

"Well, that finishes the rooms. I don't know about you girls, but I'm knackered." Hermione smiled as they all returned to the living area.

"Jamie, suppose you get ready for bed while Harry and I make some hot chocolate for all of us? Then we'll all be off to bed," Hermione said. "I intend to get back to my exercise program starting tomorrow."

Jamie looked first at Harry and then at Hermione. "But I sleep in the nude."

Harry looked tenderly at Jamie and smiled. "We know. Hermione and I discussed the naturism issue. We want you and Emily to be as comfortable as possible with us."

"Are you both sure? Even after everything that I did?"

"Jamie, we're both sure. We can never take your parents place. We would never even try, but we can make you both a part of our family if you'll let us."

Tears flooded Jamie's eyes. "I have no idea what Emily and I would have done without you. I love you both." In turn, Jamie gave Hermione and Harry a hug and then went to her room to undress. Emily had just stood and watched with a blank stare on her face. She quickly turned and followed Jamie so that no one saw the tears in her eyes. Caitlin followed closely behind.

As Harry headed for the kitchen, Hermione reached out and took his hand in hers. "Mr. Potter, when I first walked into that train compartment and into your life did you ever think that 12 years later you would be marrying me and have a ready made family of three girls?"

"No. My only regret is the five years wasted that I could have been with you."

"Perhaps it's all part of some grand plan. Maybe we were meant to be apart then so that we could be together now for these girls."

"I don't know 'Mione. I'm only sure of one thing."

"And what is that Mr. Potter?"

"That I love you more than life itself."

Harry took Hermione in his arms. Electricity snapped through the air as their lips met. He held her tightly as their kisses became longer and deeper and more ravenous.

Hermione pulled away. "Harry, the girls will be back soon. Will you be okay?"

"Do you mean after that kiss or because Jamie will be naked?"

"I was referring to Jamie, but now that you mention it, that kiss did leave me kind of weak."

"I'll be okay. I'll just keep reminding myself that she is only fifteen. It would be a lot easier if she were built like Caitlin."

"Harry!" Hermione responded in astonishment. "Don't you ever let Caitlin hear you say anything like that!"

As if on cue, the girls made their way to the kitchen.

There was little talking, as everyone had endured a tiring day.

After finishing their drinks, goodnights were said and everyone retired to their bedrooms.

Caitlin seemed to fall asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.

* * * * *

Caitlin was awakened by the sound of crying. She had no idea how long she had been asleep or how long Emily had been crying.

"Emily, would you like me to get Mum or Jamie?" Caitlin asked with sensitivity.

"No! Just leave me alone," Emily cried sharply.

"I can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because I care about you. It hurts me to see you hurting."

"Why do you care about me? I'm nothing to you."

"Maybe not yet," Caitlin replied softly. "But I'd like us to be friends. Emily, I'm sorry your parents were killed. It must be awful loving someone so much and then losing them, but you're not alone. Jamie loves you and Harry, Hermione and I will love you too, if you let us."

Caitlin got out of her bed and went over to Emily's. Before Emily realized what was happening, Caitlin crawled under the cover and into bed next to Emily. "What are you doing?" Emily questioned harshly.

"In the orphanage, when one of us was sad and crying, another girl would crawl in bed and hold her; pretend they were her mother. We knew they weren't, but it felt good to be held and know that someone cared about you."

"That sounds silly," Emily said sarcastically, but she didn't move as Caitlin nestled next to her and put her arm around her shoulder.

As Caitlin held her tightly, Emily asked, "Why do you want to be friends with me?"

"I don't want us just to be friends. I want us to be sisters."

Chapter Twenty-two She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not

Saturday, February 14, 2004

Hermione lay quietly listening, but the only sound she heard was Harry's breathing as he slept next to her. It was two in the morning and she had been awakened by what she thought were voices. Hearing voices in Hogwarts was not an uncommon occurrence, what with pictures and mirrors that talked along with the numerous ghosts. This time, however, she must have been mistaken.

Since she was awake; she decided to check on Caitlin and Emily. She reached for her robe, but was unable to locate it in the dark. When Harry was in a passionate mood he had the tendency to throw her clothes hither and yon. He had been especially zealous tonight.

Rather than illuminate her wand and possibly wake Harry she decided to sneak over to the girls' room as she was. After all, everyone was sleeping; she had no chance of being seen. As she opened the bedroom door she again stopped and listened. Not a sound, evidently even Crookshanks and Alfred were asleep. She stepped into the main living area and looked toward what was now Jamie's room. The door stood open, but the room was dark and quiet. She then looked across the living area to the room shared by the young girls. It too, was dark and quiet.

As she preceded quietly to the room that Caitlin and Emily now shared she thought how strange it was that these girls kept their doors wide open. Everything she had read indicated that young girls usually demanded privacy. Maybe it was the fact that they were nudists that made them so different and open. Hermione would never have dreamed of leaving the door to her bedroom open so that it would have been possible for her parents to walk in and see her sleeping. She had most certainly never slept naked.

Hermione was astonished by what she saw when she reached the room entrance. The girls were both sleeping in the same bed. They were not only in the same bed, but Caitlin had her arm around Emily and the younger girl was nestled against Caitlin's chest. Hermione stood, staring in awe and wondering what had happened to draw the two girls together.

Hermione practically jumped out of her skin when Jamie said, "Isn't that the most adorable picture you've ever seen? They both look so young and innocent."

Hermione didn't answer. She couldn't. Her body was in panic mode. She could feel her skin become hot with embarrassment. Parts of her wanted to run crying to her room and slam the door shut. The adult part held her ground. Then Jamie put her hand on Hermione's bare shoulder and leaned forward in order to get another look at the girls in bed. As she did so, Hermione could feel Jamie's bare breast against her back. The sensation sent shivers through out her body.

"I had just gotten back into bed when I heard your door open," Jamie said.

"Oh!" was the only reply Hermione was able to communicate. She couldn't believe that she, a Hogwarts Professor, was standing naked while talking to one of her students. She continued to watch Caitlin and Emily sleep, chiefly because she didn't want to turn and expose her front to Jamie. Finally Hermione forced a few words out of her mouth. "What were you doing out of bed?"

"I was awoken by crying, but when I went to check on the girls they were talking. It was the

first they really talked all day, so I was tentative to interrupt. I just stood outside the door and listened to their conversation."

Hermione tried frantically to concentrate on what Jamie was saying, but found it impossible to get her mind off the fact that she was standing there stark naked. "What were they talking about?" she finally asked.

"Caitlin told Emily that she cared about her and that it made her hurt to see Emily hurting. She talked about my parents dying and how hard it must be for Emily to lose someone she loved so much. Caitlin told Emily that she wanted them to be more than friends. She wanted them to be sisters.

"Then Caitlin crawled into bed with Emily and told her what they did at the orphanage when someone was sad and lonely. One girl would pretend to be the mother and hold the depressed child. Caitlin is mothering Emily."

Hermione briefly forgot her state of undress as she watched the sleeping girls. She was so proud of Caitlin. It would be nice if they could all become one happy family. For the first time she thought of Jamie as the little sister her mother was never able to have.

Not thinking, Hermione turned and faced Jamie. "Jamie," she said. "I'd like us all to be a family. I know that Harry and I could never take the place of your parents, and we would never try. I was wondering if you had room in your heart for an older brother and sister."

Tears suddenly filled Jamie's eyes. "I'd like that. I want us to be a family as well. But I couldn't quite figure out how I would fit in the picture. Sisters! That sounds great. But, one condition."

Hermione looked questioningly at Jamie. "What's the condition?"

Jamie smiled. "That we are the type of sisters that are really close. Ones that talk to each other about everything and that go shopping and hang around with each other. Sisters that are more than sisters, but also good friends."

"That sounds wonderful to me," Hermione responded as she reached out to hug Jamie.

As their breasts interlocked the two 'sisters' briefly laughed, but continued to embrace.

After a short time they broke the hug as Jamie said, "We both better get back to bed if we intend to run as a family in the morning." She turned and began to walk to her room.

Hermione stood for a short time and watched as Jamie walked away.

Suddenly Jamie turned and ran back to Hermione and threw her arms around her. Tears were cascading down her cheeks. "I love you. I don't know what Emily and I would have done if you and Harry hadn't come to our rescue. Justin Finch-Fletchley is right. You, without a doubt, are as beautiful inside as you are outside."

Tears now filled Hermione eyes. They had crossed the line and there was no turning back. They could never look at each other again and see a Professor and her student. They were much more than that. And they were both delighted.

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Saturday, February 14, 2004

As usual, Hermione woke before her alarm sounded. She sometimes wondered why she even bothered to set it. Today would be the first time she ran or exercised since she was kidnapped. Hermione had missed her daily routine and could tell that the last seven weeks of inactivity had softened her slightly. As she slipped out of bed and walked to the window to check on the weather, she thought about the previous night and her nude encounter with Jamie.

Hermione was amazed at herself. She couldn't believe that she hadn't panicked. When she and Jamie had hugged, it actually seemed right that no clothes were between them. She couldn't explain it, but their bonding, as sisters seemed more complete.

What had astounded Hermione the most was Jamie's actions or more appropriately, lack of action. She realized that Jamie had seen her naked the day Alex and her had found her, but that was a totally different situation. Last night, not once had Jamie lost eye contact with her. Jamie hadn't used the opportunity to stare at her nudity. Jamie hadn't even mentioned that she was nude. It was as if she didn't find it important one way or the other.

Hermione's thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door. "Mum, it's Caitlin. May I come in?"

Without hesitation, Hermione said, "Yes."

Hermione turned to face the door only to be shocked to see not one but two girls walk through. She blushed slightly, but didn't run for a robe or try to hide. The mirror had shown her naked in front of Emily. If she honestly desired that future, then today was as good a day as any to start it.

Neither Caitlin nor Emily seemed to notice or care that Hermione was unclothed. "Mum, may Emily speak with you and Dad?"

"Certainly, come on in." Hermione nodded for the girls to take a seat on the edge of the bed, but before they had done so, Jamie stuck her head through the door.

"Is this a private party or can I come?" Jamie asked.

Hermione momentarily stared at the ceiling as if asking how has this all happened. "It's not a party, but you may certainly join us."

Harry yawned and then stretched, his eyes still closed. "Is it time to get up 'Mione? Did I hear you talking to someone?" Harry opened his eyes. Then closed them, rubbing them before he dared to open them again. He wasn't dreaming. He had awoken in the middle of a nudist convention.

He suddenly felt extremely trapped and vulnerable. He was naked with only the covers between him and the nudist gathering. Harry looked at the girls and then smiled. "Did someone come and steal all your clothes during the night?"

"No," Caitlin laughed. "I think this may be something you best get used to seeing. I can't speak for Mum or Jamie, but Emily and I don't intend to ever wear clothes here."

"You do realize that makes you both more vulnerable to tickling," Harry threatened.

"Only if you can catch us, and I doubt you'll be leaving that bed dressed as you aren't." Caitlin teased.

Harry winked at Jamie and Hermione. "That's what I have my helpers for. Grab the little witches!"

Hermione and Jamie eagerly helped Harry in his game as they each grabbed one of the girls.

"Jamie, let me have the newest victim first," Harry said.

Emily screamed and fought to get away from Jamie. It was evident, however, that she was enjoying the game and attention as, for the first time since her parents' deaths, she smiled.

"I'm not ticklish," she said as if offering a challenge.

"Everyone is ticklish someplace. It might take me an hour or so, but I'll find out just where." Harry pulled Emily onto the bed and had barely touched her when she was laughing and screaming for mercy.

"You're easy," he said as he held Emily with one arm and indicated for Hermione to give him Caitlin. Soon Harry was fighting and tickling two screaming and kicking young girls as Jamie and Hermione watched, unable to hold back their laughter.

Hermione held her breath, as a few times as it appeared that the girls might kick the covers off of Harry, but by some phenomenon they remained in place. Perhaps Harry had charmed them. At last the girls had enough.

Emily sudden got quite serious. "Caitlin and I talked a lot last night and this morning. She told me I was acting more like a little bitch than a witch."

Hermione was stunned that either Emily or Caitlin would use such a term.

"I love my parents and no one can ever take their place. But, I'm being unfair to you both. You're just trying to help Jamie and me. I'm sorry I was so horrid." Then her mood rapidly changed. "But I'll never call you Mum and Dad!"

"Emily, please come here," Hermione tenderly said. Emily crawled over to where she was sitting and then Hermione put her arm around the girl. Emily didn't try to pull away. "Emily, you are correct. No one could ever take your parents' place nor should anyone try. The situation with you and Jamie is entirely different than that of Caitlin. Caitlin never knew her parents and feels comfortable calling Harry and I Dad and Mum.

"You and Jamie knew your parents. You've just suffered a grievous loss, a loss that at any age would be traumatizing, but at your age even more so. Harry and I know we can't take their place and would never try, but we couldn't allow the dreams that your parents had for the two of you to die with them. We just want to help you both reach your potential.

"Jamie and I had a discussion last night about our relationship. She intends to look upon Harry and I as an older brother and sister that have taken the two of you into their home."

Harry nodded his approval. This was the first he had heard of Hermione and Jamie's conversation, but he felt comfortable with their decision.

Emily had a somewhat confused expression on her face. "What do I call you? Caitlin refers to you as Mum and Dad, and for her that's fine. Jamie was already calling you both by your first names, so nothing really changes. I'm rather young to call you both by your first names, it wouldn't seem proper, and Professor Granger and Professor Potter doesn't seem quite right either."

Harry nodded his agreement with Emily's comment.

Hermione thought for an instant. "That is a problem. For the time being why not call us Aunt Hermione and Uncle Harry? Certainly we aren't actually related, but the titles aunt and uncle are not nearly as formal as professor and it lets you use our first names without seeming bold."

Emily nodded her head in approval. "I can live with that. Not to change the subject, but I thought we were all going running."

"Yes we are." Hermione answered empathetically. "As soon as you girls vacate the room so Harry can get dressed."

Emily looked puzzled. "Why doesn't he just get out of bed and slip something on?" Out of the blue she realized why. "Oh! Isn't he a nudist like you, Aunt Hermione?"

Caitlin and Jamie looked at each other and burst into laughter as did Harry. Hermione was astounded. *Emily thought she was a naturist.*

* * * * *

Jamie entered the Gryffindor common room looking for both Amanada and Alex. She wanted to update them both on the arrangements that had been made for her and Emily. She didn't see Amanda anywhere, but Alex had seen her come in to the room and was already heading towards her.

"Hi Jamie," Alex said shyly. He didn't precisely know how to approach Jamie today. It was Valentine's Day and they were supposedly a couple. Not that they had been "alone" together often since Christmas.

It had been a terrible seven weeks for Jamie. First Professor Granger had been kidnapped, and then Caitlin began to suffer identical injuries and was confined to the infirmary. Even once they had found Hermione, both she and Caitlin remained in comas. Then finally, just when everything seemed to be on the verge of returning to normal, Jamie's parents were killed.

Alex didn't blame Jamie. He realized all those things certainly took precedence over their budding romance, but still he missed her. Alex had tender memories of the kisses and hugs they had shared in the Zacherleys' bathroom on the day of the Yule Ball. He could still feel

Jamie's naked breasts squeezed against his bared chest. It had been heaven. The last seven weeks had been hell. He imagined it was selfish of him, but he wanted to hold her and kiss her like that again, but he feared that might never happen.

"Hi Alex. Is Amanda around? I want to bring you guys up to date on everything that's going on. I thought it would be easier to tell you both at once."

"You'll have to check the dorm, but she's probably out with Tony." Alex responded, seeming a little upset.

Jamie looked like she wanted to say more about Tony and Amanda, but decided to hold off and instead changed the subject. "Is something wrong with your right arm?"

"No," Alex answered guiltily.

"Then why are you holding it behind your back?"

"Jamie, I didn't know what do. Your parents just died and I knew you certainly wouldn't be in a mood for celebrating. But it is Valentine's Day and you are still my girlfriend, at least I hope you are? It just didn't seem right to ignore it either." Alex handed Jamie the small vase that contained three beautiful red roses.

Jamie's eyes moistened. "You're so sweet, Alex. I'm sorry, what with everything that's been happening I completely forgot about Valentine's Day. And yes, you are still my boyfriend. At least you are if you still want to be."

"Of course, I still want to be. Why would you ask such a question?" Alex looked questioningly at Jamie.

"Alex, it's just that with everything that's happened, I haven't been much of a girlfriend and honestly I don't see it getting much better. Now that Emily is here, I feel I have to spend time helping her get adjusted to living with Harry and Hermione. Not only that, but I really have to start hitting the books in preparation for the O.W.L.s."

"If I don't get at least a thirteen on the O.W.L.s, I won't be eligible for the scholarship. With everything else they are doing for us, it would be unfair for Harry and Hermione to have to pay for my education. I have to do everything possible to help."

"I understand, Jamie. But we can do those things together. I like Emily. It would be fun hanging out with the two of you. As far as the O.W.L.s are concerned, I have to study for them, too. Can't we just study together?"

Jamie smiled at Alex. "You must be the most understanding boy in the world, but you do understand that I mean study, not snog?"

Alex shrugged his shoulders. "Not even a little after a hard night hitting the books?"

Jamie blushed, "Like an incentive for doing a good job?"

"Yeah! An incentive," Alex agreed.

"I'm sure we can work that out. I don't know about you, but I could use a little incentive right now." Jamie had a come-hither look in her eyes.

Alex blushed. "Right here, in front of everybody?" Alex looked around the room. There were at least ten students present.

Jamie nodded her head. "Alex, you're my boyfriend. It's just a kiss. We're not going to shag."

Jamie put her arms around Alex and drew him close. "Happy Valentine's Day." Their lips meet and suddenly they both forgot anyone else was in the area as one kiss led to another and then another.

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"Tony, why can't we just kiss? If you really love me, that would be enough." Amanda grabbed Tony's wrist and pulled his hand away from her knickers.

"If you really loved me, you'd understand how I feel and let me go further," Tony begged.

"But you never want to stop. I told you I wasn't ready for sex, but you keep pushing it. You're never satisfied." Amanda sat up straight and fixed her skirt, covering her exposed legs and knickers.

"But I love you, Amanda," Tony insisted.

"Sometimes I wonder," sighed Amanda.

"What do you mean by that? You know I love you." Tony had a hurt expression on his face.

"You say you do, but you never consider my feelings or what I want. When we first met you were so caring, so loving, so gentle. You were content to kiss and hug and it felt so good to be in your arms. But that wasn't enough. You were obsessed with touching my breasts; first outside my shirt and then inside. You wouldn't stop until you had my bra off and were kissing and licking them."

"Admit it. You liked it once you let me," Tony said with assurance.

"Yes. It felt good to be touched and suckled but that's not the point. It wasn't my idea; I wasn't ready to take that step. You kept pushing and begging and making me feel guilty that I wouldn't let you touch me."

"But I knew that once you let me, you'd be glad you did."

"I suppose now you are saying that if I let you take off my knickers I will be glad and then if I let you shag me, I will be glad. Tony, we've come to a cross-road in our relationship." Amanada looked defiantly at Tony.

"Meaning exactly what?"

"Meaning that if we are going to remain as a couple, you will start respecting my wishes."

Meaning that if I say no, I mean no. I'm giving you free range above the waist and below the thighs. Anything else is off limits," Amanda spoke with firmness.

"You don't mean that."

"Tony, I love you, but don't test me. If you so much as put a finger on, or in my knickers, we are finished as a couple."

Tony begged, "But I thought you loved me."

"Tony, I think I do, but I need time to be sure. I'll let you know when I'm ready."

Tony looked at Amanda disgustingly, "Like you let me know you were ready for me to touch and kiss your breasts. Somehow I don't see you every being ready to have sex."

Amanada gave Tony an angry stare. "You can either trust me or end the relationship now."

Tony now became angry. "Is that what you want? Do you want to break up with me?"

Amanda eyes were moist, but she held back the tears. "No Tony, that's not what I want. I don't want to break up, but I don't want to feel like I have to continually fight you off either. I'm giving you the choice. Either slow down and back off with the aggressiveness, or break up. The decision at this point is yours."

* * * * *

Sam and Ron sipped their wine as they both studied the menu.

"I think I'll have the stuffed chicken breast. What are you going to have, Ronnie?" asked Samantha.

Ron was startled out of his trance. "What? I'm sorry. What did you say darling?"

Sam smiled as she reached over and put her hand on Ron's. "Where have you been? Your mind seems a mile away."

Ron nervously looked at Sam. "Do you think I'd make a decent father?"

"Ron, you'd make a terrific dad. Timmy adores you. He already thinks of you as his dad."

"I know, but I'm not really. How can a werewolf be a good dad?"

Sam squeezed Ron's hand. "The same way any other man can. By giving freely of their love, and themselves. By being there and caring. By being you."

"Sam, you know that being a werewolf isn't hereditary. It's not passed on in the genes. You have to be bitten."

"I know, Ron. We discussed this before. Except for three days a month you can lead a normal life. You can raise a family."

"But," Ron hesitated, "I am a werewolf. I turn into a horrible creature that if not controlled, would even kill those he loves."

Sam looked at Ron compassionately. "Ronnie, those three days. That's not you. You're a caring, loving gentle person."

Ron's eyes were filled with desperation. "But who in their right mind would want to spend the rest of their life with someone that..."

"With someone that they love with all their heart and they know feels the same about them. I would. Ron, I hope I'm not jumping to a conclusion because I'll be terribly embarrassed, but are you trying to ask me to marry you?"

Ron gulped as he nodded his head.

"If it helps at all, the answer is yes."

"Do you mean that you'd consider being my wife?"

"No, Ronnie. I won't consider it. My mind is all ready made up, but I would like to hear you actually say the words."

Ron trembled as he looked into Sam's eyes. "Samantha will you marry me?"

Tears came to Sam's eyes. "Yes, Ron Weasley, I will marry you."

Then in the middle of the crowded restaurant they both stood and embraced each other. After several kisses Sam looked devilishly at Ron. "We haven't ordered yet. Suppose we go home and I give you a Valentine's delight?"

Ron looked eagerly at Sam. "Will it be anything like the Halloween treat?"

Sam only blushed. "Pay the bill Mr. Weasley and you'll find out."

* * * * *

"Good night Aunt Hermione. Good night Uncle Harry." Emily said as in turn she kissed both Hermione and Harry.

"Good night," they both responded as she scampered off to her room.

Hermione's eyes followed Emily until she disappeared into her room. "What do you think, Harry?"

"Had you asked me that question last night, I would have said we had a rough road ahead of us with her. Something happened to change her attitude. It will take time, but she's trying. Jamie and Caitlin will eventually bring her around."

"Harry, do you ever regret coming back and asking me to marry you?" Hermione asked with a

most serious expression on her face.

"Of course not," Harry promptly responded. "What would ever make you raise such a subject?"

"Harry you are only twenty-three. Primarily because of me, you, in essence, have three daughters. Wouldn't you rather be a carefree bachelor with no responsibilities instead of a soon to be married homebody?"

Harry smiled and then before answering, leaned forward and licked her bare breast. Then he gently kissed her lips. "There is no place on earth I'd rather be than home with your body."

Hermione blushed profoundly. "Harry Potter, I'm serious."

"So am I 'Mione. I spent five years 'enjoying' the so-called carefree bachelor's life, the whole time thinking of you. With you is where I want to be the next 150 years. As for the girls, I certainly don't see them as a negative. I couldn't love Caitlin more if she were my own daughter.

"Taking Jamie under our wing and becoming Emily's guardian was as much my idea as yours. It was the correct thing to do, and I have no regrets." Harry put his arm around Hermione. "What you did for Emily today was great. I think it made her more comfortable. What amazed me was that you actually seemed at ease being naked in front of the girls."

Hermione took a deep breath. "Harry, can I be completely honest with you?"

"Mione, if we can't be honest with each other; our marriage is in trouble before it ever starts."

"Harry, I was at ease. At first I was extremely nervous to have Jamie see me, but now... Harry, what I'm about to tell you goes against everything I was ever taught. I was brought up to be a proper English girl."

Harry put his arm around Hermione and drew her close to him. "Spit it out Mione."

Hermione swallowed. "I could never be a naturist. The idea of strangers, more so friends seeing me naked scares me to death, but... Harry, I like being undressed here in our quarters. I didn't do it for Emily. I did it for me."

Harry thought he knew Hermione inside and out; that she couldn't possibly do or say anything to surprise him. She just did. "Do you mean that you want to be like the girls and as soon as the door closes, toss off all your clothes?"

Hermione turned bright red. "Not quite that extreme, but would you mind if I was in the buff some of the time with the girls?"

Harry pretended to think for a while and then said, "You realize the extreme sacrifice you are asking me to make. How much it will pain me to have to look at you like you are?"

Hermione gave Harry a swat on the arm. "Harry, I'm serious. Do you mind?"

"Of course, I don't mind. As long as you don't mind if I do this." Harry swept Hermione up in his arms and carried her into the bedroom.

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Hermione lay contentedly nestled in Harry's arms. "That was nice Mr. Potter, quite nice. Evidently you were serious when you said you would spend more time down there if I remained smooth."

Harry kissed her in reply. "Hermione, we haven't discussed a honeymoon."

"Harry, it already feels as if I'm on one. Would you be upset if we didn't go anywhere? I'd rather save the money and have all five of us take a special vacation together this summer. I've already missed a month of teaching."

"Are you sure? Maybe we could manage both?"

"Harry, its not where I'm with you that's important, just the fact that I am with you."

"Miss Granger, I love you." Harry seemed ready to begin plying her with kisses, but Hermione stopped him.

"Harry there is something important we need to discuss. It's about my name." Hermione said.

"You don't mean that after all this time you're going to tell me I'm pronouncing it wrong?"

"No, silly!" She became serious, "Not my first name, my last name. I'm the last Granger. Even if we are fortunate to have a child, the Granger name dies."

"You could always do that thing with the hyphen and go by Granger-Potter."

Hermione shook her head. "I hate that. I don't want to be hyphenated."

"In that case why don't you keep Granger professionally? Still be Professor Granger, but in private life be Mrs. Potter. It would probably be a lot less confusing on the students, rather than having two Professor Potters."

Hermione gave Harry a big hug and smile. "You'd be okay with that; you wouldn't mind?"

"Mione, what is important is that I love you and you love me. Names, marriage certificates, all that stuff doesn't make a relationship work. Love does. All I want from you... All I'll ever want from you is your love."

"Harry, you have it. You always have and you always will. Now it's my turn to show you just how I feel about you." Hermione kissed Harry's lips and then began to kiss her way down his body.

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"Ginny, I love you. I never meant for this to happen, but I certainly don't regret it. Not for a

moment."

"Nor do I. My body still tingles all over. I don't think I've ever felt this good or this happy. I love you. I want to open the window and shout it to the world."

"I'm not quite sure how receptive the world will be to the news; especially your brothers. Maybe we should keep it a secret a while longer. Ron in particular will have trouble accepting us as a couple."

"I know. As always, you are right, but I'm so happy. Can't I tell someone?"

"Well, definitely not Trelawney, she runs at the mouth. Perhaps, you could inform Potter and Hermione. They've always seemed rather levelheaded and understanding. Perhaps we could test the water by telling them first and seeing their reactions to us being a couple. Even if they don't celebrate our happiness, I think they can be trusted to keep it to themselves."

"When should I tell them?"

"That I'll leave to your good judgment. At the moment their plates seem to be quite full, so it may be best to wait at least a short time."

"Your right, at least not until after their wedding. It's going to be so difficult keeping it a secret until then. I adore you so much."

"As I do you, my love. As I do you." He kissed her passionately as she melted once again into his arms.

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Caitlin stood at the window watching the snow yet again fall on the grounds of Hogwarts. She marveled at the changes that had taken place in her life since last year at this time.

Last February Caitlin had felt like she was alone in the world; unloved and with no one to love. Now she had the most wonderful mother and the greatest father in the world. She had the sister-like relationship of Jamie and she felt that in time she and Emily would be just as close. She had more friends than she dared name for fear of missing someone and at eleven she had two wonderful boys vying for her attention.

She also had discovered that she had the gift of being a hyperempath. Not just an ordinary hyperempath, but according to Madam Pomfrey perhaps the strongest in the last two centuries.

Last July I wanted to give up and die. If nothing else, I've learned that in life you must never give up. Caitlin watched as an owl left the castle and flew across the grounds. She watched until it disappeared in the distance and then she looked up high in the sky and as tears came to her eyes she said, "Thank you."

Chapter Twenty-three Much Ado About Nothing

Saturday, April 24, 2004

Jamie watched, as the large tawny owl seemed to fly out of the rising sun and then across the castle grounds on its way to deliver a letter. Spring had arrived at Hogwarts in all its splendid glory. The snows of winter were but a recollection as flowers adorned the lush green castle grounds.

It was a gorgeous morning. Jamie slipped on her socks and running shoes and then hesitated. *If only I could run like this.* She shrugged her shoulders in disgust and searched her drawers for a pair of shorts and her running bra. Jamie started to put on the shorts and then stopped, turned off by their tight fit. Instead she put on a mini skirt and then stood staring at the restricting running bra. She hated how it literally smashed her breasts against her chest like a straight jacket. Call her crazy, but she loved the feeling of running naked and her breasts bouncing with each long stride. She searched disgustedly in her drawers and finally decided on a loose fitting mini top.

Amanda had begged off running for the morning, so she ran down the stairs to meet Alex. She had no more than entered the common room when Alex came bounding down the steps followed by Randy and Matt. Alex took one look at Jamie and said, "Aren't you running this morning?"

"Yes, I'm running!" she practically shouted.

"Jamie," Alex said calmly. How can you exercise dressed like that? You'll be exposed. You may as well exercise nude."

"And would you please explain what would be so awful about that? Who exactly would I be hurting in I ran in the buff this morning?" Jamie angrily asked. "It's not fair. Why do I always have to be so uncomfortable?"

At that moment Caitlin enter the Common Room wearing a pair of baggy short shorts and a mini top that just covered her nipples. "What's not fair?"

"That you and I have to dress to exercise and run," Jamie answered.

Caitlin looked wonderingly at Jamie, "I've never been naked outside. What's it like, Jamie?"

"It's the most exhilarating feeling in the world. It's so hard to put into words, but once you've experienced the sun and air on your body, you never want to wear clothes again."

"I'd love to be able to do that," Caitlin answered, "but as for now, I think Alex is correct. Mum and Dad will have a fit if you exercise in that. Everything will show!"

"Not that you have anything to show, but what you're wearing displays everything too, Caitlin." Randy added.

Caitlin looked at Randy with daggers in her eyes, as she turned red. "Thanks for noticing, Randy."

"Caitlin, I think you're beautiful, but in defense of Randy, you do show everything in that outfit. When you lay back during sit-ups, your upper chest is wholly exposed and your private area is fully on display up the legs of the shorts." Matt stated.

"Why didn't you guys ever tell me this before?"

Matt looked questioningly at Randy and then answered. "We thought you knew and didn't care. After all you are a nudist. The only one that really gets a show is the person holding you for the exercises, and that's always Randy or I."

Randy nodded his head in agreement.

Alex looked at Jamie's skirt and then her top. "I don't think that will be the case with you, Jamie. I think everyone there will see you. You may not mind, but Professor Granger and Professor Potter most definitely will be upset."

Jamie looked disgustedly around the room as the others agreed with Alex. "Okay, wait for me while I go change." Jamie quickly ran up to her dorm and in a few moments revoltingly returned in her shorts and running bra. "Caitlin, aren't you going to change?"

"Why? As Randy said, I have the breasts of a five year old. It's no big deal if anyone sees them, and as for my pubic area, only the holder sees that when I do sit-ups. You don't mind holding my ankles today; do you Matt?"

Randy knew he had screwed up and that Caitlin was angry with him. He could only watch as Matt shook his head indicating that he most certainly didn't mind.

With the warm weather, the group's numbers had once again increased. Even Ginny had taken up the morning routine. The big surprise was that she had partnering with Draco for the exercising, and they actually seemed to be talking and getting along.

As soon as Hermione saw Jamie, she knew something was bothering her. Jamie's ever-present smile was missing this morning. "Is something the matter, Jamie?" she inquired.

At first Jamie shook her head no, but then said, "I've just been frustrated lately. There's so much to study for the O.W.L.s; it seems that studying is all I have time for anymore." She looked at both Harry and Hermione and whispered low. "What really has me aggravated this morning is that I'm forced to dress for running. I really wish there was a way I could do this unclothed."

Hermione looked as if she was about to make a comment, but Harry interrupted her. "We best get started. You have to help Professor Snape with interviews this morning."

Jamie looked at Hermione questioningly.

"The Headmaster has narrowed the field to four candidates for instructor of Care of Magical Creatures next year and he would like my input." Hermione said, answering Jamie unasked question. "Let's get started, everyone. Pair off."

In a matter of moments everyone had a partner except Emily and Randy. Randy looked at

Emily and said, "It looks like you and I are the only two without partners."

Emily responded, "Yeah, looks like you're stuck with the little kid."

Randy replied, "You certainly don't look like a little kid to me, and I'd never consider it being stuck."

Emily blushed deeply as Caitlin, who had heard the conversation, irately turned and grabbed Matt's hand.

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Harry slowly paced the corridor that led to the staircase for the Headmaster's office. Hermione had assured him that the interviews of the candidates would be over by eleven o'clock; it was now eleven-thirty. He looked up as he finally heard someone descending the staircase. Harry couldn't believe his eyes. It wasn't because the woman was wearing knee high boots with an extremely short skirt, or that her blouse was cut quite low, exposing an inordinate amount of her chest. It was because the young woman was Katie Bell, but certainly not the same Katie Bell he had dated in the summer prior to his seventh year.

Katie ran to Harry as soon as she saw him, wrapping her arms around him and kissing him firmly on the lips. Harry timidly returned her kiss. Katie sensed Harry's hesitancy and broke the embrace. "Harry it's so good to see you again. I just got done talking to Hermione. I'm so glad you both finally woke up to the realization that you were meant for each other."

At first Harry was at a loss for words. "Katie, you're looking marvelous. What brings you to Hogwarts?"

"I was interviewing for the position of Care of Magical Creatures instructor."

Harry was flabbergasted. "I don't understand. You were headed to Auror training the last time I saw you. What happened?"

Katie shrugged her shoulders. "After the first day of training, I had doubts, but gave it a month. I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps, but I just wasn't cut out for it. For about three months I just worked with my Dad in the Muggle world, and then I decided to pursue my love of animals. I worked as an apprentice in a Fantastic Beasts Clinic for a year. The administrator was so impressed with my work that he arranged for me to attend two years of advanced training."

Katie blushed with pride. "Harry, I finished with honors, and at the top of the class. The Dean of the Academy for the Study and Preservation of Magical Beasts personally recommended me to the Hogwarts Board of Directors."

"That's terrific Katie. I'm glad you're pursuing a career in a field you actually get pleasure from. How many candidates did they interview and when will you find out if you got the position?"

"I was the last of four candidates they interviewed today." Katie's face was beaming. "They

told me the position is mine."

"That's terrific," Harry said smiling broadly. "Welcome to the staff. When do you start?"

"Well, Charlie is leaving the last day of classes. I have to prepare for Autumn, so I'll probably move in the beginning of August." Katie looked at her watch. "I have to be going Harry. It was wonderful seeing you again. I'm looking forward to being on the staff with you and Hermione."

Before Harry could say anything Katie threw her arms around him and stretched to kiss him once again. This time she kissed his cheek, but Harry still blushed intensely. It was at that split second that Draco and Ginny turned the corner. They both stopped and stared as Katie kissed Harry and then dashed off.

"Potter, was that Katie Bell?" Draco asked.

Harry continued to blush as he simply replied, "Yes."

"Wow!" Draco responded. "The years certainly have been kind to her. You were busy snogging and probably didn't notice but she has great legs that end up making one beautiful ass out of themselves. Her cheeks were half exposed as she stretched to kiss you."

"And of course you had to notice that." Ginny said as she shot daggers in Draco's direction. "Harry, what was Katie doing here and why were you kissing her? I thought you were marrying Hermione in less than a month?"

Harry looked angrily at the two. "She was kissing me. I wasn't kissing her. Besides she was just excited. Katie was just hired as Charlie's replacement."

"Well, that will certainly have a positive affect on the landscape," Draco said in his best sexist manor.

"Men! You're all pigs. And you, Draco Malfoy, are the worst." Ginny turned and walked quickly toward the stairs.

Draco ran after her and put his hand on her shoulder, just as Headmaster Snape and Hermione descended the stairs. "Red I was just pulling your chain."

Severus first looked at Ginny and then at Draco. His face had the strangest look, a combination of anger and hurt, but mostly fear. He turned and swiftly ascended the stairs.

Ginny rushed past Hermione and followed the Headmaster up the stairs. "Wait, Severus. Please, we have to talk."

Hermione first looked at Harry and then at Draco before saying, "Do I want to know what's going on here?"

"Depends," Draco answered smugly. Does it bother you if your future husband snogs sexy girls in the halls of Hogwarts?" Draco walked off leaving Hermione staring at a pale Harry.

"Well, Harry?" Hermione asked as she stood tapping her toe; hands on her hips.

"It wasn't really anything," Harry said nervously. "Katie was just happy about getting the job. She gave me a kiss on the cheek and a hug as she left. Of course, Ginny and Draco picked that very time to come round the corner."

"Are you sure Harry? She told me that if she saw you she was going to give you a big wet one on the lips." Hermione laughed. "Harry, I love you. You do realize that if you ever cheat on me, I'll know it instantly. You have the guiltiest look on your face."

"Katie told you she was going to kiss me?"

"Yes, I told her you would probably be waiting down here for me. Harry, she was just kidding around. Besides I trust you. What did you think of the way she was dressed?"

"That outfit makes Jamie look like a conservative dresser. I know Draco approved."

"Severus didn't. After we told her she had the job, he commented on her attire. Said he hoped she would dress more appropriately for classes come next Autumn."

"What did Katie say?"

"She said that how she dresses has nothing to do with her teaching ability. That she intends to dress as she pleases and if he doesn't approve perhaps he should withdraw the offer."

"Wow! I bet Severus lost it."

"Actually, he didn't. He backed down. Said it wasn't a condition of employment, just a suggestion. Harry, I'm glad she is going to be teaching here. I always liked her, even if I didn't show it when you two were dating. She's feisty!"

Harry simply nodded his head in agreement.

"Harry, what was that all about with Ginny and Draco."

"You've got me. Two months ago they were barely speaking to each other and today it seemed like they were fighting over Draco's appreciation of Katie's outfit. It looked like Ginny was upset. Speaking of upset, did you see the look on Severus's face? Why was he so disturbed over Draco and Ginny arguing?"

"Severus has been rather protective of Ginny since her father died," Hermione said. "I don't think he wants to see her hurt by Draco again."

Harry didn't argue the point, but he didn't think the look on Severus' face had been one of a concerned father figure.

* * * * *

Jamie paced the floor as Caitlin and Emily glared at each other over the chessboard.

"You realize you have to make a move sometime today, I hope?" Caitlin said in her bitchiest voice.

"Give me a chance to study the board; will you?" Emily answered, obviously irritated. "I didn't complain when you took forever to make your last move. What is your problem today, anyway? You've been nasty to me all morning. What did I do to you?"

"Listen to her, Jamie," said Caitlin. "Little Miss Innocent. You know perfectly well what you did. Don't tell me you weren't trying to put a move on Randy."

"Oh, is that why you're treating me like crap? I didn't put a move on anyone. Neither Randy nor I had a partner. Everyone else was paired. What did you expect us to do? Besides, you have to make up your mind sooner or later anyway. It's not fair that you keep stringing them both along. Wizardry law doesn't allow polygamy."

"I'm not stringing anyone along. They're just friends. I don't want a boyfriend yet. I'm only eleven," Caitlin responded sharply.

"No. You don't want a boyfriend. You want two of them. You're the one that fought with Randy and he's the one that paid me the compliment. I didn't do anything but show up to run. You have no reason to treat me like I'm some sort of low life that is trying to steal your guy. What makes you even think I'm interested in him?"

"You think I'm blind. I saw the two of you talking after we got done running."

"Will you two knock it off?" Jamie yelled. "Studying for the O.W.L.s is hard enough without having to listen to you two constantly bickering. Give it a break. Neither one of you is even in your teens yet. Boys should be the least of your worries."

Emily and Caitlin sat in startled silence. Neither one of them was accustomed to Jamie being angry or yelling. Jamie walked to the window and rubbed her face as she stared out. It was a beautiful spring day and she had waste most of it inside. She had spent the majority of the last two months studying every waking hour and she needed a break. Suddenly she had a brilliant idea.

"Harry and Hermione will be back shortly. Tell them I needed a break and decided to go for a run down by the Quidditch Pitch."

Jamie went to her room to dress as both girls abandoned their offended chess pieces and followed her. "Can I come with you?" Emily asked.

Jamie put on her socks and sneakers and then slipped on her robes. Her shorts and running bra remained lying on her bed. "Not this time. I love you guys, but I just need to get away for a while."

 Caitlin stared at the bra and shorts lying on the bed for a moment before saying, "You're going to run nude, aren't you?"

"Please, don't tell your mum and dad," Jamie said.

She was at the door and out of the room before the girls could argue with her.

Emily hesitated only momentarily before running to the bedroom she shared with Caitlin who was on her heels. "I'm following her. I'll be darned if I'm missing a chance to run unclothed outside. Are you coming?" Emily asked as she quickly slipped on her running shoes and robes.

Caitlin hesitated briefly, but then quickly stepped into her shoes and slipped on her robes.

Without talking they scurried out of the room and down the stairs. They reached the main door just in time to see Jamie depart and the door close. When they got to the door they slowly opened it just wide enough to see the direction Jamie had taken. After giving her time to get a head start, they quickly followed.

Earlier in the day the grounds had been inundated with students enjoying the especially warm spring day. Now the majority of them had returned to their dorms with the exception of a few couples that still remained on benches near the lake.

Caitlin noticed one couple look at Emily and her in a strange way as the two girls hurried down the path toward the Quidditch Pitch. Caitlin imagined that she and Emily looked rather peculiar running along with their robes clutched tightly closed. Most students had been lightly dressed during the day due to the fine weather. And no one ever wore robes on weekends except in the Winter to go out doors.

The girls caught up to Jamie as she tried unsuccessfully to gain entrance to the changing rooms. She turned, a disgusted look on her face, and saw Caitlin and Emily watching her. "What are you two doing here? I thought I said I wanted to run alone."

"Have a heart, Jamie," Emily implored. "Do you realize how long it's been since I had a chance to run outdoors unclothed?"

"Okay, as long as you're both here, but no more squabbling," Jamie sighed.

Emily looked at Caitlin, who shrugged her shoulders and nodded in indication of a temporary truce.

"The changing rooms are locked, so we'll have to leave our robes outside." Jamie proceeded toward the nearest tree. "Be sure to tie your robes to a limb so that they don't blow away."

Emily was out of her robe in a flash, but Caitlin slowly slipped hers off as she nervously said to Jamie, "What if some one sees us?"

Before Jamie could answer, Emily jumped in. "I thought you were a naturist. So what if someone sees us. It's no big deal. Jamie and I have been seen nude by hundreds of people."

"It's not being seen that bothers me," Caitlin answered. "I'd have no problem walking through Hogsmeade naked. It's just my parents. I don't want to do anything to cause them embarrassment or get myself kicked out of school."

"Caitlin, I did this before, after a Quidditch game. Few people come this far from the castle, especially not this late in the day. The odds are slim that anyone will see us."

"Besides," added Emily. "Who is going to bother to check out you and I when Miss Nude

Teen is around?"

Jamie turned a bright red as Caitlin questioned, "Miss Nude Teen?"

Jamie gave Emily an evil stare as she said to Caitlin, "Last year when we were on vacation at Cap D'agde my parents talked me into taking part in a beauty contest. I find such things demeaning, but they practically begged. Well, I won and little sister here has never let me hear the end of it."

Jamie thought about that day. "In retrospect, I'm glad I did it. It made them happy. They were really proud of me." Jamie was almost ready to cry. "But you can't imagine how ridiculous it feels to be walking on a stage nude except for a stupid sash that says Miss Nude Teen.

Caitlin looked at Jamie questioningly. "I thought being naked in front of people didn't bother you."

"Oh, it wasn't being naked that bothered me. It was wearing that stupid sash all day while muggle photographers took photos of me. I felt like a fool."

Caitlin thought to herself that it wasn't a fair contest. Jamie was so pretty. No one else stood a chance of winning.

"The perimeter of the Quidditch Pitch is one-half kilometer. How many trips around do you little ones think you can make?" Jamie asked in a jesting manner.

"More than you," Emily replied.

"That sounds like a challenge," Jamie laughed.

The girls made sure their robes were securely tied to the tree and then began jogging over to the Pitch. This was the first time Caitlin had ever seen Jamie run naked and she was amazed at the contortions Jamie's ample breasts made as she ran.

"Doesn't it hurt when they bounce like that?" Caitlin inquired.

"It bothers some people. Mum always told me I was a masochist because I actually love the feel of their movement."

Caitlin couldn't help staring in envy at Jamie. Then she looked at her own tiny chest. *Come on guys. I get my period now every month; I'm officially a woman. Isn't it about time you two make an appearance? Please!*

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The two fifteen-year-old wizards staggered out of the Clash barely able to stand upright.

"Didn't I tell you that would be easy, Crow? Muggles are brainless. With a stolen ID and a little Glamour, you can get as much Muggle liquor as you want."

"Maybe, a little too much," Dennis Crow said as he bent over and started to puke his guts out.

Dick Bancroft laughed at his inebriated comrade. "If you're going to hang with me, Crow, you best learn how to handle your booze."

"Right now I'm more worried about handling a broom. I don't think I'm in any condition to fly."

"You're a wuss, Crow. The wind in your face will sober you up in no time."

"Fine," said Crow, "but what keeps me from falling off before I sober up?"

"Fear of me. If you fall off and kill yourself, I'll personally break your neck. Come on, move it. I want to get back in time for the evening meal."

"Do you think anyone missed us?" Crow asked.

"In our house? I doubt it. They're all as stupid as muggles except for the Gryffindor lover, and I'm sure Marburger spent the day in heat chasing his bitch. All we have to do is fly low over the forest until we get to the Quidditch Pitch, and then walk to the castle from there and we're home free."

In a matter of moments they reached the location where they had hidden their brooms. As soon as Dick watered the flowers, they were on their way back to Hogwarts flying a not very straight path over the Forbidden Forest.

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"I'm impressed," said Jamie. "I didn't think you two would last this long. What do you say, one more lap and we call it a draw?"

"Sounds good to me," Emily replied.

"So, Caitlin what do you think of running unclothed in Mother Nature's home?" Jamie inquired.

It's the greatest sensation in the world. I just wish I didn't feel so guilty and uneasy about doing it. If only we could workout like this in the morning without the fear of repercussions."

"My sentiments exactly," concurred Jamie.

"You know what I wish?" Emily asked, but didn't wait for a reply. "I wish you both would remember that my I.Q. is only 160 and not over 200 like you two super stars. Please tell me what normal eleven-year-old fears repercussions?"

"One who has lived most her life with no one that loved her or would look out for her." Caitlin answered.

"Well, those times are over," Emily said. "Now you have two sisters."

"That's right," Jamie agreed as she put her arm on Caitlin's shoulder. "Now let's do that last lap so we can be back in time for dinner."

* * * * *

"Land near the changing rooms," Dick said. "We'll walk to the castle from there."

"Okay," Crow answered. His stomach felt better, but he still had a wicked headache. He rubbed his eyes with his hand and as he did so, he saw an unbelievable sight on the Quidditch Pitch.

"Dick, you won't believe this," Crow said. "Look over at the Quidditch Pitch."

Bancroft yawned as he turned his head in the direction indicated by his mate. What he saw almost made him fall off his broom. It most certainly made him stop yawning. "Damn! This is unbelievable. Quick, land before they spot us."

The two Slytherins brought their brooms to rest between the forest tree line and the Quidditch Changing Rooms. Swiftly they ran to a vantage point where they could see, but not be seen.

"Did you get a good look at them?" Bancroft asked. "Do you know who they are?"

"Nah, we landed too rapidly. From the long hair, I'd say they were unquestionably all girls. Two young ones and one older."

As Bancroft studied the girls, suddenly he realized who the older girl was. "Shit, that's Zacherley. What luck. Will you look at that pair of tits bounce? Damn, I wish they were closer so we could get a good look."

"Who do you think the other two are?" Crow asked.

"Who the hell cares? Neither one looks like they have anything worth checking out. One is probably that brat Granger adopted. She and Zacherley are attached at the hips. Damn, I wonder if they do this often? Crazy bitches, running around completely starkers."

"Dick," Crow gave Bancroft a nudge. "They stopped running. It looks like they're headed this direction."

"This is too good to be true. We're going to get a look at that bitch up close and personal. Damn, what I'd give for a pair of Omniculars right now. This is a moment that should be shared with all of Hogwarts. Quick, let's hide at the edge of the forest so they don't see us until we get a close look."

As they ran for the forest, Dick saw a sight before him that made a perfect day even more perfect. "Will you look at that Crow? Their robes. Quick, help me grab them and let's get out of here."

Dennis suddenly looked extremely disappointed. "I thought we were going to hide and get a

close look at Zacherley's tits and pussy."

"All in good time. Think about it. No clothes. With the sun setting it will get much colder. They'll be hungry. They'll be forced to walk to the castle as they are and guess who'll be at the door to greet them with the whole Slytherin house at his side."

"Yeah, yeah, but I've never seen a girl naked. And it's not just any girl; it's Zacherley."

"Later. This is an opportunity too good to pass up."

Within moments they were running toward the castle shielded by the trees. They were gone long before the girls nonchalantly returned to the area of the Changing Rooms.

"Jamie, that was fun. So much better than when we run in the morning. Can we do it again?" Emily asked excitedly.

"I don't see why not. After all we're not hurting anyone by running nude. Since no one knows about it, what's the harm?"

Caitlin looked at Jamie nervously. "I'm pretty sure someone knows about it." She pointed in the direction of the tree where they had hung their garments. "Our robes are gone. Jamie, what are we going to do? Mum and Dad will kill us."

Jamie looked forlornly at the tree. "I'm sorry, Caitlin. This is entirely my fault. I should have been more responsible than to do this, especially and involve you two."

"Excuse me, but after all we are nudists." Emily said indignantly. "I'm as angry as you guys that some jerk stole our robes, but what's the big deal. So a few people see us naked. Who cares?"

"Emily, how many times does it have to be explained to you? We live in the world of the clothed. If we don't follow their rules we will be ostracized. Neither Caitlin nor I are ashamed to be seen nude. But this isn't just about us. Our being seen this way would be an embarrassment to Professors Granger and Potter. Is this the way we pay them back for their kindness to us?" Jamie stared at Emily in disbelief.

"Okay, I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking." Emily sat her bare butt on a large rock. "But if we can't return to the castle like this, exactly what are we going to do?"

The girls just looked at each other in complete silence.

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"Crow, you wait here. Keep an eye out for our little nature girls. They have to come back this way. I'm going to get a camera and alert the rest of Slytherin House so they can enjoy the humiliation of Zacherley and her little friends along with us. I doubt that they'll try sneaking back till after dark. That gives us time to get ready for them." Dick Bancroft was beaming from ear to ear. His time for revenge was at hand.

"Well make it fast," Crow responded. "I feel like I'm going to have to puke again."

"Damn, what a pussy you are. Here, guard these robes with your life. They're the only proof we have until our guest of honor and her little friends return to the castle." Bancroft tossed the girls' robes to Crow as he ran inside.

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"Well, did the brain trust come up with any ideas yet?" Emily asked sarcastically.

Jamie gave Emily an extremely annoyed stare. "Not really. It seems we have two options. We can either wait here and hope someone comes and rescues us, or after dark try to sneak into the castle."

"Somehow I don't think we will get far sneaking into the castle," Caitlin stated. "I have a feeling whoever took those robes will be waiting for our return and probably with a lot of friends. Our only hope is that someone comes looking for us."

"But what if they think something bad happened to us and they have the whole school search?" Emily inquired.

"If that happens, then the whole school will know we are naturists and we'll just have to learn to live with it." Jamie said.

Caitlin looked at Emily and Jamie nervously. "If that happens, I don't think Mum and Dad will be too happy. They might not allow us to be naked anymore."

Emily looked startled. "Jamie, they wouldn't do that. Would they?"

"I don't know, but I would hardly blame them if they did." Jamie answered in a depressed manner. "This was really a stupid idea. I feel rotten."

Caitlin put her arm around Jamie's waist. "Emily and I wanted to do this as much as you. We're all equally to blame."

"Yeah," added Emily. "We're sisters and we stick together, remember. It was everybody's fault. I guess all we can do now is sit and wait for it to get dark."

Caitlin and Jamie both simply nodded in agreement.

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It had been a rather quiet dinner until suddenly Dick Bancroft rushed into the Great Hall. All of a sudden the noise level at the Slytherin table increased. Within minutes most of the Slytherins had shoveled down the balance of their food and hurried out of the Hall.

"Amanda, what do you think all the ruckus is about over at the Slytherin table?" Alex asked,

an inquisitive expression on his face.

Amanda shrugged her shoulders. "I haven't the slightest idea, but Tony is headed this way. Surely he'll know."

As soon as Tony reached their table, it was evident he knew what was going on. From the look on his face it was likewise apparent that he wasn't bringing good news.

Tony looked at both Alex and Amanda disgustingly. "Dick claims to have seen the three of them running naked on the Quidditch Pitch."

"And you believe him?" Amanda asked.

"He claims to have their robes. The Slytherins have all gone to watch the show. They figure that the girls will try to sneak back after dark." Tony waited for Amanda to respond.

Amanda shook her head in frustration. "Jamie's not ashamed of being a nudist, but she wanted to keep it from the other houses because people have a tendency to treat nudists as if there is something wrong with them."

"Well, it won't be a secret much longer. Not unless, Jamie knows an underground way back into the castle. They're all taking their wands and cameras. Dick intends to illuminate the sky as if it were daylight." Tony's face looked as if he thought preventing this was impossible. "I have to go with them or I won't be considered a loyal Slytherin. Just wanted to let you know what was going on. Wish there was something we could do to help the girls."

Amanda gave Tony a quick peck on the cheek and then watched as he hurried to join the Slytherin lynch mob. "Alex, what can we do?" Amanda asked desperately.

"I can't think of anything we can do, but maybe they can help." He indicated Harry and Hermione who were just about to leave the Great Hall. "Even if they can't, we have to tell them what's happening. Come on we have to catch up with them."

Alex grabbed Amanda's arm and practically dragged her up to the staff table. "Professor Granger, Professor Potter, may we please speak to you for a moment? It's important, about the girls."

As soon as Hermione saw the panic in Alex's eyes, she ushered the two students to the side of the rapidly emptying hall. As Alex explained the situation, Hermione looked at Harry in frustration. "If only I had told them about the spell this morning, this could have been prevented."

Harry took Hermione's hand in his. "Hind sight is always perfect. I think we can get the girls out of this situation without the Slytherins turning it into a circus, but I'll need your help." He looked at both Alex and Amanda who swiftly nodded their approval. "Good, follow us to our quarters and I'll fill you in on the details."

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"Okay everyone!" Dick shouted to get the attention of the assembled Slytherins. "In order to have this work, Zacherley and her little friends have to think no one is around and that they can successfully sneak into the castle through this entrance. That means you must all stay quiet and hidden in the bushes until they have gotten practically to the door."

"Crow and I will be inside. When we fling open the doors that will be the signal for you to all light your wands and surround them. Make sure that you get lots of pictures. I'm sure some of you guys will be more interested if a quick feel, but we want to preserve this moment, so get lots of pictures."

Bancroft turned to Crow and smiled. "Zacherley is going down my friend. After tonight she'll be ashamed to show her face. If we're lucky, the bitch will drop out of school."

"You're the man, Dick. This is going to be terrific. Hope I get to grab a feel when we mob them." Suddenly Dennis remembered the robes he was carrying concealed under his own and took them out. "Dick, what should I do with these?"

"Guard them with your life. In the event that Zacherley somehow gets by us, they are the only proof we have to corroborate our story."

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"It's dark Jamie, and starting to get rather chilly. Do you think it's safe to start back yet?" Caitlin inquired.

Jamie nervously said, "Yes. Be prepared for the worst. If someone from our house took the robes as an innocent prank, we'll probably be all right. They might even meet us with them. If on the other hand it was someone like Bancroft, we'll probably be met with searchlights and cameras."

Jamie hesitated before saying, "If Dick is behind this, it will be bad." She looked at Caitlin and her sister. "He won't be happy only to take pictures. Don't be surprised if we get rushed and guys try to grope you."

Emily's eyes bugged. "Do you really think they'd do that? Tony's a Slytherin and he's nice."

"I've never figured out why Tony's a Slytherin. Perhaps the hat made a mistake." Jamie said.

"Or," added Caitlin. "Perhaps not all Slytherins are bad. The house has a dreadful reputation, but I bet some Slytherins are great people once you get to know them."

The girls slowly and with awareness started the long walk back to the castle.

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Harry stood just next to the open bedroom window with his broom ready to be off. Next to him stood Alex and Amanda examining with wonder the invisibility cloak which Harry had

given them to use. Hermione stood behind the two students reminiscing of her adventures with Harry and that cloak. "There is nothing that can undo the fact that Bancroft and Crow saw the girls running naked, but we can prevent anyone else in the school from seeing them. We can also create doubt in the minds of the other Slytherins as to the veracity of Bancroft's story."

"Fortunately this window is not within view of the Slytherins gathered outside. The overcast evening and lack of moonlight are also to our advantage. Hermione, you'll have to create some sort of diversion so that Alex and Amanda can, with the help of the cloak, regain possession of the girls' robes. With the girls back in the castle and their robes returned, Bancroft's creditability will be diminished."

"Harry, you have to fly so far out of the way to avoid being seen. It will take forever to get all three girls back." Hermione said with concern.

"No, I'll fly Caitlin and Emily back and allow Jamie to use my broom. It will only be one trip. We'll land on the flat area of roof and then I'll transport them to this window one at a time. Try to return here as soon as you have retrieved the robes." Harry said.

Alex and Amanda looked at each other with bewildered expressions wondering how Professor Potter proposed to fly Caitlin and Emily back if Jamie was using his broom. Neither, however, had the mettle to query the Professor.

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The girls crouched behind the bushes watching the castle door. Finally after a few moments Caitlin spoke. "It looks deserted. I say we make for the bushes nearest the door. Once we are concealed there, we can plan our next step."

"I'm not sure," Jamie answered. "It almost seems too quiet."

"It is!" The male voice startled the three girls to such a great extent that it actually caused Emily to lose momentary control of her bladder.

Tears of embarrassment streamed down her face. Harry, upon realizing what had happened, straight away did a cleansing charm and then put his arm on her shoulder. He whispered in her ear. "Don't let it bother you. It's no big deal. Voldemort did it to me twice."

"How did you know we were here?" Caitlin said in relief.

"I didn't know exactly where you were, but knew it would probably be somewhere along this path." Harry gave Jamie a glance. "It was your friend Dick Bancroft and his mate Dennis Crow that came upon your robes. The Slytherins are lying in wait in the bushes ahead. Tony told Alex and Amanda, who came to Hermione and I"

"I'm sorry, Harry." Jamie said contritely. "It's my fault. I should have never given into my desires and worse, should never have drawn in Caitlin and Emily."

"What's done is done. As they say, no sense crying over spilt milk. Hermione and I accept

part of the blame. There was a charm that we should have taught you that would have avoided this entire situation, but we hesitated sharing it. The important thing now is that we get you back to the castle and try to minimize the damage. Hermione and the others are trying to regain possession of your robes as we speak."

"Are you going to fly us back one at a time?" Emily asked.

"No." Harry answered. "You and Caitlin are going to fly on my back and Jamie will follow us on my broom."

Caitlin looked at Harry in both shock and awe. "Dad, can you fly without a broom?"

Harry laughed at the expression on Caitlin's face. "As I am; no I can't. But I'm an Animagus like you mum. I can take the form of a Golden Griffin."

Emily began to tremble. "Caitlin and I are going to ride you bareback. What do we hold on to?"

"You'll be fine. I'll try not to fly too fast or take high degree turns. I won't be able to talk once I change form so I'll give you instructions now. Jamie, you may have to help them get astride me, and then you follow on my broom. Emily you get on first and wrap both your arms and legs around my neck. Caitlin, you sit as close to her as possible. Lock your ankles under her legs and wrap your arms around her chest. I want both of you to lean forward as far as you can. Don't be frightened when I change appearance. It's still me and I would never hurt any of you. Are you all ready?"

The girls all nodded their heads although Caitlin and Emily both looked not the least bit enthusiastic about the situation. Harry closed his eyes as he left the change course through his body. He felt the familiar wrench of his bones as they altered shape. The pain of the transformation had become so familiar that he was anesthetized to it now.

The change might have become familiar to Harry over the course of years, but this was the first time either Caitlin or Emily had witness such a transformation and they backed away with trepidation. "Don't be afraid," Jamie said trying to relax the girls. "It's still Harry. We haven't any time to waste. Emily, let me help you up first."

Jamie helped the young girl aboard. Once astride the winged lion, Emily wrapped both her arms and legs tightly around the neck. Caitlin climbed on board and slid tightly against Emily wedging her ankles between Emily legs and the Griffin's body. Next she wrapped her arms around the other girl's upper body forming an X in the front. She held onto Emily's chest as if she would surely die if she released her grip.

Jamie walked to the front of the beast. "Okay Harry, They are ready or as ready as they ever will be."

The beast winked an eye and then began to take great strides as its wings unfurled. Although seemingly impossible the girls held even tighter as the beast left the ground and soared into the air.

Jamie stuck out her right hand and said, "Up!" Instantly Harry's broom jumped into her hand. She quickly mounted the broom and kicked off. In a flash she was following the Griffin.

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"Where the hell are that bitch and her little friends?" Dick Bancroft complained as he paced the floor just inside the castle entrance.

"Maybe they got in through another entrance," Crow suggested.

"There is no other entrance accessible from the Quidditch Pitch unless they go through the Forbidden Forest or swim the lake. I doubt even the great Jamie Zacherley is up to either of those tasks; especially not when the kindergarten girls are with her."

"But what if she did?" Crow pleaded. "We'll be the laughing stock of Slytherin. Everyone will think we made up the story."

"That's why you're guarding those robes. Their names are embroidered on the collars. Having them doesn't prove they were nude, but it certainly lends credence to our story; especially since they were not at dinner."

Suddenly Bancroft heard footsteps. "Someone is coming. Hide those robes behind that tapestry."

Dick was surprised when only Professor Granger came round the corner. He had thought he heard multiple pairs of footsteps.

Bancroft could tell by her expression that Granger was suspicious as to why the boys were hanging around the castle corridor at this time of night.

"Mr. Crow, Mr. Bancroft, you are quite a distance from the Slytherin dorms. What brings you to this section of the castle?"

Dick hemmed and hawed briefly before saying, "The Slytherin dungeons are damp and musty. Crow and I thought we would get a bit of fresh air before retiring."

"Oh," Hermione said knowingly. "In that case you better hurry outside. You only have fifteen minutes before all students must be within the castle walls. I wouldn't roam too far."

Bancroft cursed the Professor under his breath as he motioned for Crow to come outside with him. Crow was very hesitant to leave the bulging wall hanging that he had been leaning against, but begrudgingly joined his mate.

The two had barely closed the door when the disembodied voice of Alex said, "That was almost too easy."

"Yes," answered the voice of the unseen Amanda. "I wonder if the missing robes could possibly be causing that bulge in the tapestry?"

"Don't gloat," said Hermione. "Just grab those robes and let us get back to the staff residences. I trust Harry located the girls without any difficulty."

* * * * *

Harry slowly drifted to a landing on the balcony of the deserted Great Hall. Jamie landed next to him. Emily and Caitlin both seemed quite relieved to be on a firm surface and quickly slid off. As soon as they had disembarked, Harry transformed back to his human form.

"That was cool, in a scary sort of way." Emily announced.

"Were you scared?" Caitlin asked. "I thought it was a breeze."

"Is that why your arms were wrapped so tightly around my chest? I thought you were trying to flatten my breasts." Emily retorted.

"We had to land here because unlike a broom, a Griffin can't hover at one place," Harry stated. "I'll have to fly you individually to our quarters. Caitlin, suppose I take you first. Hop on in front of me so I can hold you."

Jamie and Emily watched as Harry and Caitlin quickly soared to the open window of staff quarters. In no time Harry returned and soon was clutching Emily tightly by her waist as they too flew toward the open window.

Jamie stood alone waiting for Harry's quick return. As he landed she proceeded to mount the broom in front of Harry and then hesitated. "Harry, I'm accustomed to riding at the rear. Would you be more comfortable with me holding your clothed body rather than you having to wrap your arm around my naked waist?"

Harry simply said, "That might be best." He had been concerned about holding Jamie. Not that he had any sexual desires toward her. Harry had actually gotten quite accustomed to seeing her naked. It was holding her naked that gave him a problem and it bothered him that he felt this way. He often hugged and tickled Caitlin and Emily when they were nude, not thinking the least about it. Sometimes it seemed like Jamie wanted to join in, but was afraid. It was like she was still a little girl, but trapped in a woman's body. Harry made a mental note to talk to Hermione. She always had the answers.

Hermione was waiting at the window to first give Jamie a hand getting in and then Harry. As Jamie dismounted she felt Alex gazing at her. He had looked at her before, especially in first year, but now it was different. It felt good. The way he looked at her made her feel special, beautiful, loved. She gave him a kiss on the cheek and then turned to Amanda.

"I see you guys retrieved our robes. Was it difficult?" Jamie asked.

"Not with this," Amanda said as she showed the invisibility cloak to Jamie.

"Professor Potter, did you have that cloak when you attended Hogwarts?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Harry answered. "And no, I never used it to sneak into the girls dorms."

Hermione gave Harry a grin.

"Well, at least not to watch the girls change. Hermione would have killed Ron and me. Enough about me and my school days, how are we going to bring today's adventure to a close and prevent it from happening again?"

"I'm sorry," said Jamie. "What happened today was entirely my fault. I've been studying a lot; feeling sorry for myself and just went and did something stupid. It won't happen again. I should have known better, but worse, I never should have gotten Caitlin and Emily involved. They shouldn't be punished. Just me."

"Emily and I aren't babies," said Caitlin. "We knew what we were doing. Jamie didn't force either of us to go. Actually she told us we couldn't, but we followed her anyway. Despite what happened, I'm glad we did. I loved being one with nature."

Emily eyes went from Jamie to Caitlin and then rested on Hermione and Harry. "I don't think we did anything wrong. I think it's wrong that we aren't allowed to run free. Wearing clothes to me is like penning up a wild animal in a cage. It's cruel. Who did we hurt by running around the Quidditch Pitch starkers? I want to continue to do it. What's more, flying naked was awesome. I want to be able to fly that way, too."

Hermione stepped forward and put her arm around Emily. "No one is going to be punished. Harry and I agree with you. Not that either of us would ever do it, but you are correct in that your running nude doesn't hurt anyone. There is a way you can run like you did today without anyone ever being aware. It's a charm, rather comparable to the ones on Hogwarts. We hesitated telling you about it because it is not faultless, but it is undoubtedly better than a recurrence of today."

"How does it work?" Caitlin asked elatedly.

Hermione continued. "Like I said, it's analogous to the charm on Hogwarts. If a muggle looks at Hogwarts, they don't see a vast castle, but rather they see the remains of a castle. Your body can be charmed in a like way to make it look like you have garments on when in fact you don't. Jamie, would you mind if I used you as a demonstration model?"

"Not at all," Jamie said rather excitedly. "What do you need me to do?"

"If you would just go to your room and speedily slip on your shorts and running bra and then come back here."

Everyone watched as Jamie literally ran to her room. Before anyone even had an opportunity to query Hermione further concerning the charm, Jamie had returned wearing the requested garments. Hermione recited a simple charm and then touched her wand to Jamie's body.

"I didn't feel anything!" Jamie said.

"You're not supposed to." Hermione answered. "Would you mind slipping the bra and shorts off now as we watch?" Jamie did as requested and then laid the articles on the chair. With the exception of Harry and Hermione, everyone in the room looked thunderstruck.

Hermione smiled at the group. "Jamie, when you look at yourself, what do you see?"

Jamie blushed slightly. "Me in the buff except for my socks and running shoes."

"Alex," Hermione asked. "What do you see?"

Alex had a look of total bewilderment on his face. "Jamie, still has on her shorts and bra, but she can't. I saw her go through the motions of taking them off. They're lying on the chair. It was as if she had on two bras and two pair of shorts. I saw her remove the first layer, but the second stayed in place."

Caitlin looked at her Mum excitedly, "This is marvelous. Not only won't we have to wear clothes to run, but we'll never have to wear them." She looked at Emily, "We can even go to class naked and no one will be the wiser."

"Is that accurate Aunt Hermione?" Emily asked. "Will we be able to do that?"

"No," Hermione answered. "Sadly the charm is not without its limitations and glitches. This is a quite simple charm compared to those on Hogwarts and also doesn't have the safeguards. For instance not only do Muggles see ruins when they look at Hogwarts, but also when they get near the grounds they suddenly feel the need to go elsewhere. If a muggle were to physically step foot on Hogwarts grounds they would see the castle as it is."

"I don't understand Professor Granger. What do the wards that prevent muggles from entering Hogwarts have to do with this spell?" Alex asked.

"Obviously, we can't put a spell on a person that makes everyone think they have to go elsewhere when they get near you. That means people can touch a person under this charm. Alex, hold Jamie's hand and tell me what you see."

Jamie offered her hand to Alex and he gladly took it. He smiled and nodded his head. "I understand what you mean Professor. She's quite beautiful, but she's also quite naked."

Jamie blushed profusely, not because Alex could see her as she was, but because he had referred to her as beautiful in front of everyone.

"That is one of the problems with the charm. If a person touches you, they see you as you really are. There are others." Hermione went on. "Jamie, would you go stand in front of the mirror and tell me what you see."

Jamie proceeded to the mirror as the others followed. "I see me as I know I am, naked."

Amanda kept looking back and forth between Jamie and the mirror in disbelief. "That's amazing. When I look at Jamie, she has on her shorts and bra, but when I look in the mirror I see her without her clothes. Why is that Professor?"

"When you look at Jamie, your mind is being deceived by the charm into seeing something that doesn't exist. Her clothes. The mirror has no mind and isn't deceived. Neither are you when you view the reflection rather than the actual person. There is one further problem with the charm. If anyone within hearing distance says the words "Finite Incantatum"..."

Professor Granger didn't have to finish her sentence. It was clear what happened if those words were spoken. Using the charm within the walls of Hogwarts would be tantamount to asking to be exposed.

Emily's face looked as if she had a thousand questions. "Now that we know the spell, do we have to use it here in our quarters?"

Harry, put his arm around Emily's shoulder and surprisingly instead of pulling away, she nestled against him. "No, not unless you'd feel more comfortable doing so. The same would hold true for Jamie and Caitlin in their dorms. As long as your mates don't feel awkward about your nudity and you are comfortable, I see no reason to change anything. We're only suggesting this as a safer alternative to what took place today."

"May I also suggest that you take someone such as Amanda or Alex with you as back up. Someone who isn't nude and can get help if a problem arises." Hermione added.

"Mum, I know using the charm for classes is out of the question, someone is always saying "Finite Incantatum", but what about for exercising in the morning?" Caitlin asked.

"I feel more secure with the charm when you are far away from the rest of the student body, but I won't say no. You'll have to be particularly careful avoiding reflections and choosing who holds you for exercises," Hermione replied. "Perhaps you and Emily could hold each other and Jamie I'll hold for you if you desire."

Jamie smiled at Hermione, but looked none too happy with the suggestion she had just made. "I certainly appreciate the offer, but I know that would make you extremely uncomfortable. Alex, you've been my regular partner for years. Do you mind continuing as such if I'm nude?"

Alex envisioned a great many cold showers in his future, but knew he wanted to stay partnered with Jamie.

"Mum, I've always partnered with Matt or Randy, mostly Matt. Can't I stay with him?"

Emily for the moment looked dejected until Caitlin smiled at her and said, "Randy likes you. I'm sure he'd be willing to hold for you if you are comfortable with him seeing you."

Emily looked at Hermione almost pleadingly. "Would that be all right Aunt Hermione? Could Caitlin and I pair with Matt and Randy instead of each other?"

Hermione looked to Harry for guidance. Harry smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"You girls will never cease to amaze me," Hermione said. "I could never exercise or run in the buff, yet alone do it with a boy as holder. It must be wonderful to be that comfortable and confident with your body." .

"Now that we have that all settled," Harry said as if quite relieved. "What should we do about the Slytherins hiding in the bushes about the castle? Do you girls intend to let them stay out there all night or make an appearance so that they know you are in the castle?"

"If it were just those two drunks, I'd vote you leave them out there all night. Problem is Bancroft and Crow are inside, its Tony and the others that are out in the bushes," Amanda blurted out.

Hermione stared at Amanda, "What do you mean by two drunks?"

"Didn't you smell it? No, you probably wouldn't have. You weren't nearly as close to them as Alex and I. They reeked of alcohol and I don't mean butter beer."

Harry turned to Alex. "Is what Amanda is saying true?"

Alex nodded his head. "They definitely had both drinking extensively. There is no way to prove it, but I'd suspect that they snuck off school grounds and went to a muggle bar. Probably flew off from the Quidditch Pitch. I'd bet that they saw you guys on their return."

Jamie shook her head in disgust. "To think that I almost felt bad that we were making a fool out of them. I can't believe they would sneak off the grounds."

Amanda looked at Jamie in disbelief. "How can you not believe it? He purposely tried to hurt you, possibly kill you in the first game of the season. Jamie, it's wonderful that you try to see the good in people, but you have to stop ignoring the evil. Bancroft and his entire family are evil. They are Purebloods who look down on the rest of the wizard world as their inferiors."

* * * * *

Jamie, Caitlin and Emily had quickly dressed and donned their robes, and were now on their way to the entrance where Bancroft, Crow and the rest of the Slytherins had been encamped for the past two hours. Jamie had done a silencing charm so that their approach went undetected. As they neared the turn they slowed their pace and Jamie peeked around the corner.

"This is perfect. They have their noses glued to the window. We can probably sneak up right next to them." Jamie very slowly and quietly covered the distance until she was standing directly behind Dick Bancroft. Caitlin and Emily stood just to her rear.

Jamie whispered in Dick's ear. "What's taking so long? Where do you think they are?"

Bancroft was startled and jumped in surprise. "How the hell should..." He turned and when he saw who the voice belonged to his face turned white. "How the hell did you and your kindergarten friends get back into the castle?"

Crow just watched, dumbstruck to see Jamie and the two girls and quite disappointed that they were all now fully clothed.

"Don't you read fairy tales Dick?" Jamie replied. "The good witch always beats the evil wizard."

"You think you're a smart ass don't you Zacherley. This isn't over. You forget that we have robes with your names. They don't prove that you were out there nude, but it certainly gives credence to our story. Crow get me their robes!" Dick shouted arrogantly.

Dennis ran to the tapestry, but realized he was dead when he saw that the embroidery was hanging flat against the wall. In panic he patted the wall and searched the floor, but knew his search was in vain. The robes were gone.

"Dick, I'm sorry. I don't know how, but they're gone."

Bancroft shouted in anger. "You stupid piece of shit! I told you to guard them with your life. Now it's just their word against ours." He turned and looked angrily at the girls. "You bitches think you're smart. Don't you? Well, I may not have proof, but that won't stop me from telling the entire school that you three are weird and run around starkers."

Emily had promised to keep quiet, but she was never one to shy away from a fight. "We don't have any proof either, at least not yet. But if you start telling people we are some sort of weird freaks, we might feel compelled to spread the word that you and your mate here have been sneaking off grounds and drinking illegally."

Bancroft just stared at Emily in disbelief and then said to Jamie, "Zacherley, you haven't heard the last of this. No one makes a fool of Dick Bancroft"

Emily wasn't done. "We've heard the last unless you're as stupid as you look. It's remarkable the marvelous job your parents did naming you. I've never met anyone who lived up to their name so well, Dick."

"Little bitch," Bancroft mumbled as he grabbed Crow by the shirtsleeve and turned toward the door. "Come on, shit for brains. Let's tell the others that tonight's party is canceled." He looked back at the girls and gave them an evil smirk. "No, not canceled, rather just temporarily postponed."

* * * * *

"I'm glad you both agreed to sleep in the apartment tonight. I really wanted to talk about today," Emily said as she adjusted her pillow.

"I think we all do," answered Jamie. "I imagine even Hermione and Harry knew it. That's probably why they didn't seem the least surprised when you guys asked me to sleep in here."

"You don't mind giving up your huge bed to sleep in my little one, do you?" Caitlin inquired.

"No, I'm fine. You guys are the ones cramped in one bed," answered Jamie.

Caitlin gave Emily a wink indicating she should follow her lead. Emily nodded her head. "Actually," Caitlin said between giggles, "Emily and I were just looking for an excuse to be in bed together."

Before Jamie knew what was happening, Caitlin was straddling Emily's body, and then the two girls embraced and kissed each other. "We're a couple," Emily cried, trying to hold back tears of laughter, "we wanted you to be the first to know."

Somehow Jamie managed to keep a straight face and said with all seriousness. "You know I was wondering how long it would take the two of you to realize that you were meant for each other. I guess you already realize how beautiful a couple you make. Just one thing, that kiss looked rather weak. Would you like me to show you how to give each other tongue?"

Caitlin and Emily stared at each other and then simultaneously went, "Ugh. Let's get her."

The girls both jumped out of bed and ran to tickle Jamie, their laughter and giggles echoing through out the room.

* * * * *

"Sounds like the girls are in a good mood tonight," Harry said as he cuddled Hermione in his arms.

"Yes," Hermione smiled as she twirled the hair on his chest. "I think we're well on our way to becoming a family."

"Mione, you're the brains of this duo. Why am I afraid to get close to Jamie? I fool with Caitlin and Emily all the time. We roll on the floor and tickle and have a great time. Sometimes Jamie looks like she feels so left out. I want to grab her and include her in the fun, but I'm afraid."

"Today when I rode the other girls here, they sat in front of me on the broom with my arm around them. Jamie suggested she sit behind me and I was glad she did. I was afraid to touch her. Why can't I treat her like Emily and Caitlin?"

Hermione laughed, "Well, Jamie is a lot older than the other girls and some girls that age think they are too old to fool around like that. I don't think that is the case with Jamie. I believe Jamie will always be a little girl at heart and I think she would love to join in with you. That can't happen, however, until you both are able to forget she has breasts. You're both afraid of making contact. Harry, it would be innocent, but you have to both believe that. If it helps any, I trust both of you. I don't think she still has those types of feelings for you and I know you would never hurt me. If I find you two wrestling on the floor, even if she's nude, I'm not going to run and pack my bag. I'll do one of two things. I'll either watch and laugh, or I'll help whoever is losing. Harry, love is trust and trust is love. I could never love or trust anyone more than I do you. It might be difficult, but I think you and Jamie should talk about the subject of touching."

"Mione, what did I ever do to deserve someone as wonderful and beautiful as you?"

As Hermione rolled over on top of Harry she said, "You know, I was wondering the same thing?"

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"Guys, admit it. Now that it's all over, wasn't today great?" Caitlin asked

"It was fun, even being stuck outside without clothes was neat." Jamie answered.

"And starting tomorrow we no longer have to wear clothes to run or exercise," added Emily.

"That is going to feel so great."

"You do intend to warn Randy about what's going to happen when he touches your ankles?" Jamie asked.

"I guess, but it would be great to see the expression on his face if I didn't. Can you imagine? He looks down at my ankles, positions his hands and when he looks up, Tra Lah."

"Emily, I can't get over you," Caitlin said as she looked at Emily with dismay. "Sometimes you're so nice, and other times, well you've got an evil streak."

Emily laughed, "Must be my Slytherin blood boiling to the surface."

"Slytherin?. Were you parents in Slytherin?" Caitlin inquired.

"No," Jamie answered for Emily. "Our parents didn't have the opportunity to attend Hogwarts. Our ancestry, however, is quite a mixed bag. My Mum's parents were from Gryffindor and Hufflepuff and Dad's were from Ravenclaw and Slytherin. I had no idea what house the hat would decide to put me in."

Caitlin had a horrible thought. "That means you might not get into Gryffindor." Caitlin put her arm around Emily and hugged her. "I was so counting on us all being in the same house next year. You could end up in any house. Even..." Caitlin hesitated as the name caught on her lip. "Slytherin."

"Yeah, I'd like to be with you guys, but I'm prepared to go wherever the hat puts me. Truthfully after today I'm sort of hoping for Slytherin."

"Slytherin!" Jamie shouted. "Why on earth Slytherin?"

With the straightest face possible Emily replied, "Dick Bancroft. I was sort of hoping that if he got to know me better that maybe he would invite me to next year's Yule Ball."

Caitlin wrapped her hands around Emily neck as if to strangle her and Jamie tossed her pillow at her sister.

"You little tart," Caitlin shouted. "I thought you were being serious."

"Actually except for the part about Dick, I was. I could easily end up in any one of the four houses." Emily answered.

"By the way," Jamie commented, "I was extremely proud of the way you stood up to that twit today."

"Yeah, that was extremely cool. You really hit him hard and fast with the zingers," Caitlin added.

"I'll tell you what was cool," Emily, replied. "Your parents were cool. They way they handled the whole situation. Not once did they yell, and instead of banning us from being nude, your mum comes up with a way we can do it every day of the year. And they're both Animagi. I'd love to be able to do that. Wouldn't you guys?"

"Nah," Caitlin shook her head no. "I'm going to be going through enough training to become a Hyperempath, besides Mum says that transforming is quite painful, especially at first."

Without thinking, Jamie nodded her head and said, "It is."

Emily stared at her sister. "It is. You didn't say I heard it is. You said it is."

Jamie bit her lip. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you guys. I'm not supposed to tell anyone until I'm registered at the end of seventh year." Jamie hung her head. "Even Mum and Dad died not knowing."

Caitlin look astounded. "You can do that? You can change into an animal? What animal are you? Please can you show us?"

Jamie felt guilty in that she had divulged what was supposed to remain a secret. "I guess now that you know, there's no harm in me showing you."

Caitlin and Emily watched as Jamie got out of bed and then down on her hands and knees. She began to concentrate. In a matter of seconds her form had change to what they thought was a beautiful white horse, but they then realized it was a unicorn. Neither girl had ever seen or touched a unicorn before and they both jumped out of bed. It seemed they completely forgot it was Jamie as Emily stroked the animals back and Caitlin petted its head. Then as quickly as she had changed, she changed back. Both girls seemed disappointed.

"You know what Emily? You give a great back scratch. Any time you're interested in giving me one, just let me know. And Caitlin, I know you want your breasts to grow, but please believe me when I say that rubbing them against my nose won't help."

Caitlin blushed, "I did, didn't I? I'm sorry Jamie I forgot it was you."

Emily just nodded her head, "It figures you would be the most beautiful animal that ever roamed the earth. Do you think I could learn to do that?"

"I'm not sure Emily. It's not something every witch and wizard can do, but according to Professor Granger the rarity of Animagi is more due to people not wanting to go through the pain and effort more than it is their lack of ability. If you have the ability, I'm sure Hermione will teach you."

Suddenly Emily burst into tears. Caitlin wrapped her arm around Emily's shoulder and Jamie came and sat on the bed next to her, rubbing her leg as she asked, "What's wrong? You were so happy and cheerful, then suddenly you started crying."

"Jamie, that's the problem, I'm happy. It's only two months since Mum and Dad died. I feel so guilty. Does being happy mean I've forgotten them? That I don't love them? Because, I do love them and I haven't forgotten them, but damn. Harry and Hermione are so nice, and I love you guys so much, and I'm happy and I feel I should still be sad. Jamie, would you please hold me like Mum did when I was little?"

"Sure Em."

Caitlin kissed Emily on the cheek as she slipped out of the bed and returned to her own. Jamie nestled Emily to her chest and rubbed the young girl's back. Caitlin could still hear Emily softly crying as Jamie encouraged her to let it all out.

Chapter Twenty-four Till Death Do Us Part

Friday, May 14, 2004

"Mione, I really wish I didn't have to leave. I'm going to miss you and the girls dreadfully. Are you absolutely sure you'll be all right?" Harry lingered at the door to their quarters hoping for a last minute reprieve.

Hermione put her hands on her hips and simply shook her head in dismay. "Harry Potter, what am I to do with you? We discussed this and we both agreed it was the proper thing. Now you're making me feel as if I'm kicking you out. It's just for one night." She gave Harry a teasing smile. "I promise that I'll make it up to you tomorrow night."

Harry gave Hermione his best-lost little boy expression. "You realize that I probably won't be able to walk properly tomorrow after spending the night on that bumpy sofa of theirs?" Harry whined.

Hermione hugged Harry. "I love you so much, but you're being extremely frustrating. The couch at Sam and Ron's flat is not lumpy. You'll be very comfortable. It's probably silly, but I just don't think we should sleep together the night before our wedding. We should see each other for the first time tomorrow when I come down the aisle."

"I understand and as always you're right, but that doesn't make leaving any easier." Harry shuffled his feet, reluctant to depart.

Hermione looked pleadingly at Harry. "The girls and I have a lot of plans for tonight and we can't get started 'til you leave. Harry, It just doesn't feel right closing the door on you."

Emily had been waiting impatiently and decided to take this as her cue to do something about the state of affairs. "She may have difficulty closing the door on you, but I don't. Bye Uncle Harry. See you at the wedding." Emily closed the door leaving Hermione and Harry on either side, both quite speechless.

Harry stood waiting for the door to reopen, but it didn't. Finally he said to the door. "Good-bye 'Mione. I love you."

From the other side he heard, "I love you too, Harry. Have a nice night."

Emily leaned on the door seemingly daring Hermione to try and reopen it. "Finally," Emily said. "I thought we would never get rid of him. This is ladies only night. It's time for you to party with your girls. Jamie, Caitlin, he's gone, break out the butterbeer."

Hermione smiled at the youngest of her brood. "Okay, but give me a moment to change. In view of the fact that you girls are already comfortable, I may as well be the same."

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"...and then she closed the door in my face. I tell you that little girl is part demon," Harry exclaimed.

Sam just grinned at Harry, "And you already love her, don't you?"

"Yeah! I love all three of the girls," Harry answered. "Draco, I'm sure, thinks I'm crazy, but I've never been this content. Suddenly I'm part of a big family and I adore it. What's incredible about the girls is how much they're alike, but at the same time so different. Jamie is remarkable. Hermione thinks she is so much like me, and I see Hermione whenever I look at her."

"She's very much like both of you," Ron contributed. "If it wasn't for the age factor, she could easily be your and Hermione's daughter."

"Then there are Caitlin and Emily," Harry continued. "They've gotten so close in the last few months that you'd think they were twins, but they are as opposite as night is to day. Caitlin is one hundred percent girl and Emily is rather a bit of tomboy. We got an owl from her school last week. Seems she gave some boy a rather nasty bump. Teacher said the boy was in the wrong, but, of course, no one wants kids fighting to settle their differences."

Ron laughed, "You better watch that one. If you try to discipline her, she may turn you into a toad."

"Emily's a natural at flying, too," Harry added. "I was giving Jamie some pointers the other night and Emily went with us to the pitch. When Jamie and I were finished, I showed Emily some basics. She took to a broom like a fish does to water."

"Does Caitlin like flying?" Samantha inquired.

"Caitlin is like Hermione when it comes to flying. She'd rather walk," Harry laughed.

"Not to change the subject, but I understand your wedding plans have changed a little." Sam smiled as Harry grimaced.

Harry shook his head in disgust. "A little is an understatement. If it were feasible, Hermione and I would have liked to have been married in some isolated part of Brazil where no one knew us, just the minister and us. But we realized that was rather selfish and now with the kids basically impossible. So, we opted for a small wedding here at Hogwarts. It seems the only thing that has stayed small is the wedding party. Everything else just seemed to get out of control."

"Hermione and I both are acquainted with so many people and it was so hard to not invite people you know and love. Of course I had to invite Sirius; he's my godfather. We could hardly tell him to come without his wife and children. Then there was Lupin and his wife. How could we invite Fred and George without Bill and Percy and their families? Then since the wedding is at Hogwarts it seemed wrong not to invite the staff. There were classmates, ministry officials plus their guests and well it just grew and grew."

Sam giggled. "Exactly when did it stop growing?"

Harry blushed. "At around five hundred. With all those people and some coming a great distance, Severus thought we should at least offer the people a light lunch. Dobby laughed when Hermione asked if the elves would consider preparing a small lunch. It seems elves

never do things in a small, understated way. So there is to be a huge meal and a band and cake and everything we hoped to avoid, but all that matters to me is that tomorrow she will be my wife."

"Wife. That sounds so fantastic. Ron, do you understand how much I love her? How much I adore her?" Harry said.

Ron gave Sam an affectionate glance. "Yes, I appreciate exactly how you feel." He put his arm around Samantha and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "You've decided against taking a honeymoon?"

"Yes, Hermione didn't want to miss anymore of the school year than she already has, so we decided to forgo a honeymoon and take a nice vacation with the kids this summer. We let them pick the destination," Harry expression looked somewhat dejected.

"Where did they decide they wanted to go? Sam asked.

Harry looked extremely disappointed "I was positive they would pick Walt Disney World in America, but they didn't. I'm kind of let down because I've always wanted to go there, but instead they picked a seashore resort in southern France along the Mediterranean Coast. Hermione and I decided we would go to Disneyland Paris for a few days and then spend a week at the resort."

"What is the name of the resort?" Sam inquired.

"Cap D'agde. Jamie and Emily have been there before with their parents. Jamie was a great help making the reservations. I was impressed how well she speaks French," Harry answered.

Sam tried desperately to keep her laughter suppressed. "What do you know about the resort, Harry?"

"Mainly what Jamie has told me," Harry answered. "Oh, and I've seen pictures. It seems quite impressive. Jamie says they have their own private shopping mall, private beaches and a number of pools. Emily and her rave about the place and Caitlin can't wait to see it."

Sam bit her lips. "I've never been there, but I've heard a lot about the place. I'm sure Caitlin will love it. You and Hermione will definitely find it different and exciting. Actually I'd love to see the expression on your faces when you first arrive."

"You make the place sound amazing," Ron piped in. "Harry, if you find it as exciting as Sam says, perhaps both families could go together next summer."

Harry nodded his approval to that idea as Sam added. "I'd love to go there, but before you guys make any plans for next year, it might be best to see what Hermione and Harry think of the place."

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Saturday, May 15, 2004

Hermione sat on the edge of her bed watching the sunrise. She hadn't slept all that well last night, partly due to nervousness about today, but mostly because Harry wasn't there with her. A knocking on the bedroom door interrupted her thoughts. "Come in," she said.

As the door open she saw Jamie's smiling face. Jamie quietly entered the room and sat next to Hermione on the bed. "The big day is finally here. Are you nervous?" asked Jamie.

Hermione smiled as she laid her hand on Jamie's leg. "I'm nervous about the crowd and all the fuss, but not about marrying Harry. I somehow feel we were always destined to be together and this is just the final step." Hermione smiled as she gave Jamie a hug. "I'm glad my kid sister will be standing next to me."

Jamie returned the hug. "You can't imagine how proud I am that you chose me. Not to change the subject, but should I wake Caitlin and Emily to run or are we skipping this morning?"

"We're not skipping. I never feel the same on days I don't run. Since it will only be the four of us today, I was thinking of... well trying the charm you girls use. Promise you won't tell Harry?"

Jamie nodded, "Of course, but I'm surprised you haven't tried it before now. You've seen how well it works for the rest of us. Just be prepared for your breasts to hurt a little. Mine are accustomed to bouncing around, yours aren't. It takes some getting use to."

"What amazes me is the way you girls have changed me," Hermione said. "Last September I would have never believed that I would be sitting talking to you like a sister, both of us unclothed; yet, alone that I'd be about to run the Quidditch Pitch starkers. Will you wake up Caitlin and Emily before I chicken out?"

"Don't bother, we're ready to go," said Caitlin. The two girls were standing in the door way dressed in their socks and running shoes.

"All we have to do is reinstate the charm and we're ready to go," advised Emily. "Did I hear correct? Are you actually going to run nude this morning also, Aunt Hermione?"

"I thought I might give it a try just this once," Hermione shyly answered. "Sort of a wedding present to myself. Jamie, why don't you get you running shoes while I prepare?"

As Jamie dashed to her room, Caitlin and Emily watched as Hermione dressed to run and then after performing the deception charm removed her clothes with the exception of her socks and shoes.

When Jamie returned they all primed to depart, but when they arrived at the door Hermione stopped and looked at the others apprehensively. "You're absolutely sure that to you I look dressed?"

Jamie laughed, "That part of the charm takes a bit of getting used to. You know you are naked and see yourself that way. It's difficult to convince your mind that others don't see you unclothed. Especially when you can't use a mirror to verify that the charm is working."

The girls had to practically force Hermione out into the corridor, but once there she wasted no time in hurrying through the corridors and out of the castle.

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"I can't believe I actually did that," Hermione said as they neared the staircase leading to the staff quarters. "I felt so wickedly bad. Thank heaven no one saw us."

"Hermione, even if someone had come been in the area, they wouldn't have seen anything different then they could see any morning," Jamie replied. "We told you a thousand times that you look no different. The charm is marvelous. Here we are; all four of us nude and yet no one can tell."

"Well, my breasts can certainly tell," Hermione, laughed. "I had no idea they would go through such gyrations if I ran without a bra. They'll be sore for a week. How do you do this every day, Jamie? Your build is very similar to mine."

"You have to remember that I've been running every since I was twelve. Long before I had these to carry around." Jamie put her hands under her breasts as if pretending to carry them. "They do go through some wild contortions, but mine never get sore. You'll get used to it if you run like this everyday."

The concentrated expression on Hermione's face as they climbed the long staircase made Jamie wonder if perhaps Hermione was actually considering doing just that. "Jamie, I'm not prudish, but..." she hesitated, "I can't believe I'm discussing this with you."

Jamie gave Hermione's hand a brief squeeze. "Remember, the type of sisters that discuss everything."

"Right!" Hermione smiled. "It's just that don't you think that running like this might cause sagging to take place sooner rather than later?"

"No!" Jamie answered quickly as if ready to jump to the defense of her beliefs. "Mum had the same concerns and we did a lot of research. Going with or without a bra has little affect on sagging. Age and babies are the primary cause of breasts drooping, although you'd never would have believed it if you looked at my Mum. She breast fed both Emily and I until we were two years old and her body was almost as firm and beautiful as yours."

Hermione blushed slightly. This was the first time that Jamie had ever given any indication that she had ever checked out her body.

"There are some muggle doctors that even feel bras can actually contribute to breast cancer, depending on the material they are made of and how tight you wear them."

Hermione was just about to make a comment when they reached the top of the stairs and practically walked into the arms of the Headmaster.

"Good morning ladies," Severus said in a pleasant voice. "Hermione, could you please step into my quarters for a moment?"

Hermione blushed. She realized that to Severus all four of them appeared dressed in their running outfits, but she also knew that in actuality they were naked except for their socks and sneakers. In her own case, she could actually see she was bare. It became a mental battle between what she knew Severus saw and what she actually was. Hermione did not want to talk to Severus nude.

"Severus, I don't feel properly dressed. Let me takes a shower and slip on my robes. It will only take a few minutes," Hermione asked, the tone of her voice almost begging.

"Nonsense. There is no need to be formal. You'll have enough of that this afternoon. This will take but a few moments and then you can be on with what I am sure will be an extremely busy day."

There was no use fighting it. She was about to go to Severus' room to sit and talk with him and although he wasn't aware of it, Hermione was. She was starkers.

After sending the girls on their way, Hermione followed Severus to his room being extremely careful to avoid physical contact.

After they entered his quarter's Severus motioned for her to take a seat, which she immediately did. Hermione crossed her legs and sat with her arms across her chest. This was just too weird. Even though he couldn't see her, Hermione knew she was sitting there naked and to say the least it bothered her.

"Hermione, later today you will be surrounded by people. I just wanted a few words alone with you in private before your wedding. I'm sure it didn't seem like it those first few years as a Hogwarts student, but I've always had special feelings for you and Harry. At times, I'm sure I seemed mean and even cruel, but I wanted to see the two of you reach your full potential. Especially you.

"I say especially you because you had a lot harder journey ahead of you than Harry. I'm not referring to Voldemort, but rather to you both achieving your goals in life. Harry in a sense had everything going for him. After all he was the 'boy who lived'. Harry could have, in all probability, failed every subject and still be successful just by living on his fame. That is why I made it so clear to him that first day in potions class that being a celebrity was not everything. That in life you have to work in order to achieve success.

"I have never seen an individual that worked as hard as you have to achieve your much deserved success. You were a successful student. You are a successful professor. And I know you will be a successful wife and mother. You and Harry are probably the perfect couple. You compliment each other. Qualities that one lacks; the other brings into the relationship. I'm very proud of you. I couldn't be prouder if you were my own daughter. I pray that you and Harry have a long and happy life together."

Hermione eyes had watered as Severus talked of his feeling for her as a student, but as he finished tears were flowing freely from her eyes. Without thinking, she jumped from her chair and ran to Severus, who had also risen. She threw her arms around the Headmaster and hugged him tightly as he put his arms around her and returned the hug.

Only after holding Severus for a brief time and giving him a kiss on the cheek did Hermione

come to the realization of what she had done. As long as they touched he could see her naked. Fortunately he was looking directly into her face. She had to fully break the embrace before he looked down. No contact could be maintained if she wanted to avoid being seen naked.

She gave him another brief hug. "I'll never forget all you've done for me. Thank you for being there for me."

"It's been my pleasure," he said as Hermione dropped the embrace and quickly stepped back out of physical contact. She turned and walked half way to the chair and then turned again and stood facing Severus, who had a bewildered look on his face.

"Severus, you're such a wonderful man. It's not fair that you're alone. Twice you've had love taken away from you."

"Thrice," he responded. Then quickly, before she misunderstood and thought he was talking about her, he said, "This winter I became involved with someone. That's why I was absent so many weekends. But sadly she is torn and I'm not up for a fight. She knows I love her and if she ultimately wants me I'll be here. But as for now..."

Hermione's mind went crazy. She had to hug him. She had to show compassion for this great man who she had come to idolize. She had gotten away with it once. Quickly, she moved toward him and pulled him into another embrace. "Severus, she's out there somewhere. Be patient. You will find happiness."

She placed her hands on either side of his face and lifted his head so that he was looking directly into her eyes. She backed slightly away as she kissed his lips. Then before he opened his eyes she backed away further. "You, be sure to ask me to dance tonight."

They stood looking at each other for a time. Severus seemed perplexed. Finally, he said. "You tell Potter that I said he was the luckiest man alive. That if he doesn't take care of you and treat you properly, he'll have me to deal with." Severus stood looking at Hermione as if she were a vision. "You definitely are as beautiful inside as you are outside. And my god, I can't get over how beautiful you are outside."

"I have to run," Hermione said as she blushed deeply. "Big wedding to attend."

"Looking forward to it," Severus said as she walked out the door and hurried back to her own quarters.

As Hermione entered her quarters she was greeted by the sound of uncontrolled laughter. "It's not funny," she shouted. "That was extremely embarrassing."

"Hermione, he didn't see anything." Jamie said. "To him you looked as if you had on shorts and your running bra. We're only laughing because of the look on your face when he stopped you in the hall. You looked like he had caught you doing something terribly wrong."

"I know, it's just that you can't see for yourself the result of the charm," Hermione said. "We all get out of the shower naked, but I don't feel naked after I put clothes on because I can see them. With the charm, I'm as covered to other people as I would be with clothes, but because I can't see them I feel like I'm bare."

Jamie laughed, "I can see where that would be a lot bigger problem for you than for us. We only do the charm for the sake of others. I couldn't care less if the Headmaster or anyone else sees me nude. I don't see it as any big deal. You most certainly don't feel that way."

"No!" Hermione said. "Then I went and put myself in a bad situation twice. I got out of it both times, but was extremely nervous."

"What did you do?" Emily inquired.

"Severus was talking about the past and wishing me his best when he said some very touching things. You guys know how emotional I can get. I threw my arms around him and gave him a hug," Hermione said.

"You did what?" Emily exclaimed. "That meant he could see you."

"I realized that as I was hugging him. Fortunately he had his arms around my waist and he never looked down. I sort of timed things so that I could quickly back out of his reach before he had the opportunity to see anything."

"But..." Emily started to say something, but Caitlin slashed her finger across her neck indicating for Emily to keep her mouth shut. Hermione never saw this and continued with her story. Jamie, however, had caught the action and was waiting for an opportunity to question the girls privately.

"To make matters worse, about a minute later, he said something quite sad. I felt I had to comfort him and so I took the chance again. Once more, I was fortunate to get away with it. Believe me, I'm glad to be back here where I can be comfortable being nude."

Jamie smiled, "Hermione, do you realize what you just said? Be comfortable being nude. I can't believe those words came from your mouth."

Hermione smiled, "Neither can I." Hermione glanced at the clock and then said excitedly, "I had no idea it was this late already. We have to hurry and shower so that we can get some breakfast. The hair charmers will be here in less than two hours."

As Hermione scurried to her bathroom, Jamie stared at Caitlin and Emily. "Okay, out with it."

Caitlin started. "Has Alex ever talked to you about the charm we use to hide our nudity?"

"No. I explained how it worked, but we never discussed it more than to say how neat it was," Jamie answered.

"Matt and I had never discussed it either until the other day after Emily told me something Randy had mentioned. Randy told Emily that he could see her after he had held her or she had held him."

Jamie looked at Caitlin confused, "Of course, we all know that physical contact nullifies the charm."

"You don't understand," Emily interrupted. "He said he could see me nude for about a minute after we broke contact. Then my clothes reappeared. Caitlin and I tried it and as soon as we

broke contact the clothes were back. We asked Matt and he said the same thing as Randy. That he could see Caitlin for about a minute. Did Aunt Hermione's clothes reappear today as soon as you let go of her?"

"Yes," said Jamie as she pondered the information. "I'll be right back. I have to go talk to Alex."

"Wait Jamie," Caitlin said. "Do you have any ideas?"

"Yes. That's why I want to talk to Alex. I'm afraid you may have discovered another slight flaw with the charm. I think it's possible the sex of the partner might effect how fast the charm regenerates after you break contact. It's quite possible that if the sex of the two individuals is the same, the reappearance of clothes occurs as soon as contact is broken. If the sex is different it may take as long as a minute."

Caitlin looked at Jamie aghast. "If your theory is correct, that means...."

Emily interrupted, "It means your mum just spent at least two minutes showing the Headmaster exactly what she's made of."

* * * * *

Caitlin listened as the musical group began to play "The Rose." This would be their last number and the cue that the wedding would soon begin. The large crowd seemed to rustle in anticipation of what some had called the Wizard Wedding of the Century. Jamie and Caitlin stood next to Hermione awaiting their prompt to begin. Everyone was in place. Time to go.

Hermione glanced down at Caitlin who looked extremely nervous. "Ready?" she whispered.

Caitlin grinned up at her mum. "Ready."

Suddenly the music changed, this was Jamie's signal to begin walking down the long aisle, carpeted in Gryffindor Red for the occasion. Jamie tried her best to look comfortable in her gown and shoes. She looked beautiful without trying in the floor length, figure flattering, pale blue dress. The assembled guests gasped as they noticed how much this girl resembled the bride. Once Jamie reached the front, the music changed again, this time signaling that it was time for the bride's arrival.

Hermione looked at Caitlin and squeezed her hand. "This is it Caitlin." Caitlin just smiled and held Hermione's hand tightly as they started down the aisle, the entire assembly rising to their feet with another giant rustle.

Harry stood there waiting with Ron at his side. He was looking up the aisle, watching Hermione approach, an expression of wonder on his face.

At length, they reached the front just as the music wound to a close. The minister stood before them, a book held at his side. "Who blesses this union?" he asked.

Caitlin nervously answered, "On behalf of her family and their friends, I do," Harry leaned

over and kissed Caitlin, who then stepped back to join Sam and Timmy, who were seated in the first aisle. Sam was already wiping tears from her eyes.

"Hi," Harry whispered. "I missed you."

The minister had barely begun the preliminaries when suddenly he appeared to freeze mid-word. Harry looked at Hermione, who was looking at him, with the same shocked expression. They both realized that Jamie and Ron too were frozen. Without discussion, they both went for their wands, Hermione not even tentative about ripping her dress to get to the wand that was attached to her upper thigh.

They turned simultaneously, wands at the ready only to find all the assembled guests likewise frozen. "Harry, what has happened?" Hermione questioned. "It looks like everyone except for you and I are frozen in time."

"No, they aren't frozen. I believe someone has cast the Tempus Fugit spell or something very similar to it. Do you remember me telling you about Voldemort casting it at the train station the beginning of our sixth year?"

"Yes, I remember. So they aren't really frozen, we instead are moving so fast that all that is now taking place is happening in the space between two milliseconds."

Harry shook his head in amazement. "Your memory is incredible."

"But Harry, who could have cast the spell?"

Suddenly, there was a huge puff of smoke in the middle of the aisle that Hermione had just walked down. "I'm not sure, but I have the feeling we are about to find out," Harry answered, his wand now pointed towards the smoke.

They watched as five hooded figures emerged from the cloud. The figures slowly walked toward them as both Harry and Hermione stood their ground, prepared to battle. Then the figures stopped, the lead form slowing raising a hand toward his hood.

When the hood was lowered Harry and Hermione saw the familiar face of what appeared to be their deceased Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore. He was beaming, his arms opened wide. "You didn't think that a little thing like being dead for nearly six years would prevent me from attending the Wedding of the Century, did you?"

"But how?" Harry asked as he lowered his wand. Hermione, however, remained at the ready.

"Be careful, Harry," Hermione warned. "It could be someone using a glamour or Polyjuice."

"Yes, Professor Granger." Dumbledore winked his eye. "It could very well be someone using one of those potions, but I assure you it isn't. Even after death, wizards are sometimes able to return to earth for particular reasons. We..." He indicated the other cloaked figures. "... are here today both to wish you joy and happiness and, unfortunately, to bring you a warning of impending disaster for our world. Our time is quite limited so I will get right to the point.

"The person, known as the Great One has gained access to information that if deciphered correctly could result in the re-embodiment of Salazar Slytherin. If this takes place I doubt

that even the Covenant of Three will be strong enough to defeat him. Research is being conducted and when more is known the information will be given to the Seer. Trust her, for what she says will be your only hope.

Hermione couldn't believe that her wedding was being interrupted for so bizarre a reason. Couldn't this have waited. The look on Harry's face indicated that he shared her feelings.

"But enough of business, this is a day of celebration and I have brought with me special guests." Hermione nearly fainted when the other four figures revealed their identity. Harry and Hermione were facing their departed parents. Hermione dropped her wand to her side as she lunged toward her mum and dad, tears quickly filling her eyes.

Harry momentarily stood frozen, not believing his eyes until his mother said, "Yes, Harry, it's really us. At last we get to tell you in person how proud we are of you."

Hermione and Harry had been given both the best and worst of all gifts. They had been given the opportunity to be once again with their parents. Parents that Hermione had lost during the final days of the war and parents that Harry had never had the chance to know and love. Certainly a prospect that they would have never rejected, but it came with an understandable drawback; they would almost immediately once again lose them.

The time passed rapidly as hugs and kisses were exchanged, introductions made and congratulations offered. There was no necessity to fill the parents in on their lives because it was learned that they had the ability to observe what transpired on a daily basis.

"You can monitor everything?" Hermione had asked. "Even when we are intimate?"

Hermione's mother had assured her that such visions were clouded out of respect for personal privacy. This had comforted Hermione greatly until her mother said that they could only view anything done openly. Hermione looked at her Mum and Dad with trepidation. "Did you both see me run this morning?"

Hermione's dad blushed as her Mum answered, "Yes, but please don't be embarrassed. You have nothing to be ashamed of and neither do those lovely girls. Things are much more open and understanding where we are now. Prejudices don't exist."

Dumbledore nodded as he sadly eyed his watch. "I'm afraid our allotted time has expired. Before we leave I have some messages. The Weasleys send their love and ask that you tell Ron that they love him and that he should hold on to that girl. The Zacherleys wish you happiness and thank you for being there for their daughters. And Caitlin's mother offered her blessings to you for turning her little girl's life around."

"I am sorry, but we must depart and allow this wedding to continue," Dumbledore desolately said as he noticed Hermione looking at her ruined dress. "The dress will be fine for now. Time will revert to just before we arrived. The memory of what has transpired here will, for the balance of the day, not exist. At midnight you will both remember. Be strong and be true to each other, for on your shoulders and the shoulders of those you love sits the fate of our world." Dumbledore waved his hand.

"Hi," Harry whispered. "I missed you."

"Hi," Hermione whispered back, and then took his arm. Ron fell back to his place at Harry's other side as Hermione handed her flowers over to Jamie, and the four of them climbed the short flight of stairs to stand before the minister.

Those watching the ceremony would comment later on how beautiful it was. However, for those that take part, it is usually just a blur. Ask Caitlin what happened and she would probably say there were some words, there was a little music and there was some to-do with wands.

She heard both of her parents say their vows; one of many versions of the traditional wizarding marital vows. Caitlin noticed that her mother never took her eyes off Harry's face except when the minister required her attention. Her Mum was glowing at her soon-to-be husband and Caitlin noticed, that above all else, they looked extremely in love."

She didn't listen because the words weren't really important. It didn't matter. Whatever they said, whatever was said over them, it was all window dressing. Suddenly it all seemed slightly ridiculous. The clothes, the vows, the rings; what did it all mean? Did a pronouncement of someone official really mean much? Wasn't marriage a strictly personal agreement? No ceremony could make her parents love each other more.

Caitlin watched as the minister asked for the rings, which Ron handed over to him. The minister levitated them between Harry and Hermione, who plucked them from the air. Hermione trembled as she slid the ring onto Harry's finger. "Take this ring and remember that while you wear it, I am with you. As I have given it to you, I give you my love." Harry repeated the same words as he slipped Hermione's ring on her finger.

And then, they were at the end. The minister said, "On behalf of the International Federation of Wizards, I recognize that you, Harry, and you, Hermione, are husband and wife. You may kiss the bride."

As they kissed Caitlin heard what at first she thought was thunder in the distance, but then she also heard whistles and screams. She turned toward the castle. Every window and balcony with a view of the Quidditch Pitch was jammed with Hogwarts students celebrating the union of two of their beloved professors and Hogwarts most famous alumni. Hermione and Harry turned and waved and the cheering became even louder. The guests now too erupted with applause and cheers as the orchestra swung into a fanfare; everyone expecting that they'd now turn and walk back down the aisle, but Harry and Hermione had different plans. First, to his surprise, they turned to Ron. They both stepped forward and embraced him. Ron felt his heart swell in his chest as he hugged them back, one arm around each of them, touched that they had chosen to spend their first few moments of marriage with him. The Covenant of Three was united once more.

Then Harry motioned for Sam to come forward with Caitlin, Emily and little Timmy. Harry and Hermione each hugged Samantha before her and Timmy joined Ron. Harry and Hermione each put an arm around Jamie. Then with Hermione's other arm around Caitlin and Harry's around Emily they finally walked back down the aisle, followed by Ron and Sam holding Timmy, declaring not only their marriage, but also their union as family and friends.

Draco nudged Ginny's arm. His face was almost as white as his hair. "Ginny, who is that with your brother?"

"Oh! You haven't met Samantha yet, have you? She's from the States. She met Ron last autumn. They hit it off right from day one. Draco, are you feeling okay?" Ginny asked noticing Draco's hand shaking.

"Just a slight bit of nausea. Weddings and all this happily-ever-after rot have a tendency to turn my stomach. Whose brat is she holding? Was she married before?"

"That's her son, Timmy. No, she wasn't married. It's rather a sad story. She came to England looking for Timmy's dad. Seems the twit was in the States on vacation when he met Sam. He gave her the princess treatment until he got her in bed and then ran out on her the next morning without a word. The scum took her virginity and left her pregnant."

"Ginny, perhaps you should go on to the reception without me. I think it's best I go have a lie down."

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"Hermione, I've been trying to catch you alone all evening," Neville said hesitantly. "May I please speak with you, and in addition introduce someone rather special."

Hermione smiled at Neville and his guest. Although Neville had kept his distance from Hermione ever since the Halloween incident, she had long since forgiven him for his behavior. She knew she couldn't throw away twelve years of friendship because of one night of indiscretion.

"Hermione, I want to thank you for changing my life," Neville said as Hermione looked at him; the expression on her face clearly indicating that she had no idea as to what he was referring. "On Halloween you told me that the way I acted was sick and that I needed help. What you said and what I did to you ate away at me for weeks. Finally I took your advice and sought help. I'd like you to meet Dr. Laura Prince. She is a psychiatrist and up until a few weeks ago, she was my doctor."

Hermione and the doctor shook hands graciously.

"Laura helped me to face my problems and comprehend that I treated you the way I did because deep inside I had developed a abhorrence of women; in all probability because of the way my grandmother had treated me as a child. Hermione, what I did was inexcusable, but I hope that somehow you will find it in your heart to forgive me. I miss our friendship."

Hermione put her arms around Neville and pulled him into a hug. "Of course, I'll forgive you. I've likewise missed your friendship. I'm glad you were able to complete your therapy in such a short time."

"Actually I'll be in therapy for a bit longer," Neville answered. "It's just that, I've recently switched doctors. Laura tells me that it would be unethical of her to date one of her patients."

Hermione's face broke into a great grin. "You're dating? That's wonderful!"

At that moment Samantha grabbed Hermione's arm and apologized to Laura and Neville as

she dragged Hermione out to the dance floor. "It's getting late and you haven't done a dollar dance yet."

Hermione looked at Sam questioningly. "What's a dollar dance?"

"Well, as wizards we would probably call it a Galleon Dance. Muggles do it at weddings in the States. Guests pay a dollar to dance for a brief time with the bride or groom," Sam answered.

"Oh! Sam. Harry and I can't charge for dances. That's just not proper." Hermione said emphatically.

"You don't understand. It's not really for the money; it's more a fun thing to let people dance with you that normally wouldn't have asked. People that aren't that close, even kids. Trust me; it will be fun."

Perhaps the dances were fun at muggle weddings, but not when you are celebrities and at your wedding, with 500 guests. Ron and Jamie limited each person to only thirty seconds, but still the dance lasted well over an hour. By the time it was over, both Harry and Hermione were spent. Harry was trying his best to be good-natured and enjoy the party, but all he really wanted was to be alone in their quarters with Hermione in his arms.

* * * * *

"Great One, would you like me to get you another drink?"

"Idiot! Don't call me that here. Someone might hear you."

"I'm sorry, please forgive me." Damien looked at The Great One questioningly and said, "You don't seem to be enjoying the reception."

The Great One looked at Damien and simply shook her head. "You've been spending too much time with Crabbe and Goyle. Your brain cells are deteriorating. Of course, I'm not enjoying the reception. Do you think for one minute that when I declared their wedding day a holiday I ever expected it to actually take place?" Emma Wrong had hate in her eyes.

Damien hung his head. "I'm to blame for her surviving."

"Yes, you are, but then so am I. It was my inspiration to convert her to our side. She should have been eliminated the moment the portkey deposited her on our doorstep." Emma took a sip of her drink. "Well, let them celebrate because none of them will live long once we have Salazar Slytherin assisting us."

Damien squirmed nervously in his seat. "Please, forgive my impertinence, but are you positive that his reincarnation is a good idea? From everything I've read, I've gotten the impression that he's not much of a team player. Seems to like to take charge rather than join a group."

"He'll play on this team," Emma replied, "and like it, but first we must find someone who can

give us a correct interpretation of the prophecy."

"I'd feel more secure if we had the whole prophecy. The fact that over half is misplaced bothers me greatly."

"We have the important part. 'When Slytherin and Evil are joined, not even the Covenant will bring the result down'. No longer do we have to worry about those three, they will be no match for the dark side when Slytherin stands with us. I can't wait to kill that red headed bastard and his loyal to the death friends. Potter and Granger need not worry about till death to us part, for they will die together. Them and their animal friend."

"I am grateful that you have given me another chance to serve you. My favorite part of the prophecy is 'from the blood of innocents four, the Great Lord Slytherin shall arise'."

"Damien? Why is it, that doesn't surprise me? I can always count on you when it comes to shedding innocent blood. Which reminds me. I have a surprise for you. Someone new has decided to join our elite group. She, like you, enjoys destroying innocence. I think you will work well together."

"I want the two of you to spend the next year combing the earth until every centaur on the planet is captured. Then one will die every day until I am given the names of the innocents."

"Damien, I'm ready for that drink, for soon I too will have something to celebrate."

* * * * *

"Harry, did you check on the girls?" Hermione asked, as she lay naked in bed waiting for her husband to join her.

"Yes," Harry answered as he entered the room. "Emily wasn't kidding about Jamie."

"To what exactly are you referring?"

"Remember when Emily said she didn't want to sleep with Jamie because she snores. Well, I didn't believe that she did, because I haven't heard her before. But evidently when she is extremely tired or sleeping in a certain position, she really lets loose. I thought a lumberjack was sawing down a tree in her bedroom."

"Harry, certainly you're exaggerating. A girl that beautiful couldn't possibly produce that kind of sound."

"Hermione, you better than anyone should know that you can't necessarily judge what's inside a book, by its cover."

"Usually that phrase is used to relate physical looks and personality, but I guess it could also work in this case."

"OUCH!"

"Harry, what's the matter? What happened? Are you all right?" Hermione asked with concern.

"Just me being stupid. I should know better than to walk around barefoot in the dark. I stubbed my toe on this big box in the walk-in wardrobe. What's in it anyway? It's been here for months."

"I'm not completely sure. What with the kids and the wedding, I've not finished going through it completely. Minerva gave it to me before she left in February after filling in. Said they were things she no longer had use for, but that I might find handy now that I'm teaching."

"If you hurry up and get in bed I'll kiss your toe and make it better."

"Now that sounds like an offer. If you're in a kissing mood maybe I should stub something else."

"I hope you're not talking about what I think you are? I want you fully operational tonight. I'm sure I'll find my way down there eventually." Hermione said in a teasing way. "What time is it Harry?"

"Not quite twelve." Harry crawled in bed next to Hermione. "Here I have something for you."

Before she realized what was happening, Harry had taken a small piece of wedding cake and pressed it against her closed lips. In the process, smashing it on her nose and cheeks.

"Harry!" What on earth do you think you are doing?" Hermione yelled angrily.

"Don't get upset," he begged. "It's sort of an American tradition I learned while in the States. Something a snobbish British woman like you would never do in public. Here, I brought a piece for you to give me. In America when they cut the cake, the bride and groom feed each other a piece. Except they usually get carried away and smear it on each others' face."

Hermione took the cake Harry had handed her and smashed it right on his nose. "You mean like that?"

"Not exactly, you should at least aim for the mouth. Now comes the fun part." Harry started alternating licking cake off Hermione's face and kissing her.

As Hermione did the same, she said. "This is kind of fun. I never realized you were into kinky sex Mr. Potter."

Harry kissed her deeply. "If you think this is kinky, I'll go get another piece of cake and show you kinky."

"Amazing the things you learn about a person after ..." Suddenly a look of horror engulfed Hermione. "Harry! My parents! Your parents! Dumbledore! Do you remember?" Hermione trembled as the memories of the visit returned.

"Oh my god!" Harry said as tears came to his eyes. "Hermione, do you have the same memory? Were they really there? It feels so real? How could we both imagine the same thing?"

"Harry, Dumbledore said we would remember, I think I know how to be sure whether it actually happened or not. Let's wash up first."

They both washed the sticky cake off their hands and faces. Then Hermione picked up her wand and took Harry's hand as she led him to the walk-in closet. "Lumos," she said causing the wand to emanate sufficient light for them to see. Hermione stood and stared at the plastic zippered bag that enclosed her wedding dress.

"Harry, my dress looked like new when I hung it up tonight. I certainly want to have it cleaned, but other than that, it was in perfect condition."

Harry looked at Hermione as if lost. "I don't understand, 'Mione. What does your dress have to do with telling whether the memories of us seeing Dumbledore and our parents are true or not?"

"I never go anywhere lacking my wand. It seems the makers of wedding dresses don't find it fitting to carry a wand so they provide no place to hold one. The best I could do today was to strap mine to my thigh. Not very easy to access, but at least I had it. When I realized Ron and Jamie were frozen my first reaction was to go for my wand. I had a choice of trying to practically lift the dress over my head or rip the dress and go directly for the wand. I ripped the dress.

"Do you remember that as they were ready to leave Dumbledore looked at my ruined dress and said 'the dress will be fine for now'? If I'm correct, and the memories are true, my dress will be ruined when we open that bag."

They both held their breath as Harry opened the bag and removed the dress. It wasn't even necessary to examine it carefully. The dress had been ripped extensively just below the waist. Neither spoke as Harry returned the dress to the bag. They silently returned to their bed as Hermione curled up close to Harry. For a few minutes they just laid there quietly as he caressed her.

Finally Hermione spoke. "I had no idea such powerful magic existed. I thought that even witches and wizards, once they were dead were just that, dead."

"I can't explain how, but it happened and they weren't ghosts like Sir Nicholas or The Friar. My Mum and Dad both hugged me and I felt them. They had real bodies and were actually here." Harry tried to hold back the tears. "But before I could even get to know them they were gone."

"But they're not gone, they watch... Oh! My god! Harry, cover us. They watch us. They see everything we do."

Harry was about to cover them when he stopped. "Hermione, this is silly. Your parents have been watching you for the last five years; mine for the last twenty-two. I think it's a little late for us to suddenly become modest. Are you going to stop being nude with the girls and start taking showers with your clothes on? I have no idea how wherever they are functions, but I somehow don't think anyone gets disturbed by nudity."

Hermione leaned over and gave Harry a kiss on the cheek. "You're right. I'm being ridiculous. It's just a little weird to realize that after spending years hiding my body from my parents

when I was little, now they can watch me anytime they want to."

"I doubt that they have any interest in our clothing or lack thereof. I'm sure their only reason for watching is to look out for us."

"I wonder if they can look out for us or if they can only watch and suffer along with us. If they could intercede, I doubt that any of us would have gone through the horrible times we have. Caitlin's mother would never have stood by and watched as Hooch did those horrible things to her." Hermione shivered at the thought of that deranged woman touching Caitlin.

"It sounds like this Great One is going to open our world to a blight worse than the reign of Voldemort."

"Yes and I get the feeling that we might be called upon again. Harry, why us again? Why can't someone else fight these evil head cases? I just want to spend the rest of my life teaching and taking care of you and the girls."

"As do I 'Mione, but I doubt you and I would even be alive now if we hadn't done battle with Voldemort. I don't want to die or see you die, but I prefer to die fighting these vermin rather than have all of us being killed in our beds for lack of trying."

"Harry, remember we're a team. Promise me you won't go off after this Great One or anyone else on your own. We either live to old age together or we die together. I don't want to lose you."

"Nor I you 'Mione. Nor I you." Harry leaned down and kissed Hermione's cheek. "I guess the memories from the wedding sort of torpedoed our loving making for tonight."

"You've never been a girl have you Harry?"

"No, now that you bring up the subject, I certainly haven't," Harry said laughingly.

"Girls love physical love as much as guys, but from time to time we are just as content to be held and caressed. Just knowing your husband loves you is enough. Harry this is the happiest day of my life. On this day I became Mrs. Harry Potter."

They both lay there, each caressing the other, not talking, but unable to go to sleep. After some time Hermione said, "Harry, please don't think me mad, but I had the most bizarre feeling tonight at the reception."

"How so, sweetheart?"

"It was during that dance Sam required us to do for money."

"Oh! Please don't bring that up. I don't think my feet will ever recover."

"Mine either," Hermione laughed. "It was one of the men that danced with me. There was something about him that was so familiar and yet I was sure I didn't know him. He literally gave me the shivers."

"You say you never saw him before?" Harry asked.

"No, I believe he was the guest of Minister Wrong. I imagine he is some Ministry want-to-be, but he gave me the creeps. He insinuated that we had meet before, but that in all probability I wouldn't remember him. That dance was the longest thirty seconds of my life. For some reason I can't blot his face out of my mind."

"Well, this is our wedding night and I don't like the idea of you thinking about anyone other than me," Harry said teasingly as he first kissed her lips, and then her neck as he worked his way down her body. "I'll just have to see what I can do to get your mind onto happier thoughts."

"You already have, Harry" Hermione practically purred in contentment.

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Excerpts from the Daily Journal of Jamie Zacherley.

Monday, June 7, 2004

I'm scared. After months of studying and cramming I still don't feel properly prepared. To make matters worse Gryffindor begins the testing series with History of Magic, possibly the most boring subject in the world. If not actually, it certainly is when taught by Professor Binns. More later.

That had to be the worst test I have ever taken in my life. Only Binns could give a test that was even more boring than his class. We were all hoping for True and False questions, maybe some multiple-choice, but it was not to be. Just one question in the morning session; "What have you learned in this class?" I felt like my hand was going to fall off by the time the lunch break came.

When we returned in the afternoon, we all had the same identical message written on our parchments. "If that's all you've learned, don't expect to receive a O.W.L for this class." We sat for another four hours writing. Well, some of us did. Alex fell asleep. Alex looks so sweet and innocent when he sleeps. I wonder what it would be like to cuddle up and sleep next to him?

Tuesday, June 8, 2004

Torture beyond belief - day two. Someone hates me, they must. Today we had Divination. There is absolutely no chance of me getting thirteen O.W.L.s. Trelawney went over ever form of soothsaying we'd covered with her. I sucked at everything. Tealeaves, palmistry, crystal balls, Tarot cards, I feel like such a total loser. What am I doing here? I'll be surprised if I don't get a minus score.

Wednesday, June 9, 2004

Finally, we had a test in a class in which I at least felt slightly confident. The Defense Against the Dark Arts test was part written and part hands on. We spent the morning taking written tests on such things as vampires, werewolves and other dark creatures.

I know werewolves are dark creatures, but when you've gotten to know someone like Professor Weasley personally, it's extremely difficult to think of him as a dark creature. I said that in my essay. Hopefully, Harry won't take points off, but I think some dark creatures are simply misunderstood, just like naturalists.

In the afternoon we actually confronted some dark creatures. Harry had some Grindylows, a few Hinkypunks and a boggart. After the other creatures had been dispatched, Harry brought out the boggart. When I was a third year, the boggart took on the form of the guy that had tried to rape me. That hadn't surprised me because I still feared him and would probably have still been having dreams about him if it hadn't been for Pureheart.

Today the boggart took on the form of Salazar Slytherin. Why Salazar Slytherin? It was easy to face it down. I just thought about Alex and that day we held each other naked in the bathroom during Christmas break. That felt so good. My breasts squeezed against his bare chest, his penis pressing on my leg. I wonder what it would feel like to have him inside me?

Anyway, Harry also tested our skills at pain blocking and conjuring of a Patronus. I'm getting better, but I'm not that great at either yet. I'm sure if Harry had been my teacher since year one I would be able to do both. Anyway, I'm sure he'll give me at least basic, maybe even intermediate.

Thursday, June 10, 2004

Disgusting, disgusting, disgusting. Plants are dirty, grimy and filthy. I spend the entire morning wrestling with them in the greenhouse. My face was smeared with mud and I had dirt in my hair the entire day. Who in their right mind would want to teach Herbology? Then it was another exhaustive afternoon of tests about wonderful magical fungi and herbs. I'm going to have a nervous breakdown and we're not even halfway thru the O.W.L.s.

Friday, June 11, 2004

I can't believe I'm saying this, but I loved the Care of Magical Creatures test. Professor C.W. had what was virtually a zoo of magical creatures for use to be tested on. There had to be nearly one hundred different creatures. We had to name them all, and tell some important facts about them. I did well. I'm so excited. I actually think I may have aced the test.

I couldn't believe what happened after lunch. We had all finished the text and C.W. left us walk around petting the animals that weren't dangerous. I'm going to miss him. He's a cool professor. He told us that there were too many Professor Weasleys, that we should just call him Professor C.W. or just C.W. if we wanted. Anyway, thank god there were only Gryffindors there.

Charlie had the most beautiful male unicorn I have ever seen. C.W. left me groom him. It was warm so we had all taken our robes and ties off. When I was done with the grooming, I gave him a few sugar cubes. He either liked me or thought I had more sugar cubes because he kept nuzzling my chest. Twice I had to redo the buttons on my blouse.

Everybody was watching, even C.W. They were all getting a kick out of it. I kind of thought it was cool, too. Unicorns normally don't get that friendly with anyone. Then things started to get slightly out of control. C.W. jumped in the paddock to help me, but the unicorn reacted

protectively and started chasing him. Fortunately C.W. got out of the paddock safely and I used the distraction to climb over the fence myself.

C.W. told me that he had never in his career seen a unicorn act that way except to protect its mate. I wonder if...? Once I get through these tests, Hermione and I have to talk about what occurred.

I have never been so glad to have a school weekend.

Saturday, June 12, 2004

What's there to say? I spent the entire crappy day studying. I hate the O.W.L.s. Five down and four to go and I know I'm sunk. I'm sure I'll get a zero in both History and Divination. I did well in care of Magical creatures, but I've never heard of anyone getting more than a one in that course. Herbology? One if I'm lucky, but I doubt it. Certainly, I'll get no more than that. I did well in DADA. I think I deserve a two, but Harry may be reluctant to give it to me because of our relationship. That gives me a grand total of a terrific four after five exams!

I need nine more points to reach thirteen and only four courses to get them. That means I need a three and three twos. Dead! I don't have a chance. The three I could possibly get from Hermione. I've been number one in Transfiguration since year one and I can become an Animagus, but you have to switch back and forth quickly. Am I fast enough? I'm also ranked as the number one dueler in the class so a two in Charms isn't out of the question. But a two in both Potions and Astronomy; I'd have a better chance of Dick Bancroft turning out to be the tooth fairy. I hate myself. Hermione and Harry have done so much for Emily and I and I've let them down.

Sunday, June 13, 2004

I can't believe we went as far as we did. Worse, I almost didn't stop him. What is it about that Astronomy Tower? We were supposed to just be studying for our test Monday night, but once everyone else left and we were alone it just seemed like one thing lead to another.

"Jamie, we've been up here studying charts and stars and all that garbage for over five hours. Don't you think it's about time for a reward break?" Alex asked, his eyes begging for a yes answer.

"Actually," Jamie answered, "I was beginning to think that maybe you had lost interest in me." She laid down her charts and put her arm around Alex's neck, gently pulling him into a kiss.

He quickly wrapped both his arms around her back and held her tightly against him, running his fingers through her long hair as he gently kissed her over and over again

"Alex, do you remember the day we held each other in the bathroom at my parents' home. How good it felt when bare skin touched bare skin?"

"Remember? I'll never forget that feeling. You can't imagine how many times I have relived that moment in my mind."

Jamie gently broke the embrace and backed slightly away from Alex. "Alex," she said

nervously. "Will you take your shirt off?"

Alex didn't reply verbally. He simply pulled the tucked shirt out of his trouser waistband and began slowly unbuttoning it, shaking with every move he made. Then he removed the shirt and slowly left it drop to the floor. He stood there motionless as the warm, late spring breeze tickled his skin. Jamie ever so gently touched his chest with first one hand and then the other. She drew little imaginary circles around his nipples and then leaned down and flicked them with her tongue one at a time.

Alex stood his ground, not knowing what to expect next and fearing that if he moved she would stop. Her hands ever so lightly caressed his chest and then his stomach. She then moved closer and as she kissed his lips she wrapped her arms around his back and began gently running her nails across his skin. Then her fingertips briefly stroked his back before she again pulled him into an embrace and kissed him softly.

He went to kiss her more deeply, but she broke the embrace and backed slightly away. Neither spoke a word as she pulled the shirt from the waistband of her skirt. Slowly, but not teasingly she unbuttoned the garment and then without hesitation removed it letting it fall next to Alex's shirt.

She stood motionless, waiting. Alex had gazed upon her beauty countless times before, but tonight was different. The desire inside of him mounted with every second. His eyes looked pleadingly into hers as he said, "May I..." His words drifted off, but still she nodded her head yes.

Slowly he reached out to touch her. When finally his fingers made contact, electricity seemed to surge through both of their bodies. Her nipples became rock hard as did part of Alex. Gently he encircled her nipples with his fingertips as she had his and then he leaned forward and kissed the tip of each mound. Jamie gasped as a feeling she had never before experienced coursed through her body.

"They're sensitive, but they won't break," she whispered in his ear, lingering just briefly to nibble on his lobe.

Alex cupped her breasts with his hands. First he held and massaged one and then the other, marveling as he did at how they could at the same time be both so soft and yet so firm.

Jamie had to fight to hold back a nervous laugh. Alex looked so much like a little boy who had just opened a Christmas present, one he had no intentions of returning..

Once again, she placed her hand on Alex's neck and pulled him gently toward her. Her body was eagerly anticipating the moment when skin made contact with skin. She shivered when they first touched and then pulled him even tighter as if trying to absorb the feeling of him into her. He held her tightly and they kissed and then kissed again like they had never kissed before. These were not the kisses of a teenage crush, but the kisses of true love.

Alex's hands slipped below Jamie's waist and grasped her cheeks through her skirt as he pulled her tighter to him. She could feel him against her and for the millionth time wondered what it would be like to actually have him inside. Jamie shuddered for an instant as Alex's hands released their grasp momentarily just long enough to slide under her skirt. She felt as if she was melting as his hands made skin-to-skin contact with her cheeks.

He started to knead and caress them. Jamie had never felt like this and she didn't want to stop feeling like this. Without warning as he kissed her passionately, Alex shifted slightly to his left and his right hand and fingers as if possessing radar, moved to her front and immediately locked on to their intended target. Jamie felt as if her knees were about to buckle as she moaned in ecstasy.

"Alex, I love you," Jamie voice trembled. "You can't possibly imagine how good what you're doing makes me feel, but please, please don't try to go any further. I'm not ready, especially not here and not now, but I do love you. I have never been surer on anything in my life. I'm also sure that if you keep doing that I'm going to completely collapse."

"Jamie, there are other things I can do besides this that will make you feel equally good."

"Yes, I'm sure there are. Likewise I'm looking forward to trying a few things with you. Alex, please trust me. I do love you. I want to make love to you as much as you do to me, but not here, not like this. I want it to be special and in a bed, not on a floor. I have a dream of what I want it to be like. Will you help me live that dream? I promise I won't make you wait forever."

"I can wait. It's just, well do you mean not do anything at all or just not have sex?"

Jamie kissed Alex on the forehead. "Just not have sex. I can't make the arrangements for our joining until next school year. But there is absolutely no way I want to wait until then to feel again like I do tonight". Jamie gave Alex another hug and then a gentle kiss. "It's extremely late. I think we best get our shirts on and get back to the dorm."

"Okay," Alex said, quite reluctantly.

Jamie waited a few seconds and then laughed as she embraced Alex again and gave him another kiss. "Alex, you can't put you shirt on and I will find walking extremely difficult if you don't find another place to warm your hand. I promise, that you're welcome back anytime."

Tuesday, June 15, 2004

Well, I'm sure that was a waste of time. Our Astronomy O.W.L started last evening after dinner and just finished before breakfast. Therefore, I spent most of yesterday sleeping in preparation and will probably sleep most of today. I may as well have slept through the entire test, too. All stars look so much alike. I tried to fill out all the star charts and connect this moon to this planet and all that mumbo jumbo, but if I got a one, I'll consider it a miracle.

Why can't people be content to just look at stars and watch them twinkle? Alex's eyes were twinkling last night. He looked like he was floating on a cloud. I hope he isn't disappointed when our time comes to join.

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

The Charms O.W.L. went well, as I hoped it would, but I fear it's a case of too little too late.

I'm sure I got a two because basic and intermediate were fairly easy. I stayed and tried for advanced credit, but that involved dueling with the Professor. My time was much better than that of Amanda or Alex, but I was disarmed so I doubt that I'll get a three.

Thursday, June 17, 2004

I knew before I took my Transfiguration test today that I had blown any chance of getting a total of thirteen, but I was determined to do my best for Hermione. The basic test was changing inanimate objects into animate ones and visa versa. I guess I tried a little too hard because after I had done my tenth Transfiguration Hermione said, "That will be quite enough Miss Zacherley; you have obviously mastered this ability."

The intermediate test was to take one object and continue to change it from form to form as many times as you could until you started to lose control. Most of the class could only do it two or three times. Alex managed five and Amanda six. Hermione seemed surprised and quite impressed when I reached eight.

I was the only one who returned after lunch because I was the only student attempting an Animagus transfiguration. I'd done it many times in front of her before, but this was formal, for the records and to qualify for advanced Transfiguration. Hermione used a stopwatch to time me as I changed over and over again until I actually collapsed. I know I got my three because she gave me a hug and said, "I'm extremely proud of you sister."

Friday, January 18, 2004

I'm done. The tests are finished. I blew it big time and let Harry and Hermione down. It won't be official till next Friday when the grades are owed to us, but I know I didn't make it. I actually thought about not even taking the exam for potions. Why should I bother? I could no longer get a thirteen and I doubted anyway that Potion Master Malfoy would give any Gryffindors passing scores, even basic.

I just couldn't be a quitter so I went and did my best brewing potions, writing essays and taking a sundry of tests about potion ingredients, antidotes and the lot. Actually I think I did rather well, not that it matters.

End of Journal Entries

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Saturday, June 19, 2004

Weekends had become family togetherness time for the extended Potter Clan. Jamie and Caitlin slept in the dorms Sunday through Thursday night, but unless something out of the ordinary was taking place, they slept in the quarters Friday and Saturday night.

Today's routine had been the same as most other Saturday's. They all got up early to run, showered and then had breakfast in the Great Hall. Today, Harry had promised to give Emily some flying lessons and Caitlin decided to tag along. Jamie had begged off, she liked it when

she and Hermione could spend some time alone just talking over a cup of tea.

"Will you get to see the results of the O.W.L. s before they are given to the students?" Jamie inquired of Hermione.

"No. None of the professors including the headmaster sees the results until you receive them. We all give the scores to the elf in charge of student statistics. She compiles the scores and prepares the letters that you receive next Friday at breakfast. At the same time she makes a master sheet with all the students' scores listed. The Headmaster, the School Board of Directors and all the professors receive a copy of this at the same time you get your letters. How do you think you did?"

Jamie looked at Hermione as she struggled to hold back tears. She idolized this woman so much that the thought of disappointing her caused Jamie anguish. " I feel it was a mixed bag. Some tests I felt good about and others I felt I completely blew." It took all Jamie's resolve to force the next words out of her mouth. "Hermione, I've let you down. I studied, I tried my best, but there is no way I scored thirteen. I'm so sorry I disappointed you."

Hermione reached over and took Jamie's hand in hers. "You haven't disappointed me and I doubt you ever will. You've constantly been at the top of many of your subjects and I watched how hard you studied over the last few months. I know you tried your best. Thirteen is difficult to achieve in the O.W.L.s. But don't write yourself off just yet. I can tell you that you got a full three from me and that Harry gave you a two. That's a total of five in two subjects. You only need eight more."

Jamie thought to herself that it might as well be one hundred eight.

Jamie felt the need to change the subject before she started to cry. "Hermione, something very strange happened in Care of Magical Creatures after our test last week. I've wanted to talk to you about it, but honestly I'm a little embarrassed."

"Well now, that is certainly a first. I didn't think anything embarrassed Jamie Zacherley. What happened?"

By the time Jamie had finished the story, Hermione had a look of horror on her face. "Thank god Charlie distracted the unicorn so that you could escape. He might have killed you; he certainly would have hurt you severely. I've read of such things, but it's so rare I never even thought to mention it to you." Hermione started crying. "If something had happened to you, I would have never forgiven myself."

Jamie had a total look of bewilderment on her face. "I don't think he would have attacked me. He acted more like he liked me and was trying to protect me."

"He did like you. That's the problem. The unicorn was protecting you. He had chosen you as his mate."

Suddenly Jamie's had a look of extreme revulsion on her face. "Mate with me! You mean that animal wanted to...." She couldn't bring she self to say it. "That's sick. I've read stories about some people doing disgusting things with animals, but the unicorn? Why would a unicorn want to...? Ugh!" Jamie suddenly felt sick in the stomach.

Hermione patted Jamie's hand trying to calm her. "He didn't see you as a young girl. He sensed you as your Animagus form. Jamie, I discussed your transfiguration test with Harry and I've sent an owl to my old professor. Your time of transfiguration and the amount of times you could do it were incredible."

"Do you remember how I told you the animal chooses you rather you choosing the animal?" Jamie nodded her head. "In your case, I think you already had many qualities held by unicorns and because of this when you bonded those qualities became significantly magnified and you gained others."

"Are you trying to say that I'm part unicorn? I'm not going to get a horn on my forehead and grow long white hair, am I?" Part of Jamie was being facetious, but part of her was concerned.

"No, not likely." Hermione responded. "I'm talking more about intuitive skills such as judging virtuousness and knowing whether to trust people."

Suddenly Jamie had a horrible thought. "What if suddenly I don't allow boys to get near me?"

Hermione laughed. "Then I think you and Alex will both be extremely miserable. I doubt that will become a problem. However, since you brought up the subject of men getting near you. I'd like to talk to you about Harry. Are you aware that he is afraid to touch you?"

Jamie nodded her head disconsolately. "I imagine it's all my fault. He doesn't seem able to get beyond seeing me as that vixen that offered her body to him. Hermione, if I were given the opportunity to undo just one thing that I did in my life; it would be that night. I worship the relationship you and I have now as sisters. I'd give anything to have Harry treat me like a sister."

"There are times that I'm so envious of Caitlin and Emily. When he gets into those wild tickling and wrestling matches with them, I'd love to join the fray. I don't because I know he'd stop and I don't want to ruin their fun."

Hermione looked at Jamie sympathetically. She had no idea this was troubling Jamie as much as or even more than it bothered Harry. "I'm sure what happened Halloween could be part of the problem, but I think your body is a bigger part of the problem."

"My body?" Jamie looked at Hermione puzzled.

"Jamie we both know and love Harry. Harry doesn't have a perverted bone in his body, but he also likes to win. I'm sure that you've seen that when he and the girls wrestle sometimes hands momentarily touch or grab at places. He's fighting two of them off at once. It's never done on purpose and the girls seem to think nothing of it. I don't think Harry does either because-let's say they don't have much in the way of accessories yet."

"Jamie, that's not the case with you, I believe Harry would be extremely up tight about possibly grabbing your butt or touching a breast or worse."

"Hermione, I've been a nudist my entire life. When you don't wear clothes, body parts come in contact with other people much more often. My favorite party game is Twister. Playing that game it's impossible not to have some body contact. When we go swimming I love to be thrown around in the water and throw others around, too. You can't pickup or be picked up by

a person without some body contact. There is an unmistakable difference between an accidental touch and a purposeful grope. When you're playing hard and having fun accidents happen. Plus, I just don't find it's that big a deal to be touched. To me body parts are just that, body parts. I don't think my butt cheek or breast is any more special than my arm or leg. If I trust a person to touch one part of me, I am not going to have a fit if they touch another part, especially when it's accidental. But how would you feel about that? Would you be upset if it was a part of our fooling around? How would you feel about Harry holding me and tickling me when I'm naked?

"Jamie, I love you and I trust you. I would trust my life in either your or Harry's hands." Hermione smiled as she thought back "In fact I have. Jamie, you've always felt yourself a good judge of people. I've felt that as well about myself. I feel that you and Harry are incapable of hurting me. Now, how do we get you and Harry over this impasse?"

Jamie looked shyly at Hermione. "I'd like to try getting involved the next time he gets after the girls. If he backs off or tries to quit, I have an idea. It's rather bold, and for that reason I need your help. I won't do it unless you are one hundred percent okay with it."

"Suppose you tell me what your plan is and let me consider it?"

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Friday, June 25, 2004

Hermione couldn't take her eyes off the window as she spread her toast with marmalade. "Shouldn't they be here by now?" she inquired of Harry.

"You do realize that you're more nervous today than you were the day we received our own scores. You're not afraid someone will beat your score are you?"

"Of course not, Harry. Records are made to be broken. It's just that Jamie has worked and studied so hard. I'm afraid that if she doesn't earn that scholarship she will feel as if she let us down; that we're disappointed in her."

"We'll know in a few minutes," Harry said as he indicated the larger than normal group of owls fluttering in the windows, most of them school owls. Each of the fifth-year students received a large envelope with the Hogwarts seal. Some students, grabbed for their envelopes before the owls had an opportunity to land. Others waited patiently for the envelope to drop in their hands.

Few did as Jamie, and just sat motionless after receiving the envelope, staring at it as if petrified.

There was an unwritten scale used by the students to judge their results. If one received a score under five, there would most definitely be a howler from the parents.

Scores between five and ten were considered good. Anything over ten was considered excellent; fifteen was considered the optimum score at least it was until six years ago when Hermione Granger, a muggle-born witch, scored an unheard of sixteen.

Soon the Hall was in mayhem as the students were talking loudly about their results and running from table to table to talk with friends in other houses. Out of the corner of her eye Jamie saw Amanada and Alex both hugging, evidently pleased with their results. Suddenly she felt an arm around her shoulder as Caitlin said. "Are you afraid to open it? Would you like me to open it for you?"

Jamie simply nodded her head and handed the envelope to Caitlin, who carefully opened it. The packet consisted of a result page from each professor showing the total score number of O.W.L.s received in that class. Caitlin began leafing through the pages telling Jamie her results in each subject. As she read the scores at what seemed an excruciating slow pace a crowd of friends and house members gather around her. They all knew how important these results were to her and each and every one in their own way was praying for her.

"Jamie you received basic, intermediate and advanced in Transfiguration." Caitlin flipped to the next page. "And you received both basic and intermediate in Defense Against the Dark Arts." Caitlin looked at Jamie excitedly. "That's five O.W.L.s in only two subjects."

Jamie didn't get excited. "Yes, but those I was expecting. They were my two best subjects."

Caitlin continued, as it seemed everyone was keeping a running total. "You received a one in Herbology, but you got both basic and intermediate in Care of Magical Creatures."

Amanda squeezed Jamie's arm tightly and whispered in her ear. "I didn't think anyone got more than basic in Magical Creatures. I think you're going to make it."

Alex crossed his fingers even tighter. The total was at eight after only four subjects.

Caitlin flipped to the next page and the smile disappeared from her face. "You received a zero in Divination," she reported sadly. As she turned to the next page gloom descended upon her. "You also received a zero in Astronomy."

The Gryffindors had thought Jamie on the verge of doing the impossible; beating Hermione Granger's score, but two zeros killed any chance of that. Her total was still at eight and she was running out of subjects fast.

Caitlin turned the page and announced excitedly, "Jamie you received another three. You got all three levels of Charms."

Caitlin turned to the last page and announced sadly, "And you received basic for History of Magic."

Alex put his arm around Jamie and gave her a hug. "You did terrific. Twelve is nothing to be sad about. I think that ties for the highest this year."

"I know. It's just that I feel I let Harry and Hermione down." She looked dejectedly at the floor, not wanting to face the staff table and Harry and Hermione.

Amanda who had been deep in thought suddenly shouted. "Caitlin, Potions! You didn't read a score for potions!"

Caitlin began leafing through the packet and sure enough two pages were stuck together. As she pulled them apart, her face broke into a huge grin as she reached out and hugged Jamie. "I'm sorry I scared you. Potions, Basic and intermediate."

Jamie brushed the tears of sadness from her eyes, but they were instantly replaced with tears of joy. "Professor Malfoy gave me a two?" She couldn't believe she had received both basic and intermediate Potions and that now her total was fourteen. Jamie Zacherley had just received the second highest score in the history of Hogwarts. The cheers from the Gryffindor table were deafening. Everyone was hugging Jamie and patting her on the back as she looked toward the staff table where she saw two teary eyed professors watching her, extreme pride evident on their faces.

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Just as they were ready to depart the Great Hall, Harry and Hermione were surprised as Ginny approached them.

"Ginny," Harry said with surprise. "What are you doing here on a Friday?"

Ginny for the entire year had a rather cushy schedule that involved no classes on a Friday. Therefore, it was surprising to find her here today.

Ginny glanced uneasily back and forth between Harry and Hermione. "I wanted to be here when the students received their O.W.L.s results and learn how they ranked, but more so I wanted to talk to you two together."

Harry looked at Hermione and immediately knew she was having the same thoughts as him. Through out most of the year Ginny had been bosom buddies with Sybil Trelawney. Why now suddenly was she seeking them out?

Hermione could tell that Ginny seemed rather nervous and stressed out. "Emily is off at school and by all indications Caitlin will be celebrating for some time with Jamie and her friends. Since there are no classes today, Harry and I were headed back to our quarters for morning tea. Why don't you join us?"

Ginny accepted the offer and followed Hermione and Harry to the staff area of the castle but said little during the journey. It was evident she wanted their full attention before she disclosed whatever was on her mind.

Harry helped Hermione prepare the tea as the three discussed meaningless school matters. Finally, when all three were seated, Ginny looked at Hermione and blurted out, "Who do you think would make a better husband and father, Draco or Severus?"

Hermione was taken aback as the question caught her completely off guard. Hermione truthfully had not even ever considered either man in such a role in her life. "Ginny, it's how you feel that matters, not I. I didn't realize you were back with Draco and what makes you feel Severus would ever want to play such a role in your life?"

Ginny face bore the look of total frustration. "I'm not back with Draco, but we are on a much

friendlier basis again although he does at times aggravate me beyond imagination. As for Severus, I know he'd be willing to play such a role because he asked me to marry him."

Harry was extremely glad he didn't have a mouth full of tea when Ginny announced this news; else someone would have been wearing it. Harry suddenly came to a realization. "This winter, all those weekends that Severus left Hogwarts for business. Were you the business? Have you and Severus been dating?"

Ginny's eyes bored into Harry. "You think its ridiculous, don't you? That I'm dating someone over twice my age?"

"I didn't say that," Harry said defensively. "I just inquired as to whether you two had been dating. But now that you mention it; he is easily old enough to be your father."

"Severus thought if anyone would understand it would be the two of you. I guess he was wrong." Ginny spouted angrily as she prepared to rise and leave, but before she could Hermione stopped her.

"Ginny, Harry didn't say whether he approved or not. He just stated facts. What he said is true, but Severus is also an extremely attractive and kind man as I'm sure you have found out. Please sit and tell us all the specifics. It isn't in our place to tell you what to do, but maybe discussing it will help you reach a conclusion on your own."

Ginny nodded her head. Although she doubted it would help, it certainly wouldn't hurt to at least have someone she could talk with. "It all started last October when Severus and I both happened to be up in the Astronomy tower at the same time." She glanced back and forth between Harry and Hermione. "We both find it a wonderful place to go and be alone with our thoughts. We just talked, nothing more. That weekend I was headed to London on the train and Severus had to go to the Ministry to meet with the governors of the school. We sat together and talked again. I couldn't get over how different Severus the man was as compared to Severus the professor."

"It was late when we reached London, so we decided to have dinner together. We were just two associates dining jointly. At least that's what we kept telling ourselves. After that weekend I started to go to the Astronomy Tower in hopes of finding him there and he told me later that he was doing the same thing."

"By Christmas we were purposely meeting in London every weekend. I loved being with him. He made me feel so special and wanted. Something I hadn't felt for a long time." Ginny looked at Hermione and confessed. "Up until then we had never even kissed, not real kisses, just pecks on the cheek. I kissed him first and it was my suggestion that we share a room Valentine's weekend. I knew my brothers wouldn't be happy, but I was. Severus and I were going to talk to you guys about us after your wedding and then it happened."

Hermione looked at Ginny understandingly. "By then it happened, I would assume you mean that Draco reentered your life."

"Yes," Ginny answered. "Draco had been going to London practically every weekend, Neville, too. Although neither of them ever said anything, I expect they thought something was going on between Severus and me. A few times they shared a compartment with us on the train, but most times they left us to ourselves."

"At first Severus and I joked about seeing Neville and Draco together on the train every week. We kidded that they were traveling to London to be together. In actuality Draco was involved with a witch that he had met just prior to the start of school. Her husband found them out in March and there was quite a row. Seems they have two children. Draco would never want to breakup a family and so he immediately stopped seeing her."

Harry looked at Hermione and shook his head slightly in disgust, not enough that Ginny noticed. "Did you initiate getting back together with Draco or did he?"

"Oh! It was me. I approached him in September, trying to reconcile our differences, but it took him sometime to think it out in his head." Ginny seemed to be defending Draco.

Harry could tell from Hermione's expression that she had problems with this story. "When did Draco finally agree that it would be good if you both tried getting back together?"

"The very beginning of April," Ginny quickly answered. "I just don't know what to do. Severus has been so wonderful to me, but after all Draco is Draco. How can I ignore a chance to get back with him?"

Harry was about now feeling a powerful urge to strangle Ginny, but resisted.

"Ginny?" Hermione asked. "I want to make sure I have all the facts straight in my head. Am I correct in saying that Draco knows you have been seeing Severus? How about Severus? Does he know that Draco now wants you back?"

"Yes, Severus knows," Ginny replied.

"And how may I ask does he feel about that?" Harry asked, trying to control his anger.

"He said he loves me and that he'll always be there for me, but it's a decision I have to make on my own and that if I come to him it has to be without doubt in my mind or heart."

Harry didn't say a word, but wanted to bang his head on the table. Then he realized that it would serve more purpose if he banged Ginny's head instead of his own.

Somehow Hermione managed to maintain a level of neutrality. "Ginny, this may sound all too scientific and detached, but I think before you make any decisions, you should sit down and write a list of pros and cons. You have to decide what is truly important to you in a relationship. Who you would be happiest with? What are you doing this summer?"

Ginny answered, "I'm visiting some college friends in the States."

"That's good," Hermione answered. "That means you will be away from both of them. Spend that time comparing them and deciding whom you would really be happiest with, who you love the most and who will love you the most. That's really all that's important."

From there the conversation drifted off to other topics and after a brief time Ginny offered some excuse as to why she had to be leaving and after thanking them for their time she hurried out the door.

The door had no more than closed when Harry commented to Hermione, "I hope she chooses Draco."

Hermione couldn't believe her ears. "Why Draco?"

"If she can't figure out on her own that Severus is worth a hundred Dracos, she doesn't deserve him"

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Saturday, June 26, 2004

"Harry, after I take a shower, I'm going to take the girls into Hogsmeade to shop for clothing for the trip. Will you talk to them so that they don't give me any arguments?" Hermione asked.

"Arguments about what Mione?" he replied.

"About clothes. I want them to actually dress to go to Hogsmeade and not to give me a difficult time about getting proper clothes and swimming costumes for the vacation. They are not going to Disneyland Paris and a fancy beach resort with only a charm covering them."

"I'll talk to them honey. I'll give them the old 'when in Rome do as the Romans' story."

"I don't care what story you give them, just so they agree to dress the same as everyone else there." With that Hermione stepped into the shower leaving Harry alone in the room. Harry just stood there a moment and then went over to the dresser and stared at the mirror.

"Harry Potter." The mirror said. "Do you want to see your future?"

"No,' Harry answered nervously. "Actually I'm extremely content with the present and wish it could go on forever. Its just... could I ask you a question about the possible future you showed Hermione and I?"

"Ah yes. You mean the future showing you and Mrs. Potter on the beach with the three girls. We now know whom the third girl is and that you are taking a vacation to a beach. What exactly is the question?"

"Do Hermione and I actually have to be naked for all to see? We know this charm that makes others think we have clothes on and..."

The mirror interrupted. "Your wife asked me the identical question the other day. She hoped that since you would be actually nude and that a mirror isn't fooled by the charm that perhaps you could use the charm to create that future. I wish that was the case, but when I show possible futures they are not reflections but what the world will actually see. For that future to be a reality, the five of you must actually be naked on that beach to anyone that passes by."

"Thank you mirror," Harry said desolately, knowing that he had lost any chance of making that future a reality.

Harry put on his happy face and walked into the living area where he found three naked girls giggling about their favorite subject, boys.

"Girls, can I ask you to do me a favor today? I understand you are going to Hogsmeade with Hermione. The town may be crowded and Hermione and I would both feel better if you actually dressed today instead of using the charm. There is just too great a chance of you being touched."

The girls looked at each other and then begrudgingly nodded their heads in consent. Jamie said, "If we do that will you please ask Hermione to not make us buy bathing costumes in the village for the trip?"

"Why not?" Harry asked. "You're certainly going to need them at the resort."

Jamie looked at the others knowingly. "Oh yes! Certainly we can't swim nude at the resort, but the resort is on the French Riviera. The bathing costumes worn there are much different than what is sold in Hogsmeade. May we wait to get our costumes until we get there?"

"That seems like a reasonable request. I'll discuss it with Hermione, but I'm sure she'll agree. Will you guys agree to one more thing concerning the trip?"

In unison they said, "What?"

"Both at Disneyland and at the beach resort, I want you dressing as everyone else does. You don't need to wear knickers, but no charms. You've heard the old saying, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans.' That means you want to blend in with the other people. Do you agree?"

Caitlin and Emily both had devilish looks on their faces. "Do as the Romans. That's makes sense. Does that apply to you and Mum, also?"

"Certainly," Harry answered without a thought.

"Do you know what this Roman wants to do right now?" Emily said teasingly.

"I have an idea," Harry said. "You know you'll never win."

"Never say never," Emily responded as she leaped toward Harry. Caitlin immediately joined her just as Hermione, still bare from her shower and holding a towel, stepped into the room.

Jamie and Hermione both watched, laughing as the girls struggled against Harry. Caitlin and Emily were most certainly outmatched, but having a great time. Hermione could see that Jamie was aching to get into the battle and decided that today was the day of reckoning. She indicated to Jamie to join the fray. This made for a much fairer match. Actually Harry probably had more than he could handle now. He had his right arm around Caitlin and Emily was hanging onto his legs. He sensed Jamie in the attack mode on his left and without looking reached his arm out to hold her off. His hand came into direct contact with her breast.

Harry froze as he turned bright red. He looked at Hermione and then at Jamie. "Okay girls, that's enough for now. Time to call it quits before someone gets hurt."

Both Caitlin and Emily moaned and complained that they had just started. Jamie didn't say anything. She didn't have to; Hermione could see her struggling to hold back the tears. As Harry got to his feet Hermione walked over to him.

Hermione stood naked in front of Harry. She took a deep breath not believing what she was about to do. Not only what she was going to do, but also that she was going to do it in front of the girls. "Harry, do you love me? Do you trust me?"

"You know I do. Why are you asking that now, here in front of the girls?"

"Because I want you to allow me to do something without question and it require you having complete trust in me. Caitlin please hand me my wand. Harry, I need you to close your eyes."

"But why?" Harry asked.

"Complete trust without question."

"Okay." Harry closed his eyes.

"Now I'm going to do a blindfold charm on you. It can be a little scary because you will be unable to open your eyes until I remove the charm, which will be in about a minute. Do you trust me?"

Harry had no idea what Hermione was up to, but he knew he trusted her with his life. "Yes."

Hermione performed the simple charm. "Good, now please try to relax. Girls it's extremely important that you remain absolutely quiet. Harry, I know this is going to sound extremely silly, but I want you to step forward, but your arms around me and grab my butt cheeks. One with each hand."

"With the girls here?"

"Harry, please no more questioning what I ask you to do," Hermione asked impatiently. "If you trust me just do what I ask. It will all be clear in a few moments."

Harry had no idea what Hermione was doing, but he would trust his life in her hands. However, weird this was, he decided he had to go along with it without question. He stepped forward and wrapped his arms around until each hand held a cheek.

"Now Harry, I want you to take your right hand and cover my vagina with it. Don't fondle me in any way; just use your hand to cover it as if you were protecting it."

Harry couldn't believe that Hermione was asking him do this in front of the girls, but didn't question her. He did as she asked, but avoided making actual contact.

Caitlin and Emily watched in disbelief. Neither could figure out what Hermione was up to or that they were being allowed to watch.

"Okay Harry. One more move and we're done. I want you to gently cup my breasts in your hands. Again, don't fondle them in any way. Just hold them as if you were carrying them somewhere. I want you to continue to hold them as I release you from the charm. I'll tell you

when to open your eyes."

Hermione released the charm and awaited the wrath that she knew was about to be unleashed.

"Okay, Harry, you may open your eyes"

"Good, now will...Oh my god Jamie!" Harry released his grasp on Jamie's breasts and practically jumped away. "Hermione what in the name of..." Suddenly he realized where else he had touched. Harry turned white. "Was I touching you all the time? Why would you do that?"

"Harry, please don't be angry with Hermione or I. I don't even know where to begin, but I did this for all of us. I did it for the sake of the family.

"Breast, butts, arms, legs; even vaginas and penises are just body parts. After hundreds of years of brainwashing we have come to think of some parts as special, untouchable. And they should be untouchable if a person's intentions are improper. Harry, I doubt sometimes that you are capable of impure thoughts. You wrestle and tickle Caitlin and Emily all the time. There isn't a place on their bodies that at one time or another you haven't come into contact with, but it wasn't perverted or dirty. It was in the course of natural fun."

"Harry, I may have these things hanging on my chest, but I'm still a little girl at heart and want to be a part of the family fun. I'm not going to react any different when we're horsing around if you grab my wrist or my breast because I know it's not done in a tainted way. Hermione and I both thought this was an extreme way of demonstrating how I felt, but we agreed that just telling you it was all right wouldn't work."

"Please don't be angry with Hermione. Do you realize how much she loves and trusts both of us to allow what just happen to take place? Please forgive our method, but also please tell us that we succeeded."

Harry couldn't believe what he had just heard or what just transpired. Nor could he believe how completely both Jamie and Hermione trusted him.

He looked at Hermione and Jamie and smiled. "Okay, you asked for it. Who wants to wrestle?"

Caitlin and Emily squealed with delight. Hermione dropped her towel on the chair. "Only one difference this time. Three against one isn't fair. I'm on Harry's side."

Emily yelled, "No holds barred!"

"Right, Dad," agreed Caitlin. "No holds barred."

Soon the floor was strewn with a mass of twisted arms and legs. Everyone was screaming and laughing. The troubles and heartaches of the past year were forgotten and the happiness of today was shared. The boy who lived had a family, a family that loved him.

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Wednesday June 30, 2004

As they started off the year so they ended it. Jamie, Amanda and Alex walked arm in arm toward the Great Hall and the end-of-the-year feast. They were running late and the Great Hall was already full when they entered.

The three had barely taken their seats when Headmaster Snape stood and said cheerfully, "And so we mark the end of another year. Quite a year it has been. I hope we have been successful in adding somewhat to your knowledge this year. Please, try to at least maintain some of that knowledge until we meet again."

"To the seventh years I bid a fond farewell. I hope we have taught you well so that you will succeed beyond your dreams. I also would like to bid farewell to Professor Charles Weasley. Thank you for your loyal service to Hogwarts these last six years. We all wish you health and happiness in your future endeavors."

There was a storm of cheering as all the houses rose to their feet and gave the departing professor a standing ovation.

"Now without further ado, I believe it is time to award the house cup. The points stand thus: In fourth place, Slytherin, with two hundred eighty-five points; in third, Ravenclaw with three hundred twenty-five. The battle for first place was extremely close this year. Gryffindor has four hundred fifty points, but with four hundred sixty-three points first place and the house cup goes to Hufflepuff." The headmaster clapped his hands and in an instant the Great Hall was adorned in the colors of Hufflepuff.

For a brief moment the hall was quiet, as even the Hufflepuffs couldn't believe that they had actually won the coveted house cup. Suddenly the Hufflepuffs were on their feet screaming and shouting. Then lead by Jamie Zacherley the Gryffindors, Ravenclaws and even a large number of Slytherins took to their feet and cheered the underdog house that had risen to the occasion.

Far too fast the evening ended. Wardrobes were emptied and trunks packed. It seemed to Caitlin that the year had just begun and here it was ended. But what a year it had been. She had started the year as a lonely unloved orphan and now she had a mother, a father, two sisters, a "boyfriend" and more friends than she could count.

Something else had change for her and for Jamie. They wouldn't be leaving Hogwarts on the Hogwarts Express. Instead, along with Emily, they were standing on the train platform hugging and waving good-bye to their friends. Hogwarts was now their home all year round.

Amanda and Tony had already bid their farewells and taken seats as Alex, Matt and Randy lingered behind.

"I'm going to miss you," Alex said as he held on to Jamie's hand.

"Me too," she responded. "Promise, you won't forget me?"

Alex smiled, "Not a chance in the world of that happening. We have big plans."

Jamie smiled and gave Alex a deep kiss as the train whistle blew. "Yes we do, we most certainly do."

Jamie gave Alex another brief kiss as he broke free and ran to the train. Caitlin looked at Matt, hesitated a moment, and then gave him a quick peck on the cheek. Matt started for the train and then stopped and yelled to Randy. "Come on Randy, what are you waiting for?"

Randy just stood looking at Emily. "I'm glad we met this year and that you let me hold you in exercises. I'm really going to miss you. I... I was"

Emily just looked at Randy and shook her head. "And I suppose if I don't kiss you, it will be my fault if you miss the train." With that said she gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and he ran to the train.

The girls waved, and then just stood watching until the train finally disappeared out of sight. Then they turned without a word. Emily and Caitlin each grabbed one of Jamie's hands and they headed home to Hogwarts.

The End