

Hogwarts Too Exposed - A Slytherin Among Us

By

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Chapter One - Be Careful What You Bet

Saturday, August 14, 2004

It resembled any other minivan as it sped along the highway, definitely not the slightest bit magical in appearance. There was absolutely no reason for anyone to imagine that the two passengers seated in the front were the most powerful witch and wizard in the world. The wizard at the age of twenty-four, was enjoying the first vacation ever of his life.

From his expression, Hermione could tell that her comment had hurt Harry's feelings. "It's not that I didn't enjoy myself, Harry. It was a lot of fun, but the lines were rather lengthy and there wasn't near as much to do as I thought there would be. I guess I'm just spoiled because my parents took me to Disney World when I was younger. It's so much larger and has many more attractions than Disneyland, Paris; I know you'd love it there."

"Actually some of the rides were pretty lame," Emily interjected. "The Peter Pan carts that were suppose to look like little ships didn't really fly, they were attached to the ceiling. Also, I can't believe they had the nerve to call that one ride Aladdin's Flying Carpets. They weren't carpets and they most certainly weren't flying."

"Emily," Jamie said, the irritation evident in her voice. "That was a muggle theme park. They couldn't charm the miniature ships to fly and as for the carpets; they don't even know that real magic carpets exist. You have to use your imagination. The little muggles seemed to greatly enjoy the rides."

"Okay," admitted Harry. "I agree that they were way off base with some things, but I thought the ghosts looked comparatively realistic in the Phantom Manor, and the Big Thunder Mountain ride was pleasurable."

"My favorites were The Temple of Peril and the Rockin' Roller Coaster," added Caitlin.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Jamie. "That roller coaster was awesome. So was Space Mountain-Earth to the Moon."

"Sounds like you two like coaster type rides. How about you, Emily?" Harry inquired, comforted that the girls enjoyed some parts of the park.

"I'd have to agree that they were pretty neat. Almost as neat as flying a broom," answered Emily.

Hermione laughed. "My kind of broom. One with a padded seat and safety harness."

"Are you sure you're a genuine witch, Aunt Hermione?" Emily jokingly asked. "I can't believe you detest flying."

"I'll fly if need be, but this witch prefers to keep her feet on terra firma," Hermione replied.

"You and me both, Mum," Caitlin, agreed. "What time do you foresee arriving at the beach resort, Dad?"

"Well, we can't get access to our rooms until three o'clock. I figure if we stop for lunch just up ahead, our timing should be just about perfect," Harry answered.

"Did I hear you say rooms? Jamie and I always slept in the same room as our parents. Do we have reservations for more than one room?" Emily questioned, quite excitedly.

"Didn't Jamie tell you?" Hermione responded. "Harry and I thought it would be more comfy if you girls had your own room."

Emily gave Jamie the evil eye and said, "Would it be okay if just Caitlin and I shared the room? Couldn't Miss 'snores-a-lot' sleep with you guys?"

Hermione laughed as Jamie good-humoredly pretended to strangle Emily. "No, Harry and I might want a little time alone, Jamie's snoring isn't that ghastly."

Caitlin whispered to Emily, "Sounds like Mum and Dad are planning on shagging."

Emily giggled before saying, "So what else is new."

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"Jamie," Caitlin whispered. "Are you going to enlighten them or just let them be surprised?"

Jamie answered quietly, "I'm frightened to tell them. This seemed like such a first-rate idea at the time, but now I'm not so positive. They could both become rather angry when they find out."

"Why?" Asked Emily. "It was their suggestion to let us choose the location. You even asked if there were any restrictions and they mutually said no; that they would go anywhere we wanted."

"I know, but it's just that I'm positive they aren't expecting a resort town with forty thousand nudists. If Harry is on schedule we should arrive in about fifteen minutes." Jamie looked nervously from Emily to Caitlin. "We better explain the situation to them before it's too late."

Caitlin said, "I'll tell them. After all it was my inspiration to come here after you told me about the place."

"Caitlin, it was undisputed. We all wanted to come here. Make sure you tell them that," added Emily.

"Mum, Dad, there is something I need to tell you both," Caitlin announced, her voice shaking.

"What is it, honey?" Harry and Hermione both said practically simultaneously.

"When Jamie first told me about Cap d'Adge, I knew it was somewhere I wanted to vacation, but doubted I would see it till after I left Hogwarts. Then you both decided to permit us to select our vacation destination. There was no squabble among us; Cap d'Adge was the primary choice for all three of us." Caitlin paused momentarily to gather the strength to drop

the bombshell.

"I'm glad you're pleased with our destination. Harry and I wanted this to be a unique family vacation for the five of us." Hermione said. "I too am looking forward to a tranquil week of swimming, sunning and reading."

Caitlin took a deep gulp of air, "Dad, as you enter the city of Cap d'Adge, watch for the road signs directing you to the "Naturisme" quarter. That's where we are staying; it's the nudist section of town.

When Harry's brain absorbed what Caitlin had just said, his body almost lost control of the car. He sputtered, but was unable to articulate intelligibly.

Hermione had no difficulty speaking as she shouted. "What?! I thought we were going to a resort with beaches, restaurants and a shopping mall, not a nudist campground! Whatever possessed you girls to do such a thing?" Hermione sat nervously twitching her head as Harry reduced speed, awaiting more information.

Caitlin was about to carry on, but Jamie placed her hand on the young girl's shoulder and indicated that she would make an effort to clarify. "Cap d'Adge is not a nudist campsite. It is a nudist community. At this time of year we can doubtless expect over 40,000 people in the naturist quarter. L' Hotel Eve, where we are staying, is the only hotel in the quarter, but there are an abundance of condominiums.

"No one will compel anyone to go nude although the beach is 99% nudist and you must be naked to swim in the pools. You will be amazed at the wonderful mix of ages from babes-in-arms to the very old. There is a shopping mall as well as many shops. There is a grocery store and many fine restaurants and lots of bars and clubs. You are free to wear as much or as little clothing as you want. Some people dress to go to dinner or shopping, my family always took their clothes off upon arrival and never put them back on until it was time to depart."

Harry wished he weren't driving and that he could thrash out this quandary in private with Hermione. As it was he couldn't even get a look at the expression on her face, but maybe that was for the best.

"Hermione and I did say anywhere and I remember Jamie inquiring if there were any restrictions," Harry acknowledged. "But don't you believe it would have been nice to clue us in on the fact that this was a naturist resort? Just in case we had any uncertainties, which we most certainly do."

"Harry, would it be feasible for us to get a refund and try to get accommodations at another resort?" Hermione's voice seemed calm, concealing the panic she felt inside. Her stomach was doing flip-flops at the notion of being in a jam-packed place with the biggest part of the populace nude.

Before Harry could speak the van was filled with the sounds of moans and groans coming from the girls. "I'll ask when at the check in, but if I remember properly the cut-off date for asking for a reimbursement was nine days before arrival. This is also the peak season on the Rivera. I doubt that we will have much success getting accommodation somewhere else."

Hermione raised her voice somewhat. "Are you suggesting that we in fact stay at a nudist

resort?"

Harry answered in his most consoling voice. "Mione, we may not have an option. It's not like you and I are being required to remove our clothes. Maybe we can make the best of it for the sake of the girls."

This remark, of course, encouraged the girls to begin a chorus of whining and beseeching. Hermione pressed her fingers to her temple trying to defend against the headache that she felt rapidly approaching. "Okay, we'll stay, but I want absolutely no argument from anyone if I opt to spend most of the time in my room reading."

"But Mum," Caitlin begged, "it's a family vacation. I want to spend it with you. Can't you at least read in the vicinity of the pool?"

Hermione turned to make a negative comment to Caitlin, but stopped when she saw tears in the young girl's eyes. Her eyes, also, straight away watered. "We'll see." Is all she ended up saying.

As they entered the city of Cap d'Adge, Emily right away saw a sign indicating the directions to the "Naturisme" quarter. Harry followed the signs through a few roundabouts until they came to the entrance. After registering for a gate card they drove toward the parking lot for the L'Hotel Eve.

Just prior to them reaching the parking lot, it happened. Hermione saw her first nude people and, of course, it had to be two men. They were merely standing by a vending machine enjoying a beverage. Hermione yelled, "Caitlin, get down!" Hermione hastily slouched down in her seat and hid her face.

Jamie and Emily giggled, but not at the men. They couldn't get over Hermione's reaction. The men were naked, but Hermione was the one with her head virtually wedged under the instrument panel.

Caitlin, on the other hand, wanted no part of hiding. She had never seen a man naked and was not about to let pass her first opportunity. She forgot that staring is considered ill mannered, as her eyes remained glued on the two men.

Jamie gave Caitlin a little nudge as she said. "They come in all sizes and shapes. After a day or two, you won't even notice them."

As Harry guided the van into a parking spot, Hermione lastly uncovered her eyes and looked about. It was evident that it was check in time as she noted at least three cars quite near them unloading. All three contained families. The adults were still fully clad, but evidently the children couldn't wait because they were all either nude by now or in the course of undressing right there on the parking lot.

Caitlin found herself both checking out the girls and the boys, especially one boy who was about twelve. She whispered in Jamie's ear, "Is that what Matt looks like?"

Jamie smiled. "Now, how would I know? Although I imagine quite similar."

"May we disrobe, too?" Emily promptly asked.

Hermione was still bewildered, but Harry responded. "I'm astonished you waited this long."

The girls all took this as a yes and hurriedly shed their shorts and shirts before piling out of the car. Hermione slowly surveyed the parking lot and became slightly more comfortable when she realized that all the adults were fully clad.

"Harry, the majority of these people seem to have very little luggage compared to us?" Hermione observed.

Jamie answered before Harry had an opening. "For the most part people only bring a couple of changes of garments and perhaps a cover-up in case it gets cold. For the last three years, Emily and I haven't worn a stitch the entire time we were here."

Caitlin beamed. "You mean we can even go to the restaurants and mall nude if we want?"

"Clothing is not obligatory any place with the exception of the pools, there you must be nude," Jamie replied.

Hermione grabbed Harry's hand and squeezed it firmly. "I presume that means you and I won't be spending time in the pool?"

Harry nodded in concurrence, but as he did, he couldn't help but observe that all three of the men unloading cars were overweight, one actually rather corpulent. He wondered to himself if these men actually went nude or if they were just here for their families. Then he observed the women. It was evident that this was not a resort for only people with faultless bodies.

As they started unloading the minivan, the young boy walked over to them and addressed Jamie. "You're Jamie Zacherley, aren't you?"

Jamie nodded her head at the boy who was obviously somewhat taken by her. "Yes I am. I'm sorry, but did we meet last year?"

"No, we didn't, but I saw you in the Miss Nude Teen contest." The boy blushed. "My name is Daniel, Daniel Weber. I thought you were pretty last year, but you're gorgeous this year. Is that why you came this particular week? Are you taking part in the competition for a second time?"

Jamie blushed at being referred to as gorgeous, even if the admirer was merely twelve. "I had no idea the contest was this week, but I won't be participating this year, I'll be one of the spectators."

"That's a shame," replied the boy. "I hope you change your mind." He slowly backed away and then looked at Caitlin and Emily. "Hope I see you at the pool."

As he turned and walked away, together Caitlin and Emily stared at his butt. Jamie just watched them both and smiled.

"If we all grab as much as we can carry, I think we can make this in one trip," Harry recommended. The girls led the way as they walked toward the main entrance of the hotel.

Harry commented to Hermione, "It's amazing how natural this is to them, even Caitlin. They don't think twice about the reality that they are naked."

"No, they don't," Hermione, said. "They're naked and I'm the one trembling like a leaf. I don't know about you Harry, but there is absolutely no way that I am going to march around naked in front of a horde of strangers. I take pleasure in doing it with the girls and when we're alone, but I'm not about to be stared at by strangers."

As they entered the reception area, Hermione almost dropped the luggage she was carrying as she literally entered the nudist world. Not only were there couples in the lobby, totally nude, but also the young girl at the reception counter was likewise completely naked. Hermione, marveled as Jamie easily conversed in French with the girl; meanwhile Harry stood by trying not to gawk, but not succeeding well at all.

Soon armed with their keys and copious brochures they were on the way to their rooms. Hermione tried valiantly to smile and retain eye contact with the other guests they passed in route. She was exceedingly pleased when at last the door closed behind her and the nudist world was shut out. Hermione plopped the bags she was carrying down and waited for Harry to return from settling in the girls. She desperately needed a hug.

Hermione was startled as what she thought was a closet door opened and Harry stepped into the room followed by Caitlin. "We have adjoining rooms," Caitlin declared. And with a terrace overlooking the pool. Come look." Caitlin opened the drapes as Hermione gasped at the sight. She felt like a voyeur as she observed the naked people below.

One thing was immediately evident and that was that she and Harry would categorically stand out in this crowd. She found a couple of women with bathing costume bottoms on and a small number with towels wrapped around their waists, but there was not a single woman wearing a top or a one piece bathing costume. The men were all nude.

Emily suddenly burst into the room. "May we possibly go down to the pool?"

"I don't see why not," Harry responded. I'd like to take a stroll and decide where we are eating tonight, so please be back around six."

"Aren't the two of you coming?" Emily asked.

Harry glanced at Hermione who nervously shook her head no. "No, we don't have that much time before dinner. Hermione and I will just get our possessions organized here and checkout the pamphlets we were given. Where's Jamie?"

Emily shrugged her shoulders. "In all probability taking a shower before she goes to the pool."

"Why don't you and Caitlin do that, too? It seems appropriate etiquette," Hermione recommended.

"If we must. Come on Caitlin, we can both use this shower while Jamie is in ours. That way we'll be done sooner."

The girls both slipped out of their sneakers and socks and ran to the shower, giggling.

Harry looked at Hermione with a concerned expression on his face. "Are they going to shower together?"

"In all probability, yes, but they do it a lot," Hermione answered.

"Doesn't that worry you?" Harry asked. The nature of his voice indicated that it did him. "If two boys showered together at that age, I would be concerned they were gay. Aren't you concerned about Caitlin and Emily?"

"No, I'm not. Harry, a girl doesn't wake up one morning and decide she wants to become a lesbian. It's part of a person's makeup from birth. You are either homosexual or heterosexual just like you're either right handed or left handed. You can't modify what you are. From everything I've observed, they are both quite heterosexual, but they are also very close and very silly and extremely inquisitive."

Harry looked nervously toward the bathroom. "You don't think they sponge down and handle each other, do you?"

"With us right out here, I doubt it, but I'm sure they either have or will at sometime. They might even do it frequently"

"And that doesn't trouble you?"

"No, it doesn't because I love them both. You're heterosexual and so am I. It makes sense that we would prefer our children to be, also. But would you stop loving either or both of the girls if later in life they realized they were lesbians?"

"You know I wouldn't. Sexual inclination should have nothing to do with the way you think of a person."

"Precisely, so I say we just let them mature and develop and not try to persuade them that certain things are wrong or dirty. If they move in that direction, we want them to trust us and confide in us, not be fearful to tell us. But I wouldn't agonize. I've never seen them look at each other's butts the way they looked at that boy's out on the parking lot."

"Do you realize that you just called them our children?"

Hermione took her hand and placed it on her stomach. "Harry, I couldn't care more for those three girls if I had in fact given birth to them."

"I know how you feel. Each day I think I couldn't care for them more and each day I do."

Jamie stood at the door separating the two rooms with tears flowing down her face. "Neither of you could possibly imagine how hearing what you just said makes me feel." Jamie rushed in the room and hugged Harry and Hermione. "I love you both, so incredibly much."

Emily stopped at the doorframe and just looked at Caitlin nauseatingly before saying, "I think maybe we should go and take another shower until they get all this hugging out of their systems."

Before Caitlin could counter, Harry said, "Oh! You two think you're too old to be hugged, well how about if I.... " Without another utterance Harry rushed toward Emily and before she knew what was happening he had literally tossed her over his shoulder. He then grabbed Caitlin by the waist and carried both girls to the bed. Harry hadn't even started tickling yet and both girls were screaming for help.

"Are we going to help them?" Hermione asked Jamie.

"Perhaps, but let them suffer a short time first."

* * * * *

While the girls went swimming, Harry and Hermione decided to enjoy a little water activity of their own. Although they had two showers available, they opted to use only one. One thing lead to another and by the time they stepped out of the water, they had both started to wrinkle.

Harry wrapped a towel around his waist and stepped out on the balcony to see if he could view the girls. All he had to do was look in the direction of the most splashing and screaming and he spotted them. Evidently they had made some friends already, both of the male and female persuasion.

"Hermione, come out here and observe the girls," Harry said invitingly.

"I'm not wearing clothes yet Harry. All I have on is a towel." Hermione answered.

"Hermione, that's more then everyone else has on."

At first Hermione hesitated, but at last she convinced herself to take a first step. She reluctantly walked out onto the balcony, wishing the towel, although quite sufficient, covered more.

"Harry, how can they do it?" Hermione inquired.

"Are you referring to the girls?" Harry inquired.

"No, not the girls so much as some of those other people. I expected everyone here to be young and built flawlessly, but they're not. Some of them are fairly elderly and out of shape. How can they possibly be at ease with everyone seeing them naked?"

"Jamie keeps telling us that naturism has naught to do with bodily form. I imagine I must agree," Harry said. "If all it took was a faultless body, then there'd be no rationale for you to be hiding up here."

Hermione blushed as she gave Harry a hug and then kissed him passionately. "Mr. Potter, you are very good for a girl's ego. I desperately want to make the mirror's reflection become factual, but I could never get up the nerve to go down there naked. Could you?"

"I'm not sure, but I intend to give it a go tomorrow," Harry said without shilly-shallying.

Hermione couldn't believe her ears. "You actually have it in mind to go down there exposed in front of all those people. How? What about the girls?"

"Actually the girls are the hitch. Undoubtedly I'll be panicky in front of strangers, but that's precisely what they are, strangers. I've never seen any of those people before and, since the odds favor them all being muggles, I doubt I will ever see any of them for a second time. If that chap with the Santa Claus belly has the fortitude to walk around like that, so do I. My dilemma is the girls. I will see them again. It just seems tainted to allow them to glimpse me naked."

"Harry, I'm amazed. I didn't think for an instant that you would even consider going nude." Hermione just stared at Harry with a blend of envy and disbelief. "I believe the girls will be quite encouraging. If you're able to do it, I imagine I'll be the only one on the pool side in a swimming costume?"

Hermione was totally perturbed with herself. She wanted so badly to just pull her towel off and run down to the pool with the girls, but she knew she couldn't do it. She despised her priggish side.

"I was thinking about that. Wouldn't you fit in better if perchance there were a little less to your bathing costume? Even on the textile beaches of the Riviera, many of the women go topless. I'm not suggesting you do that, but maybe if you wore a bikini."

Hermione just looked up at the sky and shook her head. "I never thought the day would arrive that I would deem a one piece swimming costume as over dressed, but as I look at these people I tend to be in agreement with you. My current costume will draw a lot of gratuitous attention here because I'm too covered; yet I lack the self-confidence to go nude. What do you advocate, Harry?"

"I'm not at all sure you'll like my proposal, but I feel we should see if we can find you a new suit tonight." Harry took a deep breath and then finished. "One that's so tiny that it hardly covers what in general needs to be covered."

Hermione felt despondent as she looked at Harry with a trodden expression. "You're correct, but it would be throwing away money. I'd be no more apt to wear a suit like that than go naked. Why can't I be more like her?" Hermione said, indicating Jamie. "She is so confident; not the least bit self conscious." Hermione turned and walked back into the room where she threw herself on the bed and buried her head in the pillow.

* * * * *

"Are you ready to head out for the night?" Harry asked Hermione.

"All ready. How do I look? She asked.

"You're a vision," Harry responded. "You should wear muggle dresses more frequently."

Hermione was wearing a shape pleasing summer dress that exposed more of her lovely legs than normal with robes.

"Thank you, sir. You look quite handsome yourself tonight. Are the girls prepared?"

"We've been ready for an hour," Caitlin shouted from the other room. "Are you guys at last geared up to go? I'm famished."

The girls entered the room each wearing new sandals and nothing more.

"Won't you girls be chilly when the sun goes down?" Harry inquired.

"We're tough," Emily replied. "Besides we have a bet and the first one to cover themselves loses. Of course, we all know that will be Caitlin."

"In your dreams," Caitlin argued.

Hermione looked questioningly at Jamie. "Now you are absolutely sure that you girls can be like that?"

"Yes," Jamie confirmed. "You will see people in all states of dress tonight. Some like you guys fully dressed. Others like us completely nude, and everything in between. Are we going to sightsee or eat first?"

Harry looked mockingly sympathetically at Caitlin. "Since poor little Caitlin is starving to death, I think it's paramount that we eat first. Jamie, you and Emily know your way around. Which restaurant do you suggest?"

"There are a number of great restaurants with a wide variety of good food. We can find anything from French to TexMex to Indian to American and lots and lots of Pizza." Jamie looked at Emily. "Which restaurant did you like best?"

"I think for the first night we should go to 'Le Mississippi'. Their menu is varied with selections in all nationalities. I'm sure everyone will find something they like."

"Sounds fine to me," Harry said. "If everyone is okay with 'Le Mississippi', would you girls lead the way?"

* * * * *

Sunday, August 15, 2004

"Good morning sleepyhead," Harry said as he gently kissed Hermione on the cheek. "Are you ready to get dressed and go out for breakfast or would you prefer to sleep in and have us bring you back something?"

"What time is it Harry?" Hermione asked in a startled manner. It was rare for Hermione to sleep past her normal wakeup time. "Is it too late for us to go for a run before breakfast?"

"It's only seven. We still have plenty of time to take a run on the beach before breakfast. Would you like me to inform the girls that we're going to do that?" Harry questioned.

"Would you, please? And Harry, do you care if I use the charm instead of wearing my running outfit?" Hermione asked bashfully.

"Certainly not. Actually I think you should do the same for a swim costume when we go to the pool later. That way you could become accustom to being naked around people with them not realizing your condition."

"That's a good idea. I might try that. At least I should have no worry of anyone saying 'Finite Incantatum' here." Hermione laughed and then looked at Harry thoughtfully. "Are you still intending to give it a try today?"

"Yes," Harry said in a firm tone. "I only hope I don't experience an erection. I'd die of embarrassment."

"Only if I don't hex you first for having sexual thoughts about another woman," Hermione said in a teasing way.

Harry looked apprehensively at Hermione. "Maybe I should reconsider?"

Just then Jamie stuck her head through the open door that divided the two rooms. "What are you reconsidering? We're not leaving are we?"

Hermione smiled. "No, we're not departing; Harry is considering giving naturism a try today."

Jamie looked at Harry elatedly. "That's brilliant. Emily and Caitlin will be pleased. I know they want to attack you in the pool. Harry, it's not difficult at all. I'll help you. Hermione, how about you? Will you be making an effort, also?"

Hermione just shook her head despondently. "There is a part of me that wants to a great deal, but the prudish part is much stronger. I just can't do it. Harry did convince me to use the charm instead of wearing a bathing costume, however."

"That's a step closer," Jamie acknowledged. "Just be sure to use tanning lotion everywhere. The sun isn't fooled by a charm."

Suddenly the blaring voices of Emily and Caitlin were heard shouting, "Are we going to breakfast or are we running first?"

"We're running," Hermione called back. "Get on your sneakers and socks."

* * * * *

"Harry, I know Jamie warned us to get every place with suntan lotion, but if you continue to rub me there, I'm going to drag you into bed rather than go to the pool," Hermione said laughingly.

"Turn about is fair play. Here I am afraid of becoming excited and where do you decide to rub suntan lotion first?" Harry countered.

"I just wanted to insure that a sunburn didn't incapacitate you for the balance of the vacation."

"Can I come in?" Jamie yelled from the other side of the door.

"Just a minute until I put something on," Harry answered.

"No! Don't get dressed. Just cover yourself with a towel," Jamie instructed.

Harry looked at Hermione for guidance. "She's been doing this for sixteen years. It's best that you consent to let her steer you today."

Harry slipped a towel around his waist and then informed Jamie it was acceptable for her to enter the room. Caitlin and Emily who were both exceedingly anxious to get to the pool followed Jamie closely into the room.

When the girls entered the room Hermione appeared to be in her one piece bathing costume and Harry was standing fretfully next to her wearing only a towel and a smile. Jamie walked over and stood between Harry and Hermione.

"What are your biggest concerns about being unclothed at the pool?" Jamie asked Harry.

Harry looked at Jamie, extremely reluctant to answer until encouraged by Hermione. "My two biggest concerns are that I might have a reaction and I'm apprehensive about doing this in front of you girls."

Jamie nodded her head. "We were discussing that in the other room. In that case we should do away with one of those concerns before we ever reach the pool area." Jamie reached toward Harry and before he realized what was happening, she pulled his towel off.

Both Hermione and Harry couldn't believe what she had done, but as Harry went to cover himself with his hand, Caitlin said. "Dad, why are you trying to hide it? There were at least a hundred men and boys at the pool yesterday. You all have the same parts. It's no big deal."

Emily added. "Caitlin is correct. Jamie and I have seen nude men our entire lives. Although I must admit you do look better than most."

Jamie gave Emily an evil look. "Well he does," Emily replied.

"Okay," Jamie said after once again giving Emily the evil eye. "That's out of the way. We've seen you. Try to believe me when I say that no one is going to pay you any more attention at this pool than they would at a textile pool, in all probability much less. Don't wrap the towel around yourself just carry it in front. I reserved five lounges for us, although I doubt they'll get used that much. Are we ready?"

Hermione couldn't believe that Harry was actually going to go through with this. He had already gotten past what he considered the worst part. The girls had now seen him naked. Harry actually seemed less nervous than Hermione whose nakedness was hidden by a charm that made it look to others as if she had a bathing costume on.

Once they reach the chairs, Jamie said, "Hermione, unfortunately they won't allow you in the

pool because to them it looks like you have a bathing costume on. Harry, you could sit or lie here with Hermione for a while, but you might feel more self-conscious doing that. I would advocate that you come in the pool with us for a time and get used to to being nude."

Hermione didn't like the idea of being left alone, the only textile in a sea of naked bodies, but she agreed with Jamie that it would be easier for Harry to adapt if he first spent some time in the pool.

"Harry, don't worry about me. I'll be fine here with my book. Go in the pool for a bit until you become acclimated."

Harry was unenthusiastic about leaving Hermione, but once Caitlin and Emily started dragging him toward the pool and Jamie tugged away his towel, he had little choice. Once he hit water Harry seemed to relax and before long was happily cavorting with the girls.

Hermione watched with envy for a time and then started to settle herself down to read when a pleasant voice interrupted her. "Is that your husband? The girls seem to like him quite a bit.

"Yes, they've grown extremely close," Hermione, answered as she turned in the direction of the voice.

The smiling face of a plump woman of about forty greeted her. "My name is Michelle, Michelle Wolfskill. My husband, Lloyd and I were friends of Jennifer and Carl. We always planned our vacations so that we were here together at the same time each year. I was extremely sorry to read of their untimely death. I wasn't aware Jennifer had a younger sister?"

"She didn't," Hermione replied. "Oh! You thought I was Mrs. Zacherley's sister. I wasn't related to either of the Zacherleys."

Michelle Wolfskill took a closer look at Hermione. "I thought for sure you and Jennifer were sisters. My god, you and Jamie look so much a like."

"We hear that a lot," Hermione answered. "My name is Hermione Gran... Potter. Excuse me; I'm not quite accustomed to the new last name yet. Harry and I were just married in May."

Michelle just looked at Hermione. She was extremely confused, but hesitant to be nosy.

Hermione gave her a knowing smile. "You're trying to figure out why Harry and I are here with Jamie and Emily, aren't you?"

Michelle blushed slightly. "It does have me mystified."

"Harry and I are both teachers at the private school that Jamie attends. Jamie is quite an exceptional student there and we both took an extreme liking to her. When Jamie parents died we learned she would have to leave the school for financial reasons and that her sister would most likely end up in an orphanage. Neither of us could sit by and let that come about and so we applied for their guardianship."

Michele looked at Hermione with admiration. "That's fantastic of the both of you. For you to give those girls a home and take on that responsibility, your hearts are definitely in the right place. Is the little blonde girl a friend of Emily's that you brought with so she would have a

companion to play with?

"No. That's Caitlin, our daughter."

Michelle almost fell off her chair when Hermione said Caitlin was her daughter.

"My adopted daughter," Hermione added. "Caitlin was an orphan who was abused. I gave testimony at the trial and ..." Hermione hesitated, at a loss for words. "We needed each other. I adopted her and then when we got married, Harry adopted her also."

"You and your husband are certainly exceptional people."

Hermione blushed, "Not really, it's just that we've both lost our parents and wanted to help these girls." Plooo0

"Believe me, you're special. Neither of you are naturists, are you?"

"No. Is it that obvious? Harry is giving it a go today, but I'm afraid I just don't have the courage. I was brought up rather priggish."

"You'd like to be out in the pool cavorting with your family, wouldn't you?"

Hermione glanced at Harry and the girls who seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely. "Certainly, but costumes aren't allowed in the pool and I respect your rules."

Michelle seemed to be looking for someone as her head turned from one direction to another. Suddenly she seemed to spot the person she was seeking. "Excuse me for a few minutes, Hermione. There is someone with whom I must speak."

Hermione, watched as Michelle got up and started to walk to the other side of the pool, but then turned back to her book out of fear that someone might think she was watching Michelle because she was naked. Hermione thought to herself that perhaps this wouldn't be as awful as she had originally thought. Michelle seemed nice perhaps they could talk while Harry and the girls swam.

After a few minutes she checked on Harry and the girls who were still splashing about, having the time of their lives. Then she happened to glance toward the other side of the pool where Michelle had headed. There seemed to now be a rather large gathering and much to her dismay, they seemed to be constantly looking in her direction, as if discussing her.

Hermione became extremely uneasy. Michelle had been so nice, that it seemed impossible that she would have complained about her being clothed, but why else would everyone be looking in her direction. She started to wonder if Jamie had been wrong about her being allowed to remain fully clad.

Hermione snuck another peek. Whatever the problem was; she was about to find out because Michele was headed back and a rather large man was accompanying her.

"Hermione, I'd like to introduce Claude Bardo." Hermione knew she should be polite and shake Claude's hand, but because of the charm she just nodded politely. Claude is the Manager of L' Hotel Eve," Michelle said.

"Claude doesn't speak English that well, so he's asked me to speak for him. What he wishes me to tell you is that L' Hotel Eve has certain rules that were established mainly to ensure that the hotel remained exclusively a nudist resort. Those rules were never meant to separate a family or to punish good people.

"The Zacherleys were well known and liked by many people in this area. Although we would certainly like you to eliminate your clothes and become one of us, the hotel doesn't want to castigate someone who has reached out such a warm helping hand to the children of a couple we loved.

Michelle held out her hand to Claude who handed her a bracelet with a green tag attached to it. "Please accept this and wear it during your visit. It gives you nudist privileges even if clothed."

Hermione wanted to shake hands and possible even hug Michelle and Claude in response to the kindness being shown her, but knew better and just smiled, nodded her head and even bowed slightly to show her respect.

Harry and Jamie having seen the trio approach Hermione had swam to the edge of the pool and overheard the tête-à-tête. Both of them smiled and beckoned Hermione to join them.

Michelle too smiled. "Please put the bracelet on and join your family. You deserve to have a wonderful vacation. I'm sure you have a tough year ahead of you."

When Hermione first entered the pool, some people seemed disturbed, but word quickly spread. Amazingly by mid day it seemed most people poolside had heard the story of the kind hearted Potters.

* * * * *

"Hermione and I are going to go take a shower before going out for the evening," Harry shouted to the girls.

"We'll be up in a few minutes," Jamie answered. "We want to check the events list on the bulletin board first."

The girls had just reached the board when a voice called out to them. "Well, well, look who is here, Barbie and Skipper. Who is your new friend? Wait don't tell me, I know. It's Midge."

All three girls turned, but Jamie and Emily regrettably knew who was talking without even looking. "Hello, Rosalind," Jamie said as she grudgingly turned to talk to the burly, black haired girl. "Imagine running into you again this year."

Rosalind gave Jamie an arrogant look, "I guess seeing me is like having your worst nightmare come true. Now you know you don't have a possibility of winning this years contest."

"Roz, I didn't even know the contest was scheduled for this week until we arrived. I have no intention of competing, but if you like, I'll be pleased to root against you," Jamie countered.

"Just like you, Barbie," Roz needled. "I imagine you chickened out when you saw that it would take more than big tits and a shaved pussy to win this year. It figures that you would be a pansy ass when it comes to physical fitness."

"My sister is as physically fit as you any day," Emily said. "Just because she doesn't have thunder thighs like you doesn't mean she can't beat you in a physical fitness contest."

"I'd watch my mouth if I were you Skipper or you might not have any teeth left to eat your dinner with tonight," Roz threatened.

"Roz, I don't know what your problem is regarding me, but leave my sister out of it," Jamie responded angrily.

"My problem with you is that you're a coward. You're afraid to take part in the contest because you know you'll lose," Roz said tauntingly.

"Jamie could thrash you easily, she just doesn't like contests and parading around on stage," Caitlin said defensively.

"Ah, isn't that sweet," Roz teased. "Your other cheerleader is hurrying to your defense."

"Jamie, please enter the contest and shut this braggart up," Caitlin pleaded.

"Do it Jamie. You can beat her. Please!" Emily begged.

"Zacherley, you're a gutless wonder. You're a loser, your sister is a loser and your little friend here is a loser."

Jamie looked nauseatingly at Roz. "The only loser here is you." Jamie put her hand on Emily's shoulder. "Emily, you and Caitlin wait here while I go in the office and sign up for this dumb contest."

The door had barely closed when Emily said, "My sister will flog your big butt."

"You sound pretty confident Skipper. Care to put your money where your mouth is? I'll bet you twenty Euros that I beat Barbie," Roz said, seeming quite certain of herself.

"I'm eleven. Where do you think I'm going to get that kind of money?" Emily asked, greatly perturbed.

Roz's face burst into an evil grin. "Since I'm such a kind person, I'll take it in trade. If your sister places higher than me, I'll give you the money. If I place higher, you'll be my bitch for a day."

Emily had a questioning look on her face, but agreed. She totally ignored Caitlin who was frantically shaking her head no.

"Don't even think of backing out of this bet if you know what's good for you." Rosalind turned and started to walk away, then looked back. "Maybe you should start practicing on your friend."

Emily looked at Caitlin questioningly. "What did she mean by that? Practice what?"

Caitlin grabbed Emily's hand. "Do you know what she meant by being her bitch?"

"Sure. She expects me to be her slave. Wait on her, gets her drinks. That sort of stuff." Emily said and then shrugged her shoulders as if it were no big deal.

Caitlin shook her head. "I don't think that's what she meant. I think she expects you to be her girlfriend for a day if you lose. She expects you to... do certain things to her."

At first Emily didn't move, she didn't say a word. Then her face turned a pale white. "I can't do that, especially not to that malodorous bitch. I'm going to heave!" Emily barely made it to the nearest trash receptacle.

Chapter Two - Show Them What You Got

Monday, August 16, 2004

It had taken Draco months to finally reach a decision and now he found himself pacing the sidewalk across from her flat anxiously waiting for her lover to leave. At last the door opened and Draco observed Weasley scurry along the street toward Fred and George's joke shop. Draco knew she would be there alone for the next three hours. He decided to give Ron an adequate amount of time to reach the shop before approaching the door.

Samantha had enjoyed an early breakfast with Ron and was now busily straightening out the flat before Timmy awoke. Ron would be back at twelve and they had plans to take Timmy to the park after lunch. Suddenly a knocking at the door startled her. At first she thought perhaps Ron had forgotten something, but then realized he would not have bothered to knock.

She opened the door apprehensively wondering who would be calling at this early hour of the morning. Sam was literally dumbfounded when she saw his face staring in her direction. At first she didn't say a word; just stood with her mouth open in disbelief. Finally she was able to speak.

"Cedric, in no way did I ever expect to see you again," she said nervously.

"Nor did I ever anticipate for our paths to cross. Samantha. May I come in? It's rather important we talk," the white-blond haired man replied.

"Now you want to talk," Samantha answered furiously. "You didn't seem to sense a need to chat with me the morning after you took my virginity. I know I was a silly girl, but I thought you actually cared about me. You treated me like a princess and then you just vanished without a word. What makes you think that after all this time, I want to talk to you, Cedric?"

"Please don't call me Cedric. My name is Draco."

Sam just looked at him contemptuously. "I should have known. You lied about everything else, why would you have given me your real name?" Even after all this time tears came to Sam's eyes when she thought of how betrayed she had felt that morning when she awoke to find him gone. "There was a time when I searched for you. I came to England because I thought I loved you. You can't imagine how much I wanted us to be together. But I've grown up Cedric...Draco, whatever the hell your name is. I've found someone that truly cares for me, and I love him. We have nothing to talk about." Sam slammed the door in Draco's face.

Sam did a locking charm on the door and then leaned against the wall shaking uncontrollably. She waited patiently to hear his footsteps depart, but there was no sound.

"Samantha, we have to talk," he shouted through the door. "I was young, I was just looking to fulfill my needs. I thought that was all you wanted. How was I to know that you actually loved me or that it was your first time?"

Samantha turned and screamed at the door, "Like it would have made the least bit of a difference to you. You made me think I was special, that you cared for me. All you cared about was shagging me."

"I want to do the right thing now, Samantha. I was mistaken to leave. You've had my child;

let me marry you and take care of you both.”

Samantha couldn’t trust her own ears. She withdrew her wand and grasped it firmly as she removed the charm and opened the door. She looked at him in both disbelief and revulsion. “You just admitted that you had no feelings for me, that to you I was nothing but a one night shag. Why would you offer to marry me and how narcissistic can you be to imagine I would for an instant even consider saying yes?”

“Because we should both be doing what is best for our child. He should be with his actual father so that he is raised in a suitable way.”

“He will be raised in a proper way by myself and someone who truly loves us both.”

“Weasley?! Draco glared at Samantha with incredulity. “You consider that pitiable werewolf a fit surrogate to father my son? There is no way I will stand by and tolerate that happening”

“I’m afraid you relinquished any say in the subject when you walked out on me.”

“You shouldn’t be quite so sure of yourself, Samantha. This isn’t America, besides I doubt Weasley will want any part of either of you when he discovers who impregnated you.”

“Exactly what do you mean by that spiteful remark?”

“I think you should have the satisfaction of discovering the counter to that question yourself. Be sure to closely observe the expression on Weasley’s face when you tell him that the father of your child is none other than Draco Malfoy. You haven’t heard the last from me, not by a long shot.” Draco turned and hurriedly walked away before Sam was able to remark.

Sam for a short time stood at the door, dizzied by the happenings of the past few minutes. *Ron loves both Timmy and I. What possible difference could knowing the name of Timmy’s father make in our relationship?*

* * * * *

“But I thought you abhorred beauty contests,” Hermione asked as the family prepared to head out for breakfast.

“I do. I detest competing against someone in a contest where the primary qualifications are your butt and bust. However, this competition is more based on physical fitness rather than just looks. Plus, my two sisters sort of pressed me into it.”

Caitlin gave Jamie a disgruntled look. “You were as upset with Roz as Emily and I. Someone has to beat that egotistical bitch.”

“Caitlin!” Hermione shouted. “That is enough of that kind of language. I’m sure this Roz is a nice girl if you take the time to get to know her. What did you think of her, Emily?”

Emily face turned pale at the thought of ‘getting to know Roz better’. “I have to pee,” Emily said as she ran to the bathroom.

“What’s wrong with your sister,” Hermione inquired of Jamie.

Jamie simply shrugged her shoulders as Caitlin said, “Roz seems to have a negative effect on Emily’s tummy.”

“Let’s get a move on,” Harry called. Hermione and I have a tennis match scheduled for eight and there is going to be a volleyball tournament at eleven.

Jamie laughed. “It seems you’ve gotten into the spirit of the resort, Harry. I didn’t know you played tennis or volleyball?”

Harry reddened slightly. “I’ve played volleyball a few times, but I’ve never had a tennis racket in my hands until yesterday. I’m expecting Hermione to keep us in the game.”

Caitlin observed her Mum questioningly. “Do you play tennis?”

“Very seldom anymore, but I took lesson from age six to eleven. I did quite well in some children’s tournaments, but once I got my letter from Hogwarts, a lot of things took a back seat.”

“Do you ever regret giving up the cello and tennis?” Jamie asked.

“Not once,” Hermione responded quickly. “The alternative was just too exciting. Besides, now when I reflect back, I question if unwittingly my magical abilities might not have played a part in some of my victories.”

“Mum,” Caitlin said in disbelief. “You didn’t cheat?”

“Not knowingly, Honey. But I did get more than my share of lucky bounces. Perhaps I unintentionally controlled the ball in some magical way.

“Well, I hope you and Harry don’t use magic to take advantage of any muggle couple today,” Jamie responded.

Before Hermione had the opportunity to retort Emily entered the room still looking to some extent insipid. “Sorry to have kept everyone waiting. Shall we be off to breakfast?”

Caitlin looked sympathetically at Emily. *Poor Emily, Jamie just has to beat Roz.*

* * * * *

The Miss Nude Teen Pageant has been an annual event for the last twenty-five years, but this year due to feminist pressure some changes have been made in the structure of the contest. Previously the event was held for only one day. The participants were judged in street wear, bathing costumes and nude. A panel of judges decided on the ultimate winner.

This year the event will last four days with the original ‘beauty contest’ score only representing one fifth of the total score. Day two the contestants will compete in a swimming competition. On the third day there will be a physical fitness exercise contest. And the forth competition day will be composed of a four mile run and a time limit distance race. The forth

day's event will have two separate scores; the five scores will be added to determine Miss Nude Teen.

First place in an event is worth one hundred points, second place seventy-five points, third place fifty points and fourth place twenty-five points.

"Harry, you amaze me," Hermione said as she looked at her husband with admiration. "If one were to look at you, they would imagine that you had been a naturist your entire life, not just two days."

"It's not me as much as the people here. They are so accepting. I'm sure that you'd be fine. When no one is looking just cancel the charm and you will fit right in," Harry urged.

"If only it were that effortless. Oh! Harry!" Hermione wanted to kick her prudish self. "I know you're right about the people. Everyone we've met has been so pleasant; I'm sure they wouldn't stare or make comments. It's just me. I'm scared. I simply can't imagine parading around in front of everyone starkers. I envy your mettle."

"You still have four days. I have confidence that the most powerful witch in the world can overcome this impasse."

"Harry, believe me I want to do this more than anything in the world. I want to make the mirror's reflections of the future come true, but I'm petrified. I believe I'd rather face Voldemort again than have everyone see me nude."

Harry squeezed Hermione hand tightly and then laughed.

"What's so amusing?"

"I was just thinking that you should have been naked when we faced Voldemort. He would have been so spellbound by your exquisiteness that Ron and I could have effortlessly caught him off guard."

Hermione blushed a bright red. "Mister Potter, you are quite the self-esteem builder, but Voldemort would have been the last person in the world that I would have wanted to parade naked in front of."

Harry gave Hermione a gentle kiss just as the pageant host announced that they were about to begin the contest.

Harry pretended to understand the host, but in reality struggled to just comprehend the name of each contestant. As the girls were introduced one at a time, they first climbed the ramp to the stage and then walked to the far left where they stopped and smiled at the audience and then turned fully around showing the outfit they had chosen to wear from all angles. Next they went to the far right and then center stage doing the same thing.

Harry was surprised to see that the pageant was being videotaped and also that many spectators were taking pictures of the contestants. It was the first time he had seen any of the hotel guests with a camera. Emily had told him that cameras were frowned upon at the resort as an invasion of privacy. Evidently the contestants were excluded from this unwritten rule.

The competitors varied in age from thirteen to eighteen and there was a great disparity in their builds. One entrant was rather a wisp of a girl that looked like the slightest breeze would blow her off her feet while another of the participants was rather fleshy. At long last, Jamie was announced and Harry noticed Hermione's eyes light up.

Harry had wondered what Jamie would wear for this section of the contest because he knew she had packed extremely little clothing for the trip. He immediately recognized her outfit as the summer dress Hermione had worn to dinner the night they arrived. Just like with Hermione, the dress accentuated Jamie's lovely curves. Jamie, however, must have placed a temporary hem shortening charm on the dress because Harry certainly would have never forgotten seeing Hermione expose such an extreme amount of leg.

Jamie was the last of the ten participants and as she took her place on the risers, Harry leaned over to Hermione and said, "I could be biased in my opinion, but I think Jamie is a sure victor."

Hermione gave Harry a smile, "I think we both might be rather partial when it comes to Jamie, but I wouldn't rule out number six or eight. Neither is nearly as well endowed as Jamie, but both have pretty faces and looked quite fetching in their outfits."

Caitlin, who had been watching from the edge of the pool along with Emily, put her arm around Emily as the contestants left to change into swim costumes for the next segment of the day's contest. "It looks good. Jamie is by far the most attractive."

"I think so and you think so, but it's how the judges feel that counts. Besides even if she wins today, there are still four more events," Emily answered nervously. "Caitlin, what am I going to do? I get sick every time I think of having to do that to Roz. Would you ever be able to do it?"

Caitlin put her arm around Emily and gave her a hug. "To her, not in a million years. The very thought sickens me as well, but..."

Caitlin hesitated briefly and then continued. "Emily, please don't take what I'm about to say wrong. I'm sure I'm not gay; I mean, I definitely find boys extremely appealing, but a part of me would like to try that, but I could only do it with certain people."

Emily was stunned by Caitlin's answer and backed slightly away. "Who are these special people?"

Caitlin never got to answer because the host was announcing the first girl in the bathing costume portion of the program.

Harry looked questioningly at Hermione who he knew was clothed not in her bathing costume, but by the charm. "Is Jamie wearing your bathing costume also, or did she bring one with her?"

"Neither," Hermione answered. "We picked up one last evening while you, Caitlin and Emily were having an ice cream. It's the kind you wanted me to purchase, one that barely covers anything. When you see her, keep repeating to yourself that she is only sixteen."

The contestants again came on stage and presented themselves to the audience as they had in

the first part of the program. It seemed all the girls had chosen to wear two-piece costumes. As contestant number nine took her place on the risers Harry commented to Hermione. "That girl must work out an extreme amount. She is quite muscular."

"That's Roz, she's the one that the girls don't care for. She just missed out on being in the Olympics a few year ago.. Jamie informs me that she is a rather talented swimmer."

"I think her build will be a disadvantage in this part of the contest, but it should definitely help her in the exercises and I imagine she will dominate swimming," Harry commented.

"Number ten, Jamie ," the host announced.

As Jamie climbed the ramp, Hermione saw several of the men reach for towels and lay them on their laps. Difficult as it may possibly be to believe, Jamie in a tiny bathing costume was much sexier and arousing than Jamie totally naked. That could perhaps have something to do with the fact that her bathing costume only consisted of three, three inch blue equilateral triangles connected by rather flimsy looking strings.

Michelle leaned over and whispered to Hermione, "This part of the contest is over. We already know how gorgeous she is nude and that dress and bathing suit were just fabulous. What amazes me about her is that she must recognize how attractive she is, but she doesn't seem to be the least bit toffee-nosed."

Hermione smiled, "I'm certain Jamie would be appreciative of your kind words."

Hermione and Michelle drifted off into conversation and before either of them realized, the girls had left the stage, removed their bathing costumes and contestant number one, Chantal had returned and was now posing nude for the audience. She seemed to be the youngest of the contestants, but that certainly didn't affect her confidence. Her enticing smile caught everyone's attention. When Chantal got to center stage and had her back to the audience, she hesitated briefly and then leaned slightly forward and shook her bare butt at the audience. Everyone laughed and applauded as the young girl took her place next to the host and answered some brief question that were both asked and answered in French, none of which Harry understood. Then the girl took her position on the platform, still blushing quite intensely from her derriere shaking.

"I like her," Hermione commented to Harry. "She reminds me a lot of Caitlin. What I'd give to have that kind of confidence."

Harry looked at Hermione with a confused expression on his face. "You want to get on stage and shake your booty at everyone?"

Hermione frustratingly slapped Harry with a towel. "No, I don't want to shake my butt on stage. I want to have the confidence that she has, to be able to get up there like she is and joke around with the audience."

Contestant, number two, although petite and attractive lacked confidence and social grace. Margot didn't look like she had any interest in being in the contest and picked her nose during the interview. Number three was the girl that Harry had described politely as fleshy. Harry was being extremely kind. Bari's parents should seriously consider buying a lock for their refrigerator.

Contestant number four was a girl you would consider given a sympathy vote. She had a pretty face and what seemed like a beautiful personality. Yvonne's body down to her waist was beautiful, but she had been given a butt terribly out of proportion with the balance of her body. The fact that she had gorgeous legs, if anything exasperated the situation.

Number five was the wisp of a girl who was built like a twig, but had the hair, face and smile of a goddess. You could almost hear everyone commenting that with a few pounds here and there, Felicite would be quite attractive. Contestant six had those few pounds here and there. It can be said of few people, but Sydney was a great deal more attractive nude than in the textiles she had chosen to wear.

It almost hurt your eyes to look at participant number seven. Although Odetta had an adequate figure, her skin was pale white and covered with freckles. It looked like this was the first day she had been out in the sun all year. Hermione even commented to Harry that she hoped the girl had put on a good suntan lotion.

In the looks category contestant number eight seemed to be Jamie's strongest competition, but when she opened her mouth it was evident that there was a vacancy sign where her brain was located. Fluffy was British and therefore Harry could understand all the questions and answers. He greatly wished she had been French.

If this were a bodybuilding contest, Roz would have won instantly. Her arms and thighs were extremely muscular although her breasts seemed to have been diminished by her muscular chest. Harry turned his head to Hermione, the look on his face indicating he was quite turned off. "I realize not everyone is into the smooth look like you and Jamie, but doesn't she ever groom," he said nauseatingly. As Harry spoke Roz had flexed her muscles showing a good deal of underarm hair, but what had really turned Harry's stomach was the over abundant amount of pubic hair.

Hermione suddenly became aware that she was staring at Roz and promptly turned her head toward Harry in disbelief. "I'm certainly no expert on the subject, nor have I ever actually really thought about it before, but I didn't think it was possible for it to get that long and thick."

Harry looked at Hermione beseechingly and she instantly knew what he was thinking. She quickly gave him a reassuring hug and kissed his eagerly awaiting lips. Then she whispered in his ear. "Don't worry sweetheart. It's gone forever. You and Jamie have converted me for life."

They were about to kiss again when the emcee said, "And our last contestant, number ten, Jamie."

Although every contestant had been greeted with polite applause; Jamie's was much more than polite. It was apparent that she was the crowd's favorite and the disparity between her and Roz seemed to only increase their passion for her.

As Jamie moved from position to position on the stage Hermione's eyes surveyed the crowd. She noticed many men still had towels on their laps, but not Harry. He was simply applauding wildly. Hermione smiled to herself. He sees her now only as a sister that he loves and nothing more.

After Jamie was questioned by the emcee, the girls were all asked to come forward so that the judges could have one final look after which the girls huddled to the side of the stage as the judges made their verdicts.

As Harry watched the judges intently, Hermione watched Jamie and the other contestants. Jamie and contestant number five seemed to be joking with the girl that had shook her butt at the crowd. Although Hermione couldn't hear the girls, it seemed that Jamie and contestant number five were telling the girl she had done it improperly and they were demonstrating the proper way to shake one's rear. Hermione laughed as she watched the girls; envious at their lack of inhibition; just talking and fooling around not the least bit fretful that they were naked or at whom may be watching.

The judges quickly finished their assessment and the contestants were herded back to their positions on stage.

The MC first announced in French, then German and finally in English that today's contest was only the first of five events that would decide this year's winner. The second event would be a timed swimming of eight laps of the pool to be held tomorrow at noon.

He then announced the winners of the personality, pose and beauty portion of the contest. "In fourth place and awarded twenty-five points, contestant number five, Felicite." She couldn't believe she had finished as high as forth. Felicite jumped up and down screaming as the other contestants tried to congratulate her.

"Third place and fifty points are awarded to Chantal." Chantal yelled and waved to her parents and then turned and shook her butt to the audience as if saying thank you.

"I like both those girls," Hermione said softly to Harry. "Of course, I want Jamie to win, but I hope they place high."

"In second place and awarded seventy-five points, number six, Sydney. And I give you today's winner with one hundred points, contestant number ten, Jamie"

All the girls, with the exception of Roz, encircled Jamie and congratulated her. Roz simply walked off the stage despite the MC's plea that they wanted to take more pictures. As Roz passed the pool, Caitlin and Emily continued to cheer enthusiastically. Roz stopped and glared momentarily at the girls.

"I wouldn't get overly excited if I were you 'Skipper'. This was only round one and I've never seen anyone win a swimming competition doing the doggy paddle." She looked at Emily threateningly and said, "I hope you have a nice long tongue. I'm getting excited just thinking about it." She walked off before Caitlin could say a word. Emily couldn't talk either. She jumped out of the pool and ran toward the loo holding her hand over her mouth.

* * * * *

Roz was correct; Caitlin and Emily's celebration was short lived. Jamie, although she loved playing in the pool, had never had proper swimming lessons. She could keep herself afloat and make it from one end of the pool to the other, but eight laps was out of the question.

Jamie had to be helped out of the pool after only completing three laps.

Roz finished first for one hundred points. Contestant number four, Yvonne, surprised the crowd with a second place finish and although they didn't look anything like Olympic material, Felicite and Chantal managed to scratch out third and fourth place respectively. Contestant number two dropped out of the contest, preferring to sit poolside and watch the other girls compete as she incessantly jabbed her finger inside her nose.

* * * * *

Wednesday, August 18, 2004

"Dad, it's not even six, Caitlin whined. "Why are you waking us up already? Did you forget that we're on vacation?"

"I didn't forget, but we have an exceedingly busy day in front of us. Your Mum and I are still alive in the tennis tournament, albeit in the losers bracket. We have a match at eight. Jamie's exercise component of the competition takes place at eleven and then Hermione and I are playing volleyball at two," Harry said without stopping to take a breath.

Caitlin smiled. "Admit it. You and Mum are having a great time."

Harry looked at Caitlin quite seriously. "I'm not having a great time. I'm having a terrific time. It astonishes me how easily I've adapted and how much I love it here. If only your Mum..."

"If only she would take off her clothes" Caitlin finished Harry's sentence. "I know she wants to.

Emily rolled over and looked teasing at Harry. "Getting accustomed to being around us in the buff aren't you, Uncle Harry?"

Harry looked down not realizing he had walked into the girl's room naked. "I'm sorry," he started to say, quite flustered, before Emily interrupted.

"Get a grip. I'm just teasing. Forgetting about clothes and being comfortable naked is what it's all about. If only Aunt Hermione could take that last step. She's been as naked as the rest of us every day since we got here. All she has to do is say "Finite Incantatum", she's just afraid to let everyone else see her. And I for one will never figure out why. If I'm half as beautiful as her when I reach maturity, I'm going to personally send my pictures to Playwizard Magazine."

Caitlin looked at Emily with a horrified expression. "Would you really do that? I mean pose in the altogether for pictures. Wouldn't it embarrass you to have them passed around?"

Emily gave Caitlin a frustrated expression. "Why would you be willing to let someone see you physically naked, but be embarrassed to have them show photos of you that way?"

Harry gave Emily a bothered look, "I see your point, but I also understand where Caitlin is coming from. Since you both are a long way from maturity, I think we can safely table this discussion until another time. I know Hermione wants to take that last step. I wish there was a

way we could help her.”

“I could always whisper “Finite Incantatum” as I stood next to her,” Jamie playfully suggested as she sat up in bed and started stretching. “Once she’s spent a day with people seeing her, I doubt she’d have a problem doing it again.”

“We could never do that,” Harry quickly retorted. “She’d never forgive us. This has to be of her doing. Now, that’s sufficient talk. Take care of what ever business you have in the loo and lets get our morning run underway.”

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“Harry, is the charm working?” Hermione asked.

“It’s working like a charm, Mione.” Harry gave Hermione an encouraging hug. It’s Wednesday; you’re running out of time. Why don’t you just take the charm off and walk out that door?”

Hermione stood for a moment looking at the door with determination in her eyes. Then she turned and said desperately, “I can’t. We’re playing both tennis and volleyball today. Can you imagine the exhibition I’d make of myself with these flying all over the place.” She cupped her ample breasts in her hands.

Harry looked at her as if mesmerized by the thought. “I think you’d look spectacular, but then I’m a man and I happen to think you’re the most beautiful living thing on earth.”

“Harry, you make me feel so extraordinary, but perhaps you should get your glasses checked before the fall session starts.” Hermione looked at the time. “We have an hour before our match begins. I’m going to go sit by the pool a bit.”

“I’ll meet you down there,” Harry said. “I skipped shaving this morning and now I feel a bit unkempt.”

After shaving Harry decided to take a fast shower and then he rushed down the stairs to meet Hermione. He hurriedly looked around the pool and when he finally located her, his jaw dropped in astonishment. She had actually done it; the charm was off. Hermione was naked and she was dazzling. Realizing that this had taken a great deal on daring on her part and so as not to make her self-conscious, he decide it best to not make a big deal about her nudity.

“Mione, you look fabulous,” he said. “Are you ready to kick our opponents butts?”

Hermione gave Harry a gently hug. “I’m ready partner,” she said eagerly as she rubbed her eyes. “I must have dozed off waiting for you. I’d in all likelihood still be sleeping if I hadn’t just been splashed by some children.”

Hermione looked down to the end of the pool where the girls were playing with some of their friends. “I want to tell the girls that we’re headed down to the court.”

Jamie couldn’t believe her eyes when she saw Hermione headed in her direction. “Caitlin! Emily! She did it!” Jamie shouted, elatedly. “Now don’t make any comments about it or

you'll make her uncomfortable."

As Hermione and Harry walked up, the girls were all smiles. "Harry and I are off to our tennis match. Jamie, we'll be back in plenty of time for you competition," Hermione said.

Jamie looked at Hermione in awe. "You're going to play like.... Good luck!" Jamie was astonished. It had taken Hermione all this time just to let people see her naked and now she was straight away going to play tennis.

"Mum, you're fabulous," Caitlin shouted. Give them hell. I mean heck."

"Way to show them what you got," Emily added, receiving a dirty look from both Jamie and Caitlin.

As they left the pool area and headed down the path toward the tennis courts, Hermione questioned Harry. "Did the girls seem especially happy and cheerful to you?"

"I think they're happy for you," Harry responded.

Harry's response didn't make sense to Hermione, but instead of questioning it, she changed the subject and started discussing strategy for their match.

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"What was Jacques suggesting by that remark?" Hermione asked irritated, as they neared the pool area, having easily won their match in two straight sets.

What comment are you referring to, Hermione?" Harry asked.

"When he said that we won because you had an unjust advantage."

"My love, he was paying you a twofold accolade. Jacques had mentioned earlier that he found you to be an accomplished player. He also said that it was difficult to concentrate on the ball with such a vision on the court. Monique didn't seem to mind him complementing your ability, but I don't believe she was extremely happy about him ogling you, rather than paying attention to the game."

"How do you feel about another man eyeing your wife?"

"I feel I have to be levelheaded and take into consideration all the circumstances involved."

"And exactly what, pray tell are the circumstances involved with him practically staring a hole through me the entire match?"

"Well, first he's French and second, I'm married to the most beautiful woman in the world and third, he's French."

"Harry, not everyone sees me through your eyes, but then that doesn't matter because I'm not in love with everyone, just you. Shall we rinse off at the showers? I think we have time for a swim before the competition begins."

As they walked by the stage, Harry noticed that it had been completely covered with padding for the exercise portion of the contest. After rinsing and spending a short time in the pool with the girls, they went to claim two chairs for the third leg of the contest.

Harry was amazed at how Hermione was behaving. She certainly wasn't acting like this was her first day being seen naked. They found two chairs next to Michelle who was beaming at Hermione. "I knew you could do it. Congratulations," said Michelle.

"Thanks," replied Hermione, surprised that Michelle had heard about their tennis victory so quickly. "It wasn't easy, but I'm glad we both managed to pull it off."

"So am I. Now you can relax and enjoy the balance of your day," Michele said happily.

"We can't totally relax. Harry and I are playing volleyball immediately after lunch."

"Volleyball!" Michelle said surprisingly, glancing an unnoticed look at Hermione's full breasts. "Hermione, I give you credit. Good luck!"

"If I may have your attention please," The pageant's MC announced as the microphone squealed loudly. "We are about to start the exercise portion of our contest. We've had another dropout so we are down to only eight contestants. The contestants, however, will continue to wear their original numbers so as to not cause confusion."

As the girls were announced they rapidly moved up the ramp and created a line behind the MC. Neither Harry nor Hermione were surprised that the heavyset girl had dropped out. Rumors had spread that this was going to be an exhausting workout.

"This will be the most complicated aspect of the contest to score," the host announced. Therefore, two judges will be observing each of our contestants to insure that they perform all the required exercises and that they are executed properly."

"Initially the contestants will be required to perform seventy-five repetitions each of four different exercises. Should there be a tie we will do an additional twenty-five repetitions of each. If this results in still another tie, we will choose one exercise for a run off."

"The first of the exercises will be jumping jacks."

"I hate jumping jacks," Hermione said dismally to Harry. "Jamie abhors them, as well."

"Why is that?" Harry asked. "I thought you guys loved all exercising."

"Our figures just don't lend themselves well to jumping jacks, especially when done in the nude. Even as young as she is, Jamie's breasts could become sore after the contortions seventy-five repetitions will put her through."

"Is everyone ready to begin," the host announced. "Judges, by my count. One-two, two-two, three-two..."

Hermione never included jumping jacks in their morning exercise routine and now Harry understood why. He found himself captivated by the action of Jamie's breasts as they

seemingly possessed a mind of their own; insisting on going the opposite direction as the rest of her body. Finally the contestants relaxed as the count reached seventy-five. Harry noticed Jamie make eye contact with Hermione. The expression on her face left little doubt about her feelings toward that exercise.

After conferring with the judges the MC announced that all eight contestants had received full marks

“The next exercise will be done on four counts,” the MC announced. “Each contestants will start with their hands on their hips. On the first count you will bend forward and touch the stage floor with your fingertips. On two your hands will return to your hips. At the count of three you will reach for the sky and then on four, return your hands to your hips again. Are there any questions?”

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Contestant number eight raised her hand and asked, “Must our feet remain together or may we spread our legs apart?”

“If spreading your legs is necessary in order to touch the ground, then you should most certainly do that. The judges will be watching to see that fingertips make contact with the ground on every repetition. If there are no further questions, please place your hands on your hips and begin on my count. One, two, three, four; two, two, three, four....”

It was obvious that this exercise was more to Jamie’s liking as the Zacherley smile returned to her face. The girls were midway through the exercise when Harry heard some loud talking near the side of the stage. “What’s going on?” Harry questioned Hermione.

“Didn’t you see him?!” Hermione responded furiously. “I’m so glad Claude caught him. They should destroy his camera and fling the pervert out of the hotel.”

“What did he do?” Harry asked meekly.

“The degenerate had snuck to the back of the stage and was taking pictures of the girls from the rear as they did their toe touches.”

Before Harry was able to respond, Michelle said, “Sadly that happens all too often. That’s why nudists frown on the use of cameras except at special events such as this. We allow the videotaping and support of the pageant because we feel it promotes the healthy positive aspects of nudism. Unfortunately there are always those who try to turn innocence into pornography for the sake of a dollar.”

Due to the disturbance, many in the audience didn’t realize that the girls had completed the second exercise.

“Although all of our contestants finished the required number of repetitions,” the MC announced, “the judges have informed me that not everyone will receive full marks. The scores are as follows: Contestant number one-seventy-two, number four-sixty-five, number five-seventy-three, number seven-sixty nine, number eight-fifty-three, number nine-seventy-five, number ten-seventy-five.

“The third exercise will be sit-ups. For this exercise, each participant will need a holder. Would a member from each girl’s family please come forward?”

Harry hesitated. Although he had overcome his uneasiness with nudity, the thought of going on stage didn't necessarily delight him. He waited, hopeful Emily or Caitlin would go to Jamie's aid. Instead, without hesitation, Hermione jumped to her feet and without comment went to hold for Jamie. Harry was becoming more bewildered as the day progressed. Where was his Mione and who was this self-assured nudist who had taken her place?

"I can't get over your wife," Michelle commented. "Three days ago she was self conscious and afraid to even go topless and look at her now, up on stage and not the least bit concerned."

As Harry admiringly watched Hermione hold for Jamie, his eyes couldn't help but glance to Rosalind's father. He was a burley man, nearly completely covered with body hair, leaving little doubt where Roz had acquired this feature.

Rosalind and Jamie both completed the sit-ups and the pushups, which followed, with perfect seventy-fives. None of the other girls achieved even fifty in either exercise. After all four exercises, the judges were able to award forth place to number five, Felicite and third place to number one, Chantal. Jamie and Roz, however, were tied for first.

The tiebreaker was completing an additional twenty-five of each of the four exercises, which resulted in a further tie. It was nearing lunchtime and as the audience was becoming rather antsy it was decided to pick one exercise at random and have the girls compete until either one gave out. Even before it was announced, Jamie knew what the exercise would be.

When the MC announced that the final 'do it till you drop' exercise would be jumping jacks, Jamie simply looked toward Harry and Hermione and shrugged her shoulders. She gave it her best, but after one hundred twenty-five her breasts had it; she was forced to settle for second place.

Emily and Caitlin had joined Harry and Hermione, waiting for Jamie to depart the stage. She walked up to them dejectedly. "The contest might just as well be over. Tomorrow's events both involve running and my boobs have gone through just about all the contortions they can take."

Jamie gave Hermione a halfhearted smile. "You soak sore feet; what do you do for sore breasts."

"Actually, either Caitlin or I can alleviate that problem for you. You'll be as good as new. Right now, however, we have to rush to lunch or Harry and I will be late for our volleyball match. Harry, it's second nature for the girls to eat like they are. Would you have a problem if we all just went to that little café down the street for lunch as we are?"

Everyone just looked at Hermione, thunderstruck. "I'll be fine," Harry answered, still stunned. "What about you?"

"Well, certainly I'd prefer to get dressed, but since we are so rushed. After all this is a community of nudist, it's hardly a big deal."

At first no one spoke. Jamie could not believe her ears. Hermione was actually suggesting that

they all go to lunch starkers. "Let's go!" Jamie finally said. "We certainly don't want the volleyball stars to be late for their match."

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"Jamie, don't be so stubborn," Caitlin implored. "You're hurting and I can help. You heard Mum. She said that either Caitlin or her could help you."

"But you're rather new at all this hyperempathic stuff," Jamie stated, extremely concerned. "Are you positive you know what you're doing?"

"Jamie, it's not like I'm going to mistakenly shrivel them to nothing. Making simple soreness go away is the easiest thing a hyperempath does. Last week at the Hogsmeade Clinic I learned how to restore milk to a breast-feeding mother whose supply had gone dry. If I can do that, I surely can relieve your tenderness."

"Isn't there a way you can do it without touching me. That seems so... so... not right."

"Jamie, trust her," Emily encouraged. "Yesterday I cut my leg and she only had to touch the cut for a few minutes before it was completely healed. Believe me, she is amazing."

"You're just going to touch them, nothing more?" Jamie asked nervously.

"If that is all you want, I can just cup them in my hands," Caitlin answered comfortingly, "but honestly to do the process correctly, I should stroke and rub the entire chest area."

Jamie leered at Emily, "I don't want to hear one lesbian remark out of you, understood? Let's try just cupping them. How should we sit?"

Caitlin thought for a moment. "It would probably be best if we sat on the floor. I can lean my back against the bed and you can slide back against me. That way I can reach my arms around you and grasp your breasts."

"I can't believe I'm doing this. I just hope this doesn't lead to having sex with Roz," she said jokingly.

At the mention of sex with Roz, Emily leapt to her feet and ran to the bathroom.

Jamie looked questioningly at Caitlin. "What is it with her lately?"

"She'll be fine as long as you beat Roz tomorrow. Now lean back," Caitlin ordered.

As Jamie leaned her back against Caitlin's chest, the younger girl cupped a breast in each hand. "Now try to relax and don't talk," she instructed.

Jamie found that relaxing with Caitlin holding her breasts was easier said than done, but did her best. In a brief time she fell into a tranquil stupor. Her mind seemed to be floating outside of her body. She was able to observe the entire room as if she were floating above it. She saw herself leaning against Caitlin and then watched as Emily reentered the room and quietly took a seat.

Jamie felt transfixed. She floated above the scene, observing what was happening, but either unable or unwilling to move or react. She watched as the fingers on Caitlin's right hand started tracing the nipple on the apparently comatose Jamie's right breast. Caitlin's hand moved outward until she was caressing the entire breast, then the entire right half of the chest from the upper shoulder to the side and under the arm. Then she once again cupped the breast and now using her left hand repeated the process on the left side of Jamie's chest.

When Caitlin finished with the left side, she placed both hands on Jamie's shoulders and whispered, "Okay."

As if being bewildered after waking from a deep sleep, Jamie mumbled, "Okay. Yeah, I'm okay. You can start whenever you're ready."

Caitlin smiled. "We're done," she said. "You and I have an extremely strong bond. That was quite easy."

"I'm not sure how easy it was," Emily added, "but I sure wish I had pictures. I could make a fortune blackmailing you guys."

Jamie looked at Caitlin questioningly, her memory of what had transpired gone. "What exactly did you do?"

Caitlin shook her head. "I'm not sure. I just start by putting my hands at the source of the pain or injury. Once a connection is established, I sort of lapse into a trance and the powers just take over and guide me in the proper things to do."

"It may be best that neither of you know exactly what transpired," Emily said. "Let's concern ourselves with what's truly important. Did it work?"

Jamie got to her feet and then stretched to either side. She smiled and then did a couple jumping jacks. "I feel terrific. That's quite some ability you have there little sister."

"Mum and Madam Pomfrey are amazed at what I can do already. They think that in time I may even be able to regenerate body parts and heal without actually touching," Caitlin said proudly.

"Speaking of your Mum. I want to run and catch the end of Hermione and Harry's volleyball game. Do you guys want to come with me?" Jamie asked.

Emily checked with Caitlin and then said, "No. We have a couple of guys waiting for us down by the pool."

After leaving Caitlin and Emily with their friends, Jamie jogged up the path to the tennis courts; amazed at how the soreness had completely disappeared. She arrived just in time to see Hermione serve a match-winning ace. After shaking hands with the other team, Hermione dashed over to talk to Jamie as Harry remained behind celebrating with his teammates.

Hermione, whose face was glowing, excitedly ran up to Jamie. "I can't believe the game I just had. I've never been that extremely good at sports, but today both at tennis and now at volleyball; I couldn't seem to do anything wrong."

“Maybe it’s the luck of a new nudist,” Jamie suggested with a smile.

“Maybe,” Hermione laughed. “I do love being outdoors and not wearing clothes. If only I had the nerve to cancel the charm and let others see me as I am.”

Out of the blue Jamie realized why Hermione was so relaxed. She had absolutely no idea that for the entire day people had been seeing her as she truly is, naked. Hermione thinks the charm is still in place.

“Hermione, have people treated you any different today then previously,” Jamie inquired.

“No,” Hermione quickly replied and she hesitated a bit. “Everyone has always been friendly, but today I felt more accepted. It was as if they finally got accustomed to me being in a bathing costume and that it no longer bothered them.”

“Did you feel more self conscious than normal, like people were staring at you?”

“No. Actually with the exception of Jacques, whom everyone realizes is a pig, today was the most at ease I’ve felt. People obviously finally got used to me being in a bathing costume and stopped staring.”

They had been walking slowly along the path, allowing time for Harry to catch up. He hadn’t yet, and as they approached an empty bench Jamie indicated it to Hermione. Jamie thought it might be a good idea for Hermione to be seated when she got the news.

They sat for a few moments looking back the path for signs of Harry. “Hermione,” Jamie said tentatively. “Do you remember when you stopped by the pool early this morning and told the three of us that you and Harry were headed to your tennis match?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“The charm wasn’t on then and it hasn’t been on all day,” Jamie blurted out, her words running together.

Hermione repeated Jamie’s words. “The charm wasn’t on then and it hasn’t been on all day.” She sat petrified as their meaning coursed through her body.

Chapter Three - Winners and Losers

"This has been the most glorious week of my life," Ginny said, as she stood naked looking out the balcony's sliding glass door. "The view from here is breathtaking."

"As it most certainly is from here," Severus responded lustfully from their bed as he took in all of the redhead's radiant beauty.

"Why can't we just stay here?" Ginny asked. "Forget about Hogwarts and family, just you and me."

"Because my love, we are not five year olds," Severus answered. "We cannot shed the responsibilities of life as we would a shirt in order to go off and live in a make-believe world. But much of what we have here could become reality; it's simply a matter of choice."

"A choice that should be so simple, but yet I remain hesitant."

"Hesitant because you cannot come to terms with the past. One's future is built on plans and dreams, not sad memories."

"Not all my memories of times with him are sad," Ginny responded defensively.

"No, I imagine they aren't. If they were, making a decision would not be that difficult. The only thing I'm certain of is that I love you, but for a relationship between us to work; you must be able to enter into it with no lingering ties to the past."

A knocking at the door interrupted their conversation.

"That must be room service, may I get it?" Ginny asked, her voice almost begging naughtily in anticipation.

"You find it exhilarating to drive these poor muggle room service clerks virtually crazy don't you?"

"I love the way they stutter and shake when a naked girl answers the door. They don't know where to look. Besides, you should be happy; it saves you money. They're usually so frustrated and eager to get out that they forget to wait for a tip."

"Have your amusement, my beautiful little witch."

* * * * *

Samantha was driving herself crazy with apprehension. Why did Draco feel that the very mention of his name alone would create a wedge between her and Ron? If only Harry or Hermione were available to talk with, but they were still on vacation. Each day that passed without discussing Draco's visit with Ron made her feel guiltier.

As she lay there in Ron's arms she realized she could put it off no longer. "Ronnie, something happened that I've been hesitant to tell you about."

"I know," he answered sweetly.

"You know?" Sam answered, startled.

"Well, I don't know what happened, but I know that you haven't been yourself since Monday. You've been here physically, but your mind has been off in another world. I've missed you. What is it that you've been so tentative to share?"

"Ron, you know I love you. I made some mistakes in the past; namely being naïve and allowing myself to become pregnant because of a one-night fling. I was brainless; I thought I was in love. Truth is, I never found out what real love was until I met you. Part of me wishes I could totally expunge that past and make believe it never happened. Another part of me could in no way do that because it would mean losing Timmy and I love him as much as I love you. I wish it could have been you that first time. I wish Timmy was actually your son."

"Sam, I love you too. Like you, I didn't know what love was until I met you. Would I have liked to be your one and only partner? Certainly, but that's not realistic in today's world. Guys can hardly sow wild oats until they're ready to settle down, and then expect to find a virgin. You've forgiven me my sordid past and although you have nothing that needs to be forgiven; your past is just that, your past. As for Timmy, we've discussed him before. I know he doesn't have my genes, but I love him as much as I love his mother. The day you become my wife is the day he officially becomes my son."

"Ron, I was visited by Timmy's dad on Monday," Sam said hesitantly and then held her breath waiting for Ron's reaction.

To Sam's great surprise Ron remained calm, only saying, "What did he want?"

"He admitted that he never loved me. Came right out and said that he looked upon me as nothing more than a one-night stand. He didn't have any feelings for me at all. Yet he asked me to marry him."

"What did you say?" Ron asked, the nervousness in his voice now extremely evident. "How - how did he find you?"

Sam looked at Ron, as if hurt that he should even feel it necessary to ask what she had said. "I told him that it was egotistical of him to think that I would even consider marrying him when I had you. He seemed extremely upset at the idea of you raising a son he had conceived. As to how he found me, I'm not sure. I think it was through you. I believe he knows you somehow." Sam was extremely anxious, but knew she had gone this far and had to finish.

"He threatened that he would not stand by and let you be a surrogate father to his son. Then he said he doubted that you would want any part of Timmy or me when you found out his identity."

Ron looked at Sam with trepidation. He knew he loved both this woman and her son. There was not anything he could envisage that could alter that sentiment. Yet he had to know the name of Timmy's father. "Who is this guy? What's his name?"

Sam answered with consternation. "Draco Malfoy is Timmy's father. Do you know him?"

Ron voiced not a word in reply, but merely buried his face in his hands.

* * * * *

"All day? People have seen me nude all day! Why didn't you say something?" Hermione asked, actually demanded.

Jamie was taken aback. "I thought you knew. I figured you had canceled the charm and I didn't want to make you more self-conscious by making a big deal out of it. I told the girls not to say anything, either."

"But Harry said it was working in the hotel room," Hermione moaned. "I can't believe he lied to me."

"He didn't." Jamie quickly said in Harry's defense. "I saw you when you first came out and sat down. The charm was working. You looked as if you had your swim costume on."

Hermione deliberated for a moment. "Something happened during the brief time I was asleep. Either someone said 'Finite Incantatum' or this spell has another glitch. Quick Jamie, find me a towel or something to cover myself with before anyone sees me like this."

Jamie at first just looked at Hermione in disbelief and then said sternly, "Hermione, all vacation you have been saying that this is what you wanted. You've sought the reflection in the mirror to become real life. This is your chance, don't dash off and hide now. You've been exposed all day. You even said that people paid less attention to you. That was because you were nude and not covered."

"You defeated Voldemort. You're strong enough to do this. I know you are," Jamie pleaded. "I'm here to help you. So are Harry and the girls."

Hermione realized that Jamie was right. She knew she could do this. Actually she had done it all day. To run and hide now was silly.

"You're right. I can do this. Where is Harry? I want to take a swim before dinner." Hermione's voice sounded firm and resolved, but Jamie could tell she was shaking.

"Here comes Harry now. Are you going to tell him that you didn't know the charm was off?" Jamie inquired.

"I'm naked and I intend to stay that way," Hermione said with resoluteness in her voice. "Why don't we let it remain our little secret that it happened by accident and not knowingly?"

Jamie smiled and nodded. "A secret between two sisters."

* * * * *

Thursday, August 19, 2004

"Why does your competition start so early today?" Hermione inquired. "There won't be

anyone out to cheer for you girls this early on."

"They realize that, but the panel of judges wanted to conclude by eleven so that they could do the crowning before lunch and so that we wouldn't be running in the blistering afternoon sun. Besides, there won't be much to watch," Jamie added. "The running all takes place on the beach."

"How exactly do they plan to give two scores for one event?"

"The first score will be given for the fastest time completing the four mile run. We must run from the hotel one mile north on the beach. Then back passing the hotel to a point one mile south. The order of finish getting back to the hotel from the south determines the first set of points," Jamie informed Hermione.

"Four miles is rather a long distance, especially when you take into account that you are running on soft sand rather than firm ground," Hermione interjected.

"If only it were only four miles, that's just the first part." Jamie said ominously. "Then we continue running until eleven o'clock with points awarded to the contestants who log the most additional distance."

"I'm sorry, but I think that is ludicrous," Hermione said angrily. "This is just a local contest, not a high profile marathon. None of you are skilled runners. Jamie, I wouldn't think poorly of you if you decided to drop out of the competition."

Caitlin and Emily only entered the room in time to hear Hermione propose that Jamie drop out. Emily face turned a ghastly white as she shouted, "She can't; she just can't! Jamie you have to win! You have to beat Roz!" Emily clutched her hand to her mouth and ran to the bathroom.

"The unfortunate girl. The food here simply doesn't seem to agree at all with her stomach," Hermione said dolefully.

"She'll be fine after Jamie beats Roz, today," Caitlin said encouragingly. "Jamie you can't drop out and let that bit... You just can't let Roz win."

"I'm not dropping out," Jamie said sneeringly. "I'd just as soon see Chantal or Felicite finish in first, but if Roz wins, life will be unbearable."

"Especially for Emily," Caitlin thought to herself. *"Especially for Emily."*

"We best get down to the pool for the start of the race," Hermione suggested.

"Where is Dad?" Caitlin asked.

"He was asked to help keep an eye on the race route to be sure that none of the contestants are given external aid," Hermione answered. The regular judges will be at the hotel and the north and south boundaries, but they needed some extra eyes to watch the remainder of the course."

Hermione smiled to herself, as they rushed in the direction of the pool. She was naked, but with all the discussion about the contest she had completely forgotten about it. Yesterday she

was nude by accident and when she finally found out, she was exceptionally panicky. But Hermione came back to the pool and spent an hour swimming with Harry and the kids. She even sat and talked briefly with Michelle and a couple to whom she had been introduced during the week. By the time they left the pool area she knew she would be going nude today. What she hadn't realized was how easy it would be after that initial time.

As they neared the pool, the contest MC motioned for Jamie to hurry, they were about to begin. As soon as she took her place on stage, he announced, "This morning we have the final two events of our program. As expected, the pool area is rather sparsely occupied at the moment, but I'm sure that will change by the time we are ready to crown this year's Miss Nude Teen."

"Before we start the race I would like to announce the current point totals and positions. Number nine; Rosalind with two hundred points is our current leader followed by number ten, Jamie with one hundred seventy-five points. In third place is number one, Chantal, with one hundred twenty-five points.

"Felicite, number five, completes the top four with one hundred points. Yvonne, number four, and Sydney, number six, follow her, both tied with seventy-five points. And although they have yet to score, with two hundred points available in today's events, Odetta, number seven, and Fluffy, number eight, should definitely not be counted out.

"The first part of today's contest will be a four mile run. The start, halfway point and finish of the race will be on the beach just outside the pool fence. If the contestants will please follow me, we will get the event underway."

As the contestants left the stage and headed for the starting line, Caitlin asked Hermione, "Who do you think will win this phase of the running?"

"It's difficult to say," Hermione replied. "Roz is definitely the strongest of the contestants and we know Jamie can run long distances. Chantal and Felicite are the big question marks. They both did well in the swimming and their lightweight could be an advantage running on the sand. We'll just have to keep our fingers crossed."

BANG! They all jumped as the starter's gun signaled the beginning of the race.

"How long do you anticipate before they return for the halfway mark?" Emily asked Hermione.

"Well if the girls were professionals and running on a firm surface, we'd be seeing times under twenty-five minutes for the entire race. These girls aren't professionals and running on sand will indubitably slow them down. I'd estimate fifteen to twenty minutes for the first half."

Emily looked at her watch. "If that's the case we have plenty of time to get a beverage. I'm thirsty."

"I could go for a tea," Hermione responded. "The bacon at breakfast was delicious, but rather salty. My throat is dry."

"I wonder why muggles don't make pumpkin juice?" Caitlin asked.

"I've often wondered that myself," Hermione replied as she paid for their beverages. "They're missing out on a tasty drink. That and butterbeer."

"Oh! I love butterbeer," Emily exclaimed. "It tastes so good and you can drink it and drink it and never get drunk."

"Not unless you're a house elf," Hermione interjected. "Butterbeer affects elves the same as muggle beer affects humans. I knew a house elf at Hogwarts named Winky who had a very serious drinking problem."

"My grandparents had house elves," Caitlin added, "but I never saw any at Hogwarts."

Hermione smiled, "Who do you think does all the cleaning and preparing of food? When we get back to Hogwarts, remind me to take you girls to the kitchen area and introduce you to Dobby."

"We better get back," Emily said looking at her watch. "The runners should be passing by soon."

As they walked by the pool area, Hermione noticed that it was still virtually empty. Then she remembered that it wasn't even half past eight yet. As they approached the starting line, Daniel Weber yelled out, "Look, here comes someone."

Emily looked in the direction Daniel was indicating and saw not one, but three runners approaching. "They look like their running together, not really racing."

"At this point they might just be running together," Hermione answered. "The best runners sometimes stay together if they are comfortable with the pace; saving strength for the last mile when they will try to break loose."

Caitlin yelled excitedly, "It's Jamie. She's the one in the middle."

As they came nearer Hermione was able to identify Chantal and Felicite as the girls running on either side of Jamie. As the girls neared, Daniel yelled, "Here comes someone else."

Someone else was quickly identified as Roz.

As Jamie passed she gave them a brief, but certainly not confident smile. Emily checked her watch then and again when Roz passed. Roz was a good minute behind. Baring a complete collapse by someone; Roz should do no better than fourth. Sydney was directly behind Roz followed by Yvonne, but then five minutes passed and no additional runners appeared. Finally, Emily saw Odetta and Fluffy walking toward them; the two girls had evidently quit the race and were merely taking their time walking back to the hotel.

The race was now down to six runners and none of the spectators could pull themselves away from the finish line despite the fact that it would be quite some time before the girls reached and returned from the southern limit of the course.

Each minute seemed an hour as Emily found herself constantly checking her watch. Finally after what seemed like hours; the runners were seen in the distance. Felicite seemed to be

flying and undoubtedly would finish first. Jamie and Chantal were battling it out for second place. Roz had lessened the distance between her and the frontrunners, but would have to settle for fourth place. Yvonne and Sydney were lagging behind and had no chance of finishing in the top four.

Hermione winced as she saw Jamie's breasts gyrating wildly with each stride as she tried vainly to stay even with Chantal. Jamie finished third.

As Sydney finished in sixth place, the MC announced that the second portion of the event would start in ten minutes. Contestants were allowed to get a drink, refresh themselves with a shower and relax, but not leave the pool area.

Jamie cradled her breasts in her arms as she approached Hermione and the girls, the tears in her eyes becoming apparent. She looked first at Emily and Caitlin and then at Hermione. "I'm sorry," she said. "I have to drop out, my boobs are killing me."

Emily was panic-stricken. "Jamie please, you don't understand! It's more than a contest. If you lose...."

No one heard the end of Emily's comment as she ran off to the nearest trash container, quickly regurgitating breakfast.

"If she does that one more time, we're going to a French muggle doctor whether she likes it or not," Hermione said resolutely. Then she turned her attention to Jamie. "There's no disgrace in quitting when you've given your best, and you have."

"No!" Caitlin screamed. "You can't quit. For Emily's sake you can't quit."

"I don't know what Emily has to do with this, but I can't run anymore. My breasts are too painful," Jamie answered.

"But Mum or I can remedy that. You know I can. Ten minutes is plenty of time," Caitlin begged.

"Caitlin, I don't want to quit the contest, but there is no other option," Jamie declared, frustration evident in her voice. "I know you and Hermione have the ability to alleviate the soreness, but as much as I love you both; there is no way I'm going to allow either of you to touch my breasts in public and I'm not allowed to leave the pool area."

Caitlin thought hard and then said, "Mum, you and Madam Pomfrey said that you thought in time I would be able to heal without touching. What if you and I held hands and both concentrated? Perhaps our combined powers could achieve the necessary results. Its not like we're trying to regenerate tissue, we're just trying to mitigate the soreness."

"You're so young and you've never even attempted this before." Hermione looked deeply into Caitlin begging eyes. "But on the other hand, we've naught to lose. Jamie you must just sit and be very quiet. Caitlin you must hold my hand and concentrate deeply. You have to let your mind return to yesterday when you treated Jamie. In order for this to work your mind must join with hers. She has to feel your touch. Jamie, if we succeed, you will feel Caitlin touching and rubbing your chest just as she did yesterday. Difficult as it may be, try not to react. Quickly! Caitlin, take my hand. We have little time."

Jamie watched as Caitlin and Hermione sat side by side on the lounge chair next to her. They grasped each other's hand and closed their eyes. At first Jamie could only think about how grateful she was that it was not yet nine o'clock and the pool area was so sparsely occupied.

She watched as Hermione and Caitlin seemed to enter into a deep trance, their bodies rigid. Jamie waited, first a minute, then two minutes. Nothing happened. Her breasts ached as much as every. Then suddenly, without warning someone reached from behind her and cupped her breasts in their hands. Jamie turned, startled, but no one was there. She looked at her chest. No one was touching her, yet she felt two small hands cupping her breasts.

Jamie could suddenly hear Caitlin telling her to lean back and relax, but Caitlin hadn't opened her mouth. She was still in a trance.

Jamie relaxed and leaned back. She felt Caitlin's chest against her back supporting her, but Caitlin was still sitting opposite her. As she had yesterday, she fell into a tranquil stupor. Again her mind floated outside her body. She saw Hermione and Caitlin sitting on the lounge chair next to her. But then she saw herself leaning back against Caitlin.

How could Caitlin be at two different places? Then she realized that the Caitlin she was leaning against was transparent. Jamie watched as the fingers on the transparent Caitlin's right hand started tracing the nipple on the apparently comatose Jamie's right breast. She remembered having this feeling before, but again was either unable or unwilling to move or react. The transparency's hand moved outward until it was caressing the entire breast, then the entire right half of the chest from the upper shoulder to the side and under the arm. Then it once again cupped the breast and now using its left hand repeated the process on the left side of Jamie's chest.

Suddenly Jamie was awoken as if from a deep sleep by Emily's voice and being shaken violently. "Are you all right? Jamie, please talk to me."

"I'm fine," said Jamie mildly to Emily, as she noticed that Hermione and Caitlin had opened their eyes, but were still holding hands.

Hermione face literally glowed with pride as she hugged Caitlin. "You did it. On your first try you actually reached her telepathically." Hermione looked questioningly at Jamie. "Was she able to...?"

Jamie looked at them both, still dazed. "I feel fine." She looked at Caitlin. "That was scary. Your powers, you're amazing."

"No! You had it right the first time!" Emily exclaimed. "That was freaking scary! I've been alternately shaking you guys for the last minute with no results. If you're going to take a trip to Never-Never Land, will you please take me with you, or at least tell me you're leaving? I was terrified."

"We're sorry," Caitlin said. "Time was rather limited and you were sort of occupied."

Emily just blushed. "Yeah, I guess I was. Did she...? Are you okay, Jamie? Will you be continuing?"

Emily got her answer as Jamie hurried off when the MC announced for all contestants to report to the stage.

"Since you guys were rather preoccupied, I don't imagine either of you noticed the two girls Roz was talking to during the break?" Emily questioned, concern evident in her voice.

Both Hermione and Caitlin indicated that they hadn't seen the girls. "Maybe I'm being obsessed," Emily commented, "but I don't trust Roz. After they finished talking, the two ran off in the direction the runners will be headed. I think Roz is planning some dirty strategy."

"Perhaps you are being a little paranoid, Emily. But just to be on the safe side, why don't you two take a two mile run?" Hermione suggested, trying to hide the concern she also felt. "It's an open beach. As long as you don't interfere with the contestants, there should be no problem with you running along with Jamie. When you return to this point, I'll take over."

"I'm sorry to announce that the field has narrowed down to only four contestants," the MC announced. "However, we couldn't come into our last event with much tighter scores. After the just completed contest, Chantal and Felicite both have two hundred points and Roz and Jamie each have two hundred twenty-five. It all comes down to this final event and anyone of our four finalists is talented enough to carry off the crown."

"For this challenge we will be using the same course as the previous race. The competition will last two hours with the goal being to complete the most full miles. Should there be a tie, the contestant finishing the most complete miles first will be declared the winner."

Hermione and the girls followed the contestants out to the starting line. Everyone started off the race at a rather relaxed slow speed; after all they would be running for two hours. Chantal took the lead, followed by Roz. Felicite followed Roz and Jamie brought up the rear. Emily and Caitlin were able to catch up with Jamie with little difficulty.

"Don't you think you should quicken your pace," Emily suggested as her and Caitlin caught up to Jamie.

"What are you guys doing here?" Jamie asked, surprised to see the girls.

"Mum's idea," Caitlin answered. We're your 'bodyguards' in case Roz tries to pull a fast one."

"She wouldn't dare," Jamie protested. "Okay, you can run with me, but no talking. Save your energy."

Emily wanted to gripe that the other three runners had rounded a curve and were out of sight already, but held her tongue not wanting to draw Jamie's wrath.

It was just after nine o'clock and the beach, as normal, was still rather deserted. In another three hours though, it would be crowded with a throng of sun worshippers. As they reached the curve, Jamie suddenly started to sprint. Laying just ahead of them, in apparent pain, was Felicite.

"What happened?" Jamie asked as she flung herself on the ground next to the girl who was rubbing her ankle.

"Some clumsy girl ran right into me," Felicite answered. She and her friend were playing Frisbee. I can't understand why it was thrown in my direction when they had the entire beach."

"Where are they now?" Emily inquired.

"That's the topper," Felicite said irritably. "After she plows into me and steps on my ankle with her size ten sneakers, the two of them just run off. No apology or offer of assistance. They just ran off."

"Do you think it's broken?" Jamie inquired.

"Nah! It would hurt a lot worse," Felicite replied. "But I'm afraid I'm done running for awhile. Speaking of running, you're in a race. Don't worry about me. I'll be fine until someone else comes along."

Emily couldn't have agreed more and actually tried to pull Jamie back to her feet. All she received for her effort was an annoyed glance from her sister.

"We're not about to run off and leave you here," Jamie answered stubbornly. Then Jamie made eye contact with Caitlin. "Caitlin is terrific at massaging. Would you mind if she worked on your ankle?"

Felicite gave Jamie a patronizing look, but agreed.

"Wow! You do have a magical touch," Felicite said after only a few minutes. "I bet you give a great back rub."

"I've never tried the back," Caitlin said as she gave Jamie a knowing grin. "Try putting some weight on your foot."

Jamie and Emily helped Felicite get to her feet. At first she just stared at Caitlin in bewilderment. Then she shook her head in admiration. "I don't have any idea what you did, but it doesn't even hurt in the slightest anymore. You're amazing."

"Ready to get back into the race?" Jamie asked.

"Do you mind if we just run together?" Felicite asked.

"That's fine with me," Jamie answered as the four started off.

For a time, they jogged along at a slow steady pace. Shortly after they passed the half-mile point, Emily saw something up ahead on the beach.

As Emily dashed ahead, the others pursued her. "It looks like someone else had a Frisbee accident," Emily shouted to the group sarcastically.

No one seemed shocked by the fact that the injured person was Chantal, nor that a girl chasing a Frisbee had in fact injured her.

"I'm positive that Rosalind put them up to it," Chantal grimaced. "She laughed when she

passed me laying here."

"How long ago was that?" Jamie asked.

"Maybe fifteen or twenty minutes," Chantal answered.

"That means she'll be coming back this way soon. Emily, keep a look out for her while Caitlin checks Chantal's ankle.

As Caitlin reached for Chantal's ankle, the girl jerked it away and then winced. "Trust her," Felicite said, sincerely. "The girl knows what she doing."

Before Caitlin could commence, Emily yelled, "I see her in the distance."

Quickly, Jamie started giving out instruction. "Caitlin you work with Chantal. Felicite, you lie down and pretend that you're still in pain. I'm sure that if it hadn't been for Caitlin and Emily running with me, I would have been hurt also, so, I'll sit so that Roz thinks I am. Here she comes."

"Awe, now isn't this a pretty picture. Is this the annual meeting of the losers club?" Roz asked smugly.

"Roz, don't you think you're carrying things to extremes just to win a contest?" Jamie asked.

"Zacherley! You're certainly not suggesting that I had anything to do with the misfortunes that you and our fellow contestants suffered?" Roz asked, a smirk on her face. "I'm truly hurt to think that you would believe me capable of such a thing."

"If you weren't involved, please help us," Jamie begged sounding as if in a great deal of pain.

"I'm afraid I don't have time for that. You see, I have a contest to win." Before running off she turned toward Emily, stuck out her tongue and wiggled it. "You, I'll see later," she said.

As Roz ran off, Jamie turned toward Emily. "Okay, out with it. No made-up stories. I want the truth and I want it now. For what earthly reason would you be seeing that bitch later."

Emily looked to Caitlin for guidance. "Tell her. We should have told her the truth from the beginning," Caitlin said.

As Caitlin saw to Chantal, Emily told Jamie about the awkward bet in which she found herself trapped.

"Emily, I love you," Jamie said after hearing the entire story. "And I appreciate that you and Caitlin are so supportive of me, but you have to be careful who you associate with and what you bet."

"You should have told Hermione or myself about this immediately. Roz is seventeen, while you're only eleven. What she anticipated you doing is against wizard law. She is of age and you are a minor.

"The bet is history. Whether I beat her or not is inconsequential as far as that is concerned.

However, Roz and how she has conducted herself with regards to you and this contest is disgusting. We can't let her win. Chantal how do you feel?"

Chantal was standing looking at Caitlin with distrust. "I'm fine, but how did she do that? A person can't just rub away an injury and the associated pain." Chantal backed away from Caitlin. "It's almost like she has magical powers. Like she's a witch."

Jamie laughed. "I've considered calling her a bitch when I've been angry, but never a witch. Aren't witches supposed to wear black, carry a wand and ride brooms? A nudist witch; that would certainly be a first."

Chantal suddenly felt extremely silly. "I know witches don't exist, but you must admit that what she does is extremely strange."

Jamie smiled, "I would consider it more wonderful than strange. In a way I guess you could say she does magic with her fingers. But let's not dwell on Caitlin. I for one don't want to see Roz win this contest after what she's done."

"But she has at least a mile lead on us," Felicite said, discouragingly.

"She also thinks the three of us are out of this race," Jamie added. "If I know Roz, she is taking her good old time. We have over an hour left; let's give it our best."

The girls were back in the race, but with renewed enthusiasm. They were no longer running as individuals, but side by side with the single goal to catch and pass Roz.

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Jamie was correct about Roz taking her time. Once she had gotten out of sight of Jamie and the others, she had slowed her pace to a leisurely stroll. Even though just walking, she had easily made it back to the starting line and logged two miles before the others were able to resume the race.

Roz had barely left the starting line, now headed for the southern point of the race route when a voice yelled out to her, "Do, you have time for a beer to celebrate your victory?" It was Bertha. The other Frisbee player, Angie, was standing next to her holding an ice cold twelve-pack.

"It won't be official for another hour, but thanks to the job you two did on those three losers, the contest is as good as over. Sure, I have plenty of time for a brew," Roz said with confidence.

Angie looked at Bertha with a somewhat confused expression; they had only eliminated two runners from the race. Perhaps the third participant had an accident without their assistance. Bertha signaled Angie to keep her mouth shut.

"Let's take the beer down behind that sand dune," Roz suggested, pointing toward a hill of sand about one hundred yards away. "I don't want anyone to hassle us and ruin my perfect day."

They hadn't even reached the dune before Roz had chugged her first beer. "This is my day," she said, smiling as Angie tossed her another can, the empty discarded on the beach. "Not only do I get crowned Miss Nude Teen, and beat precious Barbie doll in the process, but I get pleased by her sister. That little girl has no clue as to what is in store for her."

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As the quintet of runners neared the hotel, Emily asked, "Jamie, how far ahead of us do you imagine Roz is?"

"I've got no idea, but I'm sure Hermione will be able to tell us soon," Jamie answered.

Hermione had been both relieved and surprised when she spotted the runners approaching. She was comforted that everyone seem to be okay, but rather stunned to find them all running in concert. As they neared the hotel, Hermione ran to them; her arms filled with bottled water.

"I can't talk now," Jamie said between swigs of water. "We have to catch up with Roz. Caitlin and Emily will be staying behind; they'll explain everything. How far ahead of us is she?"

"Roz left here about ten minutes ago, but I doubt she has gotten that far," Hermione said. "She was taking her good old time as if she wasn't the least bit worried about the rest of you."

"I doubt in fact that she was concerned, but that's all changed thanks to Caitlin. I can't wait to see her expression when we catch up," Jamie said, a grin on her face.

As Jamie ran off with Chantal and Felicite keeping pace, Hermione pulled Emily and Caitlin to the side. "What happened out there?" Hermione inquired. "And I want the whole story, not the abridged version."

* * * * *

"This doesn't make any sense," Jamie said as they neared the southern turn around point. "Where is Roz? We should have caught up with her or at least passed her going the opposite direction."

Chantal checked her watch. "We made that last mile in less than ten minutes. With just under an hour left, we should be able to finish five more miles. What do you guys think?"

"I can handle five more," Felicite said, "but what about Roz?"

"At this point we can't worry about Roz," Jamie answered. "All we can do is complete as many full miles as possible before the time expires. At least we'll be finishing at the hotel so we can collapse in the pool."

They thought about asking the judge at the turn around if Roz had checked in, but the fact that he was Swedish made conversation rather difficult. They just grabbed water and departed.

In order to save time they just waved as they passed the hotel on their way back north. That gave them each four miles to their credit. They continued running together mainly for the camaraderie, but also because they no longer had a yearning to beat each other.

When they reached the northern turning point for the second time, Felicite again checked her watch. "We have forty minutes left," she said. "On land three more miles would be a snap, but sand is a lot tougher to run on."

"We're going for eight miles," Jamie responded encouragingly. "I know we can make it. All of us."

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"Guys, I have to get going, otherwise I'll miss my crowning," Roz said laughing as she staggered to her feet. "Besides, I really should finish at least two more miles."

Roz checked her watch as she started running toward the southern point. *Two miles in forty minutes, no problem, I wonder if the losers will show up for my crowning.*

As she neared the northern turning point, she once again checked her watch. *Twenty minutes, right on schedule. Maybe I should pick up the pace a little.*

When she reached the turning point and started back toward the hotel, she saw a sight that made her pick up the pace quite more than a little. Less than three hundred yards away and approaching swiftly was not one, but all three of her competitors and none of them seemed to be limping even slightly.

As they passed, angry glances were exchanged, but no confrontation took place. Roz was panicked, she thought the others were on her tail; she had no idea that she had already lost. Likewise, Jamie and the others felt that somehow they had missed Roz and that in fact she was ahead of them.

When they initially sighted Roz, the girls had increased their pace, but were still running in tandem.

Until this week Jamie had always enjoyed the feeling of her breasts undulating as she jogged. Of course, when she jogged with Hermione it was usually at a rather leisurely pace, all out running to win a race was a totally different matter. As she glanced first to her right and then to her left, she realized that there were times when being flat chested or having small breasts was a distinct advantage.

As they made the turn and started the last mile back to the hotel, Jamie yelled to Chantal and Felicite, "Break off and go for it. You guys are faster than me."

Neither girl increased their speed. "What are you waiting for?" Jamie yelled. "You two can catch the bitch, I'm not sure if I can."

"Shut up and run!" Felicite screamed back. "You're not quitting!"

"We're doing this together or not at all," Chantal yelled.

The minutes were soaring by, as they got closer to the hotel. Jamie was surprised that Roz was still leading, but the distance separating her from the trio was shrinking rapidly, as was the

distance to the hotel.

With less than two hundred yards remaining, Jamie noticed Emily at the finish line frantically jumping up and down and pointing to the tote board where the contestants names were listed along with how many miles they had finished. She was too far away to read the board.

It was going to be close, but even without Jamie slowing down Chantal and Felicite, it was evident Roz was going to win. One hundred yards, and finally Jamie could read the board and now realized why Emily was so excited.

Jamie couldn't comprehend why Roz was running as if her life depended on it; she was out of the race. If the trio kept running as they were, they would tie and since Jamie was leading in points that meant she would win the overall contest.

Roz crossed the finish line and started jumping up and down frantically as if she had just won a million dollars. Jamie couldn't comprehend Roz's actions, but was happy in the knowledge that all three of them were going to beat her. Just mere feet from the finish line Jamie backed off on her pace allowing Chantal and Felicite to cross together ahead of her.

"Will you stop jumping up and down like an idiot?" Rosalind's dad yelled at her. "You didn't win anything. You placed fourth."

"Fourth! But they... How could...?" Roz was confused, frustrated and angry.

"How could they beat you?" her father said angrily. "Is that what you want to know? Possibly because they completed eight miles and you only finished four. What the hell did you do? Have a lie down? Over-confidence. That's the same thing that caused you to lose the Olympic trials. When will you get it through your thick head that a competition isn't over at the halfway point?"

Roz started to walk away.

"Just where do you think your going?" Her dad yelled angrily. "They haven't announced the winners yet. I expect you to go up on that stage and congratulate those girls."

Roz looked at her dad as if he was asking her to cut off her arm. "But Dad."

"No buts, get you ass up there now," he demanded.

Chantal grabbed Jamie's arm. "Why did you do that?"

"Yeah!" added Felicite. "We were all supposed to finish together."

"Yes, I know," answered Jamie with a smile. "But if we had done that, I would have won the contest and would have had to parade around all afternoon with that Miss Nude Teen sash having my picture taken. Now you two get to share it and I can go swimming."

"But neither of us would have even finished the race if it hadn't been for you and your sister," Chantal argued.

"If I hadn't have been running with you guys, I'm probably the one that would have dropped

out," Jamie said honestly. "Besides, one of you would have won if it hadn't been for those Frisbee girls. This way you both win."

"You're okay Jamie," Felicite said. "You can't imagine how excited my parents are."

Jamie thought back to last year and remembered the look on her Mum and Dad's faces when she stood on stage and was crowned the winner. "Yes I can," she said, her eyes moist. "This afternoon when you get tired of being photographed, remember how proud they are. It'll make it all worthwhile."

Before they could say anymore, they were all ushered on the stage for the presentation. The host smiled as the girls lined up. "Before I announce the winner, I think all the girls that entered the contest deserve a round of applause."

By now the area surrounding the pool had become quite crowded and the applause was extremely generous. "The scores for these four girls are extremely close and each has shown themselves to be a champion. Roz finishes in fourth place with a total of two hundred fifty points. In third place with two hundred seventy-five points is Jamie.

"Chantal and Felicite tied for first in our last event and so we have awarded each eighty-seven and one half points. Added to their previous scores of two hundred gives us another tie. Normally we would have some sort of tiebreaker, but the judges have instead decided that this year we will have two Miss Nude Teens. Congratulations, Felicite and Chantal."

Roz quickly shook both their hands and then practically ran off stage. Jamie exchanged hugs and kisses with the winners as they all made plans to have lunch together tomorrow. As the photographers started taking pictures, Jamie decided to make a graceful exit. At the bottom of the ramp her family greeted her.

"Jamie, I just don't understand you," Emily said, extremely frustrated. "I was jumping up and down like a fool so that you would break away and win the contest. Instead you throw it."

Hermione had tears in her eyes. "Emily, some day you'll understand that it's not always about winning. Jamie, I'm more proud of you for what you did than I would have been if you'd have won."

Harry gave Jamie a hug and kissed her on the cheek, "Remember, the true winner doesn't necessarily finish in first place."

"Do your breasts hurt," Caitlin asked sympathetically. "Do you want me to...?"

"Yes," Jamie interrupted. "My breasts are as sore as hell. But no, I don't want you to heal them. Other than myself when I wash, I want the next hands touching my breasts to be a male's."

"Anybody special in mind?" Emily inquired, giggling.

"Are his initials A.L.E.X.?" teased Caitlin.

"Girls, leave Jamie alone," Hermione, said. "I don't know about you three, but I'm starving. Shall we go to lunch?"

"I'm hungry, too," Harry agreed. "Let's go change."

As Harry was about to start off, Hermione grabbed his hand. "Harry, we're leaving directly after breakfast on Saturday, aren't we?"

"Yes, why?" he asked.

That means we only have tomorrow and the balance of today left to..." Hermione hesitated. "Harry, in the car Jamie said that her family didn't wear clothes from the time they got here till they left. Would you think I was crazy if I suggested that we stay this way until after breakfast on Saturday?"

"Even for dinner and going shopping for souvenirs at the mall?" Harry asked, surprised at Hermione's suggestion.

"Way to go," Emily said, enthusiastically. "Now you're talking like a real nudist."

Jamie and Caitlin both gave Hermione a hug and kiss. "I guess that means we're not going to our room," Harry said with a smile.

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"Why did I let you guys talk me into this?" Jamie moaned as Caitlin and Emily poured even more sand on her. "I'll have sand in every crack and crevice for a month. What are you doing now?"

"We're giving you a boob job," Caitlin said. "If you think you had big ones before, wait till we're done molding your sand mounds."

"Caitlin," Emily said frustrated. "I think you best scale back a tad bit or there will only be room for one boob in the middle of her chest."

"Well, well, that's the best I've ever seen you look Zacherley," Roz said as she came upon the girls, startling them. "A couple of buckets of sand to cover your face would make it perfect." Roz reached for the bucket, but Emily grabbed it away from her quickly as Caitlin rushed to help Jamie, who was struggling to get out from under the heavy sand covering her.

Jamie hadn't realized just how much sand the girls had thrown on top of her, or how defenseless it had made her. She was greatly relieved when she was once again standing on her feet.

"You didn't have to get up for me Zacherley," Roz said arrogantly. "I didn't come to see you. I was looking for your sister. I still haven't figured out how you did it, but I pay my debts."

"Keep your filthy money," Emily spurted out. "I had no intentions of keeping my part of the arrangement if you had won."

"Oh yes you would have," Roz said threateningly. Then she smiled. "Admit it. You were looking forward to burying you head between my legs and you know it." Suddenly with out

warning, she reached out and grabbed Emily's shoulders with both hands and forced the girl to her knees. "Do it baby, you know it's what you want."

Anger and rage, unlike any she had ever experienced in her life, surged through Jamie's body. She shoved Roz away from Emily as she shouted. "Leave my sister alone!"

"And just what are you going to do about it if I don't, Barbie?" Roz said defiantly. "Slap me in the face with one of your tits?"

Jamie didn't answer. She didn't even think about the consequences. Instead Jamie stepped forward and socked Roz directly in the face with all the strength she could muster. The blow caught Roz completely by surprise and she fell to the ground, out cold.

Emily yelled enthusiastically, "Jamie, you knocked her out! She's unconscious! You rule girl!"

Jamie had done something utterly out of character, she loathed violence and yet she had just hit another girl hard enough to render her insensible. To make matters worse, her sister found it awe-inspiring.

Caitlin got on her knees and placed her hand on Roz's head. She moved her hand about as she closed her eyes in concentration. "There's no concussion," she said after a few moments.

"I'm glad she's not hurt," Jamie said in relief. "I think I may have broken my hand."

"I didn't say she wasn't hurt," Caitlin said. "You broke her nose."

"Way to go Zacherley!" Emily shouted as she looked at her sister with renewed pride.

"No!" Jamie protested uneasily. "It can't be. Harry and Hermione will kill me. Caitlin, can't you do something?"

Caitlin gave Jamie a dejected look. "Probably, but must I?"

"Yeah! Must she?" Emily agreed. "I think she looks better with her nose pointing toward her ear."

"I'm serious," Jamie pleaded. "Hermione and Harry will be upset enough if they find out I was in a fight. Please, do what you can."

"I just hope she doesn't come out of it before I've completed," Caitlin said as she cupped Roz's nose in her hand and began to concentrate.

Jamie watched in amazement. This was the first time she had seen Caitlin use her Hyperempathic skills that she wasn't the patient. "She really zones out when she does that?"

"That's why she has to be comfortable with the surroundings," Emily answered. "She is extremely vulnerable when healing."

After a few minutes, Roz began to stir and then her eyes opened. "Get away from me!" she yelled pushing Caitlin aside. As she stared at Jamie, there was a look in her eyes that had

never been there before. Roz looked nervous and intimidated.

She jumped to her feet. "I guess you think you're tough because you surprised me with a lucky punch. Make it a fair fight and I could take you anytime," Roz claimed, her voice sounding not nearly as confident as her words.

"At least next year I won't have to be bothered by the likes of you; we're going on a real vacation." Roz backed up a few steps and then turned and hurried off in the direction of the hotel.

"I hope that's the last we see of her this year," Emily said, earnestly.

"On that we agree," said Jamie. "How did it go with her nose, Caitlin?"

"The bone is set and healed; no sign a break ever existed," Caitlin answered. "But she came out of it before I had a chance to relieve the soreness and swelling; that will take care of itself in a few days."

"Maybe a little pain and suffering will make a better person of her," Jamie suggested.

Emily shook her head. "Little chance of that happening with Roz."

* * * * *

"Now that felt really strange," Hermione commented as she and Jamie rejoined Harry and the girls after browsing in a lady's dress shop.

"What was strange?" Harry asked.

"That shop had no dressing rooms," Hermione answered. "In a way I understand; after all Jamie and I walked in there totally naked. But still it's weird to just try on clothes in the middle of the store with others watching."

"It is odd how people here don't pay you any notice when you're totally nude, but the act of dressing and undressing seems to get their attention," Jamie commented.

"You certainly got attention from those two boys when you tried on that skirt topless," Hermione said with a laugh.

"That's exactly what I mean. Neither seemed to notice me when I was starkers, but when I put on the skirt it seemed they couldn't stop staring at my chest," Jamie said slightly annoyed.

"It must be awful to have problems like that," Caitlin said, sarcastically. "You and Mum have bodies that most witches would kill for. Emily's only eleven and already has a figure, meanwhile..." Caitlin pinched one of her puffy little nipples between her thumb and finger. "I've got nothing. If I cut my hair and put on a pair of shorts, I could play on the skins side of a boys shirts versus skins basketball game and no one would notice."

Hermione wrapped her arm around Caitlin's shoulders. "Yes they would," she said. "Your face is much too pretty for you to ever pass as a boy. I wish you would stop worrying so much

about your breasts. The mirror showed us how lovely a woman you'll become. I have a feeling your body has a lot of changes in store for you this winter. Next year when we come here the friends you made won't even recognize you."

Jamie had a very satisfied expression on her face as Emily excitedly squealed, "Do you mean it? You'll actual come back without being tricked?"

Harry put his arm on Emily's shoulder as she nestled closer to him. "Hermione and I were talking about it last night before we fell asleep. We've made a number of new friends and had a great time. We'd consider coming back without a doubt, but only if you girls agreed."

"Can we think about it for a few months or do you want our answer now?" Jamie asked, laughing.

"I have a feeling we already know the answer," Hermione replied. "Harry and I are going to take a walk on the beach. Do you girls want to join us or go back to the rooms?"

Emily squeezed her legs tightly together. "I'd like to go with, but I have to pee bad."

"You don't think it has anything to do with the three Cokes you drank during dinner, do you?" Harry asked.

"Probably," Emily responded meekly.

"I'd also feel more comfortable if I relieved myself," Jamie admitted.

"Why don't you girls run the packages back to the hotel and then join us?" Hermione suggested. "We'll walk to the north so you can find us easily."

* * * * *

It was a perfect night for a stroll on the beach. The clear sky was filled with a multitude of stars, and the wind that sometimes blew the sand about annoyingly had calmed to practically nil.

"I'm glad there is no one else around," Harry said as he held Hermione in a tight embrace.

"I love the girls, but it's nice for it to just be the two of us once in awhile." Hermione agreed.

"That's not exactly what I meant," Harry said nervously. "Holding you closely against me, well, it sort of had an affect on me."

Hermione looked into Harry's beautiful green eyes and smiled. "It's nice to know that I still have that effect on you." She reached below his waist and took him in her small hand.

"Goodness," she said slightly startled. "You weren't exaggerating."

"Oh my god," Harry said, panic stricken. "Here comes Jamie."

Hermione looked in the direction of the hotel and saw Jamie jogging their way.

"What am I going to do?" Harry asked, obviously flustered.

"Hold me tight," Hermione suggested.

"Yeah! Like that will help," Harry moaned. "Holding you tight is what got me in this condition in the first place."

"I know it won't eliminate the problem, but at least it will conceal it from Jamie," Hermione suggested.

"Right." Is all Harry said before pressing Hermione as close to him as circumstances allowed.

"I thought you guys would be further up the beach by now," Jamie declared as she ran up to them. "Caitlin and Emily stopped to talk to a couple of their mates. They'll be along in a minute."

Harry and Hermione remained pressed against each other as Hermione nodded her head. "Fine," she said, nervously.

Jamie studied Harry and Hermione. They were acting extremely strange. "Is something amiss?" she asked. Is there a problem that I could do something to help alleviate?"

Hermione couldn't help herself. She continued to stay pressed against Harry, but she broke into uncontrollable laughter. "I'm sure you could help alleviate the problem," she said. "But as much as I love you, there are some things a woman won't share, even with her sister."

Jamie blushed, as she comprehended what the problem was. "Harry, you don't have to be embarrassed. I've seen men in that condition before. I'm not going to stare or make fun like Emily would."

Now Harry blushed. He didn't care if Jamie had seen a hundred men this way; she wasn't about to see him.

Jamie seemed to sense this and said, "The quickest solution would be to run into the ocean. I'll turn my head. If you two prefer a more gratifying solution, I can stand watch to make sure no one happens to come upon you."

Hermione was bowled over. Last year at this time her relationship with Jamie was purely that of a professor and her student. Jamie was a very special student indeed, but still only a student. They were so much more now to each other. Most people, upon first seeing them, thought they were sisters. At a quick glance, despite the age difference, they could almost pass as twins. But in the last few months they had become even more than sisters. Now they were now best friends.

Suddenly Hermione felt like a teenage girl, out with her boyfriend. They both wanted each other sorely and her best friend had just offered to stand guard while they had a quickie. Hermione and Harry had never had sex outside and the thought of being with Harry here on the beach was extremely enticing.

As tempting as the prospect was, Hermione recognized that she could never make love to Harry with Jamie standing only a few feet away.

"Harry, what Jamie suggests is a very tempting idea," Hermione whispered. "Believe it or not, I find the thought of the two of us making love here on the beach extremely exciting, but not with Jamie ten feet away."

"I know what you mean," Harry said. "Maybe tomorrow-night we can sneak out after they've gone to bed."

"Sneaking out at night reminds me of our school days. It seemed we were always off to somewhere hiding under your invisibility cloak."

"Shame we didn't bring that along on the trip. It might come in handy tomorrow night. I guess for now though I'm going to have to settle for a cool dip."

"Just for now," Hermione said lovingly. "Jamie, Harry decided to cool off with a dip."

Jamie was already facing away from them and remained that way as Harry took a brief plunge in the sea.

"Jamie, would you mind awfully, checking on what's keeping Emily and Caitlin," Hermione asked.

Jamie smiled. "No problem. You act more like a Mum everyday." She said before running off to see what was delaying the girls.

"Where is Jamie running off to?" Harry asked as he emerged from the cool water.

"I asked her to check on the girls," Hermione replied as her eyes surveyed Harry. "Cold water certainly changes things, doesn't it?"

"Thanks for noticing," Harry countered with a smile.

"Would you consider us both officially nudists now?" Hermione asked.

"Yes. I'd consider us second and third class nudists."

Hermione looked at Harry somewhat puzzled. "Since when are nudists classified."

"Since yesterday when I developed the Potter Classification System."

"The PCS of nudists?" Hermione laughed. "Harry you definitely need to get a hobby. How many groups are there and what qualifies you for a particular class?"

"It's a simple system composed of only four groups," Harry said, quite seriously. "The girls are first class nudists. If they could, they'd never wear a stitch. They don't care who sees them nude. They're not the least bit embarrassed. Given the freedom and safety to do so, they wouldn't hesitate to go anywhere starkers even if everyone else were fully clothed."

"I can see why we didn't qualify for first class," Hermione said. "I could never do that."

"Nor could I. Fourth class is the private nudist. That's someone who likes to be in the buff, but

only when alone. They're always dressed if someone else is about. The exception being that some fourth class don't mind being nude in front of their mates.

"Do you intend to publish the results of your research Professor Potter?"

"I'm not sure if the world is ready to know the truth," Harry said, jokingly as they continued their walk hand in hand.

"And what, pray tell, is the difference between a second and third class." Hermione eagerly inquired.

"I thought you'd never ask Mrs. Potter. Both are recreational nudists who have no problem being nude in a public nude environment. The third class tends to play it straight when out of the nudist atmosphere, where the second class continues to be nude as much as possible as long as they are comfortable with the people they are about."

Hermione gave Harry a disappointed glance. "Does that mean that tomorrow is the last the girls and I will see of nudist Harry until next year?"

Harry wavered at first and then said, "Not completely, but not purposely. This will likely sound ridiculous, but I would still find it weird to walk around our quarters naked in front of the girls. Maybe if they were actually our daughters and had grown up seeing me nude, I'd feel different about it. On the other hand if one of them walks in on me naked or the sheet falls off when we wrestle, I'm not going to panic and cover myself."

Hermione nodded her head. "I'm somewhat disappointed, but I understand your position. Maybe in time you'll grow more comfortable."

"Perhaps, but I doubt it."

Harry seemed slightly depressed and so Hermione asked, "And what makes me a second class?"

"Hermione, had you been brought up like Emily and Jamie, you'd be a first class. You love being nude. This summer you were naked as much in our quarters as the girls were. Please don't take this wrong because I'm certainly not complaining. I love you being in the buff most of the time."

Hermione looked at Harry questioningly. "You really think I would have been like Jamie?"

"Yes. You two are so alike that at times it frightens me. When is the last time you wore knickers?"

Hermione didn't answer, but simply blushed.

"You've come to hate clothes as much as the girls. You're barely in the door before you're out of yours. I think it's just a matter of time before you don't bother dressing for selected visitors."

Hermione was about to disagree when she heard yelling and turned to see the girls running toward them.

"I thought Jamie's breast were tender?" Harry asked. "How can she endure running and them bouncing like they are?"

"I think she changed her mind this afternoon and allowed Caitlin to treat her."

Harry tightened his hold on Hermione's hand. "Have you told Caitlin about the dark side of her power yet?"

"No" Hermione shook her head despondently. "Pomfrey and I hoped that we had years before we had to be concerned about that, but after yesterday it may only be months. Harry, her healing powers are almost equal to mine and she's only just twelve. We thought she would be out of Hogwarts before her telepathic abilities even started to develop."

Harry gave Hermione a hug. "She has to be told. Neither of you will be able to live with yourself if she harms someone."

"Look at her, Harry. It seems inconceivable that someone so sweet and innocent could potentially be evil and dangerous."

Unexpectedly Harry and Hermione were almost knocked off their feet by three girls hugging and kissing them. After the assault died off, Harry put an arm around both Hermione and Jamie. "What was that all about?" He asked Caitlin and Emily.

"We just wanted to tell you both how much we loved you," Caitlin responded, with a bright smile.

"And how we're glad you didn't ruin the vacation by deciding not to stay here," Emily added

Jamie sighed. "She has such a way with words."

"We understand," Harry said. "Both Hermione and I are glad we stayed."

"Oh! Look!" Hermione said as she pointed toward the sky over the sea. "A falling star. Everyone make a wish."

Harry gave Hermione a brief kiss. "Look around you and then think about the mirror's reflection. I think we've already received our wish."

"Okay, who wished for rain?" Emily scolded.

"What are you talking about?" Jamie questioned.

"Somebody must have wished for rain," Emily answered. "I just saw a flash of lightning. It came from that direction." Emily pointed toward a group of sand dunes.

"I think you had one too many Cokes today." Caitlin said, in a joking sort of way. "I didn't see anything. Besides, the sky is as clear as can be. Look how good you can see those two owls."

"Look out!" Jamie yelled, as she ducked her head. "They're headed right for us."

The owls delivered their messages, one for Harry and one for Hermione, and then flew off without even waiting to be offered a treat.

"They seemed to be in rather a hurry," Harry observed. "Didn't even wait for a treat."

Caitlin laughed, "Maybe they know that nudists don't have pockets to carry treats."

"I think mine wanted to take part of my shoulder as a treat," Hermione winced.

"Mum! You're bleeding." Caitlin yelled after looking at Hermione's shoulder. "Let me take care of it."

Caitlin covered Hermione's shoulder with her hand, held it there briefly and then removed it.

Hermione was staggered. "Caitlin, you healed that in under thirty seconds."

Caitlin shrugged her shoulders matter-of-factly. "I know."

Hermione looked at Harry in disbelief. Changing the subject, Harry said, "I wonder who would be owling us on vacation. Open yours first darling."

"It's from Samantha, but it doesn't say much." *I know you still have one day of vacation left. Sorry to bother you. Urgent you contact me the moment you return to Hogwarts.* "You don't think anything has happened to Ron, do you?" Hermione asked Harry.

"No. My letter is from Ron, but he gives a little more information. I'm afraid there's trouble in paradise. It seems that Timmy's birth father is Draco Malfoy."

"Oh! No!" Hermione howled, "Not Malfoy. Anyone but him."

Chapter Four - Traditions

Sunday, August 22, 2004

"Where are the girls?" Hermione asked as she entered the quarters she shared with Harry and started removing her clothes.

They're down on the Quidditch Pitch reinforcing their all over tans," Harry answered.

"I'm getting as bad as the girls, aren't I?" Hermione asked, her face turning red. "No more than in the door and I'm naked."

"You don't see me complaining do you?" Harry asked. "Although you might want to reconsider since Ron is in the pantry getting a drink."

"What! Why didn't you tell me?" Hermione yelled as she ran to grab her clothes.

"Gotcha!" Harry said with a laugh. "But mark my words; it's going to happen to you one of these days."

"That was mean," Hermione said, but the smile on her face canceled out the angry tone of her voice. She ran-over and plopped her bare bottom on Harry's lap, wrapped her arms around him and gave him a kiss. "If the girls won't be back for awhile maybe we could partake in some afternoon delight."

"That sounds extremely inviting; but first tell me about your visit with Sam."

"It went about the same as your visit with Ron," Hermione said sadly. "It's obvious that they still both love each other as much as ever. They just didn't say the right things at the proper moment, or in some cases not saying anything was the problem."

"Ron knows he blew it when he just sat there holding his head. Sam needed reassurance that he still loved her and Timmy and he waited too long before giving it, and then did, what he claims was, a horrendous job. Hermione, what can we do to help them?"

"Harry, I think we've done all we can do, the rest is up to them. Sam is now aware of the history between Draco and all of us. She has to come to terms with the fact that she hit Ron with one hell of a bombshell. Sam knows Ron still adores her, but he has to convince her he still loves and wants to be Timmy's daddy. That won't be easy."

"No it won't," Harry agreed. "I'm not sure he's convinced himself yet."

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Tuesday, August 24, 2004

"BUT YOU ASKED HER TO MARRY YOU! How the hell can you claim you love me, and ask that one-night-shag you haven't seen in three years to marry you?!" Ginny shouted.

"I'm willing to discuss this with you, Virginia, if you calm yourself, but I refuse to stand here and be harassed," Draco answered in a self-aggrandizing way.

Ginny took a deep breath and looked at the ceiling as she exhaled. "Okay, I'm calm. Now will you explain?"

"Exactly what do you want me to explain, Red?" Draco questioned as if unaware what Ginny was talking about.

Ginny rolled her eyes and let out a deep breath trying desperately to keep her composure. "The Friday night before I left on vacation, did you visit my quarters?"

"We both know I visited you that night. What does that have to do with anything?" Draco asked, in an irritated fashion.

"Did you or did you not tell me you loved me and beg me not to go on vacation with Severus?"

"A Malfoy never begs," Draco answered with disgust. "I simply asked you not to go on vacation with him."

Ginny gritted her teeth. "Are you denying that you shagged me four times that night and told me that you loved me?"

"Four," Draco said shocked. "Was it only four times? It seemed much longer"

"DRACO, STOP BEING SUCH A BASTARD."

"You're yelling."

"You told me over and over that you loved me. You asked me not to go on vacation. I told you that I loved you too, but that I was confused. I promised you that I would make a decision between the two of you before classes started."

"Ginny, I was there. I know what you said and what I said."

"Then why did you ask her to marry you?"

"I asked her because I had to give her the opportunity to say no. Why else?"

* * * * *

Saturday, August 28, 2004

"You're extremely quiet tonight, Mione. Is something bothering you?" Harry asked tenderly, as he moved closer and nestled Hermione in his arms.

"I was thinking about the baby," Hermione answered quietly. "Do you believe in

predestination, Harry? Do you think I was fated to lose our child so that we would take Jamie and Emily in and give them a home?"

"No, Love. I'd hate to think that that our lives were like a road trip, completely mapped out for us ahead of time. I'd rather believe that life is akin to the way the mirror described it; never-ending possibilities depending on the decisions we and others make."

"Then we just happened to be there for the girls?" Hermione asked as she looked into Harry's eyes.

"That's the way I see it? The same would hold true for Caitlin."

"Harry, I couldn't love the girls more if I actually was their mother, but I'm not. I missed the first decade of their lives. I want to be there from the beginning. Do you think we could squeeze a sixth person into our quarters?"

"A baby!" Harry said excitedly. "You want to have a baby? You and I?"

"No. Actually I was hoping that Neville would help me out. Of course, you and I," Hermione said with a laugh.

"How soon?"

"My safeguard ends Tuesday. If you're up to your part of the job, I thought we might start working on it next weekend. It should be perfect timing. That way we can take Harry Jr. on vacation with us next year."

"No! No! No! A thousand times no!" Harry said quite emphatically. "You can pick the name. Anything you want, but I will not shackle a child of mine with the name Harry Potter. He'll have a tough enough life because of his famous parents."

"What if it's a girl? Will you be terribly disappointed? We girls somewhat outnumber you now."

"Not at all. I'd love a little girl just as much as a boy. I'd just be sorry that she'd never get to wear pretty frilly dresses."

"Of course she would. What makes you think she wouldn't?"

Harry gave Hermione a knowing glance. "In this household? I doubt very much she'll be wearing anything once she's out of diapers."

* * * * *

Monday, August 30, 2004

"I'm sorry, but I think it's preposterous to take a long, mind-numbing train ride to London just so we can take another long train ride back," Emily complained. "All the items we need for school are readily available in Hogsmeade. There is absolutely no need to travel all the way to

London just to shop in Diagon Alley."

"You may say that now, but you'd regret not having the experience of shopping in Diagon Alley and riding the Hogwarts Express to Hogsmeade. Harry and Hermione think it's important that you participate in the entire Hogwarts Experience like most first year students and I agree," Jamie answered. "After this year you can do without going to London if you want."

"At least you'll be acquainted with what to expect at the end of the train ride," Caitlin added enviously. "Last year I was frightened to death. Actually I doubted for a time that I'd even get to attend here. When my letter arrived at the orphanage, everyone knew what it was, but none of the administrators really commented about it."

"I was an orphan and all my money was in a trust. How was I expected to obtain all the books and supplies I needed? I doubted, also, that Madam Crumb, the head mistress, would simply allow me to walk out on my own and catch a train, especially after what had just happened at camp. Finally near the end of August, when I had just about given up hope, she came."

Both Jamie and Emily stared at Caitlin questioningly. Neither had ever heard this story before. "She? Who came?" Jamie asked.

"Tonks!" Caitlin answered. "Actually her name is Nymphadora Tonks, but she prefers to go by her surname."

"So would I," Emily said. "I can't believe anyone's parents could have been so cruel as to name their daughter Nymphadora, that's worse than being named Fluffy like that one girl in the pageant."

Caitlin continued. "Tonks was great. She's a little clumsy, but really nice. Tonks saw to it that I got all my books and supplies and then took me to the train. Promised that she'd be there to meet me at the end of the school year, but my status changed a lot. I hope I get to see her again someday."

"Speaking of books and supplies," Jamie said, changing the subject. "Do you have your list, Emily? May I see it?"

Emily handed her list to Jamie who looked it over quickly before saying, "This brings back memories. Not much has changed since I was a first year. I still don't understand though why first years are not allowed broomsticks."

"Me either," Emily agreed. "I hope Harry keeps teaching me flying. He says I'm going to be able to fly circles around the other first years."

"You're already able to fly circles around this second year," Caitlin said sadly.

"Don't fret Caitlin," Jamie said consolingly. "I'd give up both my flying and Animagus abilities in order to be a Hyperempath like you. I doubt I'll ever save any lives by changing into a unicorn or catching a Snitch."

Hermione entering the room interrupted their conversation. "I recognize you girls hate the idea of putting clothes on, but we really must hurry or we'll miss the train."

"Isn't Dad going to accompany us to London?" Caitlin inquired.

"No. Yesterday was the first night of the full moon. He'll be staying with Ron again tonight and tomorrow in the dungeon. Fortunately they'll both make the sorting and feast."

"What time will we get to London tonight Mum?" Caitlin asked.

"It will probably be sometime after dinner," Hermione answered. "I thought that we could check into our rooms at the Leaky Cauldron and then go out for something to eat and see a muggle movie. Then tomorrow we can spend the entire day shopping at Diagon Alley. Wednesday, after a late breakfast I'll take you to the train and then Apparate back to Hogsmeade."

"Sure would be a lot easier to just toddle on down to Hogsmeade and buy what we need there," Emily suggested sarcastically. "It would save a lot of time and two long boring train rides."

"Yes it would," Hermione agreed. "But some experiences in life are too important to miss. Harry, Jamie, and I feel the first year trip on the Hogsmeade Express is one of those experiences."

"Whatever," Emily grumbled. "Are we walking to Hogsmeade or going by carriage?"

"The carriage is already waiting. That's why I'm asking you girls to get a move on," Hermione responded impatiently.

* * * * *

"It was good of you to hang about with me, mate," Ron said earnestly to Harry.

It was the second night of the full moon. Harry and Ron had slept locked in one of the Hogwarts dungeons last night and would be doing the same tomorrow evening.

"Perhaps this time it's I who should be thanking you," Harry replied. "If given the choice would you rather sleep in a dungeon for three nights or go on a shopping trip with four women?"

Ron laughed, "There is no doubt about it, mate. This time, you do owe me."

"Ron, we didn't get the opportunity to talk much last night. Has your rapport with Sam improved any?" Harry asked hopefully.

Ron's face quickly took on a depressed expression. "Harry, I'm such a loser. Sam was the most excellent thing that ever happened to me and I totally blew it."

"But you're still together?"

"I'm not sure for how much longer. It's not because we've fallen out of love because we

haven't. She still loves me, that hasn't changed. And I couldn't love her more. It's Timmy. After the way I acted and what she has learned about my relationship with Draco, she doesn't believe that I could possibly still care for her son.

"She imagines that I see Draco when I look at Timmy. Sam keeps saying they're a package deal. No matter how much she loves me; she can't marry someone who hates her son."

"But you don't hate Timmy." Harry said, his face having a questioning expression.

"No I don't. Completely the opposite is true. I've come to love him as if he were my own son. But it doesn't matter what I say, I can't convince her." Ron's voice ached with desperation.

"Sort of like saying I love you. The words alone have become meaningless because they are slung around so freely. They have to be accompanied by actions that show they are genuine. Ron, you can get her back, but it's going to take more than just words."

* * * * *

Monday, August 30, 2004

Hermione looked around the Leaky Cauldron as the girls finished their breakfast. "I'll never forget my first time in here. I was literally petrified, so were my parents. Since my parents were both muggles, my Hogwarts letter had been hand delivered by Professor McGonagall. You can imagine how shocked my parents were to find out that their little girl was a witch. Although it did explain away a lot of weird things I had done as a child. It was even harder for them to agree to my attending Hogwarts. I was after all only ten and their only child.

"In time they realized that it would not be fair to compel me to live in the muggle world and not use the magical abilities I had been given. Professor McGonagall was unable to accompany us to Diagon Alley, so my parents and I, armed only with my supply list and directions to the Leaky Cauldron, began our fateful journey."

"That must have been frightening," Jamie acknowledged. "It wouldn't have been quite so bad if one of your parents were magical or if someone had been able to accompany you, but for the three of you to have to venture into the magical world totally alone and unprepared had to be terrifying."

"It was," Hermione replied. "At first I thought we were on the wrong street. Our directions said the Leaky Cauldron was between the big bookshop and the record store, but at first I didn't see it. My parents never saw it until they took my hand and I guided them through the door. I imagine that the entrance is not visible to muggles."

"What did you think when you got inside?" Caitlin inquired.

"I wasn't the least bit impressed," Hermione answered quickly. "I hadn't been in many pubs and this one seemed to be extremely tiny and grubby-looking. The clientele didn't seem especially friendly, either. They all stopped their conversations and just stared at us. I guess to a pub of witches and wizards, two muggle dentists and their daughter were rather a sight."

"What did you do next?" Emily asked. "You didn't have to find the way to Diagon Alley without help, did you?"

"No. Professor McGonagall had described Tom, the bartender to us. She said he was old, quite bald and looked like a toothless walnut. Minerva had told him to be on the lookout for us. Tom promptly approached us and inquired if we were the Grangers. Then he led us through the bar and out into a small, walled courtyard. My parents thought at first he was going to beat and rob us because there wasn't any way out, just a few weeds and a rubbish bin. Instead he told me to watch carefully as he counted bricks up and across above the rubbish bin. Tom tapped the wall three times with the tip of his wand.

"The brick he had touched quivered and a small hole appeared. In a few seconds we were facing an archway onto a cobbled street, Diagon Alley."

"Wow! That sounds like a cool experience," Jamie said, enviously. "Having magical parents, I never gave getting to Diagon Alley much thought, but to muggleborns it must be quite a thrill."

"It was," Hermione answered, tears in her eyes. "My parents were in awe. I think it was then that they realized that our lives would never be the same." She took a deep breath. "It's hard to believe that thirteen years have passed since that day. Never could I have dreamed what adventures, heartache and happiness lay ahead of me."

Hermione brushed the tears from her eyes. "Now it's your turn Emily. I know it's not nearly as exciting because you come from a magical family, but starting Hogwarts is definitely a magical experience. If you ladies are finished eating, I suggest we tap some bricks and begin our shopping day."

Caitlin and Emily quickly shoved their chairs aside and hurried to the courtyard leaving Jamie and Hermione alone, briefly.

"Hermione," Jamie questioned. "Would you help me prepare to give myself?"

At first Hermione just stood in shock, Jamie's request completely catching her off guard. Then she said with concern, "You're planning on having sex with Alex and you want my help? Are you sure? There is no rush. After all you are only sixteen."

"I'm sure. I know there is no urgency, but he's my chosen and we want to join."

"Jamie, why is it that you refer to having sex as joining?" Hermione asked. "And how can you be sure that Alex is your chosen? Last year you were willing to give yourself to Harry."

Jamie hesitated slightly. "Hermione, my dad was different from most wizards. He was the last in a long line of seers. He could actually tell the future. Although when he did so it was usually with an ambiguous prophecy. The ability only seems to pass to males and so when he died, so did the ability. Females, in our family, although not able to see the future, usually have a unique ability in judging people. I inherited that ability, it doesn't seem that Emily has."

"The ability allows me to judge people extremely well. I've never had a friend lie or deceive me. I know whom I can trust. My Dad also felt sure that I would be able to tell when I met

someone with whom I could share a successful lifetime relationship. In some cases your life causes you to cross the path of more than one potential life partner."

Jamie looked devotedly into Hermione's eyes. "Under different circumstances Harry and I would have been right for each other, but never as perfect as you are for each other. I know that Alex and I will be together the balance of our lives. I don't hope it; I actually know it. If my parents were living, my Dad would perform a special ceremony before Alex and I joined. I'm not asking you or Harry to do that, but I was hoping that perhaps you could help us prepare so that...." She looked pleadingly into Hermione's eyes. "I don't want our first time to be a calamity on a cold stone floor. I want it to be something special that we will always remember."

Hermione understood as she wrapped her arm around Jamie's shoulder. "How much time do we have before this special joining, Sister?"

Jamie smiled, "I hope not very long."

"I have some ideas and I know just the perfect place," Hermione said, not believing that she was in fact going to help. "I'll show you this weekend, but right now I think we best catch up to Caitlin and Emily."

By the time Jamie and Hermione reached the walled courtyard, Caitlin was on the verge of a paroxysm. "What took you two so long?" She growled. "Emily and I could have chiseled the wall down by now."

Hermione gave Caitlin an aggravated glance. "Jamie and I were discussing a private matter. Patience is a virtue that you, young lady, are sorely lacking."

Emily wanted to inquire as to what the private matter was, but since Hermione already seemed annoyed, she decided to leave it alone.

Hermione tapped the wall three times with her wand and in a few seconds they were facing a large archway. As soon as they had all stepped safely through, the archway shrank instantly back into a solid wall.

The nearest shop to them featured cauldrons in all sizes, shapes and metals.

"You'll be needing one of these, Emily; Pewter, standard size 2 if my memory is correct. We'll wait till last to pick it up, no reason to drag a cauldron with us all day."

"Mum. Do we have to go get money from Gringotts?" Caitlin asked.

"Mercifully, no," Hermione answered. "Your father and I have accounts with most of the merchants. I detest dealing with those goblins. They treat everyone as if they are dirt and endeavor to take advantage of you." Hermione put her hand on Emily's shoulder. "Although we have items to purchase for everyone, this is your day. What will it be first, robes or a wand?"

Emily didn't hem and haw the least before saying, "A wand."

"Then we should head directly for Ollivanders," Hermione suggested.

As they walked down the cobble-stoned street Caitlin tried to look at everything at once. This was only her second visit to Diagon Alley and truthfully last year when she came with Tonks she had been too nervous to take in the sights. Today she tried to look at everything at once; the shops, the street vendors, even the other people doing their shopping.

When they arrived at Ollivander's shop, Hermione couldn't help but notice that it hadn't changed at all since the day she had purchased her first wand. She wondered if the single wand lying on the faded purple cushion in the dusty window was the same wand that had been there thirteen years ago.

A tinkling bell announced their arrival as they entered the shop. It appeared even tinier than Hermione had remembered.

"Good afternoon," said a soft voice. "Quite nice to see you once again Miss Granger or more correctly Mrs. Potter. How nice to see that you are still carrying your original wand. Together you have earned an enviable reputation these past thirteen years. Caitlin, Jamie, good to see you both again."

Jamie and Caitlin were both amazed that Mr. Ollivander remembered them, but they were even more surprised by what he said next. "This I imagine is young Emily Zacherley. I remember selling your parents their first wands." He looked at Hermione and shook his head in a lighthearted manner. "I find myself saying that far too often lately. Yesterday I sold a wand to the grandson of one of my customers. But enough about me."

"Well, Miss Zacherley. Let me see now." Mr. Ollivander pulled a long tape measure out of his pocket. "Hold out your wand arm." He measured Emily's arm as he told her about the wands he made and how no two were ever exactly the same.

Suddenly Emily realized that Mr. Ollivander was no longer holding the tape measure, but that it was on its own measuring her hips, waist and bust. "That will do," he said scoldingly to the tape when he saw what it was doing.

It took about six tries, but finally a proper wand found Emily. It was a ten and a half inch long willow with a phoenix feather. After paying eight gold Galleons, Hermione and the girls were bowed from the shop by Mr. Ollivander.

As they headed for their next stop, Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions, Emily's attention was drawn to a crowd of boys with their faces pressed against a window. She wandered away from the others to see what had the boys so captivated. One look and she fell in love with the *Enterprise 2005*.

Emily just stood there gawking until she felt a hand on her shoulder. "You remind me of Harry and Ron," Hermione said laughingly. "Whenever we came to Diagon Alley as teenagers, I had to pry them both away from store windows displaying new brooms. Back then it was the Nimbus and Firebolt. Now it's the Enterprise."

"Isn't it beautiful?" Emily sighed.

"Yes," Hermione answered, although frankly to her one broom looked like another. "We can go in and take a closer look later if you like, but right now Jamie and Caitlin are waiting for us

at Madam Malkin's."

When they entered the shop, they found Jamie and Caitlin both standing on footstools while a witch pinned up their long black robes. Madam Malkin, a squat, smiling witch ran to the door when she saw them enter. "Mrs. Potter, so good to see you again." She looked at Emily and smiled. "A new one for Hogwarts?"

Hermione returned Madam Malkin's smile. "It's good to see you again, too. Yes, Emily is a first year."

"Wendy is almost done with the other girls." She gave Emily a friendly glance. "As soon as they are finished we'll get you pinned up. It goes quite quickly." "Please excuse me for a moment," she said as a woman entered the shop accompanied by a young girl who appeared extremely timid, actually frightened.

"Hogwarts, dear?" Madam Malkin inquired.

"Yes!" The woman responded as if startled. "She's a witch! Would you believe it? My daughter is an actual witch."

The young girl seemed deeply upset that her mother was talking at the top of her voice; the whole store hearing her proclamation.

As soon as they were completed, Jamie and Caitlin ran to check out the formal robes. Meanwhile Wendy led Emily to the rear of the store where she had her slip a long robe over her head, and began to pin it to the right length. Madam Malkin led the young girl to the stool next to Emily.

"Hello," said Emily, "Hogwarts, too?"

The girl didn't answer, but smiled meekly and nodded her head uneasily.

"My sister is in her sixth year," Emily added. "She's a prefect and seeker on her house Quidditch team."

The girl hesitated and then shyly said, "I'm the first. I thought witches and wizards were make believe until she came to my house." She indicated Hermione who was now engrossed in conversation with the girl's mother.

"Professor Granger visited your home?" Emily questioned with surprise. "I didn't realize professors ever visited the homes of first years."

"I don't believe they do, if your parents have knowledge of the magical world. My parents had the notion that my letter was someone's idea of a joke. They kept discarding it and I kept getting a new one. Finally a few weeks ago Professor Granger knocked on our door. At first my Dad wouldn't let her in, but finally he relented."

The girl looked toward her Mum. "My Mum's really excited about me being a witch. Dad's not so enthusiastic."

"How do you feel about it?" Emily asked empathetically.

"Truthfully?" The girl's eyes glistened as she looked at Emily. "I'm scared to death. I'd much rather be a normal girl and stay home with my parents. Making friends doesn't come very easily to me and I'm going to miss my Mum and Dad awfully. Won't you miss yours?"

"I miss them every day," Emily answered sadly. "They died last spring, but I was fortunate enough to have a sister who loved me and two great people that cared enough about her and I, to give us a home."

"I'm sorry," The girl said meekly.

"Thanks," Emily said. "Maybe we'll end up in the same house. Then at least you'll know someone. By the way, I'm Emily, Emily Zacherley."

The girl's face glowed as she looked at Emily. "That would be wonderful. I'd feel so much more secure if I knew someone in my house. My names Kim, Kim Thatcher."

"Okay ladies. You're both finished," Wendy said. "Tell your Mums they can pick the robes up any time today after three."

Emily was about to tell Wendy that Hermione wasn't her mother, but decided it wasn't important enough to bother.

As Kim and her mum left the shop, Kim stopped and turned back to Emily. "Maybe I'll see you on the train?"

"Maybe," Emily answered genuinely. "I'll look for you."

Hermione put her arm around Emily's shoulder as Kim and her mother departed the shop. "I'm afraid that one is going to have a rough time adjusting to life at Hogwarts." She gave Emily a squeeze. "Perhaps she'll end up in Gryffindor, then you and the other girls can look out for her. Speaking of the other girls, will you gather your sisters? We have a lot of shopping ahead of us yet."

They visited Flourish and Blotts next and bought textbooks for the coming year. Jamie needed several new books since she would be beginning to study for her NEWTS. Some of Caitlin's books were still used in second year, such as A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot, but she did need the Grade 2 level of The Standard Book of Spells. The clerk seemed genuinely impressed when Caitlin purchased The Hyperempath in Me and How to Get it Out.

Emily needed books for all her first year classes. She had offered to use Caitlin's books from last year, but Hermione insisted on buying her new books. Hermione remembered well the humiliation Ron and Ginny had felt because of hand-me-downs and was not about to have Emily experience the same.

Rather than persist shopping with their arms overflowing, they decided to return to the Leaky Cauldron with their purchases and then finish shopping after lunch. They had a leisurely lunch with Hermione doing most of the talking as she reminisced about her first trip to Diagon Alley.

"Professor McGonagall visited my parents on a Thursday explaining about Hogwarts and how

I was a witch," Hermione said and then blushed. "I must have been spoiled because I spent all day Friday begging and pleading with my parents to bring me here that Saturday. They wanted to do the same as us and shop the day before taking the train, but I insisted that I had to have my books as soon as possible."

Jamie gave Hermione a knowing glance. "Did you sleep at all after you had your books and wand?"

"Very little," Hermione answered with a laugh. "I simply couldn't put the books down, plus I wanted to be as well prepared as possible. Minerva, rather Professor McGonagall, had told us that most of the students would be coming from families with at least one magical parent. I wanted to do as much as possible to overcome what I expected to be a enormous disadvantage."

"I guess you managed to overcome it, didn't you Mum?" Caitlin asked. "Highest number of O.W.L.s in the History of Hogwarts and the most powerful witch in a century."

"Don't forget about her being the most sought after witch in the history of Playwizard magazine," Emily added, a devilish grin on her face.

Hermione just shook her head. "Don't tell me you read Harry Potter, A History, also?"

Emily gave Hermione a sheepish glance. "It was Jamie's suggestion. She said I should know everything possible about my guardians."

It was Jamie's turn to blush as she asked, "Did they in actual fact offer to pay you the equivalent of ten years salary?"

Hermione nodded her head, yes. "I didn't think they were serious until they showed me a Gringotts cashier's check"

"I can't believe you refused them, " Emily said shaking her head. "I would have dropped my pants on the spot."

"Emily, if you had your way, you'd never be wearing any clothes to drop!" Jamie said sarcastically.

"Mum, now that you've been to Cap D'agde and are sort of into the naturist life style would you do it if ever asked again?" Caitlin questioned.

"Now that my name is no longer in the Daily Prophet everyday, I doubt that there would be much interest in pictures of me, but no. I definitely wouldn't."

"That's crazy," Emily responded in disbelief. "We just came from a nudist resort where people saw the real flesh and blood you, up close and naked. Yet you would turn down a fortune to pose for pictures showing no more than you just showed for free."

"I wouldn't do it either," Jamie interjected. "That's one of the reasons I hate talking part in those pageants. I don't like the fact that they take pictures and movies; some of which are sold."

Emily shook her head in frustration; more confused than ever. "Would someone please explain to me why its okay for me to let a person see me naked, but refuse to let them take my picture? It makes absolutely no sense to me."

"I can't speak for Hermione because being new to naturism, her reasons surely are different than mine," Jamie answered. "I'm more comfortable without clothes and as you all know I don't care who sees me that way. I wouldn't even cover myself if Dick Bancroft came into the room."

"Pictures, however, I consider a completely different subject. Don't get me wrong. I'd have no problem with Harry or any of you having a picture of me in the buff. Nor would I, Alex or Amanda. Actually I'd love it, if we had a picture of all of us on the beach that night. I don't even mind my likeness being used to promote the nudist lifestyle. It's just that...."

"It's just that most people don't consider nudity innocent like you girls do," Hermione piped in. "I've strived my entire life to achieve what I have. I want to be remembered for my achievements and contributions to the magical world. Not for the size of my boobs or what's between my legs."

The girls sat in shock, Hermione's frankness catching them totaling off guard. After a time Emily shyly spoke. "I think I understand now. When we go nude we're in control; it's our choice what we do and who sees us that way. With a picture, we have no control over whose hands it ends up in. I can understand you not wanting your picture to end up in someone's loo being used to help them..."

"We get the idea, Emily!" Caitlin almost shouted. "Please don't paint us a picture."

Now it was Hermione's turn to sit in shock. "Where did you girls learn all this stuff about sex? When I was your age..." Hermione hesitated. "I guess when I was your age I never took my nose out of a book long enough to look at the world around me. I think perhaps it's a good idea if we finish our lunch and get back to shopping. We still have quite a bit to do and I did promise someone we'd take a close look at brooms."

Emily gave Hermione a huge smile.

After lunch they stopped to have a hands on look at the *Enterprise 2005*. As far as Emily was concerned, they could have spent the balance of the day in that shop. It certainly was more appealing than the Apothecary with its horrible smell, similar to that of rotted food. They spent little time there; just sufficient to purchase Emily some basic potion ingredients and replenish those that Caitlin and Jamie had depleted.

Although not purchasing, they made stops at the pet shop and Eeylops Owl Emporium. Finally as the afternoon sun hung low in the sky, they purchased a pewter cauldron for Emily and made their way back through the wall and back to the Leaky Cauldron.

After a rather quiet dinner they retired to their rooms to pack for the trip to Hogsmeade on the Hogwarts Express.

* * * * *

At four in the morning, Emily, inquiring if it was time to get ready for the train, awakened Hermione. Hermione reached out her arm, indicating for the girl to crawl into bed next to her. "Admit it," Hermione said, "you're just a little excited about taking the train today."

Emily looked into Hermione's brown eyes and grinned. "Probably more than a little."

"It's only four, Emily. Rather early to get up especially since we won't be exercising today. I have the alarm set for seven. If you'd like; I don't mind if you stay here with me till then."

Emily nestled herself closer to Hermione, "I'd like that," she said.

They both laid quietly for a few minutes until Emily asked, "Are you still awake?"

"Yes. Can't you sleep? Are you nervous?"

"I'm a little nervous, but I have you and my sisters. I'll be fine. Hermione, can I tell you something?"

"Anytime, sweetheart. What's on your mind?"

"It's about my parents. I loved them an awful lot and really miss them."

"I know how you feel. It's been seven years since I lost my parents, but it seems you never get over the loss and most certainly you never stop loving them."

"No one could ever take their place, but..." Emily altered her position and in doing so wrapped her arms tightly around Hermione's neck as she kissed her cheek. "I love you. And I love Harry. I'm so thankful that you gave Jamie and me a home."

Tears came quickly to Hermione's eyes. "I know I can never be your real mother and neither Harry or I would ever want you to forget your parents, but nothing can stop me from loving you as a daughter."

After exchanging hugs and kisses, Emily nestled back against Hermione. It wasn't long before they both drifted off into a contented sleep, a sleep that was too soon interrupted by the screaming of a very persistent alarm clock. *"Seven o'clock. Time to get up. Come on, move it. You set me for this time, so get out of bed. Why did you set me for seven if..."*

After Hermione shut off the alarm, she glanced at Emily who gave her a big smile. Hermione said, "Remind me the next time we stay here that I should bring along my own alarm clock. Emily, will you wake Jamie and Caitlin? We all have to get a shower, have breakfast and then get ourselves to the train station."

Emily didn't answer, but reached over and gave Hermione a hug. Then she gave her a light kiss on the cheek and jumped out of bed.

Hermione just sat on the edge of the bed for a moment thinking. *I may not be your mother, but you're my daughter.*

"While you girls take a shower, I'll lay out your clothes for you," Hermione yelled, trying to be heard over the laughter coming from the bath.

After a few minutes the giggling and laughter subsided and only the sound of running water was heard. A short time later, three naked, wet-haired girls came snickering through the door.

Hermione simply looked at them and then shook her head with incomprehension. "You all squeezed into that shower at one time didn't you?"

"It was fun Mum. You should have joined us," Caitlin said between giggles.

"It would have been more fun if someone hadn't kept hitting me in the face with their breasts," Emily complained.

"Yeah! I agree," Jamie said. "You have to watch where you sling those things, Caitlin."

"Ha! Ha! Very funny," Caitlin said in a frustrated manner. "Like I could hit somebody with these." She pinched her puffy nipples between her fingers and thumbs.

"I'm just kidding Sis, besides even though they're just sprouting, I bet Matt will notice the difference."

"Do you really think so?" Caitlin asked hopefully.

Hermione made no comment, but rather headed to the bath to take her shower. As much as she liked Matt, it admittedly bothered her that Caitlin spent much of her time with him naked. "Your clothes are lying on the bed," she said as she closed the door behind her.

Emily was the first to walk over to the bed and just stood there staring before saying, "When did she buy these? Does she actually expect us to wear them?"

Lying with each girl's clothing were matching bras and knickers.

Jamie looked at the garments disgustedly, "She has good taste, I'll give her that, but I've gone sixteen years without wearing either of those and I'm not about to start now."

"The last knickers that touched my butt were disposables," Emily said with a scowl. "Wearing skirts and blouses is bad enough. I love and respect Hermione, but my Mum didn't make me wear those and she's not about to."

Caitlin just held the attire in disbelief. "I don't understand. When she adopted me last year, one of the first things I told her was that I didn't wear knickers. I thought she had accepted it. Why now?"

Hermione opened the door and stuck her head in. Instead of starting her shower, she had waited to hear the girls' reaction to the undergarments. Unfortunately it had been exactly the response she had expected. "I'm not going to force any of you to wear them," she said dejectedly. "I just thought that perhaps you might humor me and at the same time make yourselves less vulnerable to giving a show. After all, Jamie, you do wear extremely short skirts and you two," she gave Caitlin and Emily a stern look, "sometimes sit and bend in very unladylike ways."

Jamie looked at Hermione as if extremely hurt. "I thought you understood.... Hermione, do you think I'm a tart because I don't wear knickers."

"No, of course not. Jamie, I know you and understand your feelings toward naturism. I just worry what other people will think of you girls if they accidentally get a view of your private parts."

"I certainly hope people will take the time to get to know us and judge us on qualities that are quite a bit more important than whether or not we wear knickers," Jamie responded angrily. "Hermione, I love you, but I'm of age and not wearing these."

"I'm not of age, so I imagine that if you require it; I have no choice," Emily said miserably.

Caitlin sat on the side of the bed looking more disheartened than Hermione had seen her since the day of the trail. "I'll wear them," Caitlin whispered glumly.

"Oh! Give them here. All of you." Hermione's said in a loud frustrated voice. "I can't stand looking at those wretched expressions on your faces. I only got them because I worry about you; what kind of mother lets her daughters run about without knickers?"

"One who loves them very much and understands that nudity isn't dirty." Jamie responded as she put her arm around Hermione. "Hermione, I think I can safely speak for Caitlin and Emily when I say that you don't have to worry. We all respect you and Harry too much to ever do anything that would shame or embarrass you."

"Yeah, Mum," Caitlin, added. "I'll try to sit more lady like."

"And I promise not to do any hand stands in the common room," Emily said laughingly.

"Like you could if you wanted to," Caitlin retorted.

"Wouldn't like to place a bet on that, would you?" Emily replied.

"Ahem," Jamie cleared her throat. "I thought you both agreed that there would be no more betting."

Caitlin and Emily both nodded shamefacedly.

"I'm glad I didn't remove the tags from these," Hermione said as she stuffed the undergarments into a bag. Now I really must go take a shower or we'll have to skip breakfast."

As Hermione was about to close the door to the bath, Jamie slipped in. "I have to ask you a question, sister to sister. Promise, you'll tell the truth?"

"What is it?" Hermione asked.

"Since being at Cape d'Adge, do you still wear a bra and knickers? Tell the truth."

Hermione blushed quite a deep red. "I gave them both up long before our vacation. But then I don't wear micro-mini skirts that barely cover my butt."

"No, you don't, but with your legs you should. I know a certain professor that wouldn't be able to take his eyes off you if you did."

Hermione thought for a moment. "Harry and I are going out to dinner on Saturday night to celebrate the one year anniversary of our reunion. Maybe I'll go shopping Saturday morning."

"How extreme do you want to go?"

Hermione blushed. "Make a baby extreme."

"You've decided to get pregnant," Jamie said excitedly. "I have just the dress. It's a copy of a dress that Sandra Bullock, the movie star, once wore. Truthfully, I've never gone anywhere that I felt I could wear it. Nothings much is left to the imagination."

"Jamie, this is Hermione you're talking to. Do you actually expect me to wear a dress you're hesitant to wear?"

"Hermione, I guarantee that if you wear this dress, you and Harry will.... Well I suggest you get a room at the Hogsmeade Inn? He won't be able to make it back to Hogwarts."

"I must say you have me intrigued," Hermione said, a devilish grin on her face unlike any Jamie had ever seen before. "Now unless you're going to take a shower with me, get out so I can get started," Hermione said laughingly.

Jamie froze briefly in her tracks and then turned and headed for the door. Once she was outside the bath she leaned on the door trying to gather her thoughts. Jamie realized that Hermione was not serious about them taking a shower together, but the idea actually excited her and she found this extremely disconcerting.

She didn't have time to brood over her thoughts when she saw that instead of getting dressed, Emily and Caitlin were practicing handstands.

* * * * *

"That muggle cab driver was extremely pleasant," Emily commented sarcastically.

"He was nasty, wasn't he?" Hermione agreed. "I even gave him what I thought was a generous tip."

"I don't think he appreciated having to tie our trunks to the roof," Jamie offered. "They seem to prefer fares that don't require them to get off their butt."

"By the size of his butt, I'd say it was high time he got off of it and did some exercise," Caitlin remarked. "It's lucky we didn't have any pets or he probably would have refused to transport us."

As the girls sought out trolleys for their luggage, Hermione checked her watch. "It's only ten o'clock. I've never been here this early before. The Hogwarts Express in all likelihood hasn't

even pulled in yet. We'll get to see all the excited students boarding."

Emily gave Caitlin a nudge. "She's really into this whole first day train ride thing, isn't she?"

"Mum loves anything to do with Hogwarts, especially the traditions," Caitlin said proudly.

As they neared the dividing barrier between platforms nine and ten, Hermione commented on the fact that King's Cross was not extremely busy. "Shall we hurry through before it gets hectic? Jamie, suppose you go first."

Emily and Caitlin watched as Jamie walked briskly toward the barrier. She seemed to simply melt into the solid wall.

"I've been watching her do that since I was six years old and it still frightens me," Emily commented to Caitlin. "Does it hurt?"

"Not at all, but it is kind of weird," Caitlin answered encouragingly. "One second you're running toward this solid wall and the next, you're standing on Platform Nine and Three-Quarters."

"The word is magical, Caitlin, not weird; you're next," Hermione said.

Caitlin didn't waver at all, but instead quickly pushed her trolley toward the barrier. Once she disappeared, Emily looked up at Hermione, her nervousness evident.

"Don't worry, I'll go through with you," Hermione said reassuringly. "We'll both push the trolley. If it helps, simply close your eyes as we near the barrier. That's what I did the first time."

Emily and Hermione both took hold of the trolley and started pushing it at a rather fast pace. Emily closed her eyes ready for the crash, but it never came. When she opened them again she saw a sparsely occupied platform, the overhead sign reading Hogwarts Express, eleven o'clock. Behind her was not the barrier, but instead a wrought-iron archway with the words Platform Nine and Three-Quarters on it.

"That will take some getting accustomed to," Emily said, still nervous from the experience.

"I was scared stiff the first time I had to do that," Hermione confessed. "My parents, being muggles, couldn't go through with me. We said our good byes and then I just ran for the barrier. I truly expected to end up in a hospital instead of on a train platform. Then I had to come out and do it all over again."

Emily looked at Hermione questioningly. "Why did you have to do that?"

"I had to let my parents know I was all right and that there actually was a train. They would have been worried to death. Getting adapted to your daughter being a witch is difficult enough without seeing her just disappear through a wall without an explanation."

"It must be extremely hard for muggles to acclimatize to their child being magical."

"I don't think my parents ever fully did."

Suddenly Emily realized they were alone. "Where did Jamie and Caitlin disappear to?"

"They didn't disappear. Caitlin's over there next to that young couple that's kissing so ardently," Hermione said enviously, wishing that could be her and Harry. This trip was the first time they had been apart since her kidnapping and she missed him a great deal. "If they ever break the embrace, I'm sure we'll discover that the couple is Alex and Jamie."

They were just about to head over to the others when the Hogwarts Express pulled into the station. Hermione stared as the train came to a stop; smoke from the scarlet steam engine drifting over their heads. "Isn't it beautiful," she asked.

Emily gave Hermione a patronizing look. "I guess it's pretty, for a train. You do realize that's the same train we just rode two days ago, don't you? "

"I know, but it always looks so special when it's the start of the school term."

As Emily guided Hermione toward the others, numerous students greeted the professor. Jamie and Alex, both looking flushed, concluded their hug as Hermione approached.

"Good morning Professor," Alex said, nervously.

"Good morning Mr. Ward," Hermione said, with a grin. I assume you and Jamie were instructing Caitlin on the proper way to greet someone special that you haven't seen in two months. I hope you took notes, Caitlin?"

As Caitlin and Emily laughed, Jamie and Alex turned a deep red. Suddenly Amanda came hurrying toward them and threw her arms around Jamie. "I've missed you, girl."

"Me, too," Jamie said. "How is Tony?" Jamie asked as Amanda greeted and in turn was greeted by everyone else.

"Super," Amanda answered excitedly. "I can't wait to see him. Our owls must be exceedingly happy summer is over; we wrote to each other daily." Amanda looked around the platform. "The crowd is starting to swell. If we want to get two compartments next to each other, we'd better hurry and claim them."

"You're correct," Jamie agreed. "There are too many of us for just one compartment this year, especially if Matt and Randy join us."

"They'd better join us," Caitlin said threateningly. "Matt's already in trouble for hardly writing to me at all."

"At least he wrote to you," Emily said quite disgusted. "Randy practically begged me to kiss him good-bye and then doesn't so much as send one owl. I'll guarantee you that he is not about to receive a hello hug."

"Don't be too hard on them girls," Alex said in defense of the boys. "When you're twelve, you don't have your priorities quite in order. You sometimes don't realize how very unique that girl standing next to you is or how much you adore her." Alex grabbed Jamie's hand and squeezed it.

Just as they were about to head for the train, Matt and Randy came scurrying toward them. "Hurry up guys!" Caitlin yelled. "We have to go claim compartments."

In the rush to get on the train and find two compartments next to each other, neither boy received an embrace or a kiss. In fact, Randy didn't even receive a hello from Emily, just a frosty cold shoulder. Once they secured seating in the second car, Jamie suggested that the others remain on board the train while Amanda, Alex and her looked for Tony.

As Jamie left the compartment, Caitlin said, "Jamie, tell Mum that Emily and I said good-bye and that we'll see her tonight."

"Yeah, tonight," Emily said frustrated. "She Apparates and in the time it takes to snap your fingers, she's back in Hogsmeade. Meanwhile we get to spend the whole day cooped up on a train to get to the same place. Isn't tradition grand?"

Jamie just shrugged her shoulders at Emily's remark as she commented to Amanda and Alex. "There are times I find it hard to believe we are sisters."

"I understand what you mean," Amanda said with a smile. "At times you two can be so much alike and other times total opposites."

"You and Caitlin seem more like sisters and you're not even related," Alex added.

"I need to tell Hermione that Emily and Caitlin are staying on the train," Jamie said, "but remind me later on to tell you about Caitlin this summer; she was amazing. Her Hyperempathic powers are becoming awesome."

Jamie located Hermione just as she completed a conversation with some parents of first year students. "Hermione, Caitlin and Emily are staying on board to insure that no one takes our compartments. They said they'd see you tonight."

"I wanted to watch the train depart," Hermione answered, with some uncertainty, "but in fact I should get back to Hogwarts. I have a great deal to do before tonight's sorting. Tell the girls I love them." Hermione gave Jamie a brief hug and then just prior to Apparating said, "Inform Emily that she'll look great in Gryffindor red."

Hermione had only just disappeared when a voice called out to them. "Now if we were allowed to do that, I wouldn't have almost missed the bloody train." Tony ran to Amanda and literally swept her off her feet and into an adoring embrace. Only when the whistle sounded did he allow her feet to once again touch earth.

"We have to hurry, the train will be pulling out," Alex yelled. "Quickly Tony, just throw your trunk on the last car. We'll just have to carry it through the train. We have a compartment in the second car."

They barely got the trunk and themselves on board when the train began to move. Momentarily they remained on the rear observation deck as the station disappeared in the distance. As the train picked up speed, they went inside and started the trek toward the front of the train.

"Where were you?" Amanda asked. "I thought you were going to miss the train."

"You weren't the only one," Tony said, grateful that he hadn't. "It is ridiculous that we are forced to use muggle transportation rather than Apparating. I was stuck in a traffic jam that lasted for miles." He looked at Amanda and shook his head in disbelief. "Amanda, you're more beautiful than ever."

"I'm not beautiful," Amanda said as her face went bright red. "But once we get to the compartment I'll give you a kiss for having such poor eyesight."

They made quick headway through the train because the passageways were clear. That was until they reached the car just prior to theirs. When they entered, it sounded like a party was going on. The car was jammed with both boys and girls who were hooting and hollering.

"Looking good baby!"

"Cover yourself, you tart."

"Hey guys, think we'd get in trouble if we touched her?"

Jamie wasted no time as she yelled loudly. "School prefects! Empty this passage way at once! Anyone not out of here in one minute will lose twenty points for their house." Suddenly there was a mad rush to compartment doors and other cars of the train. In less than a minute the car was empty and Jamie had an unobstructed path as she ran toward the girl.

"Who the hell would do something so perverted?!" Jamie yelled, bursting with anger.

"I'll give you one guess who the bastard was," Amanda answered, "but I'm sure no one saw him; at least no one that will inform on the scum."

Chapter Five - First Years

Jamie couldn't believe her eyes. A young girl was hanging inverted from the passageway ceiling of the train. Her shoes, approximately three feet apart, gave the appearance of being glued there. Evidently she had given up the hopelessness of covering herself and was now simply crying uncontrollably.

"She doesn't have bad legs for an eleven year old," Tony observed.

"Cute little butt, too," added Alex.

Jamie looked at both Tony and Alex with disgust. "If you two pigs are done giving scores to her various body parts, I could use some assistance getting her down." Jamie glared at Tony. "Just what makes you so sure she's a first year?" she inquired.

"We all know Bancroft did this," Tony declared. "Dick wouldn't have the courage to attack anyone who might know a counter curse. He'd prefer a scared first year with no friends to be witnesses."

After his comment about the young girl's butt, Alex was disinclined to speak, but added, "The Powerpuff Girls knickers sort of pointed toward her being a first year, too."

"Tony, hold her shoulders so she doesn't hit her head," Jamie instructed. "Alex, be ready to catch her." As soon as the boys were in position, Jamie pointed her wand at the girl's feet and said, "Finite Incantatum."

The girl's body no sooner touched Alex's arms than she struggled free and jumped to the floor. Without a word she promptly made for a way out of the train car.

Alex bounded after her and only just prevented her from opening the exit door and stepping off the speeding train. "Take it easy sweetie!" he hollered as he held the struggling girl tightly. "We're the good guys. Where do you think you're going?"

"Any place, but Hogwarts," she blubbered. "I need to get back to my mum; to normal people."

Jamie knelt down and put her arm around the girl's shoulder. At first there was some resistance, but soon the girl calmed as Jamie caringly said, "What you need to do is compose yourself. Everything is okay now. We'll take care of you the remainder of the trip. No one will harm you."

"But I want to go back," the girl implored. "I want to stay with my mum. I don't want to be a witch."

"Do you remember Professor Granger, the nice witch that visited you and your parents?" Jamie asked sympathetically.

The girl nodded her head yes. "If you still want to return home once we reach our destination," Jamie said, "I'll tell her. She'll talk to you and make arrangements for your return home."

"I don't have to stay?" the girl questioned meekly.

"No one is forced to go to Hogwarts, but I wouldn't make a rash choice based on your encounter with that low life," Jamie encouraged. "Even muggle schools have bullies. The number of nice people you'll come across will far exceed the ones like him."

"Do you know who it was?" The girl inquired. "I never got to see him."

"We have a good idea," Jamie said disheartened. "Possibly, we could have seen that he was punished if you had obtained a good look at him."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't you be sorry," Jamie declared. "You did absolutely nothing wrong. What that bastard did to you was unforgivable. It wasn't a harmless joke. It wasn't even harassment. It borders on sexual assault."

"Jamie, don't get carried away," Tony suggested. "Bancroft is scum, but I'm sure it was just one of his bad jokes. I'm certain he didn't consider it sexual assault."

"It doesn't matter what he considered it," Jamie said, her face turning red with anger. "The first comment out of your mouth when you saw her was of a sexual nature."

"Jamie, I think that's enough," Amanda said, trying to head off an argument. "You and Tony getting into a quarrel in front of our new friend is not going to help change her opinion of Hogwarts and its students. By the way, what's your name honey?"

"Kim, Kim Thatcher," the girl said shyly.

"It's nice to meet you Kim, although the circumstances could have been much better," Amanda said trying to get the girl to relax. "I'm Amanda Pierce. The boy about to have his head bitten off is Tony Marburger, my boyfriend. The lioness doing the biting is Jamie Zacherley and that's her boyfriend Alex Ward. You might want to thank him for stopping you from jumping from a moving train."

"I'm sorry," Kim said bashfully. "I wasn't very nice. Thank you for helping me."

"Under the circumstances, I'm sure everyone understands your actions," Jamie said, showing the famous Zacherley smile.

"Did she say your name was Zacherley?" Kim questioned, excitement in her eyes. "I met you sister, Emily, when we were being measured for our robes. We were going to look for each other today."

"If that's the case, why don't we get you situated in her compartment," Jamie offered. "I should go and report what took place to the head boy and girl."

* * * * *

"I have no idea who did it," Kim answered shyly. "I had just gotten my trunk on board the train and was about to go into an empty compartment when suddenly it felt like someone

pulled my feet out from under me, but instead of falling forward onto the floor, my body sort of flipped and I found my feet attached to the ceiling."

"It must have been Dick Bancroft," Caitlin said. "That's his favorite spell. He pulled it a couple of times last year on unsuspecting first years."

"He preferred girls over boys, of course," Randy commented.

"What's the difference?" Emily asked. "Hanging a person powerless from the ceiling like that is malicious no matter what the sex. Being magical is a wonderful gift, not a power to use over the less fortunate or inexperienced."

"I think Randy meant that Bancroft preferred girls because their bare legs and knickers showed," Matt explained.

"What's the big deal about that?" Emily asked. "I'd be infuriated that someone had taken advantage of me and put me in such a vulnerable position. Who cares if people see your legs?"

"It wasn't just my legs," Kim said almost defensively. "My knickers were totally exposed. It's easy for you to say, who cares, but I bet you've never been in a position where people could see your knickers."

Randy couldn't help but snicker. "She has you there, Emily. I bet no one has ever seen your knickers?"

"I know I never have," Matt laughed.

"You guys are dreadful," Caitlin said, trying to hold back a chuckle.

"You all think this is hilarious, don't you?" Kim asked angrily. "Maybe I should go sit in the other compartment with Jamie."

Kim made a move to get up and leave, but Emily slid over and put her hand on the girl's leg, gently pushing her back down. "Please, don't go. They're not making fun of you. It's in regards to me they're joking. What happened to you was wrong, period."

Kim paused. "But it was an appalling thing to do to anyone. Why would it be funny if someone did it to you?" she asked, confused.

"It wouldn't be. It was the comment you made about the knickers." Emily looked to Caitlin for assistance. "Can I tell her?"

"You have to, otherwise she won't understand," Caitlin answered, not entirely sure she was giving the appropriate guidance.

"Kim, we scarcely are acquainted with each other, but I'm going to confide in you," Emily said, hopeful she would not come to dread her decision. "Caitlin and I are to a certain extent different from most witches you'll meet at Hogwarts."

"Different in what way?" Kim asked nervously.

"Caitlin and I are both nudists. We detest wearing clothes and go nude whenever possible. They were all laughing because you made a comment about people seeing my knickers. I don't wear them and I never have," Emily stated.

Kim didn't move. She just sat there with a blank stare on her face.

"Emily has been a naturist her entire life, but I only became one last year around this time," Caitlin added.

Kim indicated Matt and Randy. "Are they nudists?"

"Hah!" Emily said, almost breaking into laughter. "That'll be the day. No! They aren't, but they know about us. Actually during the school year they see us naked practically every day. They don't even notice us anymore."

"That's not at all true," Matt said as he looked at Caitlin, who blushed.

Kim was aghast. "How do they see you? The school doesn't allow you to go to class starkers, does it?"

"Unfortunately no," Caitlin answered. "We both would if we could, even if everyone else was totally clothed. We work out every morning. Just recently we learned a charm that makes us look dressed even though we are nude. Typically we use the spell to exercise. Anyone that touches you can see you as you are; Matt and Randy are our holders."

Kim glanced at Emily's hand on her leg. "You're touching me right now. Does that mean that you have on real clothes?"

Kim seemed relieved when Emily said, "Yes!"

"Actually we were talking about that just before Jamie brought you here," Caitlin said. "We were going to wait until the lady with the snack cart came. After she was gone we were going to lock the door, close the curtains and get undressed for the balance of the trip."

"But now that you're here; we'll stay dressed," Emily quickly added.

"Thank you," Kim said softly, sounding extremely relieved.

As the conversation progressed, the train left London and was now speeding past fields of sheep and cows.

It was around half past twelve when a dimpled woman slid back their door and said, "Anything off the cart?"

They all decided to buy from the cart, but Kim was befuddled as she perused the assortment of goodies. "This stuff is all strange," she said. "What exactly are Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans? They look like regular jellybeans."

"I'd pass them by if I were you," Randy advised. "When they say every flavor, well they actually mean every flavor. You get the normal flavors like orange and cherry, but then you

can get asparagus or liver. Never eat any that are dark brown."

Kim just stared at Randy, her face a bright red.

"Stick with things like Chocolate Frogs and Cauldron Cakes. Oh! Pumpkin Pasties are especially tasty," Caitlin suggested.

Kim took the advice of both Randy and Caitlin as she made her purchases. Emily helped her with the transaction, as Kim was confused dealing for the first time with Sickles and Knuts.

Everyone was starved, none of them having eaten since breakfast. They dove into the pasties, cakes, and candies. "These Pumpkin Pasties are good," Kim commented to Caitlin between bites.

"I got your mum," Matt said to Caitlin as he unwrapped his Chocolate Frog and picked up the card.

"I have three of her and two of Dad, but I can't get a Ron Weasley to complete the covenant," Caitlin complained.

"And you never will," Randy said quickly. When they stopped printing his card, it became a collector's item. There're worth a fortune."

"Why did they stop making his card?" Kim asked innocently.

"Because many wizards are racist," Emily proclaimed.

"That's partly true, but because he took part in the defeat of Voldemort most wizards were willing to accept him until that unpleasant incident," Randy added.

"Remember guys, I'm muggle born," Kim said with reserve. "I'm rather lacking in knowledge when it comes to wizard history."

"I'll let you borrow Harry Potter: A History," Emily offered. "But for now..."

"Oh! I read about him," Kim interrupted. "That's the baby with the lightning scar that defeated that guy Randy just mentioned, Voldie something or other."

"Voldemort," Matt said clearly. "There was a time wizards were afraid to utter his name. They referred to him as, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Even after the killing curse rebounded off baby Harry, they were still afraid; as if they knew he would return."

"They were afraid with good reason," Randy added. "Professor Potter was only eleven when he and Professors Granger and Weasley first faced Voldemort. Of course, they weren't professors then, just first year students.

"Dad claims he would have never lived to be a seventh year if it hadn't been for Mum," Caitlin said proudly. "He maintains that the love the three of them shared for each other is what ultimately caused Voldemort's defeat."

Kim looked at Caitlin with awe. "Your parents are famous?"

"Actually, I'm adopted," Caitlin said. "Although they love me and treat me as if I was their real daughter."

"They're two of the greatest people in the world," Emily agreed. "They didn't think twice about giving Jamie and me a home when our parents were killed."

"I don't understand," Kim said, obviously confused. "If all three took part in the defeat of Voldemort, why is Ron Weasley not regarded as highly as your parents?"

"Because people who don't know him judge him by what he is instead of who he is and what he's like." Caitlin answered. "Professor Weasley is kind and loving. It wasn't his choice to be a werewolf."

"Werewolf!" Kim's voice literally trembled. "I just learned that witches and wizards actually exist. Now are you going to tell me that werewolves are real, also?"

"Not only werewolves, but vampires, merpeople and many other creatures that muggles argue are myths," Randy said.

Kim momentarily sat bewildered. She truly was entering a new, strange magical world. "Was he born a werewolf?"

"No!" Matt answered. "Becoming a werewolf is not genetic. Another werewolf must bite you. Ron Weasley was bitten at the end of his sixth year."

"It had to be horrible for him." Kim said, compassion evident in her voice.

"It was and still is," Caitlin said sadly. "He was dating my mum at the time it happened. Both she and Harry were very supportive. They are both Animagi and stayed with him the nights of the full moon."

"Animagi?" Kim said, a blank expression on her face.

"They can change into an animal at will," Caitlin clarified.

"Oh!" was Kim's only comment. Her head was beginning to ache as it filled with all the things she was learning about her new world.

"For hundreds of years the wizarding world has looked down on werewolves as being only part human." Matt explained. "When the covenant defeated Voldemort it was easy for our world to place Harry Potter and Hermione Granger on a pedestal. After all he was the boy who lived, and Granger despite being muggle born had proven herself to be the smartest and bravest witch in centuries. Many in high places had trouble, however, honoring a werewolf despite the service he had rendered. It was done with great reluctance."

"That's not right!" Kim complained. "Your world is bigoted. A person should be judged on his or her own merits."

Matt gave Kim a condescending look. "You mean like the muggle world does?" Kim lowered her head realizing that Muggles were no better than wizards in that respect. "To make a long

story short, Weasley became a famous Quidditch player once out of school."

Kim once again seemed lost. "Quidditch is an extremely popular wizard sport." Matt added when he saw the expression on Kim's face. "Anyway, the manufacturers of Chocolate Frogs had timed the release of the trading cards with Potter, Granger and Weasley to coincide with the Quidditch World Cup. The cards had only been on the market a few days when it happened. They issued a recall and destroyed all the cards with his picture. At the time no one wanted to be associated with Weasley. I guess they didn't consider how valuable they would make the cards that survived."

Kim looked frustrated. "What happened that made them decide to recall all the Weasley cards?"

"That part of the story I know," Emily said sadly. "The World Cup game lasted a great extent longer than was anticipated. There was a full moon and Weasley changed into a werewolf. He attacked a young girl on the opposing team, nearly severing her leg. It was a miracle the Hyperempaths could save her limb, but even they couldn't prevent her from being turned into a werewolf. Weasley was sent to Azkaban and most of the magical world since has tried to ignore that there was a third member of the covenant."

Kim's brain was spinning. She felt like she was Alice and had just stepped through the looking glass. Surely the Rabbit would appear any minute now. After a few minutes Kim began giggling to herself.

"What are you laughing at?" Emily inquired.

"Nothing really," Kim answered, shaking her head in bewilderment. "It's just that when you and Caitlin said you were nudists, I found it rather out of the ordinary. Now after hearing about Quidditch, werewolves, vampires and a sundry of other things; being a nudist sounds quite normal by comparison."

"That's great!" Emily said excitedly. "I was hoping you'd change your mind. We'll be stuck not only in these shirts and skirts once we reach Hogsmeade, but also our heavy robes. I was truly looking forward to a few hours of comfort. Matt, will you and Randy lock the door and close the curtains while Caitlin and I get out of these horrible clothes?"

It all happened so quickly that Kim didn't have time to tell Emily that she had misunderstood her. Saying that something seemed normal by comparison didn't mean she found it any less bizarre or tolerable, but before Kim could correct the misunderstanding, Emily's skirt had dropped to the floor and she found herself for the first time in her life looking at another girl's vagina. When she realized she was staring she lifted her head only to find herself now looking at Emily's perky little breasts. She turned quickly away, now to have her eyes fall on Caitlin's butt as she bent over to pick up her skirt off the floor.

Somehow as locks got locked, curtains got closed and clothes got discarded, the seating arrangement also got changed. Before the strip down, the girls had been sitting on one side of the compartment and the boys on the other. Now Kim found herself seated between two boys facing two totally nude girls. She didn't know quite where to look.

Emily and Caitlin had promptly taken advantage of having a seat to themselves. Caitlin was sitting on her crossed legs Indian style while Emily was leaning with her back against the

corner of the seat, one leg and foot propped on the seat, the other hanging over the side.

Kim noticed that although Matt and Randy were allegedly accustomed to seeing the girls nude, they still seemed captivated by the sight.

"Caitlin, you've changed during the last two months," Matt said in trepidation. "You've gotten even more attractive and your breasts are..." Matt blushed. "They're starting to develop. You're beautiful."

Caitlin jumped from her seat and gave Matt a peck on the cheek; then returned a flushed smile on her face.

Emily waited for Randy to make a comment, but he remained silent; his eyes glued between her legs. Finally Emily couldn't take it any longer. "Randy, you've seen it a hundred times before. I don't mind you looking intently there, but you could at least glance at my face once in awhile and talk to me."

Randy seemed startled as if awoken from a trance. "I'm sorry, but..." He hesitated. "You even have a great tan down there. Did you ever wear clothes this summer?"

Kim too had noticed both Emily and Caitlin's rather complete tans and waited to hear the response. "We used the concealment charm all summer," Emily said proudly. "Except for Disneyland and shopping in Diagon Alley we've been naked since you left on the Hogwarts Express."

"You really look good," said Randy, his voice sounding quite emphatic.

"Thanks," Emily responded, giving Randy a smile.

Kim imagined that she'd have every inch of the compartment ceiling etched forever in her mind by the time they reached Hogsmeade because that was the only place she felt she could look without running the chance of gawking at a naked body part.

After a time, Emily observed Kim staring at the ceiling and said, "Kim if you're embarrassed by our nudity, Caitlin and I will get dressed. You'll get a neck cramp if you spend the balance of the journey studying the fly dung on the ceiling."

Kim remained focused on the ceiling as she diffidently answered Emily. "It's not so much that I'm embarrassed now as much as I'm afraid I will embarrass myself and make you both angry. I've never seen anyone naked; I'm afraid keeping eye contact as we speak might be impossible."

"You've never seen anyone naked?" Caitlin said in disbelief. "Not even a younger sibling or baby?"

"No one," Kim answered warily. "I don't want you to think badly of me, but it's extremely difficult not to stare under the circumstances. I just can't comprehend how you can both do what you're doing. I could never be naked in front of another girl, yet alone in front of them." She indicated Randy and Matt. "But it doesn't seem to phase either of you in the least."

"That's because we think of nudity in a dissimilar way than you," Emily said, and then tried to

explain. "Your parents more than likely raised you to think that being naked was shocking. That exposing your body was a dreadful thing to do. Most people are raised to think that nudity is dirty. Being nude isn't dirty; it's the things that people associate with it that are sometimes crude."

"But people aren't suppose to see your breasts, or butt," Kim argued. "And most certainly it's wrong to expose your private area."

"Why?" Caitlin asked.

"Because certain areas of your body shouldn't be shown in public," Kim argued tensely.

"Only because somebody decided it was wrong. Who determined it was okay to show arms and legs, but not breasts and butts?" Emily argued. "I grew up nude, seeing my sister and parents naked, and I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. I always knew that there was a difference between boys and girls and I knew exactly what it was. You're eleven and have never seen anyone naked therefore you are curious and want to stare. I've seen people naked my entire life and now don't even give them a second glance."

"I understand what you're saying," Kim said, "but I could never do it."

"A lot of people can't because they have a lifetime of being told it was wrong," Caitlin said. "You notice Matt and Randy aren't nude. Neither Emily nor I have ever even asked them to try it. Nudists don't push their lifestyle on others."

Kim looked worriedly from Caitlin to Emily, "So I don't have to take off my clothes for us to be friends?"

"Not hardly," Emily laughed. "I wouldn't have many friends if I required them to all be nudists. Caitlin and I also understand the urge that non-nudists have to stare. We won't think you're weird."

Kim seemed to relax slightly and actually stopped studying the ceiling before saying, "I think I'm going to have another pumpkin pastie; they are extremely good."

* * * * *

You guys better hurry up and put yours robes on!" Jamie shouted as she rapped on the door to their compartment. "We're nearly there. Matt, Kim and Randy, took out their robes, as Caitlin and Emily got dressed.

"That trip went much faster than I expected," Emily said as she tucked her shirt in her skirt and peered out the window. "It's getting dark already."

Kim hurried to the window for a look-see. There wasn't much to observe other than mountains and forests under a deep purple sky. "The train seems to be slowing down," Kim said apprehensively, as Caitlin and Emily donned their black robes.

"We will be reaching Hogwarts in five minutes' time," a voiced said, echoing through out the train. "Please leave your luggage on the train; it will be taken to the school separately for

you."

"You both look a little nervous," Caitlin said to Emily and Kim. "Don't be. There is nothing to be frightened of, although this is where we have to leave you guys. Once we get off the train Matt, Randy and I will be taking carriages to the castle. It's traditional for first years to go by boat across the lake."

"There's that word tradition again," Emily said distastefully. "I'm really starting to dislike it."

The train slowed down and as soon as it stopped, people began to push their way toward the door. Caitlin heard the feminine voice first and then noticed the pretty witch carrying a lamp. "First years! First years over here please!" The voice said in a firm but pleasant tone.

"This is where we have to separate," Caitlin said. You guys hold hands and stay together.

"We'll see you both at the Gryffindor table tonight," Matt said encouraging.

As they walked to the carriage Randy asked, "Do you think they'll actually both make Gryffindor house?"

"Jamie is Gryffindor," Matt noted. "Brothers and sisters usually enter the same house, so Emily should be a done deal. But Kim doesn't have a chance. She's got Hufflepuff written all over her."

"Unless she's relatively smart, then she might be put into Ravenclaw," Caitlin said. "But my first guess is also Hufflepuff."

Emily's eyes nervously followed Caitlin as she disappeared into the dark night. For the life of her, Emily couldn't understand why she was so panicky. She knew where she was going. Hogwarts had been her home since her parents died last spring, but still for some reason she was uneasy. "Kim, hold my hand so we get the same boat."

"First years follow me please," Professor Katie Bell called. "Any more first years? Be careful, watch your step."

Professor Bell had no more than said be careful, when Kim stumbled going down the steep, narrow path. Had she not been holding Emily's hand, she in all probability would have fallen.

The path was extremely dark with thick trees on either side. No one spoke, but Emily did hear a few snuffles, some emanating from her companion.

"Once we round the bend, just ahead of us, you'll get your first view of Hogwarts," Professor Bell announced.

Emily almost laughed when the narrow path opened onto the edge of the great black lake and the first years left out a loud "Ooooooh!" The vast castle with its many turrets and towers was impressive, perched high atop the mountain on the other side of the lake, its windows sparkling in the starry sky.

"It's huge," was all Kim managed to say as she clutched Emily's hand tighter.

Professor Bell indicated a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore. "No less than three and no more than four to a boat," she said.

Emily and Kim scampered into the nearest boat, where two boys quickly joined them. "Are you two going steady?" The one boy questioned smugly.

Both girls ignored him as they stared at the enormous castle.

"Is everyone situated?" Professor Bell asked before commanding the boats. "Forward."

Seemingly on their own power, the small boats moved off, gliding across the, smooth as glass, lake. The air was silent as not a one student spoke, but rather stared in silence at the great castle. It towered over them as the boats sailed closed and closer to the cliff on which it was built.

As the first boats reached the cliff, Professor Bell advised them to bend forward. Emily heard a few screams as the ivy curtain that hid a wide opening in the cliff's face brushed some students' bodies as they went through. The boats continued along a dark tunnel, underneath the castle, until finally they reached a kind of underground marina.

"Climb out of your boats, but remain together," Katie said as the first years clambered from their boats and on to the pebble covered ground. They followed Professor Bell as she led them up a passage cut into the rock until finally they came out at last onto smooth, damp grass.

They swiftly walked up a flight of stone steps and jammed around the great, oak front door as the Professor knocked three times. At once the door swung open.

Kim and Emily nudged each other when a familiar face answered the door. Emily had never seen Hermione looking as regal as she did in the emerald -green robes she was wearing. The beautiful witch had a stern expression on her face, but Emily knew first hand the warmth of her heart.

"I'd like to present the first years, Professor Granger." Katie said with a smile.

"Thank you Professor Bell. How did your first crossing go?" Hermione inquired.

"The water was as flat as glass and no sign of the Giant Squid," she answered professionally.

"I'm glad everything went smoothly," Hermione said with a smile. "I'll take them from here."

"Giant Squid?" Kim asked nervously.

"I'll tell you later," Emily whispered.

The students stood in awe as Professor Granger pulled the door wide open, displaying the entrance hall that was as big as a small house. The walls were lit with torches and a glorious marble staircase facing them led to the upper floors.

As they followed Hermione across the flagged stone floor to a small, empty chamber, Emily nudged Kim and pointed to a pair of double doors. "That's the Great Hall," she whispered. "The rest of the school is in there waiting for us."

Kim did not answer, but timidly reached once more for Emily's hand.

"Welcome to Hogwarts," Professor Granger said after all the first years had crowded into a small empty chamber off the hall. "We will be entering the Great Hall as soon as they are ready for us. The first order of business will be the Sorting Ceremony. You will become a member of one of the four houses; each has produced outstanding witches and wizards and has a noble history. Your house whether it be Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw or Slytherin will be something like your family for the next seven years."

Kim squeezed Emily's hand tightly at the mention of seven years. Emily could feel the other girl literally trembling.

"You will earn your house points through your accomplishments and lose your house points with any rule breaking. The house with the most points at the end of the year is awarded the house cup, a great honor. Which ever house becomes yours; be a credit to it."

"Now if you will all wait quietly, I'll go check to see if they are ready for us."

As Professor Granger left the chamber, Kim asked. "How exactly do they sort us into houses?"

"I heard it's some sort of test," the boy from the boat answered. "My brother claims it hurts a lot."

"Your brother is a liar," Emily said. "We each put on a magical hat and it decides what house to sort us into."

"Who told you that silly story," the boy scoffed. "Being situated into the proper house is much too important to be left up to some old hat."

"I trust my sources," Emily said confidently.

"We'll know one way or the other shortly," Kim said fearfully.

Professor Granger had returned. "Please form a single line and follow me. No need to push or shove. Once we reach the Great Hall you will be sorted alphabetically."

"Last again," Emily reflected to herself.

Emily thought Kim was going to rip her arm off when she saw the misty silver images of about twenty ghosts gliding about the room and glancing at the first years as they entered. "I don't belong here. I definitely don't belong here," Kim moaned.

Although Emily had been in the Great Hall before, it was never on the occasion of a great banquet and she was dazzled. She noticed that many of her fellow first years also seemed in awe. Some were staring at the ceiling. Whether it was to avoid the staring eyes of the seated students or because the ceiling looked more like the actual sky than a ceiling; she wasn't sure.

As Professor Granger placed a patched, frayed and extremely dirty pointed wizard's hat on the stool Emily looked around hoping to spot the boy who was expecting a test, but she didn't see

him.

For a few seconds, the Great Hall was completely silent. Then the hat began to sing; a rip near the brim opened wide like a mouth. Emily paid little attention to the song; her interest was more on the Gryffindor table where she saw Jamie and Caitlin beaming in her direction.

"This is the largest class I've seen since I've been here," Jamie remarked. "The sorting will take forever."

"I imagine Emily will be last," Caitlin said, depressed.

"That's life when your last name begins with a Z," Jamie shrugged. "You get accustomed to waiting."

Kim paid little attention to the song the hat was singing, as she looked apprehensively around the hall at all the faces gawking at the group of first years. She squeezed Emily hand and received a reassuring squeeze back.

"That hat is going to place us in the various houses?" Kim whispered questioningly to Emily. "I hope it knows what it's doing."

Professor Granger stepped forward; she was holding a long roll of parchment.

"When your name is called, please come forward; put the hat on and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said. "Alexander, Ruth!"

A red-haired girl with freckles nervously left the line and headed to the stool. Her body visibly shook as she placed the hat on her head. There was a brief pause-

"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat.

The students at the Hufflepuff table cheered and applauded as Ruth went to join them.

"Anderson, Albert!"

"RAVENCLAW!"

This time the second table from the left clapped as several Ravenclaws stood to greet Albert.

"Both those houses seem genuinely friendly," Kim said quietly.

"Bancroft, Tyler!"

It was the boy that had ridden in the boat with Emily and Kim, the one expecting some sort of test.

"Did she say Bancroft?" Jamie questioned Alex. "Please tell me he's not related to Dick?"

"From the expression on Dick's face, I'd guess he's a younger brother," Alex answered.

As expected, Tyler Bancroft joined his brother in Slytherin.

"They seem like an unpleasant lot," Kim said. "Not nearly as friendly as the Hufflepuffs and Ravensclaws."

"Tony, Amanda's boy friend, is a Slytherin. He's nice, but on the whole my sister would agree with you."

The sorting stretched on and on until the unsorted group was down to ten.

"Sanders, Ian" went to Gryffindor as the table on the far left once again exploded with cheers.

"Thatcher, Kim"

Emily gave Kim's hand one final squeeze. "Think Gryffindor," Emily said as Kim left her side.

Kim put the hat on and nervously perched herself on the stool. The hat hesitated longer than it had for any other student, waiting almost a minute before finally shouting, "SLYTHERIN!"

Emily couldn't believe her ears. *Anywhere but Slytherin, she'll be eaten alive.* Emily watched as the Slytherins coldly greeted Kim with the exception of Tony, who gave her a hug and offered her a seat,

Jamie had a tear in her eye as she turned to Amanda. "The hat just made a horrible mistake," she said sadly.

"Tony will look out for her," Amanda said reassuringly.

The announcement even caught Hermione by surprise as she momentarily neglected to announce the next name.

"Thompson, Craig" amid robust cheers then became a Gryffindor.

Emily agonized through the sorting of six more students until finally she stood alone at the front of the now rather noisy hall. Everyone it seemed had their fill of sorting and was anxious for the feast to begin.

"Zacherley, Emily!"

"That must be Jamie's sister." Emily heard a voice say as she plopped the hat on her head and sat on the stool.

Nothing happened. She sat there for two minutes although it seemed like two hours. Everyone in the Great Hall was now looking at her wondering what could be taking so long.

"Hat, are you awake?" Emily finally whispered. "Everyone is gawking at me."

"Difficult. Extremely difficult," a small voice said in her ear. "You could succeed in any of the houses. You're not afraid of work and extremely loyal. Your mind is sharp and you are brave at heart: extremely cunning, too. Where to place you?"

"You put my sister in Gryffindor?"

"Yes, but your sister leaned strongly. You are equally divided. Perhaps a shade more Gryffindor and Slytherin."

"If it's so equal and you feel I could succeed anywhere, perhaps you'd allow me to choose."

"Very well, but I will narrow the choice to Gryffindor or Slytherin."

Emily looked toward the Gryffindor table where Caitlin and Jamie were both watching her apprehensively. "That's easy then. Place me in Gryf...."

Gryffindor was practically out of her mouth when her eye caught the Slytherin table. What she saw would change her life. Kim was sitting with her hands folded. She was not watching the sorting, but instead her eyes were trained on the ceiling. The girl seemed to be praying.

"She needs me," Emily said her eyes moist. Please, sort me into..." The name caught in her throat. She couldn't believe she was about to say it. "Slytherin."

"I will not forget you Miss Zacherley; you were and will remain a mystery," the hat said. "Even when you make a decision to be in one house it is using the logic of another. Very well, let it be SLYTHERIN!"

Hermione practically dropped her roll of parchment in shock as she looked to Harry for some sort of support.

Jamie burst into tears as Amanda and Caitlin consoled her.

The Great Hall was in shock. To most, the name Jamie Zacherley personified the Gryffindor qualities. Now her sister was being placed in Slytherin, certainly the flip side of the coin.

Dick Bancroft and many of the other Slytherins ignored Emily as she approached their table. They saw her as a spy from the enemy side, infiltrating their house. Gaining their acceptance would not be an easy task. Others, including Tony and even Dick's brother welcomed her opening. But no one was as thrilled as Kim Thatcher that Emily Zacherley was a Slytherin. One would have thought they were lifelong friends the way Kim hugged Emily.

Once Emily was seated, she worked up the nerve to sneak a glance at the Gryffindor table. Caitlin and Jamie were looking her direction trying to catch her eye. It was obvious that they were both extremely disappointed, but neither looked angry instead they mouthed words of support.

Hermione dejectedly took her seat next to Harry. "Poor Emily," she said. "The girl must be heart broken not to be in Gryffindor with Caitlin and Jamie."

"I'm sure," Harry agreed. "But I have the strangest feeling it was her choice to make. Whether it was or not; we now have a Slytherin among us."

"That will at times be a sticky state of affairs," Hermione said after some deliberation. "As much as we care for Emily and it's essential that she have our love and support, we are Gryffindors."

"Emily is a bright, clever girl. She knows we're not about to stop caring for her, but she also must realize that you are head of Gryffindor house and I'm a direct descendant of Godric Gryffindor. We'll always be there to encourage her, but she must understand that when it comes to house battles we will be supporting Gryffindor. Speaking of houses.... where is the head of Slytherin house this evening?"

"I asked Severus the same question," Hermione answered. "Draco didn't give him a large amount of information when he owled that he would fail to make the sorting. He only told him that he had to meet with his lawyer, but would be here for breakfast and classes in the morning."

"You don't think it has anything to do with Timmy do you?" Harry asked, concern evident in his voice.

"Oh! I doubt it. Not even Draco would be low enough to try to take Timmy away from Sam. Besides, he wouldn't have a chance in the world. Sam is a fantastic mother."

* * * * *

"I won't lie to you Professor Malfoy. Taking a child away from its natural mother is not easily accomplished, but I've succeeded on numerous occasions and I feel you have a first-rate case," Legal representative Bullchip said as he rubbed his chin, an evil smile covering his face. "It's a simple matter of adjusting a few facts and calling in some favors I'm owed. Having that youngster live in the same dwelling as a werewolf is, in my mind, clearly a case of child endangerment. If everything goes according to plan, he should be a ward of the ministry within two weeks. At that point we'll go to court and illustrate that you're the more suitable parent to have custody."

Chapter Six - The Unintentional Nudist

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

Emily stretched and squinted at her watch in the dimly lighted dorm-room. The alarm would be sounding in less than five minutes. She sluggishly reached over and turned it off and then stared intently at the windowless wall. She was going to miss seeing the sun. She had to remember to add living underground to the ever-increasing list of negatives to being a member of Slytherin House.

She hadn't officially met her dorm mates last evening. Everyone was too tired to talk much. Emily had simply said good night to Kim and closed the dark green, velvet curtains around her four-poster bed. She didn't even remember undressing although her nakedness made it evident that she had. Besides her own, she counted five other beds in the room; she appeared to be the only one awake.

Emily reached for her robe; held it fleetingly in her hand and then threw it on the bed. She swung her legs over the edge of the bed, slipped on her slippers and headed for the bathroom. Emily Zacherley was a nudist and these girls were just going to have to get accustomed to seeing her in the buff. She was not about to live a lie for the next seven years.

Emily was surprised when she entered the bathroom to find that she was in reality, not the first to arise. A rather tall, thin red haired girl was standing at one of the sinks combing out her wet hair. Evidently she had been up awhile and already showered.

The girl didn't turn, but instead looked in the mirror as she addressed Emily. "Obviously, you're not the shy, timid type," the girl said, with a snicker.

"Actually in some ways I am," Emily responded. "But not when it comes to wearing clothes. I prefer to be nude"

"From the looks of that tan, you must have had your preference a good deal of the summer. I'm Becky, Becky Reynolds," the girl said pleasantly.

"Emily Zacherley," Emily replied.

"Oh! You're the one they were chatting about last night at the sorting. It must be horrible being sorted into a different house than your sister," Becky said, actually sounding sincere.

"It would have been nice to be in the same house, but since my grandparents came from all four houses; we were prepared for any contingency," Emily answered.

"My dad was in Ravenclaw, but Mum was a Slytherin," Becky said as she finished her hair and prepared to leave the room. "They say opposites attract and they certainly are opposite. I just hope the hat put me in the right place. We'll have to talk more later."

Emily watched the door close behind Becky and then brushed her teeth before taking care of business and then jumping into the shower.

She had just finished toweling off from her shower and was about to return to the dorm when

two girls dressed in dark green Slytherin robes entered. Upon seeing Emily, the one girl, a blonde, blushed and turned her head away. The dark haired girl said angrily, "Don't you have any modesty, tart? Why do you think we were all given robes? No one wants to see your bare ass."

"I'm sorry if my bare butt offends you," Emily answered. "But you best get used to seeing me like this. I prefer to be in the buff as much as possible. We're all girls, so I don't see that it's that big a deal."

"It probably isn't to an exhibitionist tart like you," the blonde responded. "However, some of us had a proper upbringing and find looking at your exposed parts to be vulgar and offensive."

"Then I suggest you learn to turn your head," Emily said, her voice rising. "My being naked hurts absolutely no one and I have no intention of wearing clothes in the dorm."

"We'll see about that, Tart!" the dark haired girl responded as Emily departed the bath to return to the dorm.

Emily was miffed and not paying proper attention as she collided with the slightly chunky girl who was standing just inside the door. "I'm sorry!" Emily said as the girl grabbed her, preventing Emily from falling.

"No need to apologize," The girl said as she continued to hold Emily. "My name is Marta."

Finally the girl released her grip and Emily backed slightly away. "Hi! I'm Emily Zacherley. My mind was elsewhere. I'm sorry I bumped into you."

Marta's eyes surveyed Emily's body appreciatively. "Think nothing of it," Marta said. "It was my pleasure."

As Marta headed for the bath, Emily noticed that Kim's drapes were still drawn closed around her bed. Becky was already dressed and concentrating on writing a letter, so Emily went over to Kim's bed and whispered through the drapes.

"Kim, are you awake?" Emily asked in an urgent fashion.

"Yes, but I'm not coming out." Kim responded. "They were talking about me."

"Who are they?" Emily asked, with concern. "The other girls?"

"They didn't know they were talking about me, but they will as soon as I come out of here," Kim said, distraught.

"What exactly are you going on about?" Emily asked, frustrated.

"They were talking about the girl on the train yesterday. None of them got a good look at my face. One of them commented on how childish it was to wear Powerpuff knickers. I can't let them see me."

"That's an easily solved problem," Emily said. "I'll get you another set of underwear out of your dresser. You can change in your bed and ditch those in the trash. No one will ever be the

wiser."

Emily's suggestion was followed by silence. Kim didn't say a word, but rather just sat with a defeated expression on her face as Emily went to the girl's dresser. She search the underwear drawer and then after checking that Becky wasn't watching, gathered all the garments and walked back to the bed.

"Do all of your bras and knickers have Powerpuff Girls on them?" Emily asked, already knowing the answer.

"No. Some have Barbie and Scooby Doo," Kim said shyly.

Emily sighed. "Well I certainly don't have any to loan you." Emily deliberated a short time and then said, "Kim! There is only one choice. Quickly, before the other girls return; take off you bra and knickers."

"What?! I can't.

"You have to do it." Emily said. "And you have to do it right now. Kim, the hat gave me a choice of houses. I'm here because I want to be your friend and help you, but some stuff you have to do on your own. One of those things is to get out of that underwear and I mean right now."

It was extremely hard for her to do, but Kim followed Emily's orders and ducked down under the sheet. First she removed her bra and then after taking a deep breath, she slid her knickers down her legs and off. "What now?" she asked.

"Give them to me. I'll dispose of all of these. You can owl your parents to send you unadorned ones."

Kim sat nervously on the bed, the sheet drawn to her chin as she watched Emily discard her bras and knickers in the trash chute. She was about to question Emily concerning what to do next when the three girls that were in the bath area reentered the dorm room.

"Are you still walking around exhibiting yourself, Tart?" the blonde inquired.

"No one is forcing you to look," Emily countered angrily. "And the name is Emily Zacherley, not Tart."

"Well Zacherley, Denise and I don't like having to look at your ugly butt, so from now on wear your robe," the dark haired girl declared.

Kim tried to dissolve into her sheets as the girls squabbled. She was naked, nervous and had to pee in the worst way.

"I don't have a problem with her being in the buff," Marta said in defense of Emily. "The fair thing would be to put it to a vote."

"What do you think Denise?" Janice inquired of her friend. "I guess voting is the democratic thing to do."

Denise was accustomed to having her way and not bowing to the will of the majority, but reluctantly nodded her head in agreement. "But she shouldn't have a vote because the question is about her," Denise insisted.

Kim sat with her legs squeezed tightly together; this was taking way too long.

"I'll abide by the majority decision," Emily agreed. She had Marta's vote, although she wasn't exactly sure how she felt about the girl. Hopefully Kim would vote with her, so it seemed Becky who was barely paying attention to the conversation would be the deciding vote.

"Okay then," Janice declared. "We put it to a vote. You already know how Denise and I feel." Janice looked disgustingly at Marta. "I assume you vote to allow her to remain naked?"

"Most definitely," Marta said her eyes stroking Emily.

Kim found it difficult to think about anything except that she was on the verge of peeing all over her bed.

"How do you vote Becky?" Janice asked.

"It doesn't bother me," Becky answered, giving Emily a supportive smile. "Actually, I'm more relaxed because of it. I was a little nervous about changing clothes and showering in a dormitory environment, but who's going to look at me with Emily parading around naked all the time."

Denise gave Janice a sickened look. The vote was tied and the verdict rested in the hands of the timid girl who was still sitting in her bed with her sheet clung to her neck. On the other hand what were the odds of this coy mouse being supportive of an exhibitionist?

"What's your name?" Janice haughtily asked Kim.

"Kim Thatcher," was the panicky reply. Kim couldn't hold out any longer. The dam was on the verge of bursting.

"Should Zacherley be required to dress when in the dorm or is it okay for the tart to parade about naked?" Janice asked.

She received a very unexpected answer.

"I gotta pee!" Kim yelled as she threw back the sheet, jumped to her feet and streaked to the loo.

Marta smiled as she watched the door close on Kim's bare bun. "I'm not completely sure but she looked to be supportive of Zacherley."

Denise's face was fired with anger. "Let's get dressed and go to breakfast, Janice. I need some fresh air."

* * * * *

"Harry, it's so quiet," Hermione said dejectedly. "It's only the first day of the school year and I already miss the girls."

"I know what you mean," Harry answered, gloomily. "There were so many times this summer that I wished I could shuttle them off some place in order to be alone with you. Now that they're gone, I feel guilty."

Hermione shook her head in disbelief. "Will you listen to the two of us? You would think the girls were off in a different part of the world instead of a different part of the castle. We'll be seeing them in a few minutes at breakfast and then again for class."

"It's not the same," Harry said, a trace of sadness in his voice. "They've become such a huge part of our lives. Seeing them across the Great Hall is so unlike seeing them across the table. Just like winking to them in class is nothing like wrestling with them."

Hermione put her arms around Harry and drew him into a hug. "You've become quite the loving father, haven't you, Mr. Potter?"

"Father doesn't properly describe my feelings. Maybe it's because the girls entered our lives as adolescents, but I feel more like an older friend, a big brother. I only know that this last year having you and the girls in my life is the first time I've truly been content and happy. I love you Mione. Will you marry me?"

Hermione laughed. "Funny, but I thought we already did that last spring. Now, if the question were, would I marry you again if I had it all to do over again? The answer is a categorical yes."

They kissed once more and then embraced. Then without warning, Hermione felt a hand gradually lifting her skirt and sliding up her leg. Quickly the hand reached its objective and its fingers went to work.

"Harry, you are so bad," Hermione complained, but she made no effort to back away. "You know I have to go deliver the house rosters to Severus before breakfast. We don't have time..." Hermione just stared at the ceiling, her body quivering as Harry teased her unmercifully. "Is it your goal to drive me crazy, Mr. Potter?"

"This is all your fault you know. I'm the one that's driven crazy knowing that you are so easily accessible under that skirt."

Hermione grudgingly backed away. "Harry, I really must go see Severus. If you keep fondling me like this all the time I'm going to be forced to go back to wearing knickers."

"That, my dear, is what is referred to as an empty threat. But now that we're on the subject of your attire, what are you wearing to dinner Saturday night?"

"I'm not sure," Hermione said blushing. "Jamie offered to let me borrow a dress she thought you would find sexy. But you know me, I'm not big on sexy clothes."

"Your husband is!" Harry said eagerly. "I wish we were back on vacation, so you could wear

my favorite outfit."

"Me too! It's amazing how you can't picture yourself doing something, but once you done it; you can't wait to do it again. Unfortunately, I don't think the Hogsmeade Inn would serve me if I arrived in the buff and I doubt the Hogwarts' Board of Directors would approve of one of their professors running around starkers."

"They do have a tendency to be a bunch of old fuddy duddies." Harry laughed. "On a more serious subject; do you have it in mind to talk to Severus about Emily?"

"Harry, I just don't know what to do! *Hogwarts, a History* does mention instances in which the headmaster overruled the hat and the student was put into a different house, but they are rare. I even discussed Emily with the hat and it feels she would do well in either house. The problem is that Emily made the choice to be in Slytherin and her reason for making it was Kim."

"I don't see that girl making it as a Slytherin without the support of someone like Emily. And although Severus perhaps would go along with switching Emily because of us, I doubt he would switch both girls."

Harry rubbed his eyes and then shook his head in frustration. "I imagine then it's best we leave it alone and do all we can to give her our support and love. It was her choice. The hat says she will do well. Let's have confidence."

"My thoughts exactly," Hermione replied. "I'm anxious to see her in class." Hermione glanced at her watch. "I have to hurry and catch Severus. I'll see you at breakfast, dearest." Hermione gave Harry one last hug and a brief kiss before rushing from the room.

Hermione hastily headed to Severus' quarters and reached there just as he was opening the door to head for breakfast. "Severus, I have the house rosters for you," she said waving them practically in his face.

"So I see," he said, giving her a smile. "Good morning, Hermione. You could have waited and given those to me at breakfast."

"I wanted to get them to you as soon as I possibly could," Hermione answered.

"Of course, you would. Let me put them on my desk first and then I'll walk you down to breakfast," Severus suggested. "That reminds me. I have something that I keep forgetting to give you."

Hermione followed Severus into his quarters, stopping midway between the door and his desk. Severus laid the rosters down and then picked up a folded piece of parchment. He returned to where Hermione was waiting and handed it to her.

As Severus watched, Hermione unfolded the parchment and began reading. When she reached the bottom of the page she turned a deep red. "Severus, I'm sorry. You must have been so embarrassed. Please forgive me."

Severus started to put his arm around Hermione, but hesitated. "Is it safe," he asked.

"Yes. It's safe," answered Hermione, self-consciously. "You must think me a tart."

"Not at all. Although I was a bit surprised that you of all people would not have completely researched a charm before using it."

"I thought I had. I was conscious of the fact that when I touched someone they could see me at the time. I was not aware that they could see me for up to a minute afterwards. I can't imagine what you think of me."

"I think of you what I've always thought of you. And that is that you are unquestionably the most beautiful, most intelligent and most loving witch in the entire world. Are both you and Harry now naturists?"

Hermione was caught totally off guard by the question. "How did you know?" she asked.

"Mostly by deduction, but the job of Headmaster also seems to come with the perk of improved perception."

"Do you think that we're outlandish?" Hermione asked, deeply valuing Severus' opinion.

"I don't think any of us is so faultless that he or she should stand in judgment of others. Could I personally ever be a nudist? I doubt it, seriously. But I do know a little about the lifestyle. I would, however, suggest that you and Harry be discreet. I'm sure some parents might object to nudists teaching their children"

"That's absurd," Hermione, said frustrated. "It's not like either Harry or I teach our classes in the nude. What business is it of anyone's what we do on vacation or in the privacy of our quarters?"

"It's none of their business whatsoever, but some people have a propensity for sticking their nose where it doesn't belong." As they left Severus' quarters and headed toward the Great Hall, Severus got a naughty glimmer in his eye. "If you ever do decided to teach in the nude, you will inform me, won't you? I dare say I'd like to sit in on one of your classes."

Hermione blushed as she slapped Severus playfully on the arm. "I promise, you'll be the first to know." She hesitated a moment. "When you were researching the concealment charm, did you read anything about it begin canceled if the person it was on fell asleep or got wet?"

"No! It has those few glitches I listed, but the only way to remove it completely is to say *Finite Incantatum*."

Hermione had hoped there was an anomaly with the charm. Since there wasn't, she was faced with a quandary. Who removed it? The end result was appreciated, but it bothered her to think that Harry or one of the girls would take such liberties. She tried to erase the thought from her mind.

"How was your vacation, Severus?" Hermione asked. "Have you and Ginny reached a meeting of minds yet?"

Abruptly Severus' demeanor changed from pleasant to somber. "I'm afraid it's over between Ginny and me. I was a fool to think she would ever love me in the way I love her."

"What happened?" Hermione asked, her voice filled with disappointment and compassion. "She did accompany you on your break?"

"Yes, and we had a wonderful time," Severus said and then sighed. "Draco asked her to marry him."

"He what?! When? I can't believe it." Hermione said with astonishment.

"Nor could I. Nor for that fact, could even Ginny." The bogus smile that Severus had worn earlier as he talked with Hermione was now replaced with a heartrending expression. "Draco, Apparated from London and arrived here last evening shortly after the sorting. The first thing he did was search out Ginny. Shortly thereafter, she gave me the news."

Hermione threw her arms around Severus and hugged him tightly. "I'm so sorry, Severus. I know you really care for her. She's a fool. I can't believe that gadabout actually asked her to marry him."

"Evidently he wants to start a family immediately," Severus added. "Instead of the usual 'will you marry me?' he asked her if she 'would be the mother of his child'."

"Not exactly the most romantic way to ask someone to marry you," Hermione commented.

"I agree, but it worked," Severus said miserably. "She said yes."

* * * * *

"Kim, I'm the only one here," Emily pleaded. "You have to come out of there now if we're going to have time to get breakfast before class. I don't know about you, but I'm famished."

Slowly the door opened a crack and Kim peeked out. "But you're dressed already and I'm naked."

"Kim, get a grip on yourself. I've seen hundreds of people naked. We have to get moving." Kim could hear agitation mounting in Emily's voice. "Just open that door and come out here. I've organized your clothes."

It took all the courage Kim could muster, but she opened the door and allowed herself to be fully exposed to Emily. Emily was stunned, but resisted making any comments. Instead she grabbed Kim's arm and pulled her over to the bed. "Quick get dressed, we'll barely have time to eat."

Kim didn't need encouragement to get her clothes on, but leaving the dorm was another matter. "Emily, I've gone without a bra before. That's no big deal. I don't think I even really need one, but how can I go through the day going up and down stairs and sitting in class without knickers?"

"The same way I can." Emily lifted her skirt, exposing her bare knickerless body. "Now come on." Emily grabbed Kim hand and they were soon both running through corridors and up

staircases toward the great hall, their robes billowing behind them.

They no more than entered the Great Hall before Jamie and Caitlin seized upon them.

"Where were you guys?" Jamie asked, concern evident in her voice.

"Come sit with us at the Gryffindor table and bring us up to date," Caitlin begged.

Emily was about to agree, but then glanced over at the Slytherin table. Spending your first breakfast with the Gryffindors was definitely not a way to win friends in Slytherin.

"Caitlin, I really want to; please believe me," Emily beseeched. "But I don't think that would go over extremely well with the Slytherins. Why don't we all meet in your parents' quarters after classes? Then we can have plenty of time to talk."

Caitlin had a look of disappointment on her face, but it vanished when Jamie agreed with Emily.

"We'll see you at four o'clock," Emily said as Kim and her hurried to the Slytherin table.

"I wish she was in Gryffindor," Caitlin said disappointedly to Jamie.

"So do I, but everything will work out," Jamie said as she put her arm around Caitlin's shoulder. "The three of us have a special relationship that being in different houses will never destroy."

As Emily and Kim sat down, Denise looked at Emily smugly and said, "Where do your loyalties lay, Zacherley? True Slytherins never associate with Gryffindors."

"We were sisters and best friends long before I became a Slytherin and we will be long after we depart this school. No childish house rivalry is ever going to destroy the love we have." Emily said tersely. "But I guess it's hard to understand something you've never known or felt."

One thing was lucid. Making enemies in Slytherin would be much easier than making friends.

"What class do we have first?" Kim asked Emily between bites of food.

"Potions with Professor Malfoy. Hurry and finish that so we can get a move on, it takes place down in one of the dungeons," Emily advised.

"We certainly won't have to worry about gaining weight will we? No matter how much you gorge yourself at a meal; you immediately work it off running up and down stairs," Kim said with a laugh.

Emily was please to see Kim talking and actually joking. She even seemed to have forgotten her lack of underclothing. As they entered the dungeon, Emily shivered; she wasn't sure whether it was because it was colder than up in the main castle or because of the creepy atmosphere created by the glass jars all around the walls with pickled animals floating inside them.

Professor Malfoy, started the class by taking the roll call of the Slytherins and Gryffindors,

finishing with Emily.

"Miss Zacherley," he said smarmily. "I assume that I can expect great things out of you in this class. After all, you have the advantage of having a sister who is a school prefect and guardians who are Hogwarts professors."

"All the class looked intently at Emily, Professor Malfoy's comment surprising both the Slytherins and the Gryffindors. Actually it had surprised Emily also. She was under the impression that her relationship to the Potters was supposed to be kept hush-hush.

"What is the difference between wolfsbane and monkshood, Miss Zacherley?" The Professor asked.

"I don't know, sir," said Emily

"You disappoint me; haven't you read *One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi*? Let's try again. "What is a bezoar?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that either. Perhaps you should ask someone else," Emily suggested.

"Perhaps I should," Malfoy snarled. "I simply wanted to make it clear to the class that hard work is the key to success when learning the subtle science and exact art of potion-making. Your famous connections will be of no help to you in my class. Two points from Gryffindor for Miss Zacherley being unprepared."

"Take out your quills and parchment and I..." Malfoy was interrupted by the unrelenting hand waving of a Gryffindor student. "Mr. Sanders, this better be important. I detest being interrupted."

"I'm sorry, sir" Ian stammered. "It's just... I was wondering why you took two points from Gryffindor when Emily Zacherley is in Slytherin house."

Draco's face suddenly turned paler than usual and he faced away from the class. He hadn't been at the sorting and had just naturally assumed that Emily was in Gryffindor. After a few moments he regained his composure.

"My apologies to Gryffindor; the two points for Miss Zacherley's ill preparedness should be charged to Slytherin," Professor Malfoy said curtly. "Oh! And Mr. Sanders, you've lost Gryffindor ten points for having the sheer audacity to correct a Hogwarts Professor."

"Now unless someone else would like to correct an error in any statements I've made, it's time you begin copying precise notes."

No one murmured a sound.

Although Malfoy was an egotistical bastard and treated all students like dirt, especially the Gryffindors, at least his class was interesting. Unfortunately it was followed by what was easily their most boring class, History of Magic. Professor Binns, a ghost who had refused to retire from schooling even after retiring from life, taught it. He droned on and on as they wrote down names and dates of various Goblins and wars.

The classes that Emily was really looking forward to didn't occur until after lunch and neither of her guardians disappointed her. Hermione started off the class by giving them all a brief lecture on how she wouldn't abide any messing around in her class because Transfiguration is a complex and dangerous magic. Then to the amazement of all, she transformed into a wolf and prowled around the class with her sharp teeth glistening in the sunlight.

Next she demonstrated transforming various solid objects into animals and back again. Finally after taking a lot of notes, the class got the opportunity to try and transform a match into a needle. Professor Granger left no doubt that although she might be young and attractive, she was also strict and clever and no one to be crossed.

"I think I'm really going to like your mum's class," Kim whispered.

"Me too, but she's..." Emily never finished the sentence. She would never forget her real mum, but she also could no longer deny that she loved Hermione like a mother.

Hermione made an excuse for Emily to remain after class so that she could verify how she was doing in Slytherin house and give her reassurance.

The class everyone had really been looking forward to was Defense Against the Dark Arts, and Professor Potter did not disappoint them. After lecturing briefly about fears, he led them to an old wardrobe in which a boggart was hiding.

After discussing the boggart's shape-shifting abilities and teaching the charm that repels one, Harry left each of the students have a go at it. When it was Emily's turn; Harry, Emily and the entire class got a massive shock. The boggart took the shape of Rosalind, a very naked Rosalind. Harry stepped in front of Emily and dispatched the boggart quickly, but not before the boys got an unexpected lesson in female anatomy.

"Who was that?" Kim asked as soon as she had the opportunity.

"Someone I unfortunately see practically every summer when I go on vacation," Emily answered.

"I bet the boys wish your greatest fear was built better and wasn't quite so bushy," Kim said jokingly.

"I'm sure you're right," Emily answered. "I'm trying to figure out how I explain to one and all that a naked girl is my greatest fear."

After class, once everyone with the exception of Kim had left, Harry pulled Emily aside and gave her a hug.

Emily had no idea how the next seven years in Slytherin house would go, but she knew she had the love and support of her family.

* * * * *

"Are you sure it's okay for me to accompany you to the professors' quarters? Kim asked uncertainly as her and Emily head toward the hidden staircase.

"Sure, Emily quickly answered. "They don't mind if we have friends there. Besides I doubt they'll be around. Hermione said something about a faculty meeting. This will be a good opportunity for you to get accustom to being nude in front of people."

Kim stopped in her tracks and gawked at Emily. She was flabbergasted. "And why exactly would I want to get acclimatized to being nude in front of people? You're the nudist, not me."

Emily leaned against the stonewall of the empty hallway and looked at Kim with dismay. "You don't understand what happened this morning, do you?"

"Nothing happened this morning," Kim said. "You're not talking about me streaking to the loo? I didn't have any other alternative. You had thrown away my knickers and I was about to piss all over the bed. I was totally embarrassed, but I had no choice."

"The other girls didn't see it that way," Emily said, tentatively. "Kim, you might want to take a seat while I tell you the conversation that took place after you ran out of the dorm." "Is it that bad?" Kim asked as she slid her back down the wall and sat on the floor, her chin leaning on her knees. "What happened?"

"I gotta pee!" Kim yelled as she threw back the sheet, jumped to her feet and streaked to the loo.

Marta smiled as she watched the door close on Kim's bare bun. "I'm not completely sure but she looked to be supportive of Zacherley."

Denise's face was fired with anger. "Let's get dressed and go to breakfast, Janice. I need some fresh air."

"Damn," Janice said as if disappointed. "I thought for sure she was the girl from the train. You know the one with the infantile knickers."

"I wouldn't be so sure she isn't," Denise answered. "Unlike Miss Tart here, she didn't exactly take her time walking to the loo. That looked more like a panic streak. Maybe she heard us talking and slipped them off. Janice, you check her bed while I check her dresser."

"You have no business going through her dresser," Emily said in panic. First because it was true, but secondly because she was afraid she might have missed some garments.

"Mind your own business tart," Denise said nastily. "This is Slytherin House. If you want to keep others out of your personal belongings, you better learn some good locking charms. Otherwise what's yours is mine."

"The bed is empty," Janice said. "It appears she slept nude."

"I don't believe this," Denise said frustrated. "No bras or knickers. No one will ever convince me that shy, fearful girl goes without undergarments. She has to be the girl from the train. I bet she just chucked them."

"I think she looked rather nice naked," Marta responded. "I think we have to give her the benefit of the doubt."

"That's correct," Becky added. "We'll be able to tell. If she acts all shy and tries to hide herself from us then there is a good chance she is the Powerpuff girl."

"But what if she shows off herself like Emily?" Marta asked.

"Then she's not the girl from the train," Denise answered. "We'll know tonight. One way or the other."

Kim looked like she was prepared to weep. "So if I choose to be modest, they'll identify me as the girl on the train and make my life a living hell. My only alternative is to live a living hell by presenting myself naked in the dorm for the next seven years. I have no choice, I'm too bashful to go naked and have everything exposed. Maybe I should give up and leave school like I originally intended." Kim sighed. "I was actually starting to like it here."

As they had talked, Kim had relaxed her legs and at the same time allowed her knees to spread apart. Had it interested Emily, she could have had a wide-open view.

"Kim, are you conscious of the view you're giving me?" Emily asked.

Kim had forgotten that she was knickerless and blushed as she realized how unladylike she was sitting. She started to change positions and then stopped. "Why bother? You've seen hundreds of girls and women naked and you've already seen me totally starkers. There's not much sense in getting all flustered and shy now."

"Are you saying that you wouldn't be embarrassed to be naked in front of me?" Emily asked excitedly.

Kim became indecisive. "I'd still be somewhat embarrassed, but the first time was the worst." She smiled. "I don't think I'd make you bang on the door fifteen minutes before coming out."

"Kim, hurry, get up. I want to get to my parent's quarters before my sisters. I would like to try an experiment."

Emily grab Kim's hand and helped her up, but then didn't let go as they ran down the hall and they climbed the stairs to the staff quarters.

Emily canceled the locking charm and they hastily entered. Kim started looking about and before she realized it Emily was practically undressed. "What are you doing?" she said in a panic.

"What I always do when I'm here," Emily answered. "Take my clothes off and get comfortable. Get undressed."

"Me!" Exclaimed Kim. "Perhaps you have me confused with some other Kim. I'm timid shy Kim, the girl that likes to keep her clothes on."

"Kim! I'm trying to help you," Emily said extremely perturbed, as she finished undressing. "Sit down."

Why she obeyed Kim wasn't sure, but her butt had scarcely touched the chair before Emily was on her knees in front of her pulling off her shoes and socks. "What are you doing?" Kim protested.

"What I asked you to do. I'm undressing you. And stop looking at me like that. I'm trying to help you." As she had talked Emily made fast work of Kim's shoes and socks. Kim hadn't helped her, but surprisingly she hadn't hindered her either. "Okay, stand up!"

Kim slowly obeyed and got to her feet. "We don't have a lot of time," Emily said. "Will you do this or must I?"

Very slowly Kim started to undo the buttons on her shirt. "Darn girl, you are slow," Emily said as she loosened Kim's belt and pulled down the zipper on her skirt. The skirt immediately fell to the floor as Emily helped Kim with her last buttons and then helped her out of the shirt.

Kim stood there frozen. She didn't try to hide herself, but she didn't move or say anything either. Emily picked up all of Kim's clothing and put it on a neat pile. "I'm thirsty," Emily said. "Would you like a soft drink?"

"Yes please," Kim answered warily. Still frozen in place. "But first tell me why you did this."

"First answer me three questions," Emily said. Kim nodded her head vaguely in affirmation. "Does it bother you that I'm naked?"

"Not really," Kim answered. "I've gotten accustomed to seeing you that way."

"Are you less anxious being nude in front of me now than you were this morning?"

"Much less. Mind you, I'd rather be dressed, but it's not anywhere near as bad as this morning."

Emily thought a while before asking her last question. "Your own personal experience with me has taught you that the more you see a person naked the less attention you pay to them. And although you've only been naked in front of me twice, I think you'd agree that each additional time would be easier."

"I see where you're headed with all this," Kim said. "But there are four of them. I'm sort of getting used to being this way around you, but a group of people is a bit different."

"I know," Emily said reassuringly. "That's why you're going to stay naked when my sisters arrive."

Kim turned pale white, but had no time to respond before the door opened and Jamie entered the room.

"Professor Malfoy kept us all an additional fifteen minutes after class or I would have been here sooner," Jamie apologized as she shed her clothes.

Kim fleetingly forgot her own nudity as she looked in envy at Jamie. Once Jamie was undressed, she walked across the room and put her arm around Kim. "I don't know about you guys, but I need something to drink," she said as she guided Kim in the direction of the

pantry. "Don't be nervous," she said reassuringly to Kim. "This is your initiative, isn't it?" Jamie said as she gave Emily a stern look. "My sister better not have pressurized you into trying naturism. It's not for everyone."

Kim didn't answer. She was too distracted by the sensation of Jamie's breast rubbing against her bare shoulder. Jamie grabbed four butter beers and did a chilling charm on them before handing one to Kim.

"Beer? I'm too young to drink beer," Kim exclaimed, pushing the beer away.

"It's not that kind of beer," Jamie said reassuringly. "If it was, you wouldn't find it in these quarters. Try it. I'm sure you'll like it."

"One of those better be for me!" Caitlin yelled as she closed the door and started undressing.

Kim shook her head, "You guys are incredible. Every one of you has the same priority of taking your clothes off as soon as you get in the door. Is being nude all you think about?"

Hardly!" Jamie said with a laugh. "To you it probably looks strange because you're not habituated to a nudist setting. In the winter, what is the first thing you do when you enter your home?"

"Take off my coat and boots," Kim responded.

"And you don't even think about it, do you? Jamie asked. "It's the most natural thing to do because you don't wear a coat in the house. We don't wear clothes, so we just undress without thinking about it."

Kim nodded her head in understanding as Caitlin approached the group. Caitlin took one look at Kim and was ready to burst into tears.

"Look at her! Why is life so unfair to me?" Caitlin cried. "She's only eleven. I'd kill to have that body at fourteen. She has a waist, a nice butt, great legs and look at her chest. Whereas I have skinny legs, no butt and breasts that look like Hershey Kisses."

Emily put her hand on Kim's. "Don't take it personal. She's great and you'll love each other. She's just rather envious when it comes to physical appearance."

Kim looked at Emily questioningly. "Is she serious? Does she actually think I'm built nice?"

"Haven't you ever looked at yourself naked in a mirror?" Emily asked. "It was the first thing I noticed this morning, but I didn't want to make you any more nervous by commenting."

"Kim, I'm sorry," Caitlin said with sincerity. "It's not you. I like you. It's just that... Well, if I knew a charm to switch bodies, I'd have yours and you'd have mine."

Time passed quickly as the girls discussed boys, school, boys, the various houses, boys, the different professors, boys, Kim's dilemma and finally boys.

Although she would have been more comfortable fully dressed, Kim enjoyed the time spent with the girls. There were a lot of nice people at Hogwarts and she was sure she knew three of

the nicest.

The girls were just discussing that it was about time that they got dressed and went down to dinner when the door opened. At first Kim wished she could become part of the sofa. She didn't want Professor Granger to see her nude. But the person entering wasn't Professor Granger. Kim wanted to die. It was Professor Potter and he was looking directly at her.

"The last time I counted there were only three of you," Harry said with a smile. "Has the student population of nudists increased at Hogwarts?"

"I think we might call her the unintentional nudist," Jamie said as she explained Kim's plight to Harry.

Harry listened intently being careful to look mainly at Emily, Caitlin and Jamie so as to not make Kim any more nervous than she already was.

"Friendship is the key," he said as Jamie finished. "I never would have made it through school if I hadn't had Ron and Hermione by my side. You two stick together and it won't surprise me if we see some changes take place in Slytherin house. Now if you ladies will excuse me I want to wash up and head down to dinner. You four might want to consider dressing for dinner. We don't want any riots the first day of classes."

The girls all laughed, even Kim. "He's amazing," Kim said to Emily as they dressed for dinner. "I wanted to die when he first walked in and saw me naked, but he put me so at ease that I was sorry when he left."

"He's great. You'll love Hermione, too. She's so very different outside the classroom."

"Can we all walk down to dinner together or will you two receive twenty lashes for fraternizing with the enemy?" Jamie inquired.

"We can always walk together," Emily said emphatically. "And I'd like to see anyone mess with us. Especially after what you taught us today."

"Just remember," Jamie said. "You never go looking for a fight, but you should always be prepared if one comes looking for you."

* * * * *

"They already all went up to the dorm. Are you ready?" Emily asked encouragingly as her and Kim lingered in the Slytherin common room.

"No. But then I never will be, so we might as well go up," Kim answered. "I know I did it this afternoon, but you're the one that undressed me. Tonight I have to do it all by myself."

"Definitely. My undressing you would send signals that we really don't want to send," Emily said assertively.

"Remember to take off your shirt and skirt first. That way it won't look like you're scared and

rushing. Then sit down and take off your shoes and socks. Take your time walking to the bathroom. Drop something if you feel you are hurrying. I'll be undressing at the same time, so they might not all be concentrating on you. But remember, I get out of my clothes rather hastily."

"Do you think anyone will follow us into the bathroom?" Kim asked nervously.

No. But if they do, don't let it bother you. Just brush your teeth and whatever else you need to do. Imagine yourself dressed."

"I don't have that good of an imagination. Do I have to leave the stall open when I pee or have a movement?"

"Heavens no. Nudists might not wear clothes, but when it comes to bodily functions or having sex, we're as private as the next person," Emily assured Kim. "Everybody is a little different when it comes to that. If I'm outside and have to pee, I'll just squat and do it. Jamie will travel six miles into the woods before relieving herself. When it comes to a bowel movement, I also prefer privacy if it's easily available."

"What do we do after we're done in the bathroom?" Kim quizzed.

"That depends how nervous you are at that point. If you're really feeling brave, we could sit up and talk awhile. If you're not, simply slowly hang up your towel and get into bed. But no matter what, don't be in a rush to close the drapes around your bed. You can't look like you're hiding.

"Should I lie on my front or back?"

"After tonight, which ever way you normally sleep. But tonight I think you should stay on your back. Somehow you have to wipe the shy timid image they have of you out of their minds. The quickest way is by being as bold as you have the guts to be."

"It would be easier to go to your mum and ask to be sent home?" Kim said, sounding much too sincere.

"You're not mean enough to do that and leave me to face Denise and Janice all by myself," Emily said with a smile.

"Don't be so sure of yourself," Kim said with a weak smile. "After all, the hat did sort me into Slytherin. Kim looked toward the staircase and took a deep breath. "Let's go. Time for me to strip away all my modesty."

As they entered the dorm, they were given a weak smile by Becky, which they both returned, but Denise and Janice totally ignored them. Marta wasn't anywhere in sight.

Without a word Emily sat down on the side of her bed and started to remove her shoes and socks. Kim remembered Emily's instructions and took a deep breath. She opened her belt, pulled down the zipper and left her skirt drop to the floor. After she stepped out of it, she, in a very unladylike fashion bent from the waist to pick it up, in the process giving Denise and Janice quite a show of her butt.

Marta entered the dorm from the bath just as Kim was leaning over. She was quite taken-back by the view that greeted her. Kim tried not to make eye contact with any of the girls. She didn't even check to see how far Emily had gotten with undressing. She was bottomless and wanted to get this over with. She hung her skirt of the hook next to her bed and then without thinking about it, removed her shirt as quickly as possible.

Denise and Janice looked at each other in disbelief as Kim stood next to her bed in only shoes and knee-high socks. Kim went to hang the shirt, but realized she would be wearing a clean one in the morning. Emily was watching Kim's progress out of the corner of her eye and almost cheered at the bold move Kim took next. Wearing only her shoes and socks she walked over to the dirty clothes hamper and deposited the shirt. On the way back Becky commented to her. "You and Emily are quite something," she said, a smile on her face.

Kim said, "Thanks." But the friendly encouragement only made her more nervous. It was evident that all four girls had stopped all activity and were intently watching Kim's strip tease. Kim returned to her bed probably faster than she should have and started removing her shoes and socks. She had to get out of their scrutiny as soon as possible and at this point didn't care if they thought she was rushing. She pushed the shoes under her bed as she reached for and slipped on her slippers. Then after grabbing her toothbrush she dropped the socks into the laundry before entering the bath. Emily was following her.

As the door closed behind her, Kim started to tremble uncontrollably and wrapped her arms around Emily. "I've never been so nervous in my entire life," Kim said, visibly shaken.

"You did great!" Emily said proudly. "The walk across the room in nothing but your shoes and socks was brilliant. That alone should have sold them on the fact that you do this all the time."

"I have to sit down," Kim said as she entered a stall. She closed the door, not that she had any business to attend to, but after all she was naked and sitting on the john. "I'm not sure if I can go back in there," she said after a time. "They stared at me the entire time. None of them were even sneaky about it."

"Kim, you're thinking about it too much," Emily commented. "Get out here and brush your teeth, so you can get it over with."

"It wasn't nearly this bad with your sisters."

"That's because we were naked, too. Many nudists even feel strange when others around them are clothed. You have to have extremely strong feelings to be like Jamie, Caitlin and I."

"I still can't believe that you'd be comfortable in a crowd of clothed people if you were naked."

"I'll make you a deal," Emily said, a grin on her face. "If you stick it out and make it through all seven years, I'll see you off at the train station at the end of the seventh year."

"I was sort of hoping that if you didn't ride the train, you'd at least see me off every year," Kim said looking rather disappointed.

"Oh! I'll see you off every year, but at the end of the seventh I'll do it starkers."

Kim opened the stall door and stared at Emily. "I think you'd actually do it."

"I'd do it this year if it wasn't for Harry and Hermione, plus I'd probably get kicked out of school."

"I actually believe you would," Kim said, as she started brushing her teeth.

After she finished and washed her face, she gave Emily a smile, "Let's do it."

Kim was actually the first out the door and they both smiled at the other girls as they sauntered to their beds.

When she reached her bed, Kim put her arms up in the air and stretched, "It's been a long day, she said. "Good night everybody."

Marta and Becky returned her good night, but Janice and Denise ignored her.

Kim pushed her slippers slightly under the bed. Then brushed the bed clothes aside and laid down on her back leaving herself open to the inspection of any one who walked by the bed.

"How long do I have to wait before I can close my drapes and have some privacy," Kim whispered to Emily,

"I'd give it at least five or ten minutes," Emily suggested.

Marta just looked at Becky and shook her head. "I don't know what Denise and Janice have against those two, but one thing is clear. Neither of them was the Powerpuff girl."

"I agree," Becky quickly replied. "You don't get the confidence to walk around starkers like that overnight. I bet it has been years since either of them wore knickers. I'd like to be friends with both of them, but Denise and Janice sort of make it a 'them or else us' decision. I'm not sure if I have the guts to go against those two."

"I know what you mean," Marta said. "They look like they could be extremely nasty and Denise knows a lot of the sixth and seventh years."

"Emily. Are you still awake?" Kim whispered.

"Yeah. What's up," Emily answered.

"I was just thinking. At ten months a year for seven years, I only have to do that two thousand one hundred twenty-one more times."

Emily didn't answer at first as she mentally recalculated Kim's number in her head. "I hate to be the barer of bad news," Emily said, "but you only calculated once a day. You have to be bare in front of them both in the morning and at night."

"Oh! Shit!"

Chapter Seven - Just Another Boring Saturday

Thursday, September 2, 2004

The day had gotten off to an earth-shattering start. Kim awoke to the realization that she had fallen asleep without closing her drapes or covering herself. She had visions of all of Slytherin house parading by her bed during the night and examining her as she slept naked. It was all Emily could do to suppress a laugh as she guaranteed Kim that was highly unlikely.

Kim handled being nude much better than she had the preceding night, possibly aided by the fact that the other girls for the most part seemed to ignore her and Emily's lack of clothing. The exception was Marta, whom it seemed would never tire of seeing the two girls in the all together.

The high point of the day's schedule was their first flying lesson. Obviously Emily and Kim approached the lesson with totally different mind-sets. Emily was eager to display her advanced abilities to Professor Weasley. Kim was simply scared stiff. Her experience with a broom was limited to two previous occasions. The first time she had swept the footpath after her stepfather finished cutting the grass. And the other time she had stuck the broom between her legs and ran around the yard pretending to be riding a galloping horse. She doubted that either incident would assist her much today.

For Emily, the day seemed to drag on; for Kim it seemed like three-thirty arrived way too quickly. The Slytherins hurried down the front steps onto the grounds to join the Gryffindors for their first lesson. It was a clear, breezy day as they marched across the sloping green lawns, the wind whipping at their robes and threatening to lift the girls' skirts. Emily reminded Kim to be careful when alighting the broom. Flying a broom in a skirt was tricky enough, what with the wind having the tendency to blow the skirt about. Being knickerless made the task even more challenging.

That was all Kim needed, something else to agonize about. They would be practicing on the flat lawn on the opposite side of the grounds to the forbidden forest. Kim took one look at the forest with its trees swaying darkly in the distance and quickened her pace.

The Gryffindors had arrived already and were standing gawking at the broomsticks lying on the ground in two neat lines.

"Finally," said Professor Weasley. "I thought perhaps this group of Slytherins were all experienced flyers and had decided to forgo this lesson. All right then, let's get started. Everyone stand by a broomstick. Hurry, we haven't got all day."

Draco stood by the window in his quarters watching the first years, but recollecting another group. It was hard to fathom that thirteen years had gone by since he was standing on the very spot that those youngsters now occupied.

"Have any of you had any flying experience?" Professor Weasley asked.

Emily slowly raised her hand as she looked to see who else had done so. She was surprised when only two others lifted up their hand. One was a rather cutie Gryffindor boy, the other was Denise.

"Although their intentions are admirable," Professor Weasley said. "I find that many parents who give their children training prior to them attending Hogwarts do more harm than good. It is much easier for me to teach proper flying skills than to correct bad habits. Will the three of you please pick up the brooms next to you and step forward."

All three of the students reluctantly picked up their brooms. They all had expected to be commended for already knowing how to fly. Instead it looked like they were about to be used in a demonstration of how not to do it.

"Now if you'll stand in a row facing the other students and lay your broom back on the ground. First I would like you to demonstrate to the remainder of the class the proper way to mount your broom. If you would please," the Professor instructed.

Denise and the Gryffindor boy quickly leaned over, picked up their brooms and mounted them. Emily instead stuck her right hand out over her broom and commanded, "Up!" Then she mounted the broom, gripping the handle the way she had been taught by Harry.

Professor Weasley's eyes scanned the three, observing their grips and how they were sitting on their brooms. "Class I have a question," the Professor said. "What are we?"

It seemed the Professor's tone of voice had intimidated the students. No one answered. Finally one timorous hand reached toward the sky.

"Yes. Miss Thatcher," Ron said. "You will find that I seldom bite heads off. I would much prefer to be given the wrong answer than have no one offer a response at all."

"Sir," Kim whispered. "We're witches and wizards."

"If you didn't hear her," Ron shouted. "She said we are witches and wizards, magical folk. Why, if you have the ability to command a broom to jump into your hand, would you bend over like a muggle and pick it up? When you teach someone, you start with the basics. Speaking of basics, you Sir are sitting improperly on your broom. Try flying like that and you will find yourself slipping off the end. You, Miss are gripping your broom totally wrong. Grip your broom incorrectly and you will find yourself hundreds of feet off the ground, with a broom no longer between your legs. I suggest the two of you rejoin your classmates and try to forget your previous training before it kills you."

Emily now found herself standing alone in front of the class, Denise glaring at her. The old phrase 'if looks could kill' was certainly appropriate.

"Miss Zacherley, suppose you show me if you can fly that thing," Professor Weasley suggested. "Nothing too fancy. Just kick off and take a short flight around the perimeter of the lawn. Keep you height relatively low."

As Emily kicked off from the ground, Denise gave Janice a nudged. "Damned showoff," Denise cursed as she picked up a small rock. "When she comes back let's she if she can control the broom unconscious."

"If the Professor sees you throw that, you'll get detention," Janice warned her.

"What's one night's detention compared to seeing that tart laying flat on the ground? Besides, I doubt the filthy werewolf has the backbone to give me detention. Maybe if I'm lucky the bitch will fall in such a way that she will give the class a nice show."

Emily made a short circuit of the immediate grass area. As she was about to land next to Professor Weasley, Denise threw the stone. Her aim was off and the rock headed for the Professor's head instead of Emily's. He saw it coming and reached to catch it, but before he could, Emily had flown in front of him and intercepted the missile.

Ron gazed at Emily, the expression on his face giving evidence as to how impressed he was. "Miss Zacherley, that was excellent; five points for Slytherin. Unfortunately, your classmate seems inclined to lose points for her house rather than win them. Miss Graves, ten points from Slytherin for throwing that rock."

Denise had a look on her face that seemed to say 'big deal'."

"And Miss Graves, you should consider yourself fortunate that this... I believe you put it, 'filthy werewolf', has outstanding hearing. Otherwise you would find yourself facing expulsion for aggression against a teacher. And I assure you that I have the backbone to give you detention. Report to Mister Filch at seven o'clock for the next week."

Denise said not a word. She had lost the house ten points and earned a full week detention. It was, in her mind, all Emily's fault.

"Now then, since Miss Zacherley has shown us how it's done," Professor Weasley said. "Everyone stick out your right hand over your broom and say 'Up!'"

* * * * *

"I'm glad I caught you by yourself," Jamie said to Hermione as she entered the family's quarters. "I wanted to give you that dress in case you choose to wear it Saturday night."

"What with everything that's happened this week, I nearly forgot about that," Hermione said with a grin. "You say it was actually worn by the movie star Sandra Bullock. I rather like her, very sweet and down to earth. Not like some of those muggle Hollywood types."

Hermione followed Jamie as the girl went to her closet. "She didn't actually wear this dress. It's a copy of a top she wore with pants, but lengthened so that it could be worn as a dress instead."

"Oh! It's pretty," Hermione exclaimed as Jamie took it out of the closet and held it in front of herself. "And it's only three or four inches above your knees. Are you turning conservative on us? I think I could wear this without a problem, but I don't understand why you think it will drive Harry crazy."

Jamie merely smiled. "Why don't we take it to your room so you can try it on, then perhaps you'll comprehend."

Jamie held the dress as Hermione slipped out of her robes and dress. "This is a first,"

Hermione noted. "You have your clothes on and I'm the one standing here starkers."

"Not by choice," Jamie said. "I'd much rather be naked, but I have to meet Alex in the library before dinner. I just wanted to give you the dress and see what you thought of it. Here! It just slips over your head. No buttons or zippers."

Hermione slipped the dress on and gazed at herself in the mirror. "It's stunning. I love it."

The dress was off-white with long sleeves. The top was trimmed with three braided cords. The cords crossed the right shoulder, but on the left side dropped exposing about five inches of arm. It was an off the shoulder look, but actually exposed little of the chest. The cords were above Hermione's nipples even on the left side. The skirt was opaque, falling at different lengths to give a tattered appearance; in some place it dropped below the knees and in others above. The top of the dress between the cords and the waist was transparent.

"It fits perfectly," Hermione said excitedly. "Of course it would. We have the same body shape. I just don't quite know what to wear under it. If you wear a slip or bra, the straps on the left shoulder will ruin the whole appearance of the dress. Even a camisole wouldn't look correct, I wonder how Miss Bullock wore it?"

Jamie looked at Hermione sheepishly. "There's a picture of her on the tag," Jamie said, holding her breath.

Hermione reached for the tag, looked at the picture and understood why Jamie thought Harry would love the dress. "She must have been rather chilly when this picture was taken," Hermione finally said awkwardly. "Her nipples look quite hard."

Evidently the designer intended for nothing to be worn under the sheer top.

"If we were back on vacation, I might venture to wear this," Hermione said sadly. "But I don't think Hogsmeade is quite ready for this dress."

"It's a shame," Jamie said as she shrugged her shoulders. "The dress is beautiful and you look marvelous in it. It would drive Harry crazy."

"That it would," Hermione agreed dejectedly.

Jamie looked at her watch and then said, "I have to be going. Alex will think I got lost. Are we still on for Saturday?"

"Yes!" Hermione said. "I'll show you the place I have in mind after breakfast and then we'll visit Madam Pomfrey."

Jamie looked uncomfortably at Hermione. She was not enthusiastic about sharing her plans with Madam Pomfrey, but Hermione had said it was a necessary precaution. As Jamie hurried off, Hermione stared glumly at herself in the mirror.

"If my opinion counts for anything, I think you look striking," the mirror announced.

"Of course your opinion matters," Hermione said. "I value your thoughts on an issue greatly. It's just that I could never wear this as it is."

"May I then suggest a shawl?" The mirror suggested. "It would cover the offending area, but you could easily remove it if you liked in order to taunt Mr. Potter."

"That's a wonderful suggestion," Hermione said, quite pleased. "I have a shawl that would match perfectly."

Hermione's smile faded as she stared into the mirror. She was undecided whether or not to speak.

"I sense that you have a more grave matter on your mind than that dress," the mirror observed.

"I'm worried about Emily," Hermione confessed. "I'd feel much better about her future if she were in Gryffindor."

"The young Miss Zacherley's future is conditional on more significant events than the house in which she resides. However, had she not ridden the Hogwarts Express, she would have without a doubt ended up in Gryffindor. Only once she boarded that train was she faced with choices."

Hermione was horror-stricken. "She didn't want to ride the train. I practically forced her to take it. It's my fault she's in Slytherin."

"It is not your fault," the mirror said intensely. "Humans make choices in life. Some of those choices have obvious consequences; others put events into play that are not so apparent. You can no more take blame for Emily ending up in Slytherin, than you can take credit for her saving Miss Thatcher's life."

"Emily saved Kim's life? When? How?" Hermione inquired, animatedly.

"Fifteen minutes ago, but not in a direct sense. Had it not been for Emily being in Slytherin and helping Kim through some bumpy times, she would have been taunted unmercifully by her dorm mates and attempted suicide once again. Only this time she would have succeeded."

"Again?"

"Kim is a very forlorn child. I learned this when she looked into me the other day. Outside of her mother, Kim has never had someone she could truly call a friend. Lately, Kim's mother has been too preoccupied with the abusive treatment she receives from her husband to be there for Kim. She is unaware that her husband has also become abusive to her daughter."

"He hasn't...?" The words stuck in Hermione's throat.

"No!" The mirror responded, guessing Hermione's question. "But it was just a matter of time, had she remained in that house. Although a person's future holds infinite possibilities, most of Kim's ended with an early death until Emily entered her life."

"Had I known that not taking the train would have resulted in Emily being in Gryffindor, I probably would have shopped in Hogsmeade and by doing so caused Kim death," Hermione said, the revelation horrifying her.

"That is why it is best that humans not know what the future domino effect of their actions will be. A person could go crazy worrying about the upshot of their every action."

Hermione nodded her head in agreement, recognizing that she could easily become paranoid in that sort of way.

* * * * *

"What do you think the special meeting is going to be about?" Kim asked Emily as they walked backed to the Slytherin common room.

"Probably to go over another ten or twenty rules that Filch has thought up," Emily answered. "If he had his way, we'd all be restricted to our dorms everyday. The man hates students with a fervor."

Becky and Marta had left the Great Hall at the same time and overheard Emily's comment. "I don't think it has anything do with Filch this time," Becky said. "I heard it was to discuss our initiation into Slytherin House."

"Initiation?! What initiation?" Emily practically shouted. "This isn't some muggle prep school or stupid college fraternity. Hogwarts doesn't have hazing or initiations."

"The other houses don't," Marta agreed, "but Slytherin is different. I heard the initiation is usually something of a sexual nature."

"Denise said that last year they picked one boy and one girl from the first years and they had to do 'it' in front of the entire house," Becky said, looking extremely apprehensive. "I couldn't do anything like that."

"Do 'it'?" Kim questioned. "What is 'it'?"

"Have sexual intercourse," Emily explained to a flabbergasted Kim. "Personally I think Denise is full of it. They might propose we go through some sort of ceremony and it may even have sexual connotations, but we're only eleven. No one our age is going to have sex with a stranger in front of a group. I doubt if many of the boys are even capable of getting an erection."

Marta glanced at Becky. "She's right about the boys. They, for the most part, seem very juvenile. I doubt if most of them even know their penis has another use other than peeing."

"Who's in charge of this immature program?" Emily inquired of Marta and Becky.

"That sixth year cousin of Denise's, Dirk Bancroft."

"Dick Bancroft," Emily corrected as they reached the common room. "I should have known. He does his best to live up to his name."

Marta gave the password and they rushed in to join the balance of the first years, already waiting uneasily.

They were barely inside when Dick swaggered up to them." How nice of you four to decide to join us," he said smugly.

"We were informed to be here at seven," Emily said, defensively. "According to my watch we still have five minutes."

Bancroft ignored Emily and cleared his throat. "If everyone will quiet down, we'll get started now that all the first years are finally here."

For the next ten minutes Dick Bancroft rambled on about Slytherin House, its history and traditions and how the other houses hated Slytherin because it was immensely superior to them. Dick seemed to conveniently skip Slytherin's bad years, especially the Potter years. He ended by saying that the first years had to earn their right of passage into Slytherin House.

"Why should we have to go through an initiation when the other three houses don't?" Emily inquired. "It's also against Hogwart rules."

"Zacherley, you'd best learn your place and learn it fast," Bancroft said threateningly. "You're a first year. You listen and you learn. You can't listen when you're talking; so keep your trap shut."

All the first years were rather taken aback by Bancroft's harsh tone.

"Dick, she was simply asking a question and a reasonable one at that," Doris Burke, the Slytherin Quidditch captain, said.

"If she had been paying attention she would have heard me say that Slytherin is not like the other houses. Being a Slytherin is not a right given to you by a moth eaten hat. It is a privilege you must earn as has every first year that has come before you."

"Exactly what do you expect us to do to earn this 'privilege'?" Emily asked.

Dick's face turned red. "You could start by keeping that mouth of yours shut."

The first years all stared at Emily. Like her or not, they had to admire the backbone she was showing by going up against the Slytherin bully, Dick Bancroft.

"Saturday morning you will all meet here in the common room at nine o'clock. Don't be late!" He said loudly, staring at Emily. "Your names will be picked from a hat two at a time. One boy and one girl, and you will be given a challenge. You may accept the challenge or reject it. This will go on until one couple has successfully completed their challenge or we have run out of names.

"It is only necessary for one couple to complete their challenge for the entire class to pass the initiation, " Dick added.

Denise timidly raised her hand.

Dick smiled in her direction. "I'm delighted to see that at least one first year knows how to show reverence and ask a question appropriately. Yes, Denise."

"What ensues if none of the pairs pass a challenge?" Denise asked, not entirely sure she wanted to know the answer.

"Outstanding question Denise. In that eventuality we will hold an auction and you will each be sold into one month's slavery to the highest bidder," Dick answered as he looked toward Emily salivating.

Janice raised her hand.

"So good to see you're all learning," Dick said smugly.

"What exactly must a slave do?" she asked, worried.

"Anything they are told to do," Dick quickly replied.

"Anything within reason," Doris added. "You have the right to appeal any order if you feel it is out-of-line." She gave Dick a knowing glance. "Some of the owners have a tendency to get carried away."

"I have a question for Bancroft," Emily said without raising her hand. "I heard that many of the challenges are of a sexual nature. Is that because Salazar Slytherin was a dirty old man or because you're a pervert?"

"That's it!" Bancroft shouted. "It's time you were put in your place, bitch."

Emily was caught off guard and didn't see Dick reach for his wand. Fortunately, Kim had been expecting foul play from Bancroft and was holding her wand. The moment Bancroft moved, Kim jumped in front of Emily and shouted, "Repercitio!" just an instant before Dick shouted his own curse.

The shield lasted only a few seconds, but that was enough to reflect the curse and send it rebounding back to its originator. The whole room was astonished. Dick Bancroft the Slytherin tormenter was hanging inverted from the ceiling, his wand on the floor beneath him. The actuality that someone had bested Bancroft with his own curse was unbelievable. This fact that it was accomplished by a timid first year with only three days class training was mind-boggling.

"I owe you," Emily said as she gave Kim a hug.

"No you don't," Kim said with a smile. "Consider it partial payment of my debt to you. But we both owe your sister for teaching us that spell."

Doris Burke stood with her arms folded looking at Bancroft with a smile that stretched from ear to ear.

"Remove that damn smile from your face Burke and get me the hell down from here. And you Thatcher enjoy your little victory because that's just the first battle. You've made a poor choice of a friend in Slytherin and you'll pay. I'm going to the head of house and report that you attacked an upper classman."

"You actually are as stupid as you look, aren't you Dick?" Doris said. "Forget it! She bested you. Let it go. *Finite Incantatum*."

Unlike Jamie, perhaps on purpose, Doris didn't make sure anyone was available to break Dick's fall. His plunge from the ceiling was not graceful, but it was certainly agonizing. Dennis Crow ran to help his crony up.

"I don't care what Burke says, I going to Malfoy with this," Dick said as Dennis helped him to his feet.

"Don't Dick, you'll come out on the short end," Crow advised. "Whoever taught her that charm was smart. They wanted her to be able to protect herself, but not get in trouble for possibly starting a duel. Although quite effective, that was just a simple shielding charm."

"You're saying I should forget how she embarrassed me," Dick snarled.

"Not forget, just don't go to Malfoy. He'll have to let Granger and Snape do the investigation. The first thing they'll do is run a wand history. Her wand will show a simple protection charm and yours... do you really want them to see your wands history?"

"Damn! I hate it when you're right," Bancroft said in disgust. "Get the hell out of here, all of you," he shouted. "The show is over. First years, be here Saturday morning."

* * * * *

Saturday, September 4, 2004

Caitlin lay on her bed staring at the ceiling, bored to death. She had spent the previous night in her parents' quarters, hoping that Emily would fill Jamie and her in on everything that was happening in Slytherin House. Unfortunately Emily had been required to spend the evening in her dorm and Jamie had not arrived until quite late. Now it seemed everyone had something to do immediately after breakfast with the exception of her.

Emily was still in the Slytherin common room doing whatever it was that prevented her from spending the night with Jamie and Caitlin. Harry had joined Ron on the Quidditch Pitch to give instruction to any students who were interested in trying out for their house teams in a few weeks. And Jamie and Hermione had taken off on a secret mission on which she wasn't allowed to accompany them.

So, it was with great enthusiasm that Caitlin jumped off her bed to answer the knock at the door. She literally ran to the door and threw it wide open.

Matt was unnerved by the rapidity with which the door was opened and by the vision standing on the other side. No matter how often he saw her, the sight of Caitlin unclothed would always electrify him.

"Am I glad to see you!" Caitlin exclaimed, as she looked up and down the hall. "Are you alone?"

"Yeah! Randy is out practicing Quidditch. He hopes to try out for the house team."

"Do you always answer the door like that?" Matt asked, concern registering on his face. Did you even check to see who was knocking before you answered the door nude?"

"No," Caitlin answered ingenuously. "It didn't matter who was knocking. I still would have opened the door as I am. Come on in and I'll get us something to drink."

"Are you sure it's all right? You're alone and naked."

Caitlin hesitated. "Mum said I could have friends up here. We never specifically discussed boys. As for me being naked, you're used to that."

Caitlin led the way to the pantry as Matt held back slightly in order to admire the view.

"Where is everybody?"

"Emily had something special she had to attend in Slytherin House. Dad's off at the Quidditch Pitch and although I'm not suppose to know about it, Mum and Jamie are making plans for Jamie and Alex to have sex."

Matt was completely caught off guard. "Your Mum is helping Jamie make plans? I can't believe.... Would you tell your Mum if you were going to...?"

"I'm not sure," Caitlin said. "I'd like to because I want the same guidance as she's giving Jamie, but it's poles apart. Hermione thinks of Jamie as her younger sister. She thinks of me as her little girl. I'm not quite sure how she'll take it when I'm ready to have sex. But that's at least three years in the future." Suddenly Caitlin started to squirm. "Matt I have an itch just below my left shoulder blade. Will you scratch it, please?"

"Sure," Matt said, eagerly, grateful for the opportunity to touch Caitlin.

"That feels good," Caitlin said, practically purring like a kitten. "I love having my back scratched. You wouldn't like to do that for the next hour or two, would you?"

Caitlin was kidding, but Matt leapt at the opening. "I'd love to scratch your back if you'll let me," Matt said enthusiastically.

"You're on," Caitlin said just as excitedly. "Grab your drink and we'll go to my bedroom."

"Your bedroom?" Matt repeated, dumbfounded.

"Well, we can't do it standing here in the middle of the pantry. It's not nearly as enjoyable standing and you'll tire out fast. You can sit at the head of my bed with your back against the wall and I can lie using your leg as a pillow. That way we'll both be comfortable."

Matt just hoped that all this comfort didn't cause him to have a reaction, something that seemed to happen now every time he thought of Caitlin. After Matt was settled at the head of Caitlin's bed, he laid one of her pillows across his legs. Caitlin put her head on the pillow and lay on her side facing away from Matt and assuming the fetal position. Matt felt like he was in heaven as he began scratching her back

For a while they talked, but then just listened to the wizard wireless as they both became lost in their individual thoughts. Caitlin's butt cheeks and tiny budding breasts were both within reach, but Matt knew better than to touch either. Instead he just scratched her back from her shoulders to her waist, dreaming what it would be like to touch her all over. Wondering what it would feel like to some day actually enter her.

Caitlin within minutes was thoroughly relaxed and at ease. It was good to be held by someone she could trust. She drifted off into a half sleep; unfortunately a condition that brought back memories of someone else who scratched her back. But that person was only pretending to care for her and they weren't satisfied just scratching her back. They wanted to caress her chest and then touch her below the waist. But when they did they were no longer gentle; they were hurting her. The more Caitlin begged and pleaded for them to stop the more brutal the woman became. Then the woman reached for that broomstick. If only her hands were free she'd put them around Hooch's neck and strangle the life out of her. She visualized herself doing just that, but then she felt the agony of the stick. Caitlin screamed, but not only in her dream. She screamed and jumped awake. Then she screamed again when she saw Matt lying on the bed cataleptic. His face was blue from affixation.

* * * * *

"I have three small containers," Dick Bancroft announced. "In the pink one are slips of paper with the names of all the first year girls. The blue box contains the names of all the boys. The last box has six different tasks. Once the participants have been selected the initiation challenge will be picked."

"I'm scared," Kim confided to Emily. "I know my name is going to be picked first. I never win good things, but this I'll win."

"If your name is picked, I'll ask to take your place," Emily said truthfully.

Kim squeezed Emily's hand. "I know you would, but that wouldn't be right. Somehow I'll do it; whatever it is."

"Only if it's something reasonable," Emily responded. "I'm not letting anyone our age be forced into some stupid sex act for Dick Bancroft's pleasure. Not even Denise."

Dick sat the three boxes on the table and concurrently picked a slip of paper out of both the boys' and girls' boxes. He looked at the names and then put them back in their respective boxes. "The representatives to undergo the challenge are Emily Zacherley and Tyler Bancroft," Dick announced. "Now I'll pick the challenge."

"Hold up a minute, Dick," Doris Burke said. "I'm totally against this whole initiation hogwash, but if the majority insists on doing it; at least it should be done fairly."

Suddenly Dick looked nervous. "Are you accusing me of cheating? If I were dishonest in the selection of names, do you think I would have picked my own brother?"

"No one accused you of being dishonest, but you could steer clear of any suspicion by handling things differently. First of all you should have left us see that all the names were in

the hat and then let someone else select the names and show them to the group."

"Well, it's too late now. I already picked names and to reselect wouldn't be reasonable either." He thrust the two boxes at Doris. "You can check and see that all the names were in, but I'm not selecting them over."

Doris quickly searched through both boxes. "All the names are here, at this point we'll have to take your word for it as to who you picked," Doris said, not too happily.

Dick looked thankful. "May I continue then," he said in a self-aggrandizing way.

"After I check the other box to make certain that all six of the trials we discussed are in the box," Doris said, obviously not trusting Dick.

"Maybe you'd like to manage this next year," Dick declared.

"If I have my way, there will be no next year for this nonsense," Doris said as she read the six slips. "Dick, as an alternative to you picking the challenge, why don't we allow one of participants to select?"

The look on Dick's face made it abundantly clear that he wasn't happy with this proposal. "If that's what it takes to get on with it, so be it. Zacherley, you best do the selecting. I'm sure Doris thinks Tyler can read the papers through the box."

Doris frowned, but did prefer that Emily make the choice. She didn't trust Tyler anymore than his brother.

Bancroft handed the last box to Emily. "Pick out one slip of paper, read it, allow Tyler to read it, and then give it to me."

Emily picked out a slip of paper, read it and shook her head disgustedly before handing it to Tyler. Tyler read it and immediately blushed. He then handed the paper to his brother.

"Do you accept the challenge?" Dick asked.

"Before we say yes or no, I want to be clear on one thing," Emily said. "If we do this, then this whole stupid initiation thing is over. No one else has to do any challenges and no one has to serve slavery."

"That's the way Dick explained it last night," Doris said. "Is that correct, Dick?"

Dick stared at Emily in disbelief. He was sure that all six challenges would be rejected and that all twelve of the first years would end up in servitude for a month. "That's correct," Dick agreed. "If you and your partner complete the challenge in fifteen minutes, no additional names will be drawn, and the initiation will be over."

"Tyler, we can do this," Emily said. "Let's end this nonsense here and now."

Tyler didn't seem nearly as confident as Emily, but reluctantly nodded his head in agreement.

"The first couple has accepted their challenge," Dick announced in disbelief. "They have

fifteen minutes to enter the broom closet, strip down to their underwear, and then return here wearing the other's clothes."

Kim's chin dropped to the ground as she stared at Emily. The other first year girls looked at each other in skepticism.

"Now how the hell does the tart plan to pull that off?" Denise whispered to Janice. "I'd never do that challenge and I wear a bra and knickers. How is she going to avoid him seeing her naked?"

"She won't go through with it," Janice answered. They'll both be sold into servitude and Dick will be picking two more names."

As the girls talked, Dick had led Emily and Tyler to the closet. "The sand in this hourglass takes exactly fifteen minute to run through. I will turn it over as soon as the closet door closes. You must be out here in the other's clothing before the sand runs out."

As soon as Emily and Tyler stepped inside the door was closed behind them.

Tyler looked at Emily nervously. "I guess we'll be sort of heroes if we pull this off? No one else will have to do a challenge and nobody will get servitude. We just can't think of it as being in our underwear. I guess we could pretend we're in our swimming costumes. Couldn't we?"

"Tyler, we can do this, but you have to promise that you won't freak out on me," Emily said, apprehensively. "What type of underwear do you wear, boxers or briefs?"

"Boxers," Tyler answered, wondering why it mattered.

"I don't wear any," Emily said without hesitation or even the slightest blush.

Tyler just stared at Emily in disbelief. "If that's true why on earth did you agree to do this challenge? We can't exchange clothes. I'd be in my boxers, but you'd be totally nude."

"Tyler, I don't want to be anyone's servant for a month. I want to end this entire initiation garbage right now. Nudity is not a big deal to me. I can live with you seeing me naked in order to complete the dare. But we're wasting time. Are you going to get undressed?"

"Yeah, but..."

"No buts," Emily said determinedly. "Hurry, get out of your clothes."

They both took their robes off quickly and then as Tyler started unbuttoning his shirt, he glanced at Emily. She was already topless. He reluctantly looked away.

"Don't be embarrassed," Emily said as she dropped her skirt to the floor. "It won't bother me if you look, but please don't stop undressing. I don't want us to be beaten simply because we ran out of time."

Tyler slipped his shirt off, took a deep breath and then undid his pants and dropped them to the floor; not once taking his eyes off of Emily as she removed her shoes and knee high socks.

As he finished taking off his socks, Tyler commented, "You're actually quite pretty."

"You probably say that to every girl that strips in front of you," Emily said good-naturedly.

"No really, you're extremely pretty. I consider myself fortunate to have gotten to see you like this."

Emily laughed as she pointed to Tyler's boxers. "I know, your approval rating is sticking out. Hurry let's get dressed."

Tyler's face turned crimson. He had tried to act cool, but his penis had betrayed his excitement at seeing Emily in the buff. After putting things in place, he exchanged clothes with Emily and they both started to dress.

Emily giggled when Tyler was finished dressing. "You should wear a skirt more often," she said. "You have nice legs. But I do have one suggestion. Your boxers shouldn't be longer than your skirt."

"This skirt is short," Tyler complained. How can you wear it with nothing underneath? Aren't you afraid someone will see?"

"If they do, they do," Emily said, unemotionally. "You can see my face, or arms or legs all the time. I think it's silly that people make such a big deal out of breasts, vaginas and butt cheeks."

Tyler just shook his head. "You're amazing. I've never met a girl like you."

Emily gave Tyler a smile. "You're okay too Bancroft. Nothing like your brother."

Kim checked her watch for the one-hundredth time. *They're not going to make it.*

Just then, with thirty seconds to spare, the closet door opened and Emily and Tyler stepped out. Tyler received most of the attention dressed in Emily's skirt.

Dick Bancroft was totally disgusted. Emily had ruined his entire initiation program. He had personally counted on making a nice chunk of cash on the bidding for slaves. Emily was fast becoming as equally unpopular with Dick as her sister.

"Bancroft and Zacherley have changed garments in the required time," Dick announced. "The ceremony will be complete when they change back into their own articles of clothing in front of us."

Emily and Tyler looked at each other, aghast.

* * * * *

"I've never been on this floor before," Jamie said as she and Hermione reached the landing for the seventh floor.

"I doubt if many students have," Hermione responded. "This level is disused and has little of significance besides the Come and Go Room, or as some have dubbed it, the Room of Requirement."

Jamie gave Hermione an extremely confused look. "It's called the Come and Go Room because it isn't always here," Hermione explained. "Sometimes the door is there and other times it's just a blank wall. The door only appears if you have an actual need for the room."

"Will it appear today, since I essentially don't have a current need?" Jamie asked with unease.

"I'm not sure," Hermione answered. "We can only try."

They walked along the corridor until they came to a stretch of blank wall opposite an enormous tapestry depicting Barnabas the Barmy's foolish attempt to train trolls for the ballet. "This is the place" Hermione said.

Jamie looked at the blank wall with disenchantment. "There's no room," She said, disappointment evident in her voice.

"There wouldn't be yet," Hermione commented. "We must walk past this bit of wall three times, concentrating hard on what we need."

And so they did, turning sharply at the window just beyond the blank stretch of wall and then again at the man-size vase on its other side.

Jamie concentrated hard, saying over and over again, *I need a place we can be alone, a place that will make our first time together special, a place to make love.*

As they paced back and forth, Hermione also thought intensely. *We need a place where two people won't be disturbed while they get to know each other in the most intimate of ways. We need a very romantic place.*

After finishing their third walk by, Jamie turned and then reached for and squeezed Hermione's hand. The blank wall now contained a highly polished door. They approached the door guardedly. Hermione reached out and grabbed the brass handle. As she opened the door, Jamie first noticed the glow of candlelight that illuminated the room romantically, but as she entered she was overwhelmed by the focal point of the room, an enormous round bed large enough to comfortably sleep twelve people.

Soft music was playing, but Jamie was unable to locate its source. About ten feet from the bed was a sunken bathtub large enough for six people filled with bubbly water, which upon touching, Jamie found to be the perfect temperature. There was even a sauna in the one corner. As if the bed wasn't large enough, the floor was covered in soft padded carpeting. There were no chairs, but instead there were abundant silk cushions on the floor.

The far wall contained a bookcase, which immediately drew Hermione's attention. The books seemed to all be about sex, but what surprised Hermione was that each volume she picked up seemed to be about women satisfying women. As she returned "The Tongue and How to Use It" to the shelf, Jamie called to her.

"Hermione, the room is wonderful, but I'm slightly confused," Jamie said. "The décor seems rather womanly and why would two young lovers want all these type of things?" Jamie was pointing to a bookcase stocked with every conceivable type of female sex toy.

Suddenly Hermione face turned scarlet red as she asked, "Exactly what type of room did you say you required?"

"I concentrated hard," Jamie said. I kept saying over and over again that, I need a place we can be alone, a place that will make our first time together special, a place to make love."

Hermione face was still red, but she suddenly burst into irrepressible laughter. Jamie stared impatiently at Hermione, not understanding what was so funny.

Finally when Hermione was able to gain control, she put her arm around Jamie. "When you and Alex come to use the room, I think you will find it the same in many ways, but also different. This room was designed for you and I."

"You and I?" Jamie said in shock.

"Yes. I think the room thought that we wanted to be together," Hermione laughed. "I'm sure some changes will be made when it's you and Alex making your needs known."

They both laughed as they continued to look about the room.

"Hermione, can I ask you a very delicate question?" Jamie inquired.

"You can ask," Hermione said with a smile. "Whether or not I'll answer depends on the question."

Jamie faltered as she worked up her nerve. Finally she said, "Have you ever been, or wanted to be with another woman?"

"Not unless you consider that awful incident with Madam Hooch being with a woman, and I certainly don't."

"No," answered Jamie. "I was referring to something you wanted to do."

"In that case the answer is a definite no. I've wondered what it would be like, but I couldn't picture myself ever being with anyone, male or female, other than Harry." Hermione looked deep into Jamie's eyes. "Now that I've answered your question, I have one for you. Why did you ask?"

Jamie squirmed as she wondered how she could avoid answering. Finally she decided that she didn't want to circumvent the question. She was going to be truthful with Hermione. "The other day when you kidded that I should either get out or join you in the shower, I wanted to join you."

"And now you're wondering about your sexuality? Don't. I've seen you look at Alex, and you've never looked at me like you do him. There's love and then there's love in capital letters. Your love for Alex is like mine for Harry. It's not just capital letters, but it's underlined and in bold print.

"You and I have a different kind of love and fortunately, being women, we can express it more openly. Harry and Ron have the same type of love, but the male persona prevents them from displaying it, which is a shame."

"You're talking about hugging and kissing?" Jamie asked; wanting to make sure she was on the same page as Hermione.

"Exactly. Imagine the comments if Harry and Ron hugged and kissed each other in public."

"They'd be labeled as gay," Jamie said.

"But you and I have hugged and kissed each other completely nude in public without anyone thinking a thing of it."

Jamie was still confused. "I understand what you're saying, but that doesn't explain my desire to jump in the shower with you."

"I think that was just an extension of the love you have for all of us. Caitlin, Emily and you had just gotten done showering all together and had a ball doing it. I think you just wanted to continue the fun and make me a part of it."

"That makes sense. Can I ask another question?" Jamie inquired.

"I feel like a genie being asked for another wish," Hermione said with a cackle. "Jamie, I think we're close enough that if you have a question, you can ask it without first being granted permission."

"What would you have done if I followed you into the shower?"

Hermione smiled and shook her head. "I can't believe how much you girls have changed me. Last year at this time I would have screamed bloody murder, been totally embarrassed, and never spoken to you again. The other day, I would have laughed, pulled you into the shower and given you a hug."

Jamie glanced at the sunken tub and then at Hermione. "It's a shame to let that go to waste."

"Jamie Zacherley! Are you suggesting that I, a Hogwarts professor, should get in that tub naked with a student? You do realize Caitlin and Emily are going to have a fit if they find out they missed out on this."

"We can bring them along some other time. What do you say sister?"

Hermione never answered Jamie, at least not verbally. The pile of clothes that suddenly appeared next to her was answer enough.

* * * * *

Caitlin was beside herself with anguish Somehow her actions in the dream had resulted in

Matt's present condition. But she couldn't think about that now. Saving Matt's life was her only concern. Quickly she straddled his limp body and placed her lips against his as Madam Pomfrey had shown her. For a Hyperempath, this was literally the kiss of life. Please Matt! Please don't die! I'll do anything! Anything you ask, but please don't die!

Caitlin maintained the kiss until finally she felt Matt moving beneath her. He was coming around, but there was an expression of fear on his face. Suddenly he tried to push her aside and get up.

"What happened?" He shouted nervously. "Did you do that to me? Did you try to kill me?" Once again he tried to get up. This time Caitlin literally threw herself on top of him and wrapped her arms around him.

"Matt, I'm sorry. I'm not sure what happened, but I'd never intentionally hurt you. You must know how I feel about you."

As Matt's senses returned to him, he calmed slightly and stopped struggling against Caitlin. Even if Caitlin was responsible for what just occurred, he realized it was not done on purpose. She'd never hurt him. He stopped struggling and instead wrapped his arms around the young girl. "Did you mean it when you said you'll do anything I asked if I didn't die?"

Caitlin broke Matt's hold on her and sat up on her haunches. "You heard me say that?" she questioned. "But Matt, I never said that aloud, I only thought it."

"But I heard you. I heard you as clear as I hear you now. Did you mean it?"

"Yes, I meant it," Caitlin said suddenly extremely panicky. She had practically killed Matt and without a doubt owed him anything he asked, but... the look on his face was like one she had never seen before. *We're only twelve. Could he actually be considering asking me to do that? How can I say no? He almost died because of me.*

Caitlin literally shivered. "Anything."

Matt pulled her back down against his chest and wrapped his arms around her.

* * * * *

"That went much better than I expected," Jamie said as she and Hermione departed the infirmary. "I expected her to give me a lecture, but she was actually quite nice and supportive."

Hermione smiled. "There are two Madam Pomfreys. When someone is hurt or sick you see the strict, nervous, order shouting Pomfrey. You just met the Pomfrey that most of the students never get to see, the loving, caring, giving-you-the-shirt-off-her-back Pomfrey. I never got to see that side of her until I became a Professor."

"I expected her to try to talk me out of it; tell me I was too young. Instead she was very helpful and compassionate."

"You are too young," Hermione said. "So was I. But when you're young and in love it's hard to be reasoned with. I'm glad you confided in me. And now that you've seen Pomfrey you can rest easy that there is no chance of a pregnancy."

"I'm glad I saw Madam Pomfrey, but if I hadn't, Alex and I would have still used some type of muggle protection," Jamie said confidently.

"And most likely ended up pregnant! Jamie, you're a witch. We may look just like muggles, but the same genes that give you your magical ability also make your body different from a muggle's in some ways. Most muggle birth control won't work on us; witches and wizards are extremely fertile. Even our cycle is different from a muggle woman's in that our periods only last three days and we can conceive the other twenty-eight."

"But with the potion I'm safe?"

"The potion she gave you is one hundred percent effective. Depending on how it is brewed the protection will last three, six or twelve months. You don't have to be concerned until next year at this time."

Jamie's eyes began to tear. "I don't know what I would have done without your help."

Hermione put her arm around Jamie and gave her a hug. "That's what big sisters are for. Do you have a special night planned?"

"No, but now that I'm prepared, I can relax and just let it happen."

As she reached the staff quarters, Hermione hesitated for a moment. "It's going to be hard to see them become women, but I hope Emily and Caitlin will come to me when they're ready to take that step."

"For their sake, I hope they do, too," Jamie said sincerely as she opened the door. "I can't wait to tell them both about our bath together. They're going to be so upset they missed out."

"Perhaps we can go back tomorrow and take them with. If we all coax him, maybe Harry will join us," Hermione said with a glimmer in her eye.

"That would be fun, but do you think you can convince him to do it?"

"I'm not sure, but I notice Harry has a hard time saying no to me." Hermione looked around the empty room. "I wonder what Caitlin's been up to in our absence."

"She probably in her room, lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling totally bored. Let's go check."

Chapter Eight - Affirmation

From the blood of innocents four,
The Great Lord Slytherin's spirit shall pour.
Two of his own, seer and heir,
Two of his enemies, healer and heir,
Two drops of each not any more,

With their death by his hand,
To his body he will be returned,
To walk the earth a mortal man,
But when Slytherin and Evil are joined,
Not even the Covenant will bring the result down.

"But you're the senior member of staff. Plus you've also known her longer. I feel you should be the one to break the news."

"You don't understand. She has a tendency to kill people who bring her upsetting news. She's already given me one reprieve. There's such a thing as pushing your luck."

The door slammed as Emma Wrong entered the room. "And just what are you two squabbling about?" the Great One demanded.

"Nothing! Great One," Damien lied as he cowered in the corner.

"Madame Hooch. I'm pleased you decided to join our organization. How are you and Damien getting along?"

"Quite well," Hooch said honestly. "We share many mutual interests."

"Are you referring to your shared love of torture and mutilation or your mutual fascination with Hermione Granger?" The Great One said nastily.

"I assure you that the only feelings I hold for Granger are those of betrayal and hatred." Hooch said, snootily turning up her nose as if the mere discussion of the Hogwarts Professor offended her senses.

"If that be the case then you and Damien most certainly don't agree on everything. He is rather smitten with the Professor. If given the chance I'm sure he would love to test her arousal levels with his dip stick." The Great One crossed the room and took Damien's chin in her hand, lifting his head so she could look him directly in his eyes. "But Damien is a good soldier. If I ordered it, he would drive a stake through her groin to her chest without hesitation. Would you do that for me?" She turned to Madam Hooch.

"With pleasure, Great One," Hooch replied.

"And how do you feel about Potter and the Weasel? If I commanded would you strip the flesh from their writhing bodies?"

"I have neither love nor hate for either, but I have pledged my loyalty and life to you. You

have but to ask and it will be done."

The Great One smiled. "I have enough hate for all of us. Soon when Salazar Slytherin joins us I will rule the world with you both as my lieutenants. The first item on our agenda will be the extremely slow and excruciating painful death of the Weasel and his annoying friends."

She turned to Damien. "How is the amassing of the centaurs progressing?"

Damien looked toward Hooch, his expression practically begging her to answer the question. She ignored him. "The search has been canceled, Great One," Damien said uneasily, sweat covering his brow.

"CANCELED! Under whose authority?" She shouted. The Great One was livid. She looked at Damien furiously. "I gave you back your life and this is how you show your appreciation. I should kill you here and now."

Damien dropped to his knees. "Please Great One, spare me. We have found a centaur that after some persuasion has agreed to help us."

The Great One calmed slightly. "In the future, Damien, I recommend you give me the good news first. You nearly didn't live long enough to tell me that you had a cooperative centaur. Tell me more," She continued sweetly to the shaking form at her feet.

Damien slowly got to his feet. "One of the largest herds of centaur live in the Forbidden Forest next to Hogwarts, therefore Madam Hooch and I decided to begin our roundup there. However, the forest is extremely dense and the centaurs exceedingly good at concealing themselves. After three weeks of searching we hadn't seen one centaur although we did come across some rather large spiders."

"As we were about ready to give up for the day, we stumbled upon a lone centaur. It was Firenze, the one that taught for a time at Hogwarts. He didn't put up much of a fight, not much spirit left in him. The other centaurs had relented and allowed him to return to the forest, but he was still banned from the herd. He was rather sad and depressed."

"Why the hell should I care how a mule feels?" The Great One shouted. "When did this happen? What have you learned? Why haven't you told me all this sooner?"

"That would be my doing," Madam Hooch said reluctantly. "We took him into custody four weeks ago, but I anticipated having better news before approaching you with the details."

"If the bastard won't cooperate kill him and hunt down another of his kind," the Great One said in fury.

"Oh! He decided to oblige," Damien said. "Madam Hooch found this ingenious muggle device called a nut cracker. Firenze decided he'd rather not discover if it worked on more than just walnuts."

"Then he has been working on the prophecy?" The Great one asked elatedly.

"Yes, Damien answered, "but he advises against taking any steps until we secure the entire prophecy,"

"I'm not looking for advice from a donkey; I'm looking for the names of the innocents. It could be years, maybe never before we find the balance of the prophecy. I want to act now while I'm young enough to enjoy being Queen of the world. What has it come up with thus far?"

"He feels innocent refers to youth and having never had sexual intercourse," Madam Hooch answered. "We're probably talking children under age thirteen. Combining two drops of blood from each will bring forth the spirit of Lord Slytherin."

"Then when his spirit kills the kids," Damien added excitedly, "he will return to human form and be able to assist you. Firenze isn't sure whether you are the Evil in the prophecy or not, but definitely once joined the Covenant will be no challenge to the power resulting."

"Stupid refuge from a glue factory. Of course, Evil refers to me. Who the hell else is ripping both the muggle and magical world apart with terrorism?" Emma looked at both Hooch and Damien with repugnance. "I didn't need a four-legged nag to tell me the information you've conveyed. I figured most of that out on my own. I want the names of the four brats."

"Firenze is still charting the stars and trying to attach names. He is sure that 'his own' and 'his enemies' refers to Slytherin and Gryffindor houses," Madam Hooch said, hoping the Great One would allow her to finish before screaming again. That would mean that the seer is either in or will be in Slytherin and the healer is or will be a Gryffindor."

The Great One face turned red with anger. "That means that heir refers to the heirs of Gryffindor and Slytherin. No one knows who the heir of Slytherin is although many people think its Draco Malfoy, but Potter is definitely the Heir of Gryffindor. I'll be damned if either of those two qualify as innocents."

"No, Great One," Damien said as he once again cringed in the corner. "We're obviously talking next generation." Both Hooch and Damien waited nervously for the angry outburst.

"Well now isn't that just fucking dandy," Emma said, her words scorching the room like a dragon's breath. "Are you telling me that I have to sit and wait tolerantly till Potter decides to knock up Granger? That could be years or never. They've already taken in half the street urchins in the wizarding world. And if Malfoy is the heir of Slytherin, he won't settle down with one woman until his prick is ready to shrivel up and drop off."

The Great One leaned her head against the wall. This was not good news. Finally she turned to her lieutenants, her face colorless. "Some things we can control and others we can not." Her voice actually sounded on the verge of tears. "The wise person knows the difference. I'll give orders to double our terror campaign. Meanwhile you two work with Firenze. I need the names of the seer and the healer. I also need to know whether or not Malfoy is the true heir of Slytherin. And make sure that the centaur doesn't escape. The memory charm that conceals our command center doesn't work on animals, I don't know if it would work on him or not. Firenze is our permanent guest until he has worn out his usefulness." A faint smile slowly curled across her face.

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"What do you mean change back here in front of everyone?" Tyler protested. "That wasn't part of the challenge. I won't do it."

"In that case you have lost the challenge and I will pick two more names," Dick said triumphantly.

"No!" We'll do it," Emily said with conviction.

Denise and Janice looked at each other in disbelief. Maybe somehow in that closet she had gotten Tyler to be a gentleman and turn his back. But how did she intend to hide her lack of undergarments here in the middle of the common room?

Tyler looked at Emily questioningly. "You can't, not in front of everybody."

"Tyler, don't ever tell me what I can or can't do," Emily said resolutely as she started to unbutton her shirt. Then she faltered just a moment. "Before I do this I just want to say one thing. Dick, you are a lying, cheating, perverted bastard."

Emily was just ready to continue unbuttoning her shirt when Doris said, "Zacherley, you're right. He is a lying, cheating bastard. Keep your clothes on. Dick, you are not a god. The committee wrote the rules and you don't have the authority to change them. The initiation is over. All first years are now officially Slytherins."

Dick's was furious, he clenched his fists in anger, but he understood he had lost. He said nothing; just walked off in disgust.

The first years cheered the end of the initiation as Doris ushered Emily and Tyler back into the closet.

"She is the luckiest bitch alive," Denise said angrily as her and Janice stomped off.

"This is getting to be a habit," Tyler said as he and Emily undressed. "One that I most certainly enjoy."

Emily smiled as she finished taking off the boy's garments she was wearing and then stood naked waiting for him to get her knee-highs off. Tyler didn't look directly at Emily, but he did try to grab peeks when he thought she wasn't looking. "You're silly," Emily said a smile on her face. "You may look if you want. Honestly, it doesn't bother me."

Tyler gave Emily a bashful stare as Emily just shook her head in bewilderment. "Boys, you're all the same. I'll give you two minutes. Visually scrutinize me as close as you want, but then I want to get dressed and out of this closet."

Emily said two minutes and Tyler didn't take his eyes off her the entire time. "I was wrong," he said when the two minutes were up and Emily started to dress. "You're not pretty. You're beautiful."

"Yeah, sure" said Emily, not buying the flattery. "Why were you so reluctant to change out there? I was the one that would end up on display and you knew I wouldn't consider it that big

a deal."

"But I did," Tyler answered. "I'm the only guy in Slytherin house that has seen how terrific you look nude and I didn't want to share that vision with the balance of the house."

Emily did something extremely out of character; she blushed. "Are you sure your Dick's brother? Maybe you were switched at birth because you're nothing like him."

"I'll take that as a compliment," Tyler said as he finished tying his sneakers. Then he took one last look at Emily in her short skirt. "I can't believe you don't wear knickers with that." Emily simply shot him a smile as she opened the door.

"It's about time," Kim said. "I think it took you longer to change this time than the first."

"It may have, we didn't rush quite as much," Emily said as Tyler left to join some of his mates.

"Okay," Kim whispered. "Now that he's gone tell me how you did it. How did you manage to change clothes without letting him see you naked?"

"I didn't," Emily responded.

* * * * *

"Mum, thank god your back!" Caitlin squealed as she ran into the room and flung her arms around Hermione. "It was awful."

"What happened Honey?" Hermione said with concern as she wrapped her arms around Caitlin to comfort her.

"It was Matt. He was here and..."

Before she could complete her sentence, Hermione interrupted, her anger filling her voice. "Matt was here! The two of you were alone? If he hurt you in any way..."

"No, Mum!" Caitlin shrieked. "It wasn't Matt. He would never hurt me. It was me; I almost killed him."

"You almost most killed him?" Hermione said in shock.

Jamie put her hand on Caitlin shoulder. "You'd never do something like that on purpose; you don't have a mean bone in your body. Calm down and tell us what happened."

They all seated themselves in the living area. Hermione sat on the couch next to Caitlin still holding the girl tightly to her. "Tell us exactly what happened," Hermione instructed, extremely alarmed.

"Matt arrived about ten minutes after you guys left," Caitlin said. "I was really bored so, of course, I was elated to see him. I had just offered him a drink when I got an itch on my back.

You know the kind that drives you crazy, but you can't reach. I asked him to scratch it and he did."

Jamie gave Caitlin a knowing glance, "I'm sure you had to twist his arm."

Caitlin ignored Jamie and continued her story. "It felt great. You guys both know how I love having my back scratched. When I told Matt how much I enjoyed it, he offered to scratch it for me."

Hermione and Jamie exchanged quick looks, neither liking the direction this story seemed to be heading.

"We took our drinks and headed into the bedroom. I figured it would be more comfortable if we lay on the bed while he did my back."

Jamie squirmed in her chair as Hermione rolled her eyes. "Caitlin," Hermione said calmly, "Some things just aren't appropriate. I'm not sure I like the idea of you and Matt being alone in our quarters, especially with you being nude. But I certainly don't approve of the two of you lying together on your bed."

"Mum, we didn't go in there with the intentions of having sex. I'd trust Matt with my life," Caitlin protested.

"We'll talk more about this later," Hermione said, doubting any twelve-year-old boy could be trusted alone with a naked girl.

Jamie was having similar thoughts, but then realized how often she and Alex had been in comparable situations throughout the years and he had not once done anything inappropriate. Perhaps she and Hermione weren't giving Matt and Caitlin enough credit.

"We tried a lot of different positions. Matt couldn't seem to get comfortable. Finally we ended up lying on our sides facing each other. He gives terrific back scratches."

As Hermione listened, she came to the conclusion that when Caitlin's time came it would be extremely challenging for her to help Caitlin plan as she had Jamie. There was only four years difference in the girls' ages, but Hermione thought of Jamie as her sister; Caitlin was her little girl. What Caitlin was describing was completely innocent, but yet part of Hermione wanted to transfigure Matt into a toadstool.

"I started to think about you, Dad, Jamie, Emily and now Matt. How good it felt to be held by someone you completely trusted and have them touch you."

Jamie and Hermione once again exchanged glances; they were both experiencing mixed emotions as they heard the story. Each was picturing themselves in similar situations, Hermione with Harry and Jamie with Alex. They knew exactly what she meant and how she felt. It was truly a wonderful sensation. Then they'd be jerked back to reality. Caitlin and Matt are only twelve.

"And then, I don't know why, but I started to think of Madam Hooch; how she lied to me and how she hurt me both physically and mentally. I remembered that day as if it were actually happening all over. I remembered struggling, trying to get my hands free so I could wrap

them around her neck and choke her, force her to let me go.

"Then I remembered the excruciating pain as she violated me with that broomstick. I screamed, but not just in my mind, I actually screamed. I wanted to hug Matt, I needed to be held by someone, but Matt had stopped scratching my back. He was lying on the bed completely still, his face contorted and blue. I thought he was dead," Caitlin said as she burst into tears.

Hermione hugged the young girl tightly as Jamie rushed to her side and knelt with her arms around Caitlin.

"It wasn't your fault Caitlin," Jamie said reassuringly. "Was he eating anything? Something probably stuck in his throat. There's no reason to connect your memories with what happened to Matt."

Hermione didn't comment on Jamie's remarks, but simply squeezed Caitlin tighter in her arms. "What did you do when you saw Matt in that condition?" Hermione asked with grave concern.

"I gave him the kiss like you and Madam Pomfrey taught me," Caitlin answered meekly. "At first I didn't think it was working. His lips felt cold, but I held him tightly and kept our lips joined. Finally he started to come around. Mum, I don't know what I would have done if he had died. It would have been my fault."

"Caitlin, for the last time it wasn't your fault," Jamie said emphatically, now holding Caitlin's hands in hers. "Matt's fortunate you are a Hyperempath and were able to save him."

Without forewarning Hermione jumped from the chair, tears pouring out of her eyes. Jamie held Caitlin as they both looked at Hermione with confusion. Hermione turned and gazed at them both, unable to suppress the tears.

"No, it wouldn't have been her fault if that innocent boy had died. It would have been mine. Mine for not telling you; not warning you." Hermione stuttered, completely distraught at what had nearly occurred. "But, but you're so young, I never envisioned that such a thing could happen not till you're much older."

Jamie's mouth dropped as Caitlin's eyes widened in horror. "Then I actually did almost kill Matt?" she asked, horrified with the revelation.

Hermione approached Caitlin and got on her knees in front of where the young girl was sitting. "I'm so sorry I didn't tell you."

Caitlin wiggled to the front of the chair and put her arms around Hermione neck. "Mum, it's not your fault." Caitlin looked at her Mum, an expression of trepidation and panic on her face. "Can I kill people in my sleep just by dreaming it?"

"No." Hermione answered, tears streaking down her cheeks. "But there are downsides to having Hyperempathic abilities and I should have explained them. I just...." Hermione tried to gain self-control.

Caitlin leaned forward and kissed her Mum. "I understand. For whatever reason, something is

causing these "powers" I have to develop way faster then they should. Maybe it's time that we sat down over a butterbeer and you told me everything."

Hermione gave Caitlin a weak smile. "Sometimes you make me wonder which of us the grownup is and which is the child."

They made their way to the pantry and after getting drinks, gathered around the breakfast table.

As Caitlin took a sip of her butterbeer she said, "It feels strange to have the two of you sitting here clothed."

Jamie gave a little chuckle. "It feels weird to me too. I had only intended to pop in for a minute, until your revelation. I have to leave as soon as I'm convinced you're all right."

"At the moment you're the priority young lady," Hermione said as she squeezed Caitlin hand and tried to decide just how to start. "My Hyperempath ability first started to appear when I was sixteen; Madam Pomfrey tells me that is the normal age. From that I assumed your gift would reach its different stages five years earlier than normal. Today proves my assumption totally incorrect."

"It usually takes two years until your healing abilities reach full power. Yours already have and seem to greatly exceed those of most Hyperempaths. I knew that for a fact the night you healed my shoulder on the beach. Little is known about your telepathic abilities because they are extremely rare. It has been over two hundred years since there was a Hyperempath that could heal without touching the patient."

Caitlin and Jamie both listened intently as Hermione continued. "Our sense of feeling is far greater than normal magical people."

"Do you mean emotionally or physically?" Jamie inquired.

"Physically," Hermione answered. "This has good and bad points. We have to learn to separate ourselves from feelings of pain. A minor cut, whilst certainly not life threatening, feels ten times as painful to a Hyperempath as to most magical people. If unable to separate from her body a female Hyperempath would be driven crazy by the pain of childbirth."

"That's sounds awful Jamie," said cringing at the thought. "You say there is a good point?"

Hermione blushed as she always did when a discussion of sex took place. "Jamie, you will soon be having relations with Alex for the first time. When you peak, that is reach your ultimate feeling of pleasure, imagine it being tens times stronger. All the touches all the caresses, ten times better." Hermione turned a deep red. "Often it's necessary to separate from your body because of the overwhelming pleasure."

"Can you teach me how to do that; to separate?" Caitlin asked nervously.

"Yes, after what happened today I want you prepared. One never knows when you could have an accident and hurt yourself. As far as the other side of the coin, you won't have to worry about that for at least three more years, hopefully longer."

Hermione turned her head briefly and missed seeing Caitlin's face turn a brilliant red, but Jamie didn't. That blush had Jamie extremely concerned. She and Caitlin unquestionably needed to have a long talk.

Hermione took a deep breath before dropping the bomb. "Caitlin, a Hyperempath has the touch of life, if they turn to the dark side or experience extreme hate or anger, their touch can also hurt or kill. In your case, in time I believe you will have the ability to both heal and hurt with your thoughts, but only with a conscious thought."

"What about Matt? I most certainly didn't want to kill him," Caitlin asked, petrified that she could have such power over people. She had been euphoric when she first learned of her abilities, now she wished she could shed the gift as easily as she shed her clothes.

"Witches and Wizards have magical powers from birth, but only once we've had proper schooling do we know how to control them and correctly cast charms and spells. You have abilities that you don't know how to control. Your mind was remembering a horrible ordeal that you went through. To you it was as clear as if it were actually happening at the moment. You wanted to strangle the person who was touching you. Without realizing it, you allowed your power to lash out at the person currently touching you."

"Since Matt's no longer here, I take for granted he is okay?" Hermione asked. "Although it would still be a good idea for him to let Madam Pomfrey check him out."

"I'll tell him to go see her when we have lunch together," Caitlin said.

Hermione studied Caitlin concernedly. "Then everything is satisfactory between you two. Does he realize that it was your powers that assailed him?"

Caitlin suddenly had an extremely guilty look on her face. "He knows it was me and at first he was frightened and wanted to distance himself. But he eventually realized that I could never do anything like that to him on purpose. We're okay now."

Hermione dropped the subject at that, but Jamie didn't like the expression on Caitlin's face. The young girl was an extremely poor liar and even though Jamie didn't think Caitlin was lying about what took place she absolutely sensed that part of the story was being left untold.

* * * * *

"I still can't believe you actually did that," Kim said as her and Emily studied together in the dorm. Actually they had done more talking then studying. It was nearly time for dinner and Kim was still going on about the initiation that had taken place that morning.

"That's because you're not that familiar with me as yet," Emily said with a smirk. "After we've lived together a few months you'll believe it."

"But he's a boy, an extremely cutie boy. You actually stood there naked and allowed him to visually examine you?" Kim was astounded by Emily's brashness.

"He'd obviously never seen a naked girl before," Emily said unflappably "So I let him look. I

will admit that I was surprised when he got down on his knees to get a closer perspective. For a few moments I actually thought he was going to touch me."

Kim eyes widen. "What would you have done if he had?" Kim asked, horror-stricken, at the thought.

Emily laughed. "I might have kicked him where he never would have forgotten it or I just might have just left him touch me and done absolutely nothing. It depended on the touch."

"I don't understand, a touch there is wrong, period," Kim asserted.

"Extend your hands out to me," Emily asked without elucidation.

Kim had utterly no idea what Emily was up to, but complied and extended both hands in front of her palms down. At first Kim just studied the right hand. Next she took her finger and rubbed each knuckle in turn. After she did that she grasped the tip of each of Kim's fingers between two of her own and moved them back and forth. She scratched one of Kim's finger nails with her own and then turned the hand over and after looking at it intently traced the life line with her finger.

As she reached for the other hand Kim started to ask her what she was doing, but Emily shushed her friend and started caressing the hand with her own. Ever so softly she moved her finger over the hand even caressing the wrist. Then she leaned over placed a few gentle kisses on the top of Kim's hand before starting to suck on her finger.

Kim pulled her hand away in repulsion. "What are you doing? She hollered with dismay.

"Why didn't you yell and jerk away when I touched your right hand?" Emily inquired.

"Because you seemed to be just examining it, but with my left... I felt like you were fondling me. Okay, Okay. I understand what you're trying to demonstrate. I agree that there is a big difference between touching someone in curiosity and fondling them. But there is also a big difference between touching someone's hand and touching someone down there."

"Only because you've been taught that way. I don't think any body parts are more important or sacred than others. To me it doesn't matter what part of me a person sees or touches, but more importantly how it's done."

Kim just kept shaking her head back and forth. "I hear you and I understand what you're saying, but I still think it's wrong to let people touch you certain places. Do all nudists think like you?"

Emily shook her head. "Positively not. My Mum used to call me her little extremist nudist. Most naturists lead two lives sort of like a fictional super hero. They're afraid to let friends and even family know they practice nudism. They dress to conform except when they visit a camp or when they are in the privacy of their own homes. If they get company, they'll rush to cover themselves in fear that someone will learn the truth and ridicule them."

"That certainly not you or your sisters," Kim said, giving Emily a big smile.

"Jamie and I weren't raised to be ashamed that we were nudists, but even my parents didn't

publicize the fact. On the other hand, they didn't conceal it either. Anyone that was invited to our home was warned ahead of time that they would find us all naked. My Mum was quite stunning and brought many a smile to the face of deliverymen. But still, my parents caved to the fact that the general populous didn't accept nudism. Despite our protests, Jamie and I were forced to dress whenever we departed the house."

"The way you think is so alien to me," Kim said. She was trying to understand Emily's viewpoint but found it difficult. "Even if I could accept and understand the desire to be naked, I'll never understand how you can do it in front of fully clothed people."

"Because unlike most people, I don't associate the word naked with something dirty or immoral. I relate it with something pure and natural. Nudist aren't out to force their belief on the general populace, they just don't want textile attitudes forced on them."

"Are you actually serious when you say you'd never wear clothes if you weren't required? You could actually walk into the Great Hall starkers and not be nervous or humiliated?"

Emily looked Kim straight in the eye. "I wish I could prove it to you tonight, but it would result in my causing others awkwardness and me more than likely being expelled. Way too often am I forced to sacrifice my beliefs in order to not be chastised or bring grief to others."

Kim marveled at Emily attitude. She had no desire to be a nudist and she'd rather die than appear nude in public. Kim doubted she'd ever even be completely comfortable with her semi-forced nudity in the dorm, but still she respected Emily for believing in something so strongly. "Have you actually ever gone naked in public; other than in a nudist environment?"

Emily smiled. "Why do you think Mum called me her little extremist nudist? I was always pushing the boundaries, seeing just how much I could get away with. I never felt I was doing anything wrong because my being nude certainly didn't hurt anyone."

"What did you do?" Kim asked eagerly.

"Mum was always yelling at me for going out-of-doors nude. Usually it was just to the curb to greet a visitor, but once...." Emily's face suddenly glowed as if you were about to tell her favorite story.

"I was watching the telly, when Mum asked me to run to the grocer and pick up a few things she need for dinner. It was a sunny late winter day, certainly not warm, but not extremely cold either. I slipped on my sneakers and then reached for my coat, not bothering to dress. As I was about to open the door, I had a breathtaking inspiration. I slipped off my sneakers, tossed my coat on a chair and stepped out the door, clutching the grocery money in my hand."

Kim's jaw dropped as she looked at Emily in amazement. "You actually went to the grocery nude. How far was it from your home?"

"About four blocks and the streets were rather chock-full of activity. It was fascinating to observe the reactions of people when they caught view of me. The men, obviously, were more supportive. One man yelled 'now that's a cute outfit, but aren't you rather chilly?' I wasn't. I loved the feel of the breeze on my body. Some of the women gave me pleasant smiles while others said rather crude things, but I didn't care; I was in heaven. Way too quickly I reached the grocery. One of our neighbors, a nice older muggle lady who knows we're nudist, was at

the store. She just shook her head when she saw me and said 'You do realize that your Mum is going to skin you when she finds out what you've done.' At the time I didn't care, I was in my glory."

"Wasn't the owner upset by your nudity," Kim asked. "Didn't he ask you to leave?"

"No. Actually, no one in fact paid me that much notice, which surprised me. But then, I was a young girl. I'm sure the reaction to a grown woman would have been a great deal different. I finished shopping and then paid for my purchases. I actually hated to leave the store because I knew my adventure would be over when I got home and I'd more than likely be punished. I took my time as I strolled home. Mum was waiting for me at the door an extremely relieved expression on her face. She had spotted my coat and sneakers near the door and realized what I'd done."

"Did you get punished?" Kim asked.

"Amazingly, no. Mum just hugged me extra long and told me how worried she had been. That's when she gave me the title, extremist nudist." Without warning, Emily burst into tears. "Mum and Dad were killed by a drunken muggle driver two days later."

Kim drew Emily close and gave her best friend a hug. "To lose one parent is awful, but to lose both at the same time, I don't think I could cope. I was only five when my Dad died so I really didn't understand what was happening. It was like one day he was there and the next just gone."

"I don't understand," Emily said as she tried to regain her composure. "At the robe shop you said your mum and dad differed about you coming to Hogwarts."

"Actually step-dad, he adopted me when Mum and he married. At first he was so nice but now sometimes...." Abruptly Kim changed the subject. "We best get dressed and head for dinner. I don't mind being nude nearly as much when it's just the two of us, but I'll never be like you. I wish there had been another way around my Powerpuff Girls' knickers problem."

"There may have been if you had put on your bathrobe, but once you streaked to the bathroom naked the other girls sort of jumped to conclusions."

"The domino effect," Kim said with a sigh. "I saw it hanging there, but thought it would be extremely bad manners to use someone else's robe, especially being naked. If only I had known it was mine. I'd be wearing clothes, even new knickers by now."

Emily laughed, "But think of all the embarrassment and humiliating experiences both past and future that you would have missed out on."

Kim thought for a moment and then reached out and clutched Emily's hand. "I dislike being nude, but given the choice between clothes and your friendship..." She hesitated briefly. "I'd spend the balance of my life starkers."

Emily gave Kim a hug, "That won't be necessary. Remember what was said on the train. "You don't have to be nude to be my friend." They hugged even tighter. "You sure you'll be okay alone here tonight if I spend the evening with my sisters."

"A few days ago, I would have said no, but after rebounding that curse back at Bancroft the other night people treat me differently. It's almost like they want to be my friend."

"Amazing," Emily said with a laugh. "Suddenly Slytherins have gotten excellent taste when it comes to choosing friends."

* * * * *

"Professor, you're going to wear a path in the carpeting if you continue to pace back and forth in front of me," the mirror said.

"I know," Hermione said in frustration. "What am I going to do about this dress?"

"Do? What is there to do? The dress is beautiful and the woman in it is gorgeous." The mirror replied.

"Obviously," you are a male mirror," Hermione said as she leaned on the dresser.

"I beg your pardon," the mirror said actually sounding as if insulted. "Mirrors are unisex. We favor neither the male nor the female point of view. The fact that I speak with a male voice is only ... well; it's intended to make me seem more imposing. But I am incapable of lying."

"But look at my breasts. In proper lighting you can see them as well as if I were topless and my nipples can easily be seen in even the worst lighting."

"I'm confused," the mirror responded. "I have been in existence now for nearly nine hundred year and served countless mistresses. You are one of the most beautiful women to have ever gazed into me, yet you seem ashamed of your attributes. Was not the purpose of that dress to expose your exquisiteness to Harry Potter in hope of sexually affecting him?"

"You, mirror, have a habit of over simplifying situations. Yes, I want to stimulate Harry. But in the process of rousing him I don't want to expose myself to all of Hogsmeade and be charged with lewdness."

"I can not envision anyone considering what I am currently reflecting as vulgar or profane, but should that be the case; isn't that why you are wearing the wrap?"

"Yes, but its warm this evening. I could be coerced into taking my shawl off at a most inopportune time."

"Hermione, we're going to be late for our reservation if we don't get a move on," Harry called from the other room. "Will you please stop trying to improve on perfection?"

Hermione took one last look in the mirror as she swathed the shawl around her back and tied it in the front. "You look wonderful Professor, I'm sure the evening will go splendidly," the mirror said as Hermione prepared to depart the room.

"That's easy for you to say," Hermione retorted prior to leaving. "You're not the one going out for the evening with your boobs on display."

Hermione never heard the mirror complain in response. "I told you that I'm unisex. I don't have boobs. The dresser has drawer knockers, but they're not mine, I'm only attached.

"Professor Granger you look exceeding lovely tonight", Harry said as Hermione entered the room and he gave her a peck on the cheek.

"Why thank you Professor Potter, she responded. "I'm looking forward to an amazing evening."

"I'll try my best." Harry said as he gave her a wink. "Are you sure you want to wear that shawl? It's not at all cool tonight and nary a breeze blowing."

"Rather safe than sorry," Hermione said, trembling with apprehension as she left the sanctuary of their quarters.

* * * * *

After they disembarked their carriage in front of the Hogsmeade Inn, Hermione glanced back at the creature harnessed to its front. "Remember when we couldn't see them?" she asked Harry.

"Yes," he responded as he took her hand. "That was certainly a more innocent time. Much has changed since we were first years; some good, some bad."

"And some wonderful," Hermione added as she squeezed his hand tightly. "I love you, Harry."

Hermione saw a tear develop in Harry's steely green eyes as he said, "I love you, Mione. My life only started the day I met you and it will end if I ever lose you."

"Harry, trust me. I'm not going anyplace without you."

Neither could refuse to give in to a squeeze and affectionate kiss prior to entering the restaurant. Once inside, the owner who still considered them celebrities promptly greeted them enthusiastically.

Their reservation was rather early; therefore the restaurant was still relatively vacant. The host, Alan was just about to escort them to what he considered his finest table when Hermione spotted it. There nestled in a quiet corner was a small table barely large enough for two. She tugged on Harry's sleeve and pointed to the table. Harry was about to wrinkle his nose, but when he saw the look in Hermione's brown eyes, he melted. It was unbelievable how she could manipulate him with those eyes. Alan must have said 'are you sure' fifty times before he finally seated them.

Harry reached to assist Hermione with her wrap before she sat down, but she was resolute about keeping it on. "I think we upset Alan by insisting on sitting back here," Harry said.

"I'm sure we did," Hermione responded. "He still considers us celebrities and as such likes to sit us in the middle of the restaurant in full view of all his clientele. I think he believes it helps business."

They were no sooner seated when the waiter stopped by the table and asked if they had any questions about the menu or needed any assistance in placing their order. After being assured they'd be fine, he went about his business.

"I so prefer magical restaurants over their muggle counterparts," Hermione commented.

"Why is that?" Harry asked. "I've had many appetizing meals in muggle restaurants."

"I'm referring more to the service than to the food itself," Hermione responded. "In a muggle eating-place you either get a server who completely ignores you or one that incessantly bothers you. If you need a top-off of your beverage in a magical restaurant you just tell the glass and it's refreshed."

"You're correct about muggle waiters. I think they hide in a corner watching, in anticipation of you taking a large bite of food. Then they come running to ask how everything is when your mouth is too full to answer. Speaking of drinks what would you like?"

"I think I'll just have water," Hermione said giving Harry a smile. "I'm conceiving tonight and I want a clear head so I can remember every moment."

"Talk about pressure," Harry said. "If I don't get you pregnant tonight will I be replaced?"

"If you recall," Hermione said, trying to suppress a laugh, "I was considering Neville as your substitute."

Harry gave Hermione a grin. "There was a time you would have made me jealous with such a comment, but now Neville seems to be quite content with his doctor friend and ..."

"And you know I'm a one man woman and you're that man," Hermione interrupted reassuringly.

"An extremely fortunate man," Harry said as he reached for and held Hermione's hand. "I love you Mrs. Potter."

"I love you Mr. Potter," Hermione said as she looked around the still reasonably empty restaurant. "Would you help me with my wrap?"

"Certainly my lady," Harry said, his napkin dropping to the floor as he rose to his feet.

Harry kissed Hermione's neck as he helped her off with the wrap. It was possibly his imagination, but she seemed to be trembling. He kissed her now bare shoulder and then went to retrieve his fallen napkin before sitting down.

Harry was about to ask Hermione what she was going to order for dinner, but as he took his seat he got his first clear view of the front of Hermione's dress. All other thoughts were completely erased from his mind. His eyes suddenly became too big for his face and his mouth hung open in astonishment.

"My god, Hermione," he said in absolute shock. "I'm able to see your breasts. That dress is transparent. You might just as well be topless."

A look of disappointment shrouded Hermione face. "You don't like it?" She said sadly. "You said you liked sexy clothes. I was hoping it would excite you."

"Excite me?! Hermione, you have no idea the torture you are putting me through at this very moment. The dress is beautiful and you're gorgeous in it, but this isn't Cap d'Adge. What if someone sees you?"

"Harry calm yourself down and help me back on with my wrap," Hermione said with a laugh. "This dress is for your eyes and your eyes only. That's why I wore the wrap and that's why I insisted on this particular table."

"Hermione, do you absolutely need my help?" Harry said nervously. "I'd rather not get up at this very moment."

"I think I can manage," Hermione said, a glint in her eye as she struggled to get the cape back on.

"Curse you, Hermione," Harry said crossly. "Now I've lost my appetite for food. The only thing I'm interested in eating right now is... Can you open your wrap just a second and give me another look."

"Harry do you realize how wonderful you just made me feel? During the last few months you've seen me naked more than you seen me clothed; yet you ask for another peek at me in a see through top.

"My Mum would never let me have dessert unless I finished my dinner. But considering the way I'm dressed, I'm certainly nothing like my Mum. What say we go up to our room and have dessert and let Alan deliver our dinner later?"

"Do you think he'll do that?" Harry asked.

"I don't know. We can ask. Tell him it's an emergency; that you have to make a deposit at the sperm bank in order to insure timely delivery of a baby."

Harry made several deposits that evening, one that would unquestionably bare interest.

* * * * *

"You must have been frightened to death when you saw Matt was comatose and barely breathing." Emily said as she and Caitlin reviewed the events of the day as they lay in bed.

Harry and Hermione were spending the night at the Hogsmeade Inn; therefore the girls currently had the quarters to themselves. Jamie had promised to join them, but had not as yet arrived.

"They haven't invented a word that properly describes how I felt," Caitlin said as she relived that moment in her mind. "Initially I thought he was dead and that I had killed him. I was beside myself with anguish, but fortunately had the presence of mind to straddle his limp

body and give him the Hyperempathic kiss of life."

"Wow!" Emily said with amazement. "Remind me to stay on your good side. I knew your powers were strong, but never envisioned that there was a negative side to them."

"Neither did I," Caitlin said almost shaking. "If I hadn't screamed, Matt might be dead."

"Mercifully, he's not, but how did he react to everything that occurred?" Emily asked.

"At first he was rather knocked for six," Caitlin explained. He tried to thrust me aside and get up. I imagine he most wanted to put as much distance between him and me as he could. It was necessary for me to literally throw myself on top and wrap my arms around him to prevent him from running off."

Emily giggled. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't be laughing, but considering that you were nude some of that activity is rather erotic."

Caitlin blushed deeply. "It gets worse," she said. "Matt finally calmed down when he realized that I would never hurt him intentionally. But then he asked me if I meant what I said."

"But you didn't say anything, did you?" Emily inquired.

"No, but my thoughts had linked with Matt and he was aware of what I was thinking as I gave him the kiss of life."

Emily's look turned to one of concern. "Exactly what were you thinking?"

Caitlin was bursting to tell someone. She took a breath and began. "I was thinking, *please Matt! Please don't die! I'll do anything! Anything you ask, but please don't die!*"

Emily's look turned from concern to worry. "You had said that you would do anything if he didn't die. And now that he was okay, he was asking if you meant it. Caitlin your word is gold, but anything takes in a lot of territory. He could have asked you to have sex."

Caitlin turned crimson as Emily's face turned white. "You didn't?" She said in disbelief. "You guys are only twelve. I wouldn't have expected Matt to ask that of you."

"He didn't precisely ask. Matt wrapped his arms around me and we rolled over, which put him on top of me. After that he kissed me. Not a peck on the cheek, but a genuine kiss. It was a long kiss and our tongues actually touched. Mum said today that Hyperempaths feel things more intensely than most people and she wasn't lying. It felt like my goose bumps had goose bumps."

Emily listened in disbelief. Had her 'sister' actual broken wizardry law and had sexual intercourse at age twelve?

"Then Matt sat up and looked at me. I mean actually looked at me. You would have thought he had never seen me naked before. I never felt so nude and susceptible and at the same time so cherished and desired. I didn't feel like a flat chested skinny little girl. The way he stared at me, and the look on his face made me feel loved and attractive."

"Matt started playing with my hair and then lightly kissing my face. He kissed me everywhere, my eyes, my ears, my nose, especially my mouth and cheeks. He said every part of me was beautiful. Then he started kissing my neck and then my shoulders and finally my...."

"Your breasts! My god you allowed him to kiss your breasts?" Emily said in disbelief.

"Initially he just kissed, but then he started to lick them with his tongue and finally gently sucked on them. Emily, my breasts are almost nonexistent so it must have been caused by my increased Hyperempath senses, but it drove me crazy. I actually started to get really moist down there." Caitlin used her eyes to indicate where she meant. "I in fact think my body was getting ready to have intercourse."

Emily was about to ask a question that's answer would disappoint her whether affirmative or negative. She found the story, to this point captivating, but she was honestly disappointed that Caitlin had let things progress so far. "Did the two of you actually go all the way?" Emily asked. "Did you shag?"

"No," Caitlin said, sounding rather disappointed to Emily. "Matt suddenly gave me a kiss and after hugging me tightly jumped off the bed. He said he cared for me too much to ruin both our lives and he practically ran from the room."

"I'm glad to hear that at least one of you had common sense enough to stop something that had already gone way too far," Jamie roared angrily.

"You were eavesdropping!" Caitlin shouted crossly. "I can't believe you, of all people, would ease drop on a private conversation."

"And I can't believe it was necessary for me to do so," Jamie retorted. "I thought the four of us shared a special relationship; a relationship that had no secrets; one where we didn't hide important information. I knew this morning that you weren't telling Hermione and I the entire story, but... after what she's done for you. I thought you loved her."

Emily was stunned. She had never seen her sister quite so angry. Although she felt sorry for Caitlin, Emily was exceedingly glad that she wasn't the focus of Jamie's venting.

"How dare you insinuate that I don't love Hermione? You know I'd die for her. She's the mother I never had. You have no right to suggest that I don't love her," Caitlin cried.

"Well, you certainly have one hell of a way of showing it. I'll be damned if I'd risk losing Harry and Hermione as parents just so I could have my tit sucked by a boy," Jamie said with veracity as she sat down on Emily's empty bed.

"What the hell has one got to do with the other?" Caitlin questioned, crossly.

Jamie was trying to calm herself, but thus far not succeeding. "You are aware that the international magical world's age for consensual sex is fifteen? Anything prior to that is considered rape. If both parties are under age, neither is sent to Azkaban, but rather both taken from their now declared unfit parents and placed in a juvenile detention center until they are fifteen. Do you realize how damn close you came to being kicked out of Hogwarts, and not being allowed to see Hermione or Harry for the next three years? And you wouldn't have seen

Mister sensitive tongue either, the centers are not coed."

Caitlin and Emily both stared at Jamie in shock, neither previously aware of the consequences of underage sex. "But how would anyone know?" Caitlin asked, suddenly somewhat timorous.

"The same way they know when we are born. Your names would all of a sudden appear in the offenders' log. Within minutes enforcers would be dispatched. Often they arrive while the couple is still in the act. You'd be immediately taken into custody, no hugs, no good byes, no collecting of belongings. Hermione and Harry would receive an owl telling what occurred. There is no trial, no appeal and no exceptions. Your name appearing in the log proves you were guilty."

Caitlin sat stunned, tears streaming from her eyes. Did Matt know? Is that why he stopped? She couldn't believe how close she had come to ruining her life and hurting those who love her most. The tears were now an unceasing torrent. Then she felt bare skin against both her legs as Jamie and Emily nestled next to her and comforted her. Despite her stupidity they both still loved her.

"Jamie, I'm so ashamed and repentant.," Caitlin said. "Will you ever trust me again? How can I tell Mum?"

"We all make mistakes," Jamie said as she gave Caitlin a hug. "Under the circumstances, Emily or I might have done the same thing. It's over. As for Hermione, she'll understand. She loves you more than you can possibly realize. I think it might be a good idea, however, if you and Matt reframed from spending time alone, especially here in the quarters or when you're naked."

"I agree," Caitlin said trying to force a smile. "We have three long years ahead of us." Caitlin looked at Jamie, "I'm sorry I yelled at you. Are we still sisters?"

Jamie gave Caitlin a hug. "Of course, we are, Jamie replied. "Even the closest sisters have conflicts once in awhile. How about it Slytherin?"

Emily smiled and nodded her head.

"Now that we got that off our chests, what is stirring in Slytherin House?" Jamie asked Emily.

Emily smiled and shook her head. "Compared to Caitlin's Hyperempathic experience and the follow-up, life in Slytherin House is wearisome. Oh! Kim did glue Dick Bancroft to the ceiling with that curse you taught us and I stripped naked in front of his brother, but other than that nothing much has occurred of interest.

"What?!!!!!!"

Chapter Nine - Separation

Sunday, September 5, 2004

"Get away, don't touch me," Jamie shouted as she opened her eyes and tried to get her bearings.

Jamie had spent the previous night with Caitlin and Emily, and, as normal when they got together, very little actual sleeping took place. Therefore, she had taken advantage of the boring afternoon to take a brief nap from which Amanda had just awakened her with startling results.

Amanda jumped back in shock. She'd nudged Jamie awake on many a previous occasion, but never with this type of response.

"Oh! It's you. I'm sorry Amanda. I must have been having a dream. Did I frighten you?" Jamie asked, still faintly disoriented.

"I'll say you did," Amanda responded. "Who were you fighting off in that dream, or should I say nightmare?"

"I don't remember now. I just remember trying to avoid being touched," Jamie answered. "Forget my stupid dream, where have you been? I looked all over for you yesterday afternoon to no avail. Then, no one knew where you were this morning when I got back."

"Yesterday I was with Tony," Amanda said as if regretful. "This morning I just took a walk after brunch to be alone with my thoughts."

Amanda had a solemn look on her face that troubled Jamie. "You and Tony didn't have a fight, did you?" She asked, genuinely concerned.

"No, we're all right." Amanda replied unconvincingly. "I just worry sometimes that maybe we're rushing things. After all, neither of us seriously dated before we got together. I envy you being able to know for a fact that Alex is your chosen."

Jamie nodded her head. "I appreciate what you saying. It must be tough not being one hundred percent sure. You think you are, but there is always that little doubt in the back of your head that nags you."

"You got it," Amanda said shaking her head dismally. "Witches and wizards live too long a life to be married to the wrong person."

"Fortunately, we both have quite a few years to go before we have to worry about marriage and children. But speaking of rushing things, I have lots of stuff to tell you about Caitlin and Emily."

Amanda gave Jamie a forced smile. "Have you finished your parchment for History of Magic yet?"

"No. I've been waiting until I needed something to put me to sleep," Jamie said, depressed at

the thought of tackling the assignment.

"Let's go to the library and get it finished this afternoon, then maybe you, Alex and I can do something together this evening. You know, just the three of us, like it used to be. You can tell me about the adventures of Emily and Caitlin on the way."

Jamie laughed. "We'll have to walk to the library by way of Hogsmeade for me to finish by the time we get there; the girls have been extremely active."

* * * * *

Monday, September 6, 2004

"Kim, it's time to get up," Emily said, shaking the girl's shoulder.

"It can't be. It must be the middle of the night. The sun isn't even up. Let me go back to sleep," Kim moaned.

"Kim, we're underground. How would you know whether the sun is up or not?" Emily said, aggravated. "You're the one that said you wanted to be a part of the exercise group. If you've changed your mind, just say so, and you can go back to sleep."

"Can anyone join, or do you have to be invited?" Marta said groggily.

"I'm sorry Marta," Emily apologized, "I didn't mean to wake you. In answer to your question, it's open to anyone not too lethargic to get out of bed early!" Emily looked disgustingly at Kim who appeared to have fallen back to sleep.

"What should I wear?" Marta inquired.

"Socks and trainers, of course," Emily responded. "The balance is up to you depending on the weather and how easily you get cold. It's still fairly warm so most people will be wearing shorts and a top."

Marta took off her pajamas and stood in her bra and knickers as she searched for a pair of shorts. Marta had only started putting her socks and trainers on when Emily finished dressing and went over to her dresser and looked in the mirror. She said a few words that Marta didn't catch and then started to undress, but even though she seemed to take her clothes off, she didn't.

"How did you do that?" Marta asked in amazement. Emily was still dressed in her shorts and top, but Marta saw her put them back in her drawer.

"It's a concealment charm that Mum... I mean Professor Granger taught me. I use it all the time to exercise in nice weather. It looks like I'm fully dressed, but actually, I only have on my trainers and socks."

"Wow! So you can go outside naked and no one knows." The concept seemed to intrigue Marta. "Would you teach me how to do that?"

"Sure," Emily said without hesitation, "but there are a couple of glitches you should be aware of. The charm doesn't fool mirrors and if someone touches you, like to hold you for sit-ups, they see you as you are."

"Oh," Marta exclaimed, sounding rather disappointed. "I imagine, in that case, you have one of your sisters hold you?"

"Not generally," Emily answered nonchalantly. "Usually it's Randy, but sometimes Matt, Alex or Tony holds me."

"And they've all seen you naked?" Marta asked in disbelief.

"Okay, okay, I give up," Kim said, as if extremely aggravated. "I guess I'll go with you two, seeing as how you won't shut up and let me go back to sleep. Give me two seconds to dress."

Kim tossed her covers aside and quickly slipped on her socks and trainers, then hurried to her dresser and grabbed a tee shirt and a pair of shorts. As she pulled the shorts over her butt, Emily commented. "I love those shorts, but are you sure you want to exercise in them? The inseam is almost non-existent. Your holder will probably be able to see everything."

"I'm sure you are both tired of looking by now," Kim said, holding back a yawn. "Let's get this healthy stuff over with so I can have a nice greasy breakfast."

Kim headed for the door, not letting Emily warn her that there was no guarantee that she or Marta would be her holder for the exercises.

"I hardly see the need for exercise when it's necessary to run up and down twenty staircases to get anywhere in this castle," Kim grumbled, still half asleep, as they finally reached the main entrance. Hermione, Harry and most of the regulars were already stretching as Emily and the girls arrived.

"Good girl, Emily," Hermione said with a smile. "You brought us two new victims. Suppose you help Marta today and let Randy assist Kim."

"Sure," Emily answered quickly, a devilish smirk on her face.

"Couldn't Randy help Marta? I'd be more comfortable with Emily," Kim practically begged, now suddenly very conscious of just how short her shorts were.

"Kim, it's only for one day," Emily said, trying to fight laughing. "Randy won't bite. He holds for me all the time."

Yes, but you don't mind boys seeing your private area. You're doing this to me on purpose, just because I ignored you and didn't change shorts. You are evil, Emily Zacherley.

Since it was the first day that they were exercising as a group for the year, Hermione only had them do twenty-five repetitions of each exercise. Both Kim and Marta felt twenty-five seemed like a lot, since neither was accustomed to a workout.

Quickly, they got to the last of the exercises, sit-ups. First, Emily and Kim held for Marta and

Randy. Marta was amazed when she saw that Emily's holding of her ankles negated the charm. Then, they switched places. Kim took a deep breath. She felt like the sacrificial virgin about to be placed on the altar. If her inseam stayed centered, she might get away with this, but if it went right or left, she'd be exposed. It slipped to the right, the far right.

With each sit-up Kim felt like she was exposing more and more. She knew that Randy had to be able to see all of her, but he didn't seem the least fazed. He certainly wasn't staring like he had at Emily on the train; actually, he seemed to be looking away as if turned off. Kim jumped to her feet, as soon as the count hit twenty-five, and brushed down her shorts.

"That's all the exercises," Randy said nonchalantly. "Now we run."

Kim just stood staring at his back as Randy ran off following Hermione and Jamie, who as usual led the group.

"Are you annoyed with me?" Emily warily asked, as she tapped Kim shoulder. "Let's get going before they get too great a start."

"Actually right now I'm more confused than annoyed," Kim said. "That was a dirty trick on your part, but then again, I didn't use much common sense wearing these shorts, especially after you warned me."

"If you're not angry, what's the dilemma?" Emily asked as they started to run, Marta directly behind them.

"I know this is going to sound ridiculous, especially bearing in mind that I certainly didn't want Randy to see my bush, but he didn't react at all," Kim said. "I know he could see me, but he didn't stare. It actually seemed as if he didn't want to look."

"That's weird," Emily said, shrugging her shoulders. "I'll have Caitlin cross-examine him. He's certainly not acting like the Randy I know."

* * * * *

Thursday, September 9, 2004

"You're certainly not Hermione, but you're just as pretty," Harry said as he stuck his head out of the kitchen to glimpse at who had slammed the door.

"Only in my dreams," Emily said as she quickly finished removing her clothes. Once finished, she ran to give Harry a hug. "I miss us not being together every day."

"I miss you, too. How are the Slytherins treating you and Kim?" Harry inquired.

"It's getting better," Emily said with a half-smile. "Kim sticking Bancroft to the ceiling and Tyler and I finishing the initiation challenge helped a lot. Of course, there are some who will always hate us, but, after all, they are Slytherins."

"So are you, but you're hugging the heir of Gryffindor."

"I'll do more than that," Emily said as she jumped up and threw her arms around Harry's neck, kissing his cheek several times as she wrapped her legs around his waist.

"My, but you're certainly in an atypical mood today," Harry said as he wrapped his arms around the young girl in order to help support her. "Where's your shadow?"

"Kim went to the library with Becky and Marta. I have something important I have to discuss with you and Mum. I mean Hermione," Emily said apologetically.

Emily suddenly looked ready to cry. Harry held her tightly and kissed her forehead. "You have a big heart, sweetheart. There's room in there to love a lot of people. Calling her Mum, doesn't mean you've forgotten your real mother. You're incapable of that; you love her too much. It simple means you care for Hermione a great deal.

"I'm not telling you that you should call her Mum, that's a choice only you can make. I'm only saying that it's not wrong. Your parents are up there watching and I'm sure they are extremely proud of their youngest daughter. I'm also sure they'd understand. I know how wonderful it would make Hermione feel."

Emily hugged Harry even tighter. "I don't know how to explain it. It's not that I love my parents less, but every day I love you two more. I shudder to think what would have happened to Jamie and me without the both of you."

"It's a two way street," Harry responded. "You, Jamie and Caitlin have brought a great deal of happiness to our lives. Even if we eventually have children of our own, you guys will always be our little girls. And don't you ever forget that." Harry gently squeezed Emily as he finished telling her this.

Emily could no longer hold back the tears as they flooded forth. She squeezed Harry with all her strength. "I love you too, Dad!"

"I love you too, Honey." Harry replied, his usually steely green eyes now quite moist with tears.

They stood there holding each other until at last Emily said, "Do you know where Mum is? I really have to talk to you both."

"No. I expected her to be here by now. Let's check on her whereabouts," Harry said as he deposited Emily on her feet. "You'll find this interesting."

Harry took Emily's hand and led her into the room that Jamie used as a bedroom, but also served as a study for Hermione and Harry. He walked over to the desk and took a seat, and Emily quickly perched herself on his lap. Harry opened the large double drawer, Emily spied the invisibility cloak, but Harry pushed it aside and reached for a rolled up parchment beneath it.

Emily watched as Harry unrolled the large, square, much worn piece of parchment. She was disappointed to see that there was nothing written on it. "Is there something special about that old thing?" Emily asked.

"You could say that," Harry said as he took out his wand, touched the parchment lightly, and said, *"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good."*

At once, thin ink lines started to sprout from where the wand had touch the parchment. They spread about joining and crossing each other until they formed what appeared to be a map. Then words began to materialize across the top, wavy green script, that declared

Messrs. Mooney, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs

Purveyors of Aids to Magical Mischief-Makers

are proud to present

THE MARAUDER'S MAP

Emily was amazed. It was a map showing every aspect of the Hogwarts castle and grounds. Then she notice the tiny ink dots moving about, each labeled with a name in diminutive writing. "There's Kim!" she shouted excitedly, pointing to the library. "Caitlin and Jamie are in the Gryffindor common room."

"And there's Hermione," Harry said, pointing to the headmaster's office. "She must be having some sort of meeting with the Headmaster and Professor Malfoy."

Emily's face turned pale. "I think that meeting might be about me," she said uncertainly.

"You haven't got yourself in trouble with the Potions Master, have you?" Harry asked, concerned.

"Not exactly trouble, but that's what I wanted to talk to you and Mum about."

* * * * *

"I don't see the necessity of involving her in this," Draco said caustically. "You're the headmaster. Only your approval is required."

"Quite true Draco, but under the circumstances I feel Hermione's contribution is important," Severus answered calmly. "After all you are the head of Slytherin House and I am the former head. We could be considered bias."

"Like she is Miss Impartial," Malfoy spouted angrily. "The last time I checked she was still head of Gryffindor House."

"I don't welcome being argued about as if I weren't even in the room," Hermione said, annoyed. "If you want my opinion, I will try to be impartial, but I don't intend to stand here all day while the two of you come to a decision about whether or not to even inform me as to what you want my opinion on."

"Professor Malfoy would like permission to bend the first year rule for Quidditch," Severus announced.

Hermione just looked at the two men, irritated. "I hate to see a first year play Quidditch. Firstly, the game is extremely dangerous. Secondly, it takes such a great deal of time away from their studying. Getting accustomed to Hogwarts is difficult enough, but...."

"What did I tell you?" Malfoy yelled, interrupting Hermione. "If it was Gryffindor house, there would be no problem. They've done it twice in the last twelve years. But let's not help Slytherin. Are you afraid we might give you a run for the cup?"

"Draco, you have a bad habit of not letting a person finish speaking," Hermione answered tersely. "Although I had nothing to do with it, Gryffindor has had two first year players on their teams in recent years. And as much as I'm against it, you did have a horrible season last year. I can't see how I can go in opposition to it as long as it's agreed that the student's grades are monitored. Studies are more important than Quidditch."

"Then it's agreed," Severus announced. "Draco, you may have the team captain inform the player."

"Who is the first year and what position will he be playing?" Hermione asked.

"It's not a he, but rather a she," Draco corrected Hermione. "Emily Zacherley will be the first female seeker in the history of Slytherin house."

Hermione mouth dropped open, but she was too shocked to speak.

* * * * *

"She's leaving Severus' office," Harry noted. "Now will you tell me this deep dark secret?"

"Let's wait for Mum," Emily answered. "Depending on their chat, I might not have a choice." Emily tried to change the subject. "Are we allowed to use this map?"

Harry looked at the map and then glanced in the drawer at the invisibility cloak. *How would he have ever gotten through Hogwarts without those two items?*

"I mean to find you or Mum in an emergency," Emily added.

Harry smiled. "Show Caitlin and Jamie how it works the next time you're together. But if Hermione catches you with it, I'll deny having any knowledge of how you discovered how to use it." Harry tapped on the map again and said, "Mischief managed." The parchment went blank, and he put it back in the draw just as the door slammed.

"Hermione isn't happy," Harry said. "She never slams the door. We're in here Mione."

Emily waited in anticipation. Was the slamming of the door a sign of good or bad news? Emily wasn't even sure which news she would consider good.

"You realize, of course, that this is your entire fault, Harry," Hermione said as she stormed into the room. "You're the one that's been teaching her to fly the past few months."

"Did the Headmaster say yes or no?" Emily asked hesitantly.

"He said yes," Hermione answered. "You, young lady are a double first. Not only are you the first first-year to ever play on a Slytherin team, but you are also the first female seeker in Slytherin history."

"Quidditch!" Harry shouted excitedly, as he hugged Emily. "You made your house team as a first year without even a tryout. And you're going to play seeker." Abruptly the enthusiasm went out of his voice. "But Jamie's the Gryffindor seeker. You'll be playing against your sister."

"I know," Emily said gloomily. "That's what I wanted to talk to you and Mum about."

Hermione just stared at Emily. She wondered if the young girl even realized what she had just said. It didn't matter. She had said it. Hermione rushed to Emily and literally swept her up into her arms.

"I didn't expect you to be this happy about me playing Quidditch," Emily said between hugs.

"I'm not," Hermione said. "It's what you said."

"I love you Mum."

Neither could fend off the tears as they stood holding each other. Harry watched, with a smile on his face, a tear in his eye.

Finally, Emily said, "What am I going to do? I want to play. It's a dream come true, but I can't play against Jamie. Maybe I should just say no and wait until my third year to try out after Jamie is gone"

"Is that what you think Jamie would suggest?" Harry asked.

"Jamie would tell me that I'd be crazy not to play," Emily answered. "As far as us playing against each other, she'd tell me to try my best and that we just play it out."

"Sounds like good advice to me," Harry answered.

"But what if I beat her?" Emily asked, seriously doubting that possibility.

"Either way, we'll be proud of both of you," Hermione said as she gave Emily a reassuring squeeze.

* * * * *

Friday, September 10, 2004

"Caitlin, did you see Amanda this morning?" Jamie asked, concern in her voice.

"No, but I did notice she missed our morning run again today. Has she quit the fitness program?" Caitlin asked in response.

"She says she hasn't, yet she's had some excuse or another not to attend every morning this week and this is the second time she's missed breakfast," Jamie replied.

"Well, wherever she is, Tony isn't with her," Caitlin commented. "He's sitting with the other Slytherins. You don't think they've had a fight, do you?"

"Amanda says not, but she doesn't seem to be spending anywhere near as much time with him as she used to," Jamie answered. "I feel like Amanda is keeping something from me and that's just not like her. I think I'll ask Alex to talk to Tony."

"I don't think Amanda is the only one keeping secrets," Caitlin said, a rather disgusted look on her face. "Dick Bancroft's brother seems to be making a habit of sitting next to Emily at meals. You don't think she's going to dump Randy for him, do you?"

"I hope not," Jamie said as she stared at the Slytherin table. "He seems nice enough, but after all he is Dick's brother. That single-handedly should tell Emily to be vigilant around him. I know, I shouldn't judge him by his brother, but it's hard to believe they could be complete opposites."

* * * * *

"Must I go to bed already, Daddy?" Timmy begged fervently.

"Yes, you must," Ron said. "It's already way past your bedtime." He glanced at Sam who was curled up on a chair in the corner of the room wearing her favorite at home outfit, absolutely nothing. "If I allow you to stay up any longer, I'm afraid Mummy will punish both of us."

"You mean take away our treats?" Timmy asked, aghast.

"Exactly," Ron answered, although Timmy and he were thinking of two extremely different types of treats. "Run, give your Mummy a kiss good night and then I'll tuck you into bed."

Timmy ran across the room and climbed up on his Mum. "Daddy says I have to go to bed now or neither of us will get treats."

"Is that what he said?" Samantha laughed as she gave Timmy a hug and then before kissing him, said, "If that's the case you better hurry off to bed. I know the two men in my life certainly love their treats."

Sam watched as her son ran back and grabbed Ron's hand. "Daddy, is it okay if I sleep nude again tonight. I'm a big boy. I promise not to dirty my bed."

Ron shook his head in bewilderment. "You're getting more like your mum everyday. Go to the potty quickly while I get you an extra blanket so you're not cold."

Sam continued to observe Ron and Timmy until they both entered Timmy's bedroom. *"I love*

them both so much; life without either of them would be unbearable. If only I could shed this burden of doubt. Of all people, why did Timmy's birth father have to be Draco Malfoy?"

"He's amazing," Ron said as he reentered the room a few minutes later. "Claims he's not tired, but fell asleep the moment his head hit the pillow."

"Typical man," Sam responded. "You guys will never admit to being tired. Part of the male sense of self."

"Not true," Ron said defensively as he knelt down on the floor in front of Sam. "Timmy had me tucked out and ready for an early night, but then I looked at you and suddenly felt invigorated."

"Really," Sam said playfully. "And I suppose you're on your knees begging for your treat."

"Actually, no. I want to see if what they say is true," Ron replied mysteriously.

"Who is they, and what do they say?"

"You know. It's better to give than to receive." With that said, Ron reached for Sam's foot. Before she knew what was happening, he was licking her toes and tickling the sole of her foot. But he didn't stop there. After several minutes of concentration on her foot he moved to her ankle and calf, caressing and kissing.

Sam tried to relax and enjoy the pampering, but Ron had done this before and she knew where he was headed. Her body was already tingling with anticipation as Ron reached her knee and the sensitive area behind it. Then he started caressing and kissing her upper leg getting closer and closer to his objective.

Sam could feel her body reacting as Ron began kissing her inner thighs. He was just inches away and the keenness was driving her crazy. Unexpectedly, there was a loud rapping at the door.

"Damn," Sam said aggravated. "Some people have the worst timing. Ron, will you please get rid of whoever it is, my robe is in the bedroom."

"Sure, just remember where I was when we were interrupted."

"Don't worry," Sam said, assuringly. "I know exactly where you were."

Once again there was a pounding on the door. "I don't know who the hell that is, but they're certainly impatient," Ron said as he climbed to his feet and headed for the door.

* * * * *

"I hate going out on a custody case," the chartreuse haired girl said. "This isn't proper duty for an Auror."

"This is rather more than a simple child custody battle," Sergeant Anders replied. "Child

endangerment is involved. This tart of a mother is living with a werewolf, a werewolf who is a known attacker and has spent time in Azkaban. That's why the captain assigned four of us to pick up the kid rather than sending the normal patrol. Even though the animal's bite is allegedly not dangerous except during the full moon, they're still exceedingly strong. I don't want anyone hurt. If any of my actions tonight seem overly aggressive, just remember Smithy."

The girl tugged the sleeve of the other female Auror. "Who is Smithy?" she whispered.

"Smithy was an Auror and the Sergeant's best friend; stood up with him when the Sergeant got married," Churchill replied. "Smithy and his partner were sent on what was thought to be a simple disturbing the peace case about three years ago. The scene of the disorder turned out to be the apartment of a known prostitute. The door was locked, but from the noises emanating from the apartment it sounded like an argument with a client had gotten out of hand."

"They wasted no time deactivating the locking charms, but neither was prepared for what faced them inside, a female werewolf. Before they could react, the she-wolf lunged at Smithy's partner causing him to crash backwards and out the third floor window. Then she turned on Smithy and in an instant had bitten through his jugular vein. She actually severed his head from his body. It was never found."

"Wands ready," Anders ordered. "I'll take the woman. You three guard the werewolf. Take whatever action necessarily other than the forbidden curses to put him down if need arises."

* * * * *

"Who the hell do you think you are banging like that?" Ron shouted as he opened the door.

"Official business, Ministry of Magic, Department of Child Welfare. Step back and no one will be hurt," Anders ordered as the Aurors shoved their way into the apartment, the green haired girl tripping over the threshold and practically falling.

Sam jumped to her feet, about to flee the room in order to screen her nudity. "Freeze lady. I don't want to hurt you, but I will if necessary," Anders shouted.

Sam didn't move, her embarrassment suddenly forgotten and substituted with fear.

"This is our home," Ron shouted. "What the hell gives you the right to burst in uninvited? For god's sake at least let her get something to shield her modesty."

"No one moves," Anders bellowed. "As for modesty, I doubt she has any. A whore that sleeps with a werewolf has probably been in bed with half of England."

"You fucking bastard," Ron cried as he made for Anders only to be thrown to the floor by a curse hurled by Powers.

"Sergeant Anders, that's Ron Weasley," Tonks declared. "He was part of the covenant that defeated Voldemort. Shouldn't he be treated with more respect, and, the poor girl, can't she at

least be allowed to cover herself."

"He's a werewolf and she's a whore," Anders answered angrily. "Neither deserves respect or kindness. And you, Tonks, will find yourself in a menial pencil-pushing job if you don't learn to follow orders without question."

Anders turned his attention to Samantha. "Are you Samantha Bowman?"

"Yes," Samantha answered determinedly.

Anders walked over to Sam and handed her a parchment. "This is a court order, demanding that you without delay turn Timothy Malfoy over to our protection. He will remain in the care of the Ministry until proper custody is determined. Where is the boy?"

"No!" Samantha screamed as she ran to block the entrance to Timmy's room. "You're not taking Timmy from me. He's my son, and his name most certainly isn't Malfoy."

"Churchill, get the boy," Anders ordered.

"No one is taking our son from us," Ron roared as he once more lunged for Anders, this time successfully pinning the Sergeant to the floor and delivering a number of winning blows before Churchill and Powers sent him hurtling through the air with their combined curses.

Ron hit the wall with such force that the resulting impact left him unconscious and literally in the next room. Sam rushed to his side as Anders staggered to his feet. "Churchill, get that damn kid."

Timmy was already awake and crying when the Aurors entered the room. "He's naked," Churchill yelled. "They don't even dress the poor child."

"Damn perverted people," Anders said, shaking his head in disgust. "Just wrap the child in his bedcovers."

Timmy started screaming as Churchill wrapped the bedcovers about him and carried the boy out of the room. "Mommy, Daddy please help! Don't let them take me!" Timmy cried in panic, tears covering his face.

Sam made for Churchill, but Powers grabbed her by the hair and threw her to the floor.

Tonks looked on in horror, not believing she was a part of this atrocity, as Anders opened the door for Churchill who was carrying the still screaming and struggling Timmy. As Powers turned away, Sam got to her feet and ran through the door grabbing on to Timmy and trying to seize him from Churchill's grasp.

Anders grabbed Sam by the neck and slung her head first to the ground as if she were a rag doll. She lay there motionless.

When Tonks reached the street, she was horrified. Sam's forehead was covered with blood, her body motionless.

"Let's get a move on," Anders called out to Powers and Tonks. "Our work is done here."

Powers ran to the portkey as Tonks lingered.

"We can't leave her here in the middle of the street unclothed and comatose," Tonks argued.

"What's your problem Tonks," Anders asked angrily. "Do you think someone will take advantage of the tart in her present condition? Hell, the bitch would probably enjoy waking up to the knowledge that she'd been gang banged while she slept. She's rubbish."

Tonks hesitated, looking at Sam lying on the ground, bleeding, naked and totally defenseless.

"Tonks, we don't have all night. Get the hell over here now," Anders ordered.

Chapter Ten - A Secret No More

"I'm not one hundred percent positive, but I think we're pregnant," Hermione said contentedly as she and Harry cuddled in front of the fireplace.

"That's an enormous relief," Harry said, wiping his forehead with the back of his sleeve. "I was worried that you'd force me into another one of those all night sex sessions if you weren't."

"Well if that's the way you feel about having sex with me perhaps I should go put some clothes on," Hermione threatened half-heartedly.

"I certainly hope you realize I'm only kidding?" Harry said as he held Hermione and gently circled her left nipple with his finger. "I love the fact that you're always naked and that I can just reach out and touch you any time I want."

Hermione gave Harry a kiss on the cheek. "And I love being fondled by you. I'll miss all this attention while I'm fat and pregnant." A quick grin that changed just as quickly into a smile spread across her face.

"You mean while you're beautiful and pregnant," Laughed Harry. "I'm looking forward to holding you just like this and watching our baby grow."

"I thought perhaps you'd want me to start dressing; that you'd be turned off seeing me naked while I'm heavy with child," Hermione replied grudgingly.

"Not in the least. By the way, are you aware that the girls intend to keep a photographic record of the transformation of your body?"

"They're what? Clothed or naked?" Hermione snapped, taken aback by this news.

"Knowing them, I would take it for granted nude," Harry laughed. "Caitlin says they're going to take a front and side view every two weeks so that they catch all the changes in your body."

"They in fact expect me to pose naked for them? And what did you say?" concern slowly leaking into her voice.

"I told them it was a grand idea and that if they needed any help holding you immobile for the pictures, I'd be pleased to give a hand," Harry said, a grin on his face.

"My hero," Hermione said just shaking her head. "What's happened to me Harry? I was always so dignified and now look at me, lying here unclothed, completely uninhibited. What's worse, I've half a mind to let the girls take their pictures, and I'm thrilled you want me to still be nude while I'm pregnant."

"Nothing has happened to you," Harry declared. "You're still the same wonderful girl that walked into my life thirteen years ago. The only change is that now you have a different perception of nudity. A much healthier view, in my opinion, but then I could be prejudiced, considering the benefits I reap."

"Speaking of garnering benefits, since the kids are sleeping in their dorms tonight, why don't we take advantage of the privacy?" Hermione said as she got to her feet.

"Funny isn't it, how great minds pursue the same course? I was just about to suggest the same thing," Harry said as he embraced Hermione.

Just as he was about to sweep Hermione into his arms, a face appeared in the fireplace flames without the usual advance warning. Hermione hastily sought coverage behind Harry as the redder than normal face of Ron Weasley spoke. "Sorry about that. I just..."

Ron couldn't get the words out before he started crying. "Please, I desperately need your help," he implored. "They took Timmy, and Sam's been hurt. I dread to think what would have happened if Tonks hadn't been here." His head falling into the two shadowy hands that started to shake.

"We're as good as there," Harry said without question or hesitation. "Hermione, summon your robe and...."

Without a word and either forgetting momentarily about her state of undress or not considering her modesty important under the dire circumstances, Hermione ran to the fireplace, grabbed a handful of floo powder and stepped into the flames. Harry couldn't believe his eyes; his wife appeared to have literally stepped into the wide-open shocked mouth of Ron Weasley. Harry dashed to the bedroom, grabbed Hermione's robes and, in an instant after flooing over, was standing next to Ron.

"Where's Hermione?" Harry asked, an anguished and disheveled looking Ron.

"She went directly to the bedroom. It sounded like she gave Tonks a bit of a revelation."

"What happened? Who did this?" Harry asked, looking at the damaged room.

"I'll fill you in, but let's check on Sam, first," Ron said, noticeably worried. "I'd also like Hermione to look at my shoulder. It's either dislocated or broken."

They promptly headed for the bedroom, but Ron paused before entering. "Perhaps you should go in first and give Hermione that." He indicated the robes Harry was carrying. "I think she might be more comfortable with me in the room if she has that on. I know without doubt that I will be."

Harry collided with Tonks as he entered the room. "I was just coming to get you," the Auror said uneasily. "Hermione was hoping that you might have thought to bring her robes. Does she do that often? I mean use the floo in the nude?"

"This was her first time," Harry said giving the purple haired young woman a smile. "It's good to see you again. Although I wish it were under different circumstances."

"Me, too. I'm sorry I had to be a party to this atrocity, but, in a way, maybe it's good I was here."

Harry nodded in concurrence as he hurried over to Hermione. "How is she?"

"She'll be fine," Hermione answered, relieved. "Just a mild concussion. The blood made it look a lot worse than it is."

"Maybe you should slip this on," Harry suggested as he helped Hermione with her robes. "Ron wants to check on Sam, and I think you ought to look at his shoulder."

Once granted entrance, Ron rushed to Sam's side. "Will she be okay?" he asked.

"She's fine," Hermione said reassuringly, as she put her arm around Ron. "I placed her in stasis till I was sure. It will also serve to calm her somewhat. What say I look at your shoulder before I bring her out? Then we can all discuss what took place here. Harry, while I'm seeing to Ron, will you try to contact Seamus Finnegan?"

"Isn't it rather late to be contacting a legal representative?" Harry inquired.

"Look at this letter," Hermione said as she passed the parchment, which had previously been clutched in Sam's hand, to Harry.

"Tuesday!" Harry bellowed after reading the letter. "The hearing is this Tuesday! That gives us no time at all to prepare."

* * * * *

Sunday, September 12, 2004

"The message didn't say what he wanted to speak to you about?" Alex asked, somewhat concerned.

"No," Jamie answered as they walked in the direction of the headmaster's office. It just said to report to his office as soon as possible. You don't think that he somehow found out that we plan to use the room of requirement?"

"I hope not, but you never know," Alex said, perplexed. "They say that when Albus Dumbledore was headmaster, he never seemed to be unaware of anything that took place in the castle. Maybe Hogwarts is somehow magically bugged."

"We'll know soon enough," Jamie said as she reached the winding staircase that led to Snape's office. "Please wait for me."

At first when she entered the office she thought it was empty, but then the Headmaster called to her from the balcony above his desk requesting her to take a seat. Jamie sat waiting nervously as Professor Snape descended the stairs.

"Miss Zacherley, I find myself in need of some assistance next week and from the information I received from the staff, it would seem you are my prime candidate." Professor Snape stated as he seated himself behind the desk.

"Assistance, doing what, Sir?" Jamie asked with trepidation.

"I assume you are aware of the custody hearing which is scheduled for this week. Because of it, I will be lacking many of my teaching staff for two, possibly three days. Normally if one Professor is under the weather, another Professor will fill in during their off periods or the class might be canceled for a day.

"In this case I am going to be missing five Professors and I've only been able to secure two substitutes. Professor McGonagall has agreed to cover for Professor Granger and Professor Grubbly-Plank will teach Care of Magical Creatures; that will allow Professor Bell to cover most of the Muggle Studies and flying lessons. I will be teaching Potions.

"That unfortunately leaves me with no one to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. Professor Flitwick has agreed to teach year four and up, and also year five and up of Charms. Would you be willing to give us a hand and teach the younger students?"

Jamie was stunned. "You want me to teach Charms and Defense Against the Dark Arts?" Jamie asked.

"It would just be for that short time. The lesson plans are prepared and both Professors Potter and Flitwick have utmost confidence in you - as do I," Professor Snape added.

"I'd be honored, Sir," Jamie answered breathlessly.

"Wonderful," Severus said, a grin on his face. "I will announce our plans this evening at dinner. I will also inform the students that you have orders from me to be extremely harsh point wise to anyone not giving you the full respect owed a professor."

"Thank you, Sir," Jamie said, her face glowing. "I'll do my very best"

"Of that, I'm quite sure," the Headmaster said with a smile.

* * * * *

Tuesday, September 20, 2004 13:45

"Seamus, thanks for everything," Ron said, offering his hand.

Seamus Finnegan gave Ron a rather perplexed look. "Usually the client waits until the outcome of the hearing is known before expressing gratitude to his legal representative."

"I know, but not many barristers would practically move in with their clients and work twenty hours a day to prepare a case," Ron replied.

"Normally I wouldn't either," Seamus said honestly, as he gave Ron a pat on the back. "But I think of you as a friend first and a client second." Seamus glanced at the door of the courtroom as Hermione entered with her arm around Sam.

"How is she doing, Ron?" Seamus inquired. "Will she be able to make it through her testimony?"

Ron shook his head bleakly. "Not good. If we lose Timmy, she'll never be the same. But she realizes how important her testimony is to the inquiry. I know she'll try her best. Excuse me," Ron said, as he went to meet Sam at the door.

Harry watched as Ron gave Sam a peck on the cheek. "Exactly how good are their chances of winning this?" Harry asked apprehensively.

Seamus shook his head gloomily. "Maybe fifty-fifty at best," he answered. "Ebenezer Bullchip is a ruthless counselor; doesn't care who he hurts, just as long as he wins. The documents you and Hermione secured in America over the weekend will definitely help, but prejudice will play a big role. Sadly, Ron living with Sam hurts her chances of keeping Timmy."

"Bullchip is going to push the child endangerment issue," Seamus added. "We can only hope the judge doesn't buy into it."

"What's he like; the judge?" Harry asked.

"She," Finnegan corrected. "Ebony Jones is hard-hitting, but fair. If anyone is capable of seeing through Bullchip's smoke and mirrors, it will be Jones. I just hope Sam and Ron can hold up against the horrible treatment Bullchip will put them through."

"It sounds like you're on familiar terms with him. Have you faced him in court before?" Harry asked.

"Twice, unfortunately," Seamus answered bitterly. "Both times my clients were in the right, but the jury bought his lies and deceit. Hopefully, this judge will be more perceptive."

"Hopefully," Harry said, with a mock sound of joy but not at all convinced, as he went to sit with Hermione. He stopped briefly and endeavored to bolster Sam and Ron's spirits as he passed them.

"All rise."

"You may be seated," Judge Jones announced. "This is a custody hearing with allegations of child endangerment. Let all ye present be aware that my only interest is the safety of the child concerned. I will not be influenced by, or tolerate screaming, shouting, or crying. Theatrics do not impress me. I am only impressed by honest testimony and undisputable evidence.

"There will be no jury, therefore, no reason to object to any statement. The opposing party shall not shout out at anytime during testimony. You will have ample opportunity to cross-examine and refute what has been said. I want to hear all the evidence; therefore, in this hearing witnesses are not at any time limited to a yes or no answer. Please give all pertinent information. At times I may even ask questions of a witness in order to gather more clarification." Judge Jones explained in a tone that declared and demanded authority without question.

"I understand that parentage is not disputed. Attorney Bullchip, your client has filed the petition, so please begin."

Hermione leaned over and whispered in Harry's ear. "Talk about a no nonsense judge. Remind me not to cross her."

"You got that right," Harry responded.

"If it pleases your honor," Ebenezer Bullchip said self-importantly, "I would like to call to the stand, Professor Draco Malfoy, the birth father of Timothy Malfoy."

As Draco approached the stand, he nodded politely to the judge before being seated.

"Mr. Malfoy. Would you prefer if I call you mister or professor?" Bullchip asked respectfully.

"Actually I'd prefer Draco," he said looking as humble as possible. "It's much less pretentious."

"Draco, your son is nearly three and a half years old. Pardon me for being so harsh, but why have you waited until now to become a part of his life?" Ebenezer asked, sounding almost as if he were chastising Draco.

"I only found out in May that he existed," Draco said despondently. "And that was entirely by accident. I saw the boy with Miss Bowman at the Potter-Granger wedding. Anyone looking at him can see immediately that he has Malfoy genes."

"Was that also the first time you saw Miss Bowman since Timmy's conception?"

"Yes. I was shocked to see someone of her repute at a Hogwarts function. But when I realized she was with Weasley; it made more sense."

Bullchip looked at Draco questioningly. "What exactly do you mean when you say someone of her reputation?"

Draco seemed to be searching for the correct words. "You know, a working girl, a woman of the night, a street walker."

"Oh my god," Hermione whispered to Harry in consternation. "He's trying to make Sam out to be a prostitute." Harry noticed that Seamus was having great difficulty keeping Ron from attacking Draco. Sam just kept shaking her head uncontrollably as tears trickled down her cheeks. Barrister Bullchip looked at Draco with surprise. "How did someone of your background allow himself to come into contact with such a person?"

"I'm embarrassed to say." Draco blushed as if truly mortified. "It was while I was on an extended holiday in the States. I'd never seen the colonies and was rather enjoying myself, despite being extremely lonely. While I was eating lunch, Miss Bowman asked if she could share my table. I was rather surprised, since there were numerous empty tables in the vicinity, but feeling alone, I said yes."

Ron glanced at Sam a horrified expression on his face as he remembered how he and Sam had first met.

"We had a rather enjoyable lunch," Draco continued. "It was nice to talk to someone pleasant, and I offered to pay for her lunch. She agreed to accept my offer, but only if I allowed her to personally escort me about town. I was hesitant, but she seemed quite nice and, since I was friendless, I agreed."

"The afternoon was fabulous. Although lacking in some British refinements, I was quite taken by Samantha. She similarly appeared to be attracted to me. We had dinner together and then made plans to meet the next day." Draco looked up at the judge. "I was certainly naive; never even wondered how it was that she didn't have to work. The second day was even more marvelous than the first. I was by now quite smitten with Miss Bowman, and so when she suggested that we go to her apartment after dinner, I followed her like a lovesick puppy."

Draco looked at the judge as if mortified. "I was rather inexperienced and nervous, but Sam put me at ease. She helped me and didn't make fun of my naïveté. At the time I never even wondered how it was that she was so knowledgeable and secure. I felt like I was in love. That was until the next morning when she told me the previous evening would cost me two hundred dollars. While she was in the loo, I put the money on the bed and left." Draco shook his head dejectedly. "I thought she cared for me, but she was simply plying her trade."

Sam looked at Ron, tears in her eyes. "Please believe me. That's not how it happened."

Ron squeezed her hand as he forced a smile.

"And you never saw her again until the wedding? She never tried to contact you and tell you that you were a father?" Bullchip asked.

"No, she didn't contact me," Draco said, looking heartbroken. "I never even considered the possibility that she might be expectant. I always thought that those types of women took precautions to prevent pregnancies."

"When you realized that you were a father, what did you do? The barrister asked.

"At first nothing," Draco answered honestly. "I struggled with indecisiveness for months. Finally I became conscious that it was my duty as a father to do whatever necessary to secure a fit life for my child."

Ebenezer nodded his head in agreement. "And that's when you came to me and decided to seek custody?"

"No," Draco replied. "That's when I went to Miss Bowman and begged her to marry me?"

Bullchip acted as if this was the first time he was being made aware of this information. "You asked her to marry you despite her profession?" He practically sputtered.

"It was the proper thing to do," Draco announced, righteousness dripping from his lips. "I thought perhaps I could turn her life around, but at the very least I could save my son from the depravity of that half human." Draco looked directly at Ron.

"What was her answer?"

"She slammed the door on my face," Draco responded, looking like he was about to cry. "Told me that I could never satisfy her sexually the way her wolf man did. That's when I came to you."

Ebenezer Bullchip wobbled his head sadly side to side. "I have no more questions your honor."

"I have a question for you Professor Malfoy," the Judge said. "You're a bachelor. How do you intend to take care of a child and continue teaching?"

"I'm to be married in the very near future, and my bride to be is anxious to help me properly raise the child."

The judge had a strange look in her eyes, but nodded her head without further comment.

Harry and Hermione just looked at each other. Could that be Draco's true purpose in asking Ginny to be his bride, to have a live-in babysitter?

"Your witness Barrister Finnegan," the judge declared.

Seamus approached the witness stand with two parchments in his hand and acknowledged Draco. "When we attended Hogwarts, you had quite a reputation as a ladies man yet your testimony seems to decry that. You make it sound like your encounter with Miss Bowman was your initial time having sex. Is that the case?"

"Not exactly my first," Draco hedged. "But she obviously was more experienced than I."

"Really," Seamus retorted. "According to these two parchments that I'd like to enter as evidence." Seamus handed the documents to Judge Jones. "Miss Felice Harrington-Smyth and Miss Mariah Kirkner both found you to be rather a satisfying and accomplished partner at age seventeen. Yet four years later you claim to be young and naïve. Would you be what they consider a born again virgin? Never mind, I withdraw that question. I've heard enough dubious testimony from this witness, your honor. No further questions."

"Is that all he's going to ask him?" Hermione asked Harry, dismayed. "What about all those lies he said about Sam?"

"I think I understand Seamus' strategy," Harry answered. "Instead of attacking Draco I think bit by bit he intends to show that virtually everything that Malfoy said was a lie. But he doesn't want to do it with Draco on the stand. Draco without doubt won't recant any of his previous testimony, so why give him the occasion to lie even more?"

"Would Virginia Weasley please take the stand?" Barrister Bullchip announced.

"Talk about dividing a family," Harry said softly as Ginny walked to the front of the courtroom.

"Sadly what they say about love must be true," Hermione added. "She's evidently blind to the fact that Draco is only using her to help secure Timmy."

"May I call you Virginia?" Ebenezer asked as he approached the witness.

"Certainly," Ginny answered politely.

"Virginia, how long have you know Draco Malfoy," Bullchip asked.

"I've known of Draco since I was a first year student at Hogwarts. That would be approximately twelve years, but I only really got to know him during my forth year." Ginny's face turned pinkish. "That's when we started dating."

Bullchip looked at Ginny surprisingly. "Have you been dating continuously since then?"

"No, we broke up and dated other people, but now..." She looked in Draco's direction, smiling. "I think we've both come to the realization that we were destined to be together," Ginny answered happily.

"I understand you come from a somewhat large family," Bullchip said with a grin.

"Yes, rather large. I have six brothers. My mother had her hands quite full with us."

"How would you feel about starting out married life already responsible for a three year old?"

"It's certainly not how I would plan it, but I understand Draco's desire to be with his son and raise him in the Malfoy tradition. I'm prepared to help my future husband give his son a quality life."

"I'm sure you'll make a wonderful, decent wife and mother," Bullchip said with a smile. "No further questions."

Sam stared at Ron, livid. "She's your sister! How the hell can she be a party to this sham? Timmy has a mother; he belongs with me."

Ron hung his head, he was not about to defend his sister's actions.

"Ginny," Seamus said with sincere concern as he approached the witness. "This must be extremely difficult for you. Draco is your husband to be, yet Ron is your brother and engaged to Timmy's mother."

"Difficult is putting it mildly," Ginny answered sincerely. "But I believe and trust Draco. I feel that together we can give his son a safer more secure home than Timmy would have with my brother and her." Ginny gave Sam a cold look.

"Harry, Ginny has bought into Draco's lies," Hermione whispered, horrified. "She actually believes those falsehoods he's spewing about Samantha."

"Ginny is a wonderful girl, but is too easily manipulated," Harry answered. "What will it take to make her see that Draco is and always has been using her? Severus would have been the best thing that could have ever happened to her."

"Have you meet or talked to Timmy?" Seamus asked Ginny.

"Not really, but I'm quite good with kids," Ginny proclaimed. "I'm positive we will get along

brilliantly."

"What about his real mother?"

"I'm sure she'll be granted visitation rights," Ginny answered, making it sound as if it was more than Sam deserved. "But a boy needs his father."

"Nothing more of this witness, Your Honor."

"Seamus seems disappointed," Hermione said as Ginny left the witness stand.

"I'm sure he is," Harry said dejectedly. "Ginny came off as potentially a perfect wife and mother."

"Would Ronald Weasley please take the stand?"

"Why's Bullchip calling Ron to the stand?" Hermione questioned. "He's certainly not a witness for their side."

"Seamus said he was a clever barrister. I assume he is going to try to portray Ron as a hideous werewolf before Seamus gets the chance to show that Ron is actually a kind loving person," Harry said as he watched concernedly while Ron slowly took the stand.

"Mister Weasley, I understand you were attacked by Remus Lupin at the end of your sixth year at Hogwarts," Bullchip stated. "Is that correct?"

"Yes," Ron replied without further comment.

"You and Hermione Granger had just recently become a couple?"

"Yes, that day."

Bullchip shook his head, "Not exactly the best way to start off a relationship. I imagine you've hated Lupin ever since."

"I did at first," Ron replied. "But it wasn't his fault."

"If not his, then whose!" Bullchip shouted. "Were they not his teeth that gnawed into your flesh?"

"Yes, but Remus was not in control. He had locked himself in the Screeching Shack to avoid contact with people, but Death Eaters destroyed it. Even then, he ran from people to the dark forest, but we were all there, returning from our mission to rescue Malfoy and Snape."

"Sad," Bullchip said, but his face showed triumph, not sadness. "Lupin had taken every conceivable precaution, but still ended up attacking you. And your party was lead by none other than Harry Potter. Tell me, Mr. Weasley, if Professor Lupin was unable to prevent attacking others, how can you insure the safety of Miss Bowman and her son?"

"I've taken precautions," Ron said meekly.

But before Ron could elaborate on his precautions, Bullchip shouted, "Like you did during the Quidditch Championships when you attacked that poor unfortunate girl. Tell me, Mr. Weasley, has she forgiven you for ruining her life? For turning her into a demon like yourself?"

Ron hung his head dismally. "Your honor," Ebenezer said, "There is no guarantee of safety from a werewolf. If Miss Bowman can't see that, then the court must put her son with a caring parent that will put the child's welfare ahead of their personal sexual desires. I have no further questions of this...." Bullchip didn't finish his sentence, but instead turned away in disgust.

"Ron," Seamus said sympathetically as he approached the witness stand. "You spent five years in Azkaban for what occurred that day?"

"Yes!" answered Ron, tears in his eyes. "And every single day I thought of that girl. I thought about what I had done to her. If only the Aurors had killed me before I bit her, but they didn't. Even now, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think of her. I still have nightmares about that day. I can't undo the past, but I'd rather die than hurt anyone every again."

Ron looked at the judge pleadingly. "Three days a month between sunset and sunrise I'm cursed and become something hideous. But that's not me. I'm not a monster. I have feelings just like everyone else in this room. I feel sadness and loss, and I feel love and happiness. Samantha and Timmy have brought happiness and love to my life, the likes of which I never thought I would ever feel again.

"Hogwarts Headmaster Severus Snape, along with Harry and Hermione Potter, has helped me develop a plan that should insure that I never hurt anyone again. But as Barrister Bullchip aptly pointed out, no plan can be one hundred percent foolproof. Because of me a loving mother could be separated from her child. I can't be the cause of that.

"Draco Malfoy has tried to paint a picture of Samantha Bowman that is a total lie. She is the sweetest, most loving person that has ever walked this earth. Sam could give lessons on how to love and nurture a child. Exile me to some desolate place, forbid me to see either of them, but don't separate her from her son. To do that would be a travesty of justice."

Sam wanted to run to Ron and take him in her arms but knew she couldn't. Instead, she remained seated, tears streaming down her face. How could she have ever doubted this man's love for her and her son?

Seamus nodded his head as he plucked a tear from his eye. "Thank you Ron, I have no more questions."

Hermione squeezed Harry's leg. "Ron did good."

"Yeah," Harry grunted, "But that judge is a stone wall. Her face is impossible to read. Bet she plays a mean poker game."

Hermione nodded in agreement.

"Sergeant Anders, please take the stand."

Ebenezer Bullchip approached the witness. "Sergeant Anders, I understand that you were in

charge of the detail that took young Timothy into protective custody last week. Is that correct?

"Yes, it is," Anders answered, importantly.

"I would think that picking up a three year old abuse victim would be a rather simple matter. Why was it necessary to send Aurors; a Sergeant and three officers?" Ebenezer asked cunningly.

"Nothing is simple when one of those things are involved," Anders answered as he gave Ron a revolting glare.

"Please explain," Bullchip asked. "Mister Weasley left us under the impression that werewolves are only dangerous three days a month."

"Their bite is only dangerous on the nights of the full moon, but the animal is present in them all the time. Their strength is greatly increased and they are extremely unpredictable and easily provoked. One never knows what to expect, therefore caution is always advised."

"Then in your expert opinion you would consider a werewolf dangerous irregardless of the time of month?"

"I most assuredly would," Anders answered. "Last week was a prime example. That one gave me these cuts and bruises." The Sergeant indicated Ron and then showed his wounds to both Bullchip and the judge. "He's was one of the most unstable I've ever come up against. I'm amazed that neither the child nor the slag showed any overt signs of abuse."

"Sergeant Anders!" Judge Jones admonished. "You shall not use such terminology in this court."

Anders apologized, but didn't appear the least bit sorry.

"What made you suspect possible abuse?" Bullchip asked.

"He keeps them both naked," The sergeant said with disdain. "The mother was naked when we entered the apartment and the child was discovered to be the same way when he was taken from the bedroom. Poor little tyke was shivering because he was so cold. At least I hope it was just from the cold and not because of anything that animal had done to him before we arrived."

Ebenezer Bullchip gave the judge a concerned glance as he stepped closer to the witness. "In your expert opinion, Sergeant Anders, is it possible to provide a safe environment in a home for a child when that home is occupied by a werewolf?"

"Definitely not. It's like living with a bomb that you know will eventually explode. You don't know when, but it undeniably is going to happen. I feel we saved that child's life. If his mother knows what's good for her, she'll get out while she's in possession of all her members."

"Thank you Sergeant Anders for setting the record straight. No more questions."

"Your witness," the judge proclaimed.

Seamus studied Anders and then said, "I have no questions for this witness."

Hermione was livid. "Harry, how can he not have any questions for that opinionated bastard? Anders just negated all the advancement Ron made."

Harry just bobbed his head. "I know. Seamus better turn this trial around quickly or Sam is going to lose Timmy."

Ebony Jones looked at the witness list and then glanced at her watch. "I would prefer to complete this matter today, but in deference to the defense and the limited time available I'm afraid we will have to carry on tomorrow. I have a matter I need to attend to in the morning, so we will continue at one in the afternoon."

"All rise."

* * * * *

Wednesday, September 21, 2004

"Emily, I know this is silly and it shouldn't bother me, but did you ever mention to Caitlin the way Randy acted toward me last week, the first day of exercising?" Kim asked.

Emily had been avoiding telling Kim what Caitlin had found out, hoping she would drop the subject. Evidently she was not about to do that. Emily rinsed off her toothbrush and placed it back in its case. "Instead of having Matt ask Randy, she did it herself," Emily answered. "At first he beat around the bush and claimed it was your imagination, but then he finally admitted it was your bush."

"Beat around the bush, but it's my bush," Kim said, a look of total mystification covering her face. "What are you going on about?"

Just then Denise and Janice entered the room, trying their best to ignore the naked girls. "I'll tell you while we dress," Emily said softly. "Those two have the ability of hearing what they shouldn't better than Professor Weasley."

Once they reached their beds, Kim immediately looked around and upon finding everything secure said, "Okay, what did that mean?"

"I can't comprehend why what Randy thinks bothers you, but he found the fact that you have hair down there to be a turn off," Emily explained.

"But that's a sign of maturing, of becoming a woman. Aren't you eager for yours to start growing?"

"No! I want to stay clean like my sister," Emily said without vacillation.

"I meant to ask you about that. I thought all girls her age were fully covered?" Kim inquired.

"I guess most are, but Jamie has the ability to control her hair growth. I'm not that fortunate, but there is a charm that will do the same thing," Emily announced. "You just have to be sure to specify a particular area of your body; else you'll end up completely bald and without eye brows or lashes."

"Now that would be a nude nudist," Kim chuckled although still looking upset.

"You have to remember that Randy has only ever seen three girls naked; Caitlin, Jamie and I are all smooth. It's what he's accustomed to seeing," Emily said. "You've stopped wearing those shorts to exercise and I'm sure you don't plan on letting him see you nude, so I don't understand why you're letting it bother you."

"I know it's silly, especially seeing as how I consider it sort of a rite of passage, but it bothers me that he thinks of me as being unkempt. Do you think of it that way, too?" Kim asked.

"I'm hardly the person to ask," Emily answered with a laugh. "Remember, I'm the extremist nudist, but I consider pubic hair as unsightly as leg and underarm hair."

"But if I got rid of it, I'd be completely exposed," Kim argued.

"Kim, it's not like the little you have is really hiding anything," Emily said. "It's a decision each individual has to make, but I hardly think it's crucial or one you should make on the basis of what Randy thinks. He'll undoubtedly never see that part of you again."

"Your right," Kim said as she finished dressing, but it still bothered her.

* * * * *

"Look who is going to honor us with her presence for breakfast," Caitlin said jestingly as Jamie neared the Gryffindor table. "Everyone say good morning to the professor."

"Good morning Professor Zacherley," The Gryffindors seated nearby chanted.

"Good morning students," Jamie said with a laugh as she sat.

"How has the teaching been going?" Amanda asked as she played with her breakfast, barely eating.

"Actually rather well, I'm going to miss it when they all return," Jamie answered.

"Maybe you should reconsider your future plans," Alex suggested as he grasped Jamie's hand momentarily and gave it a squeeze, his way of saying I love you in a crowded atmosphere.

"But we were going to train to be Aurors together," Jamie said. "Besides, I don't think I'd enjoy teaching younger children. I'd want to teach at this level."

"Who says you couldn't?" Caitlin inquired.

"Considering the age to which witches and wizards live, there is normally not a lot of openings for Hogwarts Professors," Jamie said, sounding rather disenchanted "That's especially true now with the staff being so young. Moreover, they only take the best."

"Which you are." Alex reminded Jamie.

"Only in your eyes," Jamie answered, wishing she could hug Alex right then and there. "Besides I still have two years of school. I intend to enjoy these two years and not fret away my time worrying about the future. As for now I'm famished."

Jamie started filling her plate. Just then, the mail arrived. She didn't pay much attention as about a hundred owls suddenly streamed into the Great Hall. In view of the fact that she had no living relatives other than Emily, Jamie seldom received any mail.

The owls circled the tables until they spotted the apposite recipient, and then dropped letters and packages onto their laps. Jamie was about to take a bite of toast when Hedwig fluttered down and dropped a letter on her plate. From the neat penmanship, she realized immediately the letter was from Hermione.

Jamie tore it open and after reading the couple paragraphs handed it to Caitlin. "It's not going well at the hearing," she said to Alex, who seemed entranced in his copy of the Daily Prophet."

"It's not going well here either," he said grimly. "You best have a look at this."

Jamie smiled as she reached out for the paper, but the smile quickly vanished as she read the headline over the front-page picture.

POTTER AND GRANGER AS YOU"VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE
(See article page two)

There they were, Harry with an arm around both Jamie and Hermione as Hermione pointed to the sky. Caitlin and Emily standing in front of them looking in the direction Hermione was indicating. As they moved about in the photograph, little black bars floated in front of them hiding breasts and genitalia, but it was obvious that they were all totally nude.

Caitlin looked at Jamie questioningly as the chatter in the Great Hall became louder. Jamie handed the paper to Caitlin as she looked in the direction of the Slytherin table where all hell had broken loose. Emily was on the receiving end of whistles, catcalls and unbelievably crude comments.

Jamie watched proudly as her sister, seemingly not the least flustered, rose to her feet and with her head held high proceeded in the direction of the Gryffindor table, ever-loyal Kim by her side.

"Severus, aren't you going to put a stop to this," Katie Bell asked, concernedly.

"No, not just yet," he said as he studied the various expressions on the faces of the students as

copies of the Prophet were passed about the Great Hall.

With tears trickling down her cheeks, Caitlin jumped to her feet and rushed to join Jamie and Emily.

"Hey what are the tears about," Jamie asked as Caitlin reached her side. "You're the girl that stripped off her clothes to defend me last Halloween. Certainly you're not embarrassed by a picture in the paper?"

"It's not the picture or the entire school knowing we're nudists," Caitlin said exasperated. "It's the damn newspaper. They didn't cover my breasts with a bar. Even they don't think I have anything worth concealing."

Jamie put her arm around Caitlin. "Will you once and for all get it through your thick head that you're beautiful and we love you. It's the size of the heart that counts, not the size of the breasts. Come on, let's get out of here."

"You guys aren't going anywhere." Alex said as he walked up behind Jamie and grabbed her hand."

"That's right," Amanda added. "Gryffindors judge people by what's inside, not their clothes or lack of same."

"I think you'll be surprised by how many people care about you," Matt said as he put his arms around Caitlin and Emily."

"You guys are special," Randy said standing between Kim and Emily and placing a hand on each of their waists.

It started slowly, first roommates and close friends, but it grew fast and soon every Gryffindor was on his or her feet showing their support. But it didn't end with the Gryffindors. Soon many Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw joined the throng of supporters.

Dick Bancroft was sickened as he watched the display of affection and support the girls were receiving. He simply shook his head in disgust as Tony joined the well-wishers. But then Doris Burke rose from the table. "Where the hell do you think you're going," he asked threateningly.

"Where I should have gone five years ago," she said, not at all quietly. "I'm sick and tired of being looked at with hate and disdain just because I'm in Slytherin house. There are a lot of wonderful people in this school that I've avoided and have avoided me simply because of my being in this house. I only have two years left, but I damn well plan to make the best of them."

As she departed she was joined by a couple of other Slytherins, although most remained seated.

"Becky," Marta said beseechingly, "We can't ride the fence any longer. It's time we make a decision whether we're going to be friends with Emily and Kim or Denise and Janice. I've made my mind up. Friends should be people you like, not people you fear. Please come with me."

As Marta got to her feet, Becky glanced nervously from Marta to Dick and then to Janice and Denise, but she remained frozen to the bench.

Marta looked back at her still seated best friend and then sadly turned away and headed toward the Gryffindor table. She was just ready to tap Emily on the shoulder when she herself was tapped. "You do realize that they'll make our lives a living hell because of this," Becky said, nervously.

Marta broke into a grin. "Denise and Janice might be evil, but Emily and Kim are cunning. Besides now they have an advantage."

"What's that?" Becky queried.

"They have us," she said with a grin.

"Don't you even think about it!" Dick Bancroft shouted angrily as he noticed Tyler quiver in his seat.

"Sometimes problems work out best when left to solve themselves," Severus said as he placed his hand on Katie's shoulder. "I fear, however, that Harry and Hermione will not fair nearly as well with their peers as did the girls." He handed the newspaper back to Katie, still folded to the article that accompanied the picture.

HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

By Ima Mazed

This reporter along with the rest of wizardkind was shocked today to find out that the most beloved and revered couple in the magical world, Hermione Granger and Harry Potter, lives a second secret life of nudity and perversion.

Not only do they participate in this decadent life style, but also they have encouraged their adopted daughters to publicly display themselves in the same obscene manner. One shudders to imagine the tainted activities that take place behind closed doors. Those closed doors being the staff quarters of the renowned Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Our world owes the Potters a great debt. Were it not for Harry Potter, Hermione Granger and the other member of the Covenant, the world we know today would not exist. My question is, exactly how far are we obligated to go in repaying this debt? Already, three innocents that have been entrusted to the Potters by our court system have been introduced to a life of immorality.

Regardless of their superior magical knowledge or contribution to our world, I strongly question whether they should be allowed to continue teaching our children now that this horrible secret has been revealed. How long will it be before they seek to lure other naïve children to their distorted way of life? Are we going to wait until they expose themselves in class to our offspring?

I encourage you to take action. Write the Hogwarts Board of Directors and demand the immediate termination of these deviates.

Chapter Eleven - The Naked Truth

"I wonder what prevented the judge from concluding the hearing this morning?" Ron asked as he studied the breakfast menu. "What are you having to eat, Honey?"

"Just tea, I can't even consider food right now," Samantha responded as she stared sadly out the restaurant window. "What are we going to do if they take Timmy from us?"

"That's not going to happen," Ron said forcefully, wishing he actually believed that as strongly as his voice made it sound. "The judge has to see through Malfoy's lies."

"I'm so frightened," Sam said, fighting to hold back tears. "It's like a terrible dream, but one I can't wake up from. I miss him so much now, I can't imagine what it will be like if...." Sam couldn't bring herself to say the words. "If only I could wrap my arms around him, I'd never let him go."

"We'll get him back," Ron said, praying he was right. "Your testimony will refute the lies Malfoy told and having Harry and Hermione as character witnesses will certainly hold a lot of weight. They're the most revered witch and wizard in the world, and thank GOD, Tonks is willing to go on the stand and refute Ander's fabrication."

"I like Tonks," Sam said candidly. "Her being a Metamorphmagus takes a little getting used to, but she has a good heart. It was a blessing that she was there Friday night."

Ron nodded his head in agreement. "Here come Harry and Hermione," he said, as the couple entered the hotel restaurant. He motioned for them to join Sam and him.

"We were just about to order," Ron said as Harry and Hermione were seated.

"I only want tea," Hermione said. "My stomach feels like its being jostled about."

"Are you nervous about testifying, too?" Sam inquired.

"It must be that," Hermione answered, reluctant under the circumstances to divulge that she was pregnant and likely suffering from morning sickness.

They had only just placed their breakfast order with the plates when a house elf entered the restaurant with a rucksack of Daily Prophets. When he approached the table, both Ron and Harry purchased a paper, although neither glanced at the front page, laying them aside instead to concentrate on their meals that had just appeared.

"That's one thing men have over us," Hermione laughed to Sam. "No matter how upset they may be, they can always eat."

Sam smiled, nodding her agreement, as she picked up Ron's paper. "Oh my God!" she shrieked. "Hermione look at the front page."

Hermione picked up Harry's paper. She was speechless; she couldn't believe her eyes. She handed the paper to Harry, a dazed expression on her face.

"But how?" Harry said, his face now looking as confused as Hermione's. "No one was on the beach that night with a camera."

"The rain," Hermione said suddenly realizing what must have happened. "Remember Emily thought she saw lightning and that it was about to shower? The flash was most likely made by a wizardcam."

Harry shook his head in frustration. "Old Bullchip is going to rip us apart. Some character witnesses we are, naked on the front page of the Prophet."

"It gets worse," Ron said, regretfully, as he finished reading the article on page two of the paper Sam had handed him. "This Rita Skeeter want-to-be is encouraging the Board of Directors to discharge both of you."

"Just because we're nudists?" Hermione asked, appalled, as she reached for Harry's paper so she could read the article. When she finished, she slammed the paper down on the table. "I used to think the muggle world was guilty of bigotry, but wizards are worse. Muggles, elves, giants, werewolves and now even naturists; is there any group wizards don't have a prejudice against?"

"I know what you mean," Sam said desolately. "I always loathed the way my grandparents always looked down their noses at everyone as if wizards were better than any other creature on earth and that they were the best of the best because they were purebloods."

"Then you're a pureblood?" Hermione asked, rather stunned. "I never would have expected that you...."

"I'll take that as a complement," Sam said, bursting in. "Other than Ron and his family, I find most purebloods have a propensity to be rather full of themselves. That's why I'm inclined to not publicize that I'm one."

"But you're American," Hermione added. "It's rare for an American witch or wizard to be pureblood."

I know," Sam answered, seemly embarrassed. "That's why most of my relations act snobbish the way they do. Fortunately, Mom and Dad had a lot of contact with muggles as they grew up and, therefore, didn't fill my head with any pureblood-wizard superiority baloney."

The more she got to be acquainted with Sam, the more Hermione liked her. She was about to ask her more about her family tree when she became aware that Ron and Harry had their heads together, whispering animatedly about something in the Prophet; both looking rather horrified.

"What are you two going on about?" Hermione asked.

Harry looked at his loving wife, not sure at all how to break the news that would bring her world plummeting down about her.

Harry looked intently at Hermione not wanting to speak, but knowing she had to be told. "Hermione," he said adoringly. "I'm afraid we have a much greater challenge facing us then

how the Hogwarts Board feels about us being nudists." Reluctantly, he passed the Daily Prophet to Hermione. "Read the advertisement at the bottom of page two."

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Hermione looked up from the Daily Prophet, her face as white as the paper on which it was printed. "But how?" she asked in astonishment. "Harry, I would never pose for such pictures."

"Of course not," Harry said forcefully, knowing this to be a fact. "Perhaps they're manipulated photographs, your head on another person's body."

"That only works with muggle photos," Hermione answered, deep in thought. "If you try that with a wizard photograph, the head has a propensity to float away from the body." Hermione thought for a moment. "Harry, the pictures must have been taken while we were at Cap d'Adge."

"Obviously, but how and by who?" Harry asked concerned.

"Harry," Hermione asked, wondering if possibly.... "The day you met me at the pool, the first day I revealed myself, when you first came down the steps, did you notice anyone near me?"

Harry tried to think back. At first, he had difficulty distinguishing one day's events from the other, sort of like Binn's goblin wars. "That was the day you fell asleep waiting for me and those young girls splashed you, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Hermione said, encouraged by Harry's memory.

"The pool area was practically empty that morning," he remembered. "Our girls were up at the far end of the pool with some of their friends, and the young girls that splashed you had just gotten in at the other end. There was no one seated anywhere near you. Actually I remember being astonished that all the chaise lounges were empty. There was no one near you. "

Then suddenly it came back, "But that pervert was just leaving the pool area headed for the beach," Harry said, disgustingly. "You know, the guy that tried to take close-ups from the rear as the girls exercised."

"It had to be him," Hermione said. "Harry, I think he was a wizard."

"A wizard?" Harry said in amazement as Sam and Ron waited for an explanation.

"If you recall, I left our room with the concealment charm on. Harry, I never removed it. That whole day while we played tennis and volleyball, I had absolutely no idea the charm had been removed. I only found out late that afternoon when Jamie finally told me. All this time I thought either you or one of the girls removed it, but now I bet it was he. He removed the charm and snapped a few pictures of me as I slept, and then slithered off when the little girls appeared, just before they splashed me awake."

"It makes sense, but how would he know about the concealment charm?" Harry asked.

"Harry's right," Sam agreed. "To the normal passerby, you would have appeared to be wearing a swimsuit."

"That's just the point," Hermione elucidated. "If he was a wizard, then he surely recognized Harry and me. I sincerely doubt he guessed that I was using a concealment charm. He probably just muttered 'Finite Incantatum' to remove any charms I might have been using such as an anti-photographic charm."

"Unfortunately, he got to photograph quite a bit more of you than he expected," Ron said, meaning to be supportive, but not coming off at all like he intended. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean...."

"It's all right Ron, I understand," she said, placing her hand on Ron's, "but because of those photographs, I'm worried that Harry and I have become more of a detriment to your case than an asset. Perhaps it would be best if we didn't testify," Hermione said sadly, knowing she was leaving her best friends down.

"I was afraid you two might be thinking something to that effect," Seamus Finnegan said grimly, having heard Hermione's comment as he approached the table. "May I join you?" he asked, but didn't wait for an answer before enlarging the table and adding a chair.

"Sure," Ron said, but only after Seamus was already seated.

"Needless to say, we could have done without this revelation today," Seamus said, not smiling. "But we still need you to testify; for you not to do so would be disastrous."

"I'm not sure I understand," said Hermione.

"Bullchip has the witness list," Seamus stated. "He would jump all over the fact that you were pulled as character witnesses. He'd make this," Seamus held up the *Daily Prophet*, "out to be something sordid, and we'd have no opportunity to refute him."

"So you think Hermione and I should still testify, despite the article?" Harry asked.

"You have to," Seamus said alluding to Ron and Sam. "They need your help, and it gives you a forum to defend yourselves."

"It shouldn't be necessary for them to defend being naturists," Sam said, frustrated.

"Not in a perfect world, but ours is far from perfect," Seamus added.

Ron looked at Seamus questioningly. "How does it give them a forum?"

"After that article, I expect the courtroom to be a sea of reporters today," Seamus replied. "We have to use that to our advantage. First, we have to show how badly you and Sam have been wronged by bigotry in our legal system. Our priority, most certainly, is to see Timmy returned to your custody, but, in the process, perhaps we can help Harry and Hermione achieve a vote of confidence."

"Sam, I'm going to alter the order of testimony," Seamus stated. "I'm going to have Harry and Hermione go before you and then finish with Tonks, and instead of submitting the balance of proof to the judge before hand, let's wait until Bullchip cross-examines you. I think it will be more effective."

Four pairs of eyes studied Seamus. He seemed confident. They all prayed that he knew what he was doing.

* * * * *

Jamie, Emily and Caitlin were still the topic of conversation when lunch arrived and probably would be for sometime to come. The picture that had been in the Daily Prophet was still being passed about the Great Hall, although there weren't nearly as many copies remaining as there had initially been. It seemed that eager male students had destroyed most copies of the paper, attempting to charm away the floating black bars that hid features they were most longing to see.

The school in general, and the Slytherins in particular, was stunned when word finally circulated that Gryffindor House had been aware that Caitlin and Jamie were nudists since last Halloween. Not only had the house members been aware, but also they had all seen both girls totally nude and not a one had said a word. Even the Hufflepuffs, known for their loyalty, were significantly impressed.

Emily and Kim had been encouraged to return to the Slytherin table by Tony and Doris, but the tension was apparent. The four sat at the end of the table nearest the staff table along with Marta, Becky and the hand full of others that had shown support for the naturists that morning. Empty chairs represented an invisible wall between them and the majority of Slytherin House.

Undoubtedly, not all of Slytherin House hated them, but most were evidently afraid to cross the likes of Dick Bancroft and his cronies. Tyler Bancroft in particular seemed extremely unhappy with the present seating arrangement.

Jamie was engrossed in conversation with Alex when the hand of the Headmaster, tapping her shoulder, startled her. "How did your classes go this morning, Miss Zacherley?" He asked. "I hope the students aren't giving you problems because of the picture that appeared in the Prophet."

"Actually, they've been much more dutiful than I expected," Jamie said with a smile. "One Ravenclaw student did suggest that I'd have no problem keeping their attention if I taught in the nude."

Headmaster Snape was taken aback. "And how did you respond?" he asked. "I hope you deducted points."

"No," Jamie said. "I told him that it was an excellent suggestion and that I'd be quite comfortable teaching unclothed, but that I'd rather not be the only one nude. He turned quite red and dropped the subject when I suggested he get naked first."

The Headmaster looked at Jamie with surprise and then grinned. "I'm not sure if the Board would quite endorse your methods, but I like your *modus operandi*," he said and then turned to Caitlin. "Are you being harassed in any way young lady?"

"No, Sir," she replied. Matt and Randy sat protectively on either side of her. "I'm concerned about Emily, however."

"Yes," Snape said as he looked concernedly toward Emily. "Slytherins are certainly not known for their empathy. I shall talk to her."

"Professor," Jamie said as the Headmaster turned to leave. "What will happen to Harry and Hermione?"

"Unfortunately," Snape answered sadly, "the fate of Professors Potter and Granger lies in the hands of the Hogwarts Board of Directors, another group not known for having a great deal of compassion." He turned and headed toward the Slytherin table.

Caitlin looked at Jamie, her eyes filled with panic. "They can't discharge them. They're the greatest witch and wizard of the century."

"Of the twentieth century," Jamie said despondently. "We're now in the twenty-first century, and wizardkind has a strong tendency to forget the past and only judge people on their current contributions. That picture made Harry and Hermione an embarrassment to, so called, 'proper' magical folk."

Caitlin had tears in her eyes as she watched Headmaster Snape talk to Emily and her handful of supporters.

* * * * *

"All rise."

"Look at this place," Hermione whispered to Harry as the judge entered. "The gallery is crammed to capacity."

"They're here for the freak show," he said spitefully. "Where else can you see monsters, whores, nudists and perverts on the same stage."

"Harry," Hermione said in shock, "Ron isn't a monster nor is Sam a whore. And although we're nudists, we most certainly aren't perverts."

"Tell them," he said, indicating the throng overflowing the courtroom balcony.

Judge Jones surveyed the crowd, an angry expression on her face. "Let it be known from the very beginning that this is a court of law and not a circus," she said with severity. "I will not be the least bit hesitant to clear all visitors should there be any inappropriate behavior." Her demeanor left little doubt that she meant every word.

She turned her attention to Seamus Finnegan. "Will the defense please call their first witness?"

Ebenezer Bullchip was expecting Seamus to call Samantha first and was surprised when he heard the name Harry Potter being announced.

As Harry approached the witness stand, the room was filled with whispering which ended abruptly when Judge Jones pounded her gavel.

"Professor Potter," Seamus began. "You and Ron Weasley have been mates since age eleven. Is that correct?"

"Yes," Harry responded. "We met on the Hogwarts Express our first year and instantly became friends."

"And how long have you known Samantha Bowman?" Seamus asked.

"Almost a year," Harry answered. "Hermione and I both immediately took a liking to her."

"By Hermione, I assume you're referring to your wife, Professor Granger?"

"That's correct."

"Have you had the opportunity to meet Timmy and see him interact with Ron and Sam?" Seamus questioned.

"Yes," Harry responded, a smile coming to his face. "We've had dinner at their place a number of times. Sam's done a wonderful job of raising Timmy on her own and now... Well, Timmy has come to think of Ron as his Dad, and I know Ron loves him equally."

"I realize you're no expert on the subject, but in your opinion, are Sam and Timmy in any danger living with Ron?" Seamus asked.

"I'm not what some would call an expert, but I've personally known two werewolves. That gives me more first hand knowledge on the subject than most people possess. In my judgment, a werewolf is not dangerous except on the three nights of the full moon, and with proper precaution, they are no danger even then."

"Do you feel Mr. Weasley takes proper precautions?" Seamus inquired.

"Yes, I do. Ron loves Sam and Timmy. He would never do anything to harm them."

"No further questions your honor."

As Seamus took his seat, Ebenezer rose and approached Harry acting as if in awe.

"Professor Potter, it is indeed a pleasure to meet the wizard that defeated He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," Bullchip said, hypocritically.

"There were three of us at hand," Harry said modestly. "I wouldn't be sitting here today if not for Hermione and Ron."

"Ah yes," Bullchip said, a grin appearing on his face. "The great Potter humility, I understand you've always shunned the spotlight; preferring your privacy. Is that correct?"

"I never felt I was a hero or celebrity; in fact, I was extremely lucky to survive many of my encounters with Voldemort. I appreciate the honors that the magical world has showered on me, but now, I'd just like to teach and raise a family."

The spectators had as one shuddered when Lord Voldemort's name was mentioned. Even now, six years after his final demise, the name was still feared.

"Yes, I imagine privacy is necessary when one has a perversion for adolescent girls."

Before Harry could speak, Seamus had jumped to his feet. "Your Honor, may I approach the bench please?"

"Yes," Judge Ebony Jones replied disgustingly, evidently expecting something of this nature. "Both counsel please approach the bench."

"Your Honor," Seamus said, "Harry Potter is not on trial here. Life as we know it would not exist, was it not for him. I feel plaintiff counsel is out of order."

"Defense chose to call him as a witness despite the disclosures in this morning's Prophet," Bullchip barked. "Someone giving testimony as a character witnesses should be of unquestionable character themselves."

Judge Jones stared at Seamus. "You had to expect this when you put him on the stand. Barrister Bullchip has the every right to question his worth as a character witness, but..." she looked sternly at Bullchip, "if you want to continue this line of questioning, I expect it to be in a more civil, respectful manner."

As Finnegan returned to his seat, Bullchip again faced Harry. "Professor Potter, are you a nudist?"

"Yes," Harry responded. "Not to the degree that my daughters are, but our family did go to a naturist location for holiday this year."

"Would you please explain what you mean by the comment 'not to the degree as your daughters'?" Bullchip asked.

"The three girls were nudists before they became part of Hermione's and my life. Jamie and Emily were raised as nudists by their parents."

"Do you expect me to believe that these children are responsible for you turning to this

decadent life style?"

"I don't expect you to believe anything I say." Harry responded sharply. "It's quite obvious to me that you are both bigoted and arrogant. As for the life style being immoral, there is nothing morally wrong with my daughters preferring to be naked rather than clothed. What's depraved is that bastards such as you see them as objects of lust rather than the innocent children they are."

"Professor Potter," Judge Jones said in an admonishing tone. "I will remind you that this is a court of law and such language and outbursts are out of order."

"I apologize to the court," Harry said, purposely excluding Bullchip.

Bullchip, however, had no more questions for Harry. Ebenezer preferred to have the upper hand, keeping his witnesses on the defensive. With his outburst, Harry had managed to turn the tables and make Bullchip appear to be the dirty old man. Ebenezer decided to let the defense move on to the last three witnesses, all women and much easier, he found, to manipulate.

"Hermione Potter, please take the stand."

As Seamus approached Hermione, he gave her a reassuring glance. "Hermione, what is your opinion of Samantha Bowman as a mother?"

"In my opinion, Sam should write a book on how to raise a child. Timmy is a beautiful, well-adjusted boy. Now she has Ron's help, but for two and a half years, it all fell on her shoulders. She's amazing," Hermione said, sincerely meaning every word.

"What about Ron?" Seamus asked. "Do you think he'll make a good father?"

"He already has." She looked tenderly in the direction of Malfoy. "Draco may be Timmy's birth father, and I'm sure in his heart he wants what is best for Timmy, but taking the boy from Sam and Ron is just wrong. Timmy thinks of Ron as his father; in the last year they've developed an incredible bond. Although I know Ginny would love and take care of Timmy, she could never take Sam's place. Timmy has a mother and father that love him. He is in absolutely no danger in that house. If our legal system truly wants what is best for the child, then he should be returned to Ron and Sam post haste."

"I would imagine you were rather shocked by today's paper?" Seamus asked sympathetically.

"You always were one to understate a situation," Hermione said with a smile.

"Your personal life should be a private matter; it shouldn't factor into this hearing, but I'm sure opposing counsel will bring up the picture in today's newspaper. Would you like to explain briefly how you and Harry ended up nude on that beach?" Seamus asked.

"I'm not sure how brief I can make it," Hermione said with a smirk, "but I imagine that picture is what brought all the sudden attention to this hearing." As Hermione gathered her thoughts she reviewed the gallery where, much to her surprise, she saw even the Minister of Magic, Emma Wrong, seated.

"I was raised by rather prudish English standards, as I'm sure most of you were. I never saw my parents naked, nor did they see me that way once I was capable of washing and dressing myself. Even living in a dormitory environment for seven years, I managed to maintain my modesty. Then, someone wonderful entered my life. Although the sufferer of horrible physical and mental abuse, she was still pure of heart and, amazingly, had retained her innocence.

"My life started to change the day Caitlin became my daughter. Our first evening as mother and daughter, she informed me that she was a nudist and asked permission to be nude whenever in our quarters. I most certainly had misgivings, but it seemed so important to her that I agreed. It took some getting used to, but in time I adjusted. Her not wearing clothes seemed innocent and certainly harmed no one.

"Caitlin encouraged me to give naturism a try in the privacy of our accommodations. I resisted at first, but it seemed so significant to her. The magical mirror in my bedroom had reflected some quite happy futures, all showing us together and nude, so I gave it a try.

"By the time Harry and I started sharing quarters, I had come to feel quite relaxed and natural being nude in the safety of our living space. Then tragedy struck. Jamie Zacherley's parents were killed, and she and her sister became part of our family. It was Jamie who had introduced Caitlin to the naturist way of life originally. Emily and Jamie were raised as nudists.

"The girls helped Harry plan our holiday this summer, and the little imps tricked us into going to a nudist resort. At first, Harry and I basically tried to make the best of it, but by the end of our holiday, we were both converted.

"Is that where the picture that appears on the cover of the *Daily Prophet* was taken?" Seamus asked.

"Yes, although the photographer was hidden," Hermione answered. "We were unaware the photograph existed until this morning when we saw the newspaper."

"Thank you. No further questions," Seamus said, satisfied with Hermione's testimony.

"Your witness," Judge Jones said to Ebenezer Bullchip.

"Good morning," Ebenezer said in the usual sickeningly sweet chauvinistic tone he used with female witnesses. "Would you mind if I called you Hermione?"

"I most certainly would," Hermione said sternly, shocking both Bullchip and the audience gathered. "The use of my first name is limited to family and friends. You may refer to me as either Professor Granger or Mrs. Potter."

Ebony Jones covered her face in order to hide an amused grin; Ebenezer cleared his throat loudly.

"You seem extremely youthful to be a Professor?" Ebenezer questioned. "How long have you been teaching?"

"This is my seventh year on the Hogwarts staff," Hermione responded proudly.

"Assuming you're allowed to continue it," Bullchip said, brutally. "Do I understand you correctly? You blame three young girls for you and Mr. Potter now living a depraved and sinful life style?"

"I blame no one for my actions," Hermione responded vehemently. "The girls introduced me to naturism, but I espoused it of my own free will. As for being depraved or sinful, there is absolutely nothing sullied about the naked body. Naturism is a pure, wholesome lifestyle. It's only the thoughts and actions of some people that are depraved. I'll tell you what is sinful. It's sinful that a mother's child has been ripped from her arms because of baseless vicious bigotry. I can understand Draco wanting to have contact with his child, but you trying to obtain it for him through lies and by slandering innocent loving people is despicable."

Bullchip was momentarily taken aback by Hermione's volley, but swiftly regained his equanimity. "Professor Granger, you are here as a character witness. Do you really feel that someone who has just appeared nude on the cover of the Daily Prophet and is about to be totally exposed in a filthy rag like Playwizard Magazine is of proper moral quality to be vouching for someone's else's character in a custody hearing?" Bullchip asked, his words cutting as sharply as a knife.

Hermione took a deep breath and looked to Harry for moral support. He gave her his best 'you can do it' smile. "I came here today to support two people I adore very much; two loving parents that have been dreadfully victimized," Hermione said, her sincerity evident, "but it seems that in order to vouch for their character, I must first defend my own. And in order to do that, I find myself in the unenviable position of defending naturism, a lifestyle that up until last year I myself would have ridiculed.

"There is nothing decadent or dirty about the naked body. Certain acts and poses most certainly can be offensive, but nudity itself is not immoral. Our society finds a naked baby precious, and a nude two year old scampering across the lawn adorable. When and why does nudity suddenly become forbidden and immoral? Suddenly parents are frowned upon if their little girl runs topless at age six. Heaven forbid a boy and girl that age being bathed together.

"I doubt that I will ever be as comfortable with my body as my girls; they'd have no problem appearing in this court before all of you totally starkers, and its not because they are exhibitionists. It's because they're comfortable with their bodies. Comfortable doesn't mean beautiful or proud, it simply means unashamed.

"On holiday, we saw men and women, boys and girls, of all sizes and shapes, but all nudists. I can't explain why, but naturists just seem more accepting of a person. Maybe it's because it's hard to put on airs when you're naked. No one is judging you because of your designer dress. It's an exhilarating feeling, and you being naked hurts absolutely no one."

Hermione hesitated for a moment and then, looking Bullchip directly in the face, she said, "But you're not a nudist, nor are you a werewolf, and I'd be willing to bet you're not muggle born. Anything different is dangerous and immoral isn't it, Mr. Bullchip? Anything different should be shunned or, better yet, destroyed."

Ebenezer stared angrily at Hermione. She saw him for exactly what he was and he didn't like it. "No further questions!" He said furiously.

As Hermione left the stand, Ron turned to Seamus. "How do you think Harry and Hermione did?"

Seamus smiled, "Considering the circumstance they were dealing with, I doubt they could have done much better. It's down to Sam and Tonks now." He turned to Samantha. "How are you feeling, Sam?"

"I'll be okay," Sam said nervously. "That old prejudiced bastard isn't going to shake me."

"Good girl. Now hold on to these envelopes, but don't give them to the judge until Bullchip brings up the subject."

"But what if he doesn't?" Sam asked.

"Trust me, he will," Seamus responded. "It will work out much better if we wait for him to open the gate."

"Samantha Bowman, please take the stand."

Ron squeezed Sam's hand, and then she left his side, determined to win back her son.

"Samantha?" Seamus asked once she was seated. "We've heard Draco Malfoy's version of how you met. Could you please give us your version?"

"It was the beginning of July, 2000. I had just finished college and was out job hunting," Sam started.

"Excuse me," Seamus interrupted, "but you're a witch. Why would you attend a muggle university?"

"The magical world in the United States is rather different than here," Sam continued.

"Although they have three schools of wizardry and witchcraft, they are all much smaller than Hogwarts, and the wizard population, although about equal to that of Britain, is spread over a much larger area. The part of the country I lived in offered very few jobs in the magical world; therefore, I needed to have an advanced muggle education to obtain employment.

"What type of employment were you seeking?" Seamus Finnegan asked.

"I wasn't particular," Sam said. "I was just in quest of something temporary to give me an income until I began teaching full-time in the fall. My college degree was in elementary education, and I had already been hired as a first grade teacher starting in September."

"So you were just out of school, had already secured employment in your field and were simply looking for summer employment when you met Draco Malfoy," Seamus reviewed.

"Yes, but when he approached my table and asked politely if he could sit with me, he introduced himself as Cedric Diggory," Sam answered. "I had initially refused, but he looked so lonely, and then I noticed his ring with the Hogwarts seal. I had heard so much about Hogwarts and the chance to talk to a recent student of the school was impossible to turn down."

"I found him extremely captivating. We must have spent two hours talking, comparing schools. In America, we aren't divided into houses. I found myself enthralled in his stories of how he was a Quidditch champion, and how he had been bullied by students from other houses, especially Gryffindor."

Hermione leaned over and whispered in Harry's ear. "It sounds like he got his story rather mixed up."

"I doubt he'd pick up many girls if he told them the truth; that he was a twit," Harry answered.

"I honestly found myself attracted to him," Sam said, hopeful her candor would not upset Ron. "Cedric was so kind and polite. When he asked if I had the time to show him around, I jumped at the opportunity. We had a wonderful afternoon together, after which he offered to take me to dinner. I didn't want to see the evening end and, as a result, was ecstatic when he asked if I was busy the next day.

"We met for breakfast and spent the entire day together. He treated me like a princess. No one had ever made me feel so cared for before. I didn't want the day to end, but worse, I dreaded the approaching weekend when he would be leaving. When he asked me to go back to his room, I was scared. I knew what might happen, but convinced myself that I could maintain control.

"I'd never gone further than light petting, so I was confident that I could stop, but I had never been alone with anyone like Cedric."

Ron sat holding his head, his stomach churning. Of course he'd known Sam had sex with Malfoy, after all Timmy was living proof, but he had blocked it from his mind. Now he was hearing all the details, and it was as if Draco was taking her at this instant as he helplessly watched.

"I couldn't stop. At the time, I didn't want to stop. I had lost my virginity, but it didn't upset me because I knew Cedric loved me. He had been so tender, so patient, so loving.

"I woke up the next morning in his empty hotel room. While I slept, he had dressed and packed. There was a note on the nightstand with a one hundred dollar bill attached. *For services rendered.*

"I lay on the bed for what seemed like hours. There seemed no end to the tears. How could I have been so wrong about a person? I ripped the note and the attached money into a hundred pieces. A few weeks later, I realized I was with child."

"What did you do?" Seamus asked sympathetically.

"First, I told my parents," Samantha answered. "That had to be the hardest thing I've ever done. They were supportive, but I knew I had let them down. Then I buried myself in my work. For a time, I hated all men; I thought I'd never love anyone again. Then, Timmy was born.

"When I looked at him, I broke into tears. He looked so much like his father. How could I hate someone who had given me such a beautiful child? I convinced myself that if Cedric saw the baby, he'd want to be part of his life and that, maybe for Timmy's sake, he would marry

me.

"I worked for the next year saving everything I could. In June of 2002, I hugged my parents good-bye, and Timmy and I came to Europe to find his father. I spent the next year searching, but to no avail. Every lead turned up a dead end. Timmy's father was not to be found. Every trail led to another Cedric Diggory who had died long before Timmy's conception.

"Finally in the summer of 2003, I gave up my search and settled in Hogsmeade with my son," Sam said in conclusion.

"And that's where you met Ron Weasley?" Finnegan questioned.

"Yes," Sam said as she looked to Ron. "That's when I found true love; not only for myself, but also for my son. Timmy thinks of Ronnie as his dad and Ron, I now realize, couldn't love Timmy more if he were his natural son. I have two wonderful men in my life; I can't envision existence without either of them."

Seamus nodded his head in agreement as he said to the judge, "I have no more questions."

As Ebenezer Bullchip approached Sam he took a handkerchief from his pocket and mockingly pretended to wipe tears from his eyes. "That was certainly a heart rendering story; did you and counsel spend the entire weekend rehearsing it?" he asked wickedly. "Quite a twist on the true facts that Professor Malfoy presented, but then he's a pureblood and you're...." he hesitated seemingly lost for the proper term. "You're some what, shall we say, less?"

"Your honor," Sam said tentatively, "I would have preferred not to submit this as evidence, but since Barrister Bullchip feels lineage is the only judge of truthfulness, I have no choice." Sam handed Judge Jones an envelope sealed by the International Ministry of Magic.

The warning embossed on the large envelope startled Judge Jones. ***For the eyes of Judge Ebony Jones only, anyone else attempting to open will be disemboweled. Contents will vaporize five seconds after reading. Divulging the specifics of the enclosed will result in a total mind wash.***

Never had the judge been handed such an intimidating document in the course of a hearing, especially one dealing with a matter as ordinary as child custody. She apprehensively broke the seal and removed the parchment. Her eyes studied the page carefully and then she dropped it to her desk. She looked at Sam with trepidation as the envelope and parchment disappeared. The occupants of the courtroom were mesmerized. Ebenezer Bullchip just stood staring, his mouth open.

"Obviously, the information I have just been made aware of is something that can not be divulged in its entirety to this room. All I can say is that Miss Bowman is pureblood and her ancestry dates back to and beyond the founding of Hogwarts."

Ebenezer looked as if he had been stabbed in the heart. "Very well," he said nervously. "Never the less...." Bullchip seemed to be rattled and stumbling for words. "You make the claim that Professor Malfoy took your virginity at age twenty-one. I expected you to lie and deny that you were a prostitute," he smiled and shook his head, "but really, Ms. Bowman, don't you think you're going to extremes? Of course, I'm sure you expect us to take your word, or can you prove you were a virgin in July of 2000?" He looked at her smugly.

"No," Sam said, but not the least disconsolately. "I can't prove it beyond May of that year." She handed Judge Jones another envelope.

Ebony Jones seemed relieved that this envelope contained no seals or warnings of jinxes. She read the enclosed document and then said, "Ms. Bowman has just handed me a medical report from her gynecologist that confirms that her hymen was indeed intact at the time of her examination on May 31, 2000."

Seamus smiled at Ron, "That's two, let's hope old Ebenezer goes for three."

But Ebenezer did not. Samantha Bowman was chipping away at Draco's testimony, and Bullchip decided it was best to remove her from the stand before she did any more damage. "No further questions," Ebenezer said cantankerously.

As Sam was about to leave the stand, Judge Jones stopped her. "If you would Ms Bowman, I'd like to ask you a few questions. I notice you have one more envelope in your possession. Does it contain information pertaining to this case?"

Sam handed the letter to the judge. "It's only a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Amos Diggory in which they state that a girl fitting my description contacted them with a ridiculous story concerning their deceased son being the father of her child."

"I see," said Judge Jones. "That would indeed seem to confirm that not only did you search for your son's father, but also that you were misinformed as to his correct name. Tell me, why once Draco Malfoy asked you to marry him, did you refuse? Was that not your original purpose in coming to England, hoping to find Timmy's father and have him marry you?"

"Yes, that was the goal of a naïve young girl," Samantha answered, sorrowfully, "but once I realized he lied to me about his name, I understood that our whole encounter had been a charade. He had absolutely no feelings for me. I was simply a vessel he had used for satisfying his sexual needs. You can't marry someone simply because you have conceived a child together; a marriage can only endure when there is love. I know that now because I've experienced true love. Ronnie will always be there for Timmy and me."

Sam broke into uncontrollable tears, but she had held out long enough to present her case.

Judge Jones excused her as Seamus helped her to her seat

"Barrister Finnegan, I understand that you have one more witness?" Judge Jones asked.

"Yes, I'd like to call Auror Nymphadora Tonks to the stand."

Harry couldn't believe his eyes when a very attractive brunette with wavy shoulder length hair stood up and approached the witness stand. She was impeccably dressed and every eye in the courtroom was on her.

"Is that really Tonks?" Harry asked Hermione in amazement.

"That's Tonks," Hermione answered with a smile, "a Tonks that realizes the importance of this trial and wants to be taken completely seriously."

"I understand you prefer to be referred to by your surname only," Seamus asked.

"So would you if your fool of a mother had called you 'Nymphadora,'" muttered Tonks.

Judge Jones unsuccessfully tried to suppress a smile.

"Tonks, I understand you were a member of the group that took Timmy Bowman into protective custody, is that correct?"

"Yes, unfortunately I was a part of that staged travesty of justice," Tonks responded.

"Ms. Tonks," Judge Jones said, "I want to warn you that making unfounded charges against a ministry office could put your job in serious jeopardy."

"Thank you, your honor," Tonks responded. "But I'd rather be unemployed than take part in another scheduled attack against innocent people."

"Tonks, what leads you to believe that the charges of child abuse were unfounded," questioned Seamus.

"Because the original orders to pick up the child were issued Monday, but we were instructed not to carry them out until Friday. If serious child endangerment were suspected, we would not have deferred. Also, Sergeant Anders was scheduled off on Friday, but reported just for that case. That's highly irregular."

Judge Jones gave the impression of being extremely alarmed by Tonks's testimony. Ebenezer Bullchip seemed to be squirming in his seat.

"In your opinion, was excessive force used in carrying out the mission of the group," Seamus asked.

"Most definitely," Tonks responded. "Initially, Sergeant Anders goaded Mr. Weasley into attacking him by his refusing to allow a naked Miss Bowman to cover herself and then referring to her as a whore who had probably slept with half of England. Then, instead of a simple stunning or restraining spell being used on Mr. Weasley, he was twice thrown across the room, once actually through the wall, which rendered him unconscious and caused a fractured shoulder."

"Was Samantha Bowman manhandled in anyway?" Seamus answered.

"Yes," Tonks answered quickly. "She was grabbed by the hair and thrown to the floor inside their apartment, and then she was again thrown head first to the street outside. That time, she suffered a concussion and cuts to the forehead. Anders ordered us to portkey with her lying naked and unconscious on the street. I'm currently under suspension for disobeying that order and not departing with the others."

The court gallery was chaotic. Judge Ebony Jones was appalled. She pounded her gavel demanding silence which came, but not until she pounded and shouted again.

"No further questions, Your Honor."

"No questions," Ebenezer muttered, his face in his hands.

"We will take a thirty minute recess," Judge Jones declared. "After which, I will render my verdict. I suggest that during that break, members of the gallery refresh their memory as to the proper decorum suitable in a court of law."

* * * * *

"All rise."

Sam stood, petrified as the judge enter the courtroom. This was it. In a few minutes, she would know whether her future would be one of happiness or one of despair. The testimony today had appeared to go rather well, but there was no reading Judge Ebony Jones' face. Had she seen through the lies and bigotry, or was she blind to the truth and as prejudice as most of wizardkind seemed to be?

"I take the welfare of children extremely serious," Judge Jones began. "The human offspring is the frailest of all creatures and requires the nurturing of caring parents well into their teens. Sometimes, even the most loving parent can unwitting create a volatile situation that puts their child at peril."

Sam hung her head and closed her eyes, fearing her worst nightmare was about to come true.

Chapter Twelve - The Verdict

"All rise." A solemn voice commanded.

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"For this reason it is imperative that a judge listens closely to all testimony and takes into consideration all evidence," Judge Jones said passionately. "I personally prefer to go a step further in my hunt for the truth. I like to talk to the child, if they are old enough to carry on a meaningful conversation. This morning I spent an enchanting two hours with young Timothy. You would be amazed at the fountain of information that spews from a three-year old when they are encouraged to speak.

"Miss Bowman, I'm pleased with the job you've done up to now raising your son. I especially like the fact that you have taken such an open and honest approach, dealing with things such as his paternity. It is evident Timmy loves Mr. Weasley very much; he constantly refers to him as daddy, but Timmy is also aware that he is not his real father.

"I was especially impressed that you had informed Timmy that his birth father lives nearby and that you wanted them to meet. This to me was a positive sign that you put what is right for your child ahead of your personal feelings.

"Mr. Malfoy, I applaud a man who, when finding out he is a father, steps forward to take responsibility. I, however, question the methods you have stooped to use in your effort to gain custody. As I said the first day of this hearing, I am only impressed with honest testimony and undisputed evidence. I question the truthfulness of your testimony when compared to the evidence presented by the defense.

"I find it difficult to believe that a young lady, who had maintained her virginity throughout university, overnight turned to a life of prostitution, and since you obviously presented her with a false name, I tend to consider the balance of your story to be just as false. I would have thought much better of you had you simply told the truth. You would not have been the first man that lied to a girl in order to get her into bed.

"The courtship, or lack of same, is at this point a non-issue. The question at hand is which couple will provide the most secure and nurturing home for young Timmy.

"I was much impressed with Miss Weasley. I believe her to be an extremely loving person, and I have no doubt that she would do her utmost to make her marriage succeed and to be a

good mother. But Timmy already has a natural mother who has done an exceptional job of child rearing. If the case were predicated only on the abilities of the mother, I would certainly lean in favor of Miss Bowman. Nothing against Miss Weasley, but after all Miss Bowman is the natural mother and has three positive years of experience behind her.

"But this case is not based only on the ability of one parent to raise a child. We must look at both parents and also consider if either pairing creates an unsafe, possibly dangerous environment for the child. On this issue, the nod would on the surface seem to go to Mr. Malfoy.

"Unfortunately, at this point, our hearing seemed to lose its focus and, instead of concentrating on the child, took on the appearance of a muggle witch-hunt. I'm appalled that wizardkind seems hell bent on punishing two of our greatest heroes simply because they enjoy nude recreation. I was always raised to judge a person by their actions and how they treated others, not how they dress or, in this case, don't dress.

"I certainly do not see the connection between nudity and creditability that Barrister Bullchip tried assiduously to forge.

"Mr. Weasley, you are a werewolf, an undeniable fact. I was very much surprised to find that even young Timmy is aware of this. He told me that daddy becomes extremely sick each month and goes away to stay with Aunt Hermione and Uncle Harry. They protect him and make sure he doesn't hurt anyone.

"Life does not come with one hundred percent guarantees, but I feel everything humanly possible is being done to prevent Mr. Weasley from hurting Timmy, Miss Bowman or anyone else. Should he be prevented from parenting a family simply because he has a sickness, a controlled sickness?

"I find the charges of child endangerment absurd and totally unfounded. The entire handling of this case has been a travesty of justice and it will, I promise you, be thoroughly investigated. Thankfully, Miss Tonks was present to prevent a true tragedy.

"And so comes the time for me to render my verdict, but before doing so I want to make it perfectly clear that I expect both birth parents to have a part in this child's life. Should you not be able to accomplish this agreeably, I will set requirements.

"Above everything else, a child needs to know they are loved. Mr. Malfoy, you and I define love in a different way. There is no doubt in my mind that you desire to have custody of your son, but I'm not totally sure of your rationale. I don't feel love is the primary reason. A few weeks ago, you asked Samantha Bowman to marry you so that you and she could raise your son together. From your testimony, it would seem apparent that your proposal was not based on love. Yet, now merely weeks later, you are posed to marry Miss Weasley. I question your sincerity and ability to sustain a lasting loving relationship.

"For that reason, among others, I declare that Timothy Bowman will remain in the custody of Samantha Bowman." The judge glanced in the direction of Sam and Ron, who had wasted no time entering into an embrace. "Professor Granger, will you please meet with me in my chambers."

Hermione looked at Harry questioningly as Timmy was brought into the courtroom and

immediately ran to the open arms of his mother. "I wonder why she wants to talk to me," Hermione said worryingly.

"Probably wants to give you a warning about using the floo network when you're starkers," Harry said kiddingly. "I'm sure it's nothing to worry about."

Hermione, however, wasn't nearly as confident as she approached the judge's chambers and knocked on the door.

Harry turned his attention back to Ron and Sam when Hermione's bushy head had disappeared through the door.

Sam and Ron were talking animatedly and looking in the direction of Draco Malfoy, who was now standing, talking dismally to Ginny. Suddenly, Ron and Sam started walking in Draco's direction, Sam still clutching Timmy tightly in her arms. Harry watched, his heart in his throat, fearing the worst.

Sam approached Malfoy and timidly said, "Draco, I'd like you to meet someone."

Draco turned abruptly ready to swear, but found he was looking in a mirror, a mirror that reflected an image of a three-year-old Draco Malfoy.

"Draco, I'd like you to meet your son," Sam said cautiously, not sure what reaction to expect for either boy or man. "Timmy, this is Mr. Malfoy, your father."

Father and son simply stared at each other, Draco at a loss for words and Timmy only three and confused.

Timmy was the one that first spoke. "You look like me," he said innocently, "but more used."

Despite his efforts to the contrary, Draco's face broke into a faint smile. "That's me," he said. "Used and abused."

Ginny grabbed Draco's hand and squeezed it tightly.

"Malfoy," Ron said, seeming to be struggling to force the words out. "Sam and I take Timmy to the park at the end of Hogsmeade every Saturday about noon. If you'd like, you can join us this week."

Draco stared at Ron in disbelief. "I might just do that," he said, nodding his head. He turned to Sam. "You've done a good job." Quickly he turned away hoping no one had noticed the unmanly tear in his eye. Draco ushered Ginny to the doors of the courtroom as Sam and Ron watched.

"It's all right Draco," Ginny said reassuringly. "We'll have children of our own as soon as we're married."

"Yes," Draco agreed. "But there's hardly any reason to rush that now any more, is there?"

Ginny looked at Draco as if he had just ripped her heart from her chest and smashed it on the floor.

"You two are amazing," Harry said, as he and Tonks approached Sam and Ron. "I doubt I could have been that gracious."

"Don't look at me, mate," Ron said defensively. "It was all her doing. Sam had a knife to my back and was threatening to take away all my treats."

"Daddy likes his treats even more than I do." Timmy said innocently.

"I somehow get the feeling Timmy and Ron are taking about two very different type of treats." Tonks said with a laugh.

Sam blushed, "Quite different."

Tonks grasped Harry's hand and kissed him on the cheek. "It's been good to see you again, Harry. I have to get to the office. They want me to hand in a written report of what happened last Friday. I'm off suspension and Anders is on. Give Hermione a kiss for me," she said as she hugged both Ron and Sam.

"Thanks Tonks," Sam said, tears in her eyes.

"My pleasure," the Auror replied.

"You know," Ron said tentatively. "You should wear your hair like that more often. It's very becoming."

"I forgot all about that," Tonks said, as she turned to leave. Abruptly, the hair became frizzy and turned a vivid greenish blue.

"There's only one Tonks," Harry said as they watched the Auror free her robes from the courtroom door's handle.

By the time Hermione left the judge's chambers, the courtroom and gallery had emptied. Sam, Timmy, Ron and Harry were the only ones remaining.

"Well, at least your not in handcuffs," Harry joked. "What did she want to talk to you about?"

"You wouldn't believe the difference," Hermione said, excitedly, "When she takes those robes off it's like she transforms into a different woman. I could have talked to her for hours."

"Thank you for not doing that," Harry said, "but what did she want?"

"Well, actually three things," Hermione said. "She wanted to assure me that you and I would not receive any problem from the court system concerning any of the girls and the nudist issue. Ebony thinks it's ridiculous how it is being blown out of proportion."

"Ebony?" Sam said questioningly. "You're now on a first name basis with the judge?"

"Yes, she even offered me a job if Hogwarts gives me the boot," Hermione said, trying to sound upbeat.

"That was right nice of her," Ron said. "What was the third thing?"

Hermione looked sheepishly at Sam and Ron. "Ebony says it's been a long time since she's performed a marriage ceremony.

Ron and Sam just looked at each other, speechless.

"But here, now!" Sam said, both loathing and loving the idea. "But we don't have rings or a license."

"I have the rings," Ron said, hopefully. "I don't go anywhere without them."

Sam looked desperately at Ron. *Just ask me! Just ask me!* She kept saying to herself.

"I doubt the license would be a problem," Hermione interjected. "Ebony brought up the idea and she is after all a judge."

Timmy looked quizzingly at Ron, "Are you going to marry Mommy and be my real Daddy?"

"If she'll have me," Ron answered, his body trembling as if his life hung in the balance. Ron took Sam's hands in his and dropped to one knee. He looked up at her loving face. "You alone hold the power to grant my heart's desire. Please, say you love me and that you will become my wife."

Sam sank to her knees opposite Ron and put her arms around his neck, drawing him closer. "I love you, Ronnie. Nothing could make me happier than spending the rest of my life in your arms. Yes, I'll marry you."

Timmy, who had been standing next to Hermione, hurried over and put his arms around both Ron and Sam. "Can I get married with you?"

Ebony Jones stood at the door to her chambers watching, confident that she had made the right decision.

* * * * *

"How soon do you think they'll need us to leave the castle," Hermione asked glumly as she and Harry trudged their way to Headmaster Snape's office.

They hadn't even unpacked yet. The message they had received was to report to the Headmaster's office immediately upon their return to Hogwarts and that is what they were doing.

"You're certainly the eternal optimist, aren't you?" Harry questioned, although he too felt like he was taking that last walk that ended with the dementor's Kiss.

"I consider myself neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but rather realistic," Hermione said as they reached the spiral staircase and just stood there looking up. "You're acquainted with the Board of Directors. Do you seriously think we stand a chance? We were on the front page of

the Daily Prophet totally nude, not exactly proper conduct for Hogwarts Professors, and I extremely doubt that Playwizard Magazine is going to superimpose any black bars over my features in their publication."

"No, I doubt they will," Harry said gloomily. "I wonder what type of photos we can expect?"

Hermione face turned quite red. "I doubt we'll see any head and shoulders shots. That rag seems to concentrate primarily on the pubic area of the body," Hermione said as she squeezed Harry's hand. "I think I know what one of the pictures will be."

"You do!" Harry said in surprise. "But we never saw anyone take your picture."

"No, but we have a good idea of when the charm was removed and...." Hermione hesitated a moment and then started fresh. "That morning when I came down to the pool to wait for you, there was no one about except for the girls and a few of their friends, frolicking at the far end of the pool. I knew you'd be along shortly so I just straddled a chaise lounge and watched the girls fool around for a time. After a bit, I leaned back and obviously fell asleep."

Hermione had a look of horror on her face. "If that's when he removed the charm, I was practically laying spread eagle."

To Hermione's great surprise, Harry seemed nonplused at her revelation. "It's just another part of your body, Love, and, I might add, just as beautiful as the balance of you."

Hermione looked at Harry in disbelief. "You're starting to sound like the girls."

"Only because they're right," Harry responded. "You laying there nude was completely natural and innocent."

Hermione just shook her head. "To you and the girls maybe, even possibly to other nudists, but I doubt many that buy the magazine will think of innocence and purity when they scan the pictures. They will forever more think of me as a slag."

Harry was at a loss for words. His wife was in no way a slag, but she was right. A huge percentage of the wizard world would soon regard her as such, once those pictures were published.

Harry was about to knock, when the large doors of the headmaster's office swung open and Professor Snape beckoned them to enter.

"The hearing went well, I understand," Snape said, evidently already aware of most of the details. "And Mr. Weasley is to be congratulated on his marriage."

"Yes," said Hermione, wondering how Snape had become so well informed so quickly.

"Please, have a seat and I will bring you up to date on occurrences here at the castle," Snape said.

Hermione and Harry nervously took seats, both wishing that Severus would skip the small talk and get to the point of this meeting.

"I was extremely impressed with Jamie Zacherley's performance as a substitute Professor. It is my understanding that she intends to train as an Auror, after her time at Hogwarts is complete. She might want to reconsider; the young lady has a talent for teaching."

Hermione and Harry exchanged glances, pride evident on both their faces.

Severus' expression abruptly took a more somber quality. "As you might have surmised, the arrival of the owls at breakfast this morning caused quite a stir. Young people, for the most part, have a rather immature attitude toward nudity. Fortunately, the Gryffindors, being aware of Jamie, Caitlin and Emily's backgrounds, formed a wall of support around them. The group was joined by many friends from Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw and even a hand full of Slytherins."

"All three girls showed admirable spirit," Severus added. "I feel Jamie and Caitlin will weather the tempest unfazed. They have a great deal of support within their house. Emily, on the other hand, I fear has a much rougher road ahead of her. The vast majority of Slytherin house has ostracized her and those that supported her. I fear they all face a coarse year, as do you both."

"Then we're still employed," Harry said, seemingly amazed.

"At least for the moment," Severus said. "If I had a Galleon for every owl that board members and I received today, I'd be considerably rich; however, I don't and therefore still sit behind this desk of responsibility."

"What did they say?" Hermione asked half-heartedly.

"What didn't they say is a more fitting question?" Snape answered. "You're welcome to read them if you care." He pointed to an, until now, unnoticed pile of envelopes in the corner of the room. There must have been thousands of letters forming an avalanche vulnerable mountain. "I saved them for you, except of course the howlers. I actually thought at one point I would go deaf from the screaming."

"In the morning, the letters were running about fifty/fifty. As many people were supporting you as wanted your naked butts kicked out," Snape said, straight-faced. "But that changed when you both testified and even more when the judge rendered her verdict. I'd say you ended up with an eighty-five percent approval rating. What most likely swayed the board most was the large number of parents that threatened to shift their offspring to either Beauxbatons or Durmstrang if either of you were terminated. So your jobs are secure until November fifteenth"

"November fifteenth?" Harry questioned, not immediately remembering the significance of the date.

"After which Harry will most likely still have a job, but the Playwizard slag will be out on her arse," Hermione responded angrily.

"I wouldn't have put it quite that way, but yes, I'm afraid so," Severus responded, his face now pained. "The Board reluctantly agreed to disregard the photo in the Prophet because of the fact that you were both discreetly covered. They are not at all happy with you being nudists, but, in their words, understand that extremely intelligent and gifted people quite often have eccentricities."

"They called us eccentric," Hermione responded, with amazement. "Why didn't they just say we were weird or odd, it means the same thing."

"Hermione," Severus said, calmly, "You have to take into consideration that the average age of the Board members is one hundred and forty. Plus, they don't personally know you both like I do, but regrettably, they were flawlessly clear and adamant on one count and that was in print nudity. Should pictures of either of you show up at anytime without the benefit of those little black bars, you will be discharged straight away."

Hermione reach over and squeezed Harry's hand "At least we'll still be able to live here as a family," she said, trying to find a bright side to a dismal situation. "But I'm going to miss teaching ever so much."

* * * * *

"Damien, isn't the news wonderful," The Great One said, excitedly as she entered her hidden headquarters.

"I thought it would have distressed you," Damien said, looking rather confused.

"Upset me! Impossible! The news my spy brought me is wonderful," Emma Wrong said happily, lifting the crystal glass of white wine, which sat upon the table in the centre of the room.

"Oh! Then you haven't talked with Madam Hooch," Damien said nervously, realizing that he would now be the one to break the bad news.

"No, I haven't," Emma Wrong answered; coming to the conclusion that Hooch was plainly looking for her in order to give her some disappointing information.

"Evidently, we are not talking about the same news," Damien said, now trembling.

"Obviously not," the Great One said, her mood now changed to one of anger.

"Perhaps you'd care to share you're positive information before I tell you of our disappointing find." Damien said as he tried unsuccessfully to blend in with the furniture. It was at times like these, that Damien wished he had paid more attention when Disillusionment Charms were taught.

"Very well," Emma Wrong said begrudgingly. "Good news first. As you are aware the custody case concluded today, and not surprisingly, the Weasel and his bitch won. Truthfully, I could not give a damn who has custody of the little bastard, as long as they keep him healthy until the time of his sacrifice. I was more interested in hearing the private conversation after the hearing, so I had Crabbe hide in the courtroom under an invisibility cloak. Mind you that was no easy matter, considering his considerable bulk.

"Most of what he overheard was useless dribble, but he did return with one piece of worthwhile information. It seems that your girlfriend is pregnant."

Damien appeared shaken at this information.

"Oh come now, Damien. She's married to the man. I'm sure they do the dirty deed on a regular basis," The Great One chuckled, "or did you think she was pining away, saving herself for you. Good god man, she doesn't even remember you. Forget her. That perfect little naked body you adored will soon be nothing but a memory. Besides her usefulness to us will be exhausted once the baby is born.

"The important thing is that we're closer to our goal. We will soon have the second heir." The Great One smiled triumphantly.

"Excuse me," Damien said meekly. "That's what Hooch and I wanted to speak to you about."

"Have you discovered the identity of the healer and the seer?" Wrong asked excitedly.

"Not exactly," Damien, shilly-shallied. "It's Draco Malfoy." Damien gulped hard. "His ancestral link to Lord Slytherin is a sham."

"What?" The Great One shrieked.

"It seems his father paid to have numerous documents altered in order to gain favor with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Malfoy is no more the heir to Slytherin than I am."

"Damn!" the Great One vented, throwing the glass across the room barely missing Damien. "Just when I thought we were making progress. And I was so looking forward to seeing Weasley and his tart cry over the body. Hell, I can still kill the little bastard if I want. But if he's not the heir of Slytherin, then who is?"

* * * * *

"Do you think they'll be allowed to continue teaching?" Caitlin asked as Emily, Jamie and she headed for the staff quarters.

"The fact that they were at the head table for dinner is a good sign," Jamie answered encouragingly.

"I think the whole subject is ludicrous," Emily added angrily. "Everybody knows they're the two most excellent teachers Hogwarts has."

"People just don't understand naturism," Jamie said, dejectedly.

"Yeah! And it's easier to discriminate against something you don't understand rather than take the time to learn about it," Emily said, her voice echoing her frustration.

Once they reached the quarters, Caitlin went to open the door and then paused. "What do we do once we get inside?" she asked.

"What to you mean?" Jamie questioned.

"Well, normally I'd strip out of my garments," Caitlin said, confused. "But under the circumstances, maybe we should stay dressed."

Jamie looked at Caitlin perplexed. "I hadn't thought about it, but you're probably right. Harry and Hermione will undoubtedly want absolutely nothing to do with nudity after what has occurred. Hopefully, in time, we can go back to being nude here, but for now we should probably stay dressed."

Emily looked aghast. "You're not serious? All day long, people have been taunting me about being a nudist. I've been so looking forward to getting up here and relaxing. Now you want me to keep these on," she said, looking disgustingly at her clothes.

"Stop thinking about yourself and think of Hermione and Harry, especially Hermione." Jamie said, irritably. "If it hadn't been for us, neither one of them would have even considered naturism. They wouldn't have gone to that resort, and none of those pictures that Playwizard Magazine has would exist."

Emily sulked as they entered the door. Jamie was correct, yet it didn't seem right or fair. No one had forced Harry and Hermione to be nudists. They tried it of their own free will and they both now loved the way of life, especially Hermione. The entire family had a brilliant time on vacation. What they did hurt no one. But now, because of some git of a photographer, they were all going to suffer. Emily was in fact sickened at the prospect.

The sound of the door initially startled Harry and Hermione, who were cuddled by the fire, talking. Harry looked at the girls and then with an upbeat voice said, "We were wondering if you three would be joining us tonight," he said. "Why don't you grab a butter beer and then sit down? I imagine we have lots of stories to swap."

"See," Hermione whispered to Harry as the girls went into the kitchen area. "Things are changing already. When have you known them to not shed their clothes the moment they entered the door?"

"And when is the last time you and I cuddled with you fully dressed?" Harry asked. "If you don't want things to change, then you can't be part of the change."

"I know you're right, but being nude makes me think of that photographer and what pictures he might have taken," Hermione said, depressed. "I'm not embarrassed any more to be seen nude, but that magazine has a tendency to print rather extreme close-ups. I'm not looking forward to people asking me to autograph a picture of my most intimate parts."

"No one would ever do that," Harry said.

"No," Hermione said, trying to be more realistic. "I doubt any one would be so crass to ask that, but that doesn't mean the magazine won't print it. They're known for their crude pictures."

Harry nodded his head in agreement as the girls entered the room and plopped down. "How bad was it for you this morning when the *Daily Prophet* was delivered?" Harry asked.

Jamie quickly explained how at first they were ready to flee the Great Hall, but then their

friends and fellow Gryffindors gathered around them in support. Hermione was extremely pleased to hear that even some Slytherins had given moral support.

"I always knew Doris Burke was special," Hermione said, quite pleased. "She actually hugged all of you?"

"Yeah!" Said Jamie. "She asked if we could become friends; perhaps make up for the last five years. I feel like I've missed out, not having her as a friend until now."

"And three of your dorm mates joined you?" Hermione asked Emily. "That's impressive!"

"I thought someone else might support me, too," Emily said rather sadly. "But I was happy that Becky and Marta joined Kim and me."

"Enough about us," Jamie finally said. "We'll survive. What about you guys? How did the Board react to the picture and article in the Prophet?"

"They reluctantly accepted the fact that we are eccentric nudists," Harry answered. "We can keep our jobs; at least for the moment."

"They actually referred to you both as eccentric?" Caitlin asked. "I guess that means they think the whole family is odd?"

Harry nodded his head. "What do you mean by 'for the time being'?" Emily asked concernedly.

Hermione gazed in the direction of her youngest daughter. "It means that in all probability, Harry's job is secure, but when the December issue of Playwizard is distributed, I'll be sacked."

All three girls looked in Hermione's direction and as one cried, "No!"

Jamie and Caitlin ran and threw their arms around Hermione, but Emily instead ran to her bedroom, tears flowing freely from her eyes.

Hermione went to get up and follow Emily, but Harry indicated for her to stay with Jamie and Caitlin. Instead, Harry got to his feet and headed for Emily's room.

She hadn't closed the door and Harry was rather taken aback when he reached the threshold. Emily had literally thrown herself on the bed and was stretched out with her head buried in the bed pillow. In her present position, the short skirt she wore was incapable of covering all it was in theory designed to cover up. Harry turned his head to leave and then realized how silly he was being. He wasn't seeing anything he hadn't seen a thousand times before; it just seemed wrong because she was dressed instead of nude.

He sat on the side of the bed and started stroking Emily's hair as she continued to cry. Neither spoke for quite some time. Finally, Emily said, "It's all our fault. If it wasn't for us, you and Hermione would be normal people, a young couple with a baby on the way. You should have never taken us in; we've ruined your lives!"

"Emily, look at me," Harry said firmly.

Emily slowly turned on her side as Harry leaned over and tenderly kissed her cheek. "Slytherin," he said, shaking his head with a sly grin tugging at the sides of his mouth, "will you get it through your head that you, Jamie and Caitlin are the best thing that ever happened to us? Not once has Hermione or I regretted the choices we've made."

"Surely you regret going to Cap d'Adge," Emily said between sobs. "I'm not going to be a nudist anymore. It causes too much pain for the people I love." Emily buried her head in the pillow once more.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Harry said as he stood up and started quietly undressing. "Hermione and I have every intention of remaining naturists. We were hoping to have a family nature swim in the Room of Requirements tonight, but I guess you can still come along and wear a top and shorts."

Emily turned her head to look at Harry and was shaken to find him standing next to the bed totally exposed. She hadn't seen him this way since vacation. "In spite of everything that's happened and even considering the magazine?" She asked.

"You girls have said it a million times; we're not hurting anyone by being nude. We have no intentions of changing a life style we have come to appreciate. Certainly! Hermione is upset about losing her position, but we are what we are. People either accept that or we move on."

"Can I change my mind?" Emily said hopefully as she started taking her shoes and socks off.

"I was hoping you would," Harry said gladly as he watched Emily hop to her feet and quickly remove her skirt and blouse.

"I'm taller than you," Emily said, finally smiling as she continued to stand on the bed and put her arms around Harry's neck. "Will you carry me, Dad?"

Harry put his arms around Emily's waist and was about to draw her closer when she said, "Just this once, will you please carry me properly so I don't fall."

Harry looked at Emily questioningly, not quite understanding how she wanted to be held.

"My real father always held me under my bum. It's really much easier to pick me up that way."

Harry reluctantly proceeded to do as Emily suggested. "Now lift me," Emily said, as Harry picked her up. Emily wrapped her legs around his waist. "Isn't that better?"

Harry was a little uncomfortable at first. Then, he thought about how he and Emily were holding each other and realized that they were not holding each other any differently than the way many other children were held by their fathers' in public. The only difference was that those other children and their parents were always clothed.

"Do the others know we're going swimming?" Emily asked excitedly, practically bouncing in Harry's arms."

"I'm hoping that Hermione told them and that they're all ready," Harry said, as he carried his

daughter out of the room.

"Good you're all set," he said as he saw the three attractive witches in their robes standing near the door. He assumed they were naked underneath.

"We're ready," Hermione said light heartedly. "but I hope you two don't intend to walk through the halls like that?"

"We most certainly do," Harry said as everyone, including Emily, looked at him in alarm. "Well, maybe we'll cover ourselves with my invisibility cloak? Will you run get it Emily?"

Emily quickly returned with the cloak, and soon three witches were headed for the Room of Requirements followed closely by a giggling sound that seemed to emanate from thin air.

* * * * *

"Are things back to normal then?" Caitlin asked as the three girls hurried down the stairs from the faculty quarters.

"Hardly," Jamie said. "That was simply a show for our benefit. Don't get me wrong; I think Harry and Hermione have come to enjoy naturism and fully intend to continue the practice, but they're both miserable. They just don't want us depressed or taking the blame for what has happened."

"Then you think Mum will be fired?" Emily asked forlornly.

"Unfortunately, I don't see any way around it," Jamie responded. "The Board of Directors would fire her even if the pictures were tastefully shot and only of her topless. I've seen a few copies of that magazine, and I'm sure the pictures will be anything but refined."

"Then in your view, there will probably be close ups of her twat?" Emily asked.

"That's not a word I like to hear you use," Jamie said, admonishingly. "but that's exactly what I expect. Since we never saw anyone, I'm sure most of the photos were taken with a telephoto lens and most likely when Hermione was in an awkwardly exposed position."

"Is that legal?" Caitlin inquired.

"Yes, we were in a public setting and it was our choice to be nude." Jamie explained. "Having appeared in two teen pageants, I imagine there are oodles of pictures of me floating around; of course they're muggle photos. I know both pageants were video taped, but that was done in an appropriate way, not unprofessionally."

"He had to be a wanker; no self-respecting photographer would take nude pictures of a person without their permission," Emily said with anger.

"I'm disgusted with the management of *Playwizard Magazine*," Jamie said just before the girls broke company. "It's one thing to print their type of pictures if the girls willingly pose and are paid, but to ruin someone's life and cause him or her to lose their means of employment so

that you can make money with unauthorized pictures is revolting."

The girls parted, Emily heading for the dungeons and Slytherin House, Caitlin and Jamie to Gryffindor Tower. They all had an empty feeling.

* * * * *

"That was fun," Hermione said two hours later as Harry held her in his arms. "but you and the girls have a tendency to get rather rough. I have scratch marks all over my body."

"At least your reproductive system can't be used as a lifeline," Harry said.

"Not, hardly!" Hermione said, stunned by Harry's comment. "What happened?"

"It was when Emily and Jamie were swinging Caitlin back and forth, holding her hands and feet. They ended up sort of tossing her at me. Caitlin kind of panicked as she went under water and just grabbed anything she could to hold onto."

"And the something was your penis?" Hermione said dazed.

"Obviously, it was an accident; she simply questioned if she had hurt me. It's not just talk with the girls; the three of them actually don't think it's a big deal to touch or be touched anywhere when it's not sexual."

Hermione nodded her head in agreement. "I know what you mean. In an effort to dunk me, none of the three hesitated to grab any part of me. It gave them an unfair advantage until I decided enough was enough."

"What did you do?" Harry questioned.

"I started using their tactics," Hermione said innocently. "It really caught Jamie off guard the first time. She had the funniest look on her face. Not upset, but like she had just lost the advantage she had over me. Harry, it amazes me how much those girls have changed me. I wish I had grown up being a naturist."

"If you had, would you have told Ron and me?" Harry asked out of curiosity.

Hermione smiled and then blushed as she gave Harry a hug. "I wouldn't have had to tell you. You would have noticed."

Harry visualized Ron and him walking the halls of Hogwarts under the invisibility cloak with a naked Hermione between them.

"Harry, how do you do it?" Hermione asked.

"How do I do what?" he asked

"How do you avoid being excited when you are around the girls? I would think that just seeing Jamie naked would cause you to have a reaction; she's so beautiful. How can you

control yourself around them?" she asked

"It's a case of mind over matter. I pretend they're someone else."

"Someone else?"

"Yes, when the girls are around, I imagine that Caitlin is McGonagall and Emily is Grubbly-Plank."

"And who is Jamie,"

"She's been different people, but I find that Dolores Umbridge seems to turn me off the most."

"And just what Professor do you think of when you make love with me?"

"I've tried thinking of Snape and Malfoy," Harry said facetiously, "but that didn't produce the desired results. So I visualize the most beautiful witch to ever grace the halls of Hogwarts, Hermione Granger."

Hermione awarded Harry for that response by kissing him fervently. Her life was being torn apart, but she had what was most vital for her survival, his love.

* * * * *

Harry awoke at around three in the morning to the sound of sobbing. He moved closer, holding his trembling wife in his arms and gently caressing her back. He didn't ask why she was crying; he already knew.

"Harry, am I selfish?" Hermione finally asked, ending the silence.

"You!" he said incredulously. "You're one of the most giving and selfless people I've ever met."

"I don't feel noble. I should be happy and content. After all, I have you, as a husband. That alone would make most women feel blessed. And then I have three wonder girls that I cherish and that love me in return. I'm well educated, a hyperempath, and I've just been offered a wonderful job with a prestigious judge. I'm young, could train for any career I'd like, but yet I'm miserable, and it's not because of the pictures. I'm, most certainly, not happy with the thought of men wanking off to my naked image or people viewing close-ups of my privates, but I'm not going to hang my head in shame. I didn't intentionally pose for lurid pictures. They were taken without my knowledge when I was doing purely innocent activity."

"It's just..." she hesitated. "Harry, I don't want to start a new career. I was meant to be a teacher and I love teaching here at Hogwarts. No matter what else I do, I'll never be happy and content like I am here. It's just not fair. I worked so hard and now in a little more than a month, it will be history."

Harry held her tightly, but said nothing. No words could relieve the pain Hermione was feeling. Once again, Harry felt helpless; he was letting his wife down. Men are supposed to be

heroes and protect the ones they love from sadness and danger. Last winter, Hermione had been practically stolen from his arms, and he was unable to rescue her. Now, she was about to be mortified and lose the teaching position she coveted, and again, it seemed he was powerless to aid.

* * * * *

The warm early September days soon gave way to the brisk days of October. The once green trees for a short time displayed their glorious fall colors before becoming bare, ready for winter. With, homework, exams, Quidditch practice and the incessant badgering from her fellow Slytherins, Emily didn't get to see much of Caitlin and Jamie during the next month. Except for class, she also had little contact with Harry and Hermione, but it was evident that her Mum was dreading the passage of each day. Hermione's vibrancy and smile dimmed with the knowledge that her time at Hogwarts was quickly drawing to a close.

Soon, Halloween was nearly upon them and all the houses were preparing for huge parties. Jamie and Caitlin reminisced about the previous year when they had found themselves completely nude in the middle of the Gryffindor common room; one of them due to an accident and the other by choice. This year, both doubted they would even attend the party. It somehow seemed wrong to party with Hermione about to lose her job.

Harry and Hermione had run out of options. Seamus had tried everything imaginable from a legal standpoint to stop publication of Hermione's pictures, but as they had expected, those efforts were fruitless. Harry had even owled Playwizard Magazine asking to meet with the editor in hopes of somehow persuading him not to publish the pictures. He received no reply. They had both accepted the inevitable.

* * * * *

Friday, October 23, 2004

He had waited outside in the hall for her to leave the common room; finally at last, she was alone. Why was she avoiding him? He felt they had a wonderful relationship and thought she sensed the same. Yet ever since they had been intimate, things seemed different. She had agreed and actually seemed to be just as eager as him, but now she gave the impression of being so distant. She appeared to circumvent being alone with him, even avoided talking to him whenever possible.

The boy remained out of sight as he followed her down steep staircases and through long corridors. Finally, he saw her enter the library. He was about to corner her; finally they would talk. At last he would learn why she was steering clear of him.

As he reached the library entrance and gazed about the huge room; it appeared empty. She was no place to be seen. Slowly he walked past row and row of books.

At long last, there she was in the medical section nervously reading a book. When he spoke her name, the girl's face flushed and she clutched the open book to her chest. He gazed at her

questioningly as he took the book in his hand and read the chapter heading, *Pregnancy: The First Stages*.

He looked at her, a combination of shock and fear covering his face.

She broke into tears. "But they don't tell you how to stop it!" she said in panic.

Chapter Thirteen - Halloween Treats

Friday, October 22, 2004

He had waited outside in the hall for her to leave the common room; finally at last she was alone. Why was she avoiding him? He felt that they had a wonderful relationship and had always thought she sensed the same. Yet ever since they had been intimate, things seemed different. She had agreed, actually seemed to be just as eager as him, but the impression she gave now was of distance not intimacy. She appeared to circumvent being alone with him, even avoided talking to him whenever possible.

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He looked at her, a combination of shock and fear covering his face.

She broke into tears. "But they don't tell you how to stop it!" she said in panic.

"Pregnant," Tony said aghast, "but we did everything to avoid that happening?"

"Evidently, not everything," Amanda replied miserably.

Tony shook his head; this couldn't be happening. "You ought to see someone to be sure," he said, nervously.

"I am sure," Amanda answered, distressed. "Besides, I can't go to Pomfrey."

"What about Caitlin? She's a hyperempath; she'd be able to tell," Tony suggested.

"And the first person she'd tell is Jamie and then they'd both run to Professor Granger. Neither of them can know," Amanda said emphatically. "Besides, I'm positive. I don't need anyone to confirm it."

"What will your parents say?" Tony asked, apprehensively.

"Tell Mum and Daddy," Amanda repeated, horrified at the thought. "Oh! No! I can't. I really can't."

"Well, you can't hide it forever," Tony said frankly.

"I can't tell them. It would kill them. I'm their little girl."

"It would kill my parents, too. They believe in me. Trust me!" Tony said, disgusted with himself.

Unexpectedly, three second-year Slytherin girls turned the corner and saw Amanda and Tony hugging. The girls giggled and quickly departed.

"They saw us together," Amanda said horrified.

"But they didn't hear what we said," Tony whispered trying to calm Amanda. "Everyone knows we're going together." Pulling his arms tighter together in the hug, Tony felt safety being shared between the shaking bodies standing besides the bookcases.

"Oh! But now..." Amanda burst into tears. "I feel so ashamed," she said, burying her head against Tony's chest, a puddle of salted water slowly started to spread into his shirt.

"Amanda please don't weep," Tony begged, as he gently patted her head. "It won't help."

"What will?" Amanda cried, her voice muffled by tears and material.

"I don't know," Tony said, an angry tone to his voice

"Don't get mad. Please don't get mad," Amanda jumped out of the hug and begged.

"I'm not mad at you. It's just.... Why did I let it happen? Why did I let it happen?" He said as a single tear threatening to escape the corner of his right eye.

Amanda noticed the library was beginning to fill with students. Then she saw Jamie enter the room. "You better go," she said anxiously.

Tony gave her a quick squeeze and wiped the tear from his eye. "Don't do anything, you know, crazy. We'll talk tomorrow first thing."

Amanda slowly nodded her head as Tony scurried away.

* * * * *

Saturday, October 23, 2004

It was evident by their bleary eyes that neither Amanda nor Tony had gotten much sleep the previous night.

"What are we going to do?" Amanda asked desperately as they hid in the empty Charms classroom, while most of their friends ate breakfast.

"In some countries, kids our ages are already married and raising families," Tony commented, not really knowing why.

"Could we go to one of those countries maybe?" Amanda said enthusiastically. "Maybe like

Mexico?"

"Are you crazy?"

"Don't you see?" Amanda explained. "We got to get a plan. Daddy says you should state your problem and then bring all your intellectual resources to bear."

"Amanda, shut it a minute will you?"

Amanda continued to ramble on as if unaware of Tony's presence. "Maybe I could go to my Aunt Claire's. She lives over two hundred miles away. No." Amanda thought briefly, pausing within her step. "No. She'd tell my father."

"Amanda, I'm trying to think," Tony pleaded.

"Maybe I could just disappear somewhere or... or kill myself," Amanda blurted without thought.

"Listen, don't say things like that," Tony shouted in a chastising way as he took Amanda in his arms. Then his voice became more soft and compassionate. "I know you feel bad, but you shouldn't feel like you're all alone. I mean... I'm with you Amanda. I'll take care of you."

"Okay, Tony," Amanda replied softly, turning around she looked trustingly into his eyes.

* * * * *

Sunday, October 30, 2004

The delicious smell of baking pumpkin wafted through the corridors of Hogwarts as the students headed to the Great Hall for the Halloween feast. As they were seated, thousands of bats fluttered from the walls and ceiling and swooped over the tables in what resembled low black clouds, their movement causing the candle lit pumpkins in the hall to flicker.

As the students waited impatiently for the feast to appear; Headmaster Snape moved to his feet. Immediately, the Great Hall became silent.

"I know you are all anxious to partake of another magnificent feast, so I will make this brief," Snape announced. "First I realize that it is traditional for all houses to hold rather festive parties on Halloween. I would remind you that classes are to be held as normal tomorrow. Therefore, your head of house will be checking to see that all celebrations end at a reasonable time."

A collective moan spread through the hall.

"Now, now. It's not that bad," Professor Snape went on. "Quite a bit of merriment can be squeezed into the time between now and midnight." The Headmaster paused for a moment. "On a happier note, I have two other announcements. Our initial Hogsmeade visit of the school year will be next Saturday. I remind you that this is only open to years three and above. Mr. Flitch will be checking that no unauthorized students try to sneak out as has

happened occasionally in the past. He will be pleased to give detention to anyone attempting to circumvent this rule. There will also be an additional Hogsmeade weekend just prior to our Christmas break

"My second announcement is that we will once again be holding a Yule Ball this year. As was the case last year, the ball will be open to students of every year, and in order to make this year's ball somewhat different, it will be held on New Years Eve."

Then without further comment he said, "Let the feast begin."

The meal appeared abruptly on the golden plates, as it had at the start-of-term banquet. The students found themselves in rather a quandary. Many wanted to discuss the Halloween party curfew, the Hogsmeade visit and the Yule Ball, but the spread looked extremely mouth-watering. Some of the girls resisted the food and gossiped excitedly, while most of the boys allowed their stomachs to do the talking as they filled their plates to the brimming with the smorgasbord of food available.

Emily sat staring at the Gryffindor table wondering if Randy would invite her to the ball. She wasn't, in fact, sure she actually wanted him to. Theirs was a strange relationship that Emily had difficulty understanding. In some ways Randy treated her like a girlfriend, although they had no such understanding. At other times, he completely ignored her. For the past month, he had been mainly paying no attention to her. The odd thing about that was Emily didn't, if truth were told, especially care.

The down side, of course, was that she in all probability wouldn't get to go to the Ball if Randy didn't ask her. She wasn't acquainted with many boys in any of the other houses, and unquestionably, no Slytherin would ask her. They all treated her like she had leprosy. There was a time when she thought Tyler and her might become close friends, but he had scarcely talked to her since it became common knowledge that she was a nudist.

Tyler wasn't the only one not conversing with her. With the exception of the few Slytherins that had supported her on the day the picture appeared in the Prophet, most of the house shunned her. Her supporters weren't being treated nearly as badly as they originally had been, but she was definitely still considered a blight on the good name of Slytherin House.

Hermione watched the students smiling and laughing as they talked about Halloween and the upcoming Yule Ball. She reflected sadly that this would be her last Halloween as a Hogwarts Professor.

"Harry," she said, out of the blue. "Tell Severus that you'll chaperone the Yule Ball."

Harry looked at her baffled. "But you'll most likely...." He couldn't bring himself to finish the sentence.

"I'll most likely have been fired," she finished the sentence for him. "Just because I'll no longer be a Hogwarts professor doesn't mean I no longer want to be a part of the school," she said insistently. "We had a grand time last year until I was.... I promise not to leave your sight all night. You can even accompany me to the loo if you like." She gave a faint smile as Harry's face reddened.

Harry was dumbfounded. "But what about the pictures? Won't you be embarrassed to face the

students if they've all seen pictures of you naked?"

"Harry, that magazine goes on sale November fifteenth," Hermione said, accepting the inevitable. "By New Years Eve I doubt there will be anyone in the wizarding world over eleven that hasn't seen me graphically displayed in the raw. I have two choices. Either I become habituated to everyone staring at me like I'm some sort of slag or I spend the rest of my life brooding in our bedroom. As much as I love our bedroom and the various pleasant activities that take place there, I don't intend to spend the next one hundred plus years of my life there."

"If you're sure," Harry said reluctantly, "should I ask Ron if he and Sam would like to co-chaperone with us again?"

"Definitely," Hermione said without reservation. "I hope they will. I could use Sam's moral support."

As Harry made a move to stand, a large gray owl swooped into the Great Hall and flew in his direction. The owl landed heavily on his shoulder, as he was about to rise, and nearly caused him to topple over. "Who would be sending me an owl at this time?" He asked no one in particular, but his question was answered straight away when he looked at the envelope. Instead of a return address, there was the picture of a totally naked young woman. The words "Play", "Wizard", and "Magazine" were moving about swiftly to cover the intimate areas of her gyrating body. She smiled broadly, puckered her lips, and threw Harry a kiss.

"Well, it certainly took them long enough," Harry said to Hermione, "but they finally answered my letter."

Hermione was about to ask whom, but observed the envelope first. The pictured girl was no longer throwing kisses at Harry, but was now instead sticking her tongue out spitefully at Hermione.

"What does it say?" Hermione asked excitedly, hoping for a miracle, a last minute reprieve.

Harry finished reading the letter and then handed it disconsolately to Hermione.

Dear Harry,

I regret that it required so long a time to respond to your correspondence, but I was acting under the advice of legal council. You know how they are, didn't want possible litigants chatting. Heaven forbid we solve a legal matter ourselves without the assistance of barristers.

Now that all legal avenues have been exhausted, they've informed me that I may contact you in order to present an offer.

It was good to hear from you. Six years is a long time. I regret that our reunion must be a confrontational one. I have a special fondness in my heart for you. At a time in my life when many were making jest of me behind my back, you were a true friend and treated me with respect. Because of that, I want to assure you that no naked pictures of you will be appearing in our publication either now or in the future. I have destroyed negatives of any such pictures personally.

Hermione is a different subject. Firstly, I have no great love for your wife. Although we got along, it was more a case of her putting up with me rather than friendship. I always felt she looked down her nose at me, as if I were both inferior and in fact unbalanced. Secondly, I am in an executive position and must do what is in the best interest of our publication. Advance sales indicate that, because of her pictures, our December issue will top all previous records easily.

I harbor no hatred for Hermione and sincerely regret that she will undoubtedly lose her teaching position because of our publication. You asked to meet with me; I'm sure with the hope of convincing me not to go to press. By now I'm certain you realize the impossibility of that happening. I would, however, still like to meet with you and Hermione. I have a business opportunity I would like to discuss with the two of you that I feel will be mutually beneficial to us all.

For your convenience, I am willing to meet with you in Hogsmeade at a location of your choosing. I suggest next Saturday, November 6, 2004 around lunchtime.

Please, don't say no. What is about to transpire can't be stopped, but perhaps it can be made worthwhile.

Sincerely yours,

Luna Lovegood
Managing Editor, Playwizard Magazine

Hermione looked at Harry incredulously. "Did you know that Luna was editor of that sleazy magazine? She asked hotly.

"No," Harry said sincerely. "I had addressed the letter to the editor. I never expected the editor of such a magazine to be a woman, and most certainly not Luna. The last I heard, she was working as a reporter for the Quibbler."

"Well, I most certainly have no intentions of meeting with her," Hermione avowed emphatically. "Any opportunities being offered by a person ruining my life are the opportunities I can live without."

Harry looked at Hermione disappointedly.

"Harry, please don't look at me that way. It's over. I've lost. Why should I give her the opportunity to rub salt in my wounds?"

"Hermione," Harry said cautiously. "Luna was always a little idiosyncratic, but she was never malicious. I doubt her publishing the pictures is in any way spiteful. From her view point, it probably simply makes good business sense."

"Good business sense that just happens to ruin my life," Hermione said bitterly and then shook her head disconsolately. She looked at Harry as she tried to hide the tears in her eyes from the students and other professors. "Am I being punished for being such an egotistical, know-it-all, bitch?"

"Hermione!" Harry said in shock. "You're not and you never were any such thing."

"Yes, I was," Hermione replied, sadly. "Maybe not purposely, but I'm sure I appeared that way to others. Luna is correct; I never tried to befriend her. I always treated her as if she was weird and I was better than her. Now she is the managing editor of a successful magazine, and I'm one of the slags appearing in it."

"Hermione, you are not a slag." Harry said tersely and then hesitated. "And neither, I'm sure, are many of the other girls that appear in the magazine. We shouldn't be so quick to judge. It makes us no better than many of the bigots in our world."

"Your right; it's just that I'm so Harry, I'm going to go have a lie down," Hermione said inconsolably. "Please remember to ask about chaperoning."

Harry said nothing, but only watched as Hermione left the table and headed for their quarters. No simple words could console her. Hermione's teaching career, way too soon, would be sadly coming to a close.

* * * * *

Jamie and Caitlin had been involved in conversation, not noticing the happenings at the staff table. They, after all, were young girls and, for the moment, had forgotten the tribulations of their parents as they excitedly talked of the evening's party and the much anticipated Yule Ball.

"I thought we agreed that we weren't even going to attend," Jamie said rather flustered. "I haven't even thought about a costume."

"Me either, but I know what I wish we could wear," Caitlin suggested, rather unhappily. "The same costume we had on at the end of last year's party."

"But by the end of the party we were...." Jamie hesitated. "I think that was the greatest evening of my life. I felt so free and comfortable and so loved. Everybody in Gryffindor House had accepted us for what we were, naturists."

"And for a full year not one of them disclosed our secret. They had even encouraged us to stay nude all the time if we desired." Caitlin reminisced.

"And most of them were suggesting it out of kindheartedness and consideration, not like the perverts now that just want the opportunity to ogle at us naked. Unfortunately we can't do that; we promised Hermione we wouldn't let all the others see us naked again in the common room," Jamie said, rather sad, wishing she could, in fact, relive the previous Halloween.

Caitlin's eyes suddenly lit up. "I have an idea," she said excitedly as she whispered it in Jamie's ear.

Jamie, at first, just stared at her. "Isn't that rather just using semantics to get around the true intent of what Hermione said?"

"Maybe," Caitlin said almost pleadingly. "But not everyone will see us and we're in control of

who does."

"I don't know about you, Caitlin. Sometimes I think you should have been sorted into Slytherin House rather than Emily." For a time, Jamie just looked intently at her younger 'sister' and then she smiled. "Let's do it," she said, not at all convinced she was behaving at all in an adult manner.

"Can we invite Emily to our party," she asked, now excited about the approaching evening.

"I don't think anyone would mind," Jamie said, "but don't push her. Let it be her decision. She might feel that under the circumstances it's best if she spend the night with the Slytherins. She may not want to alienate them even more."

"Look! Kim and Emily are leaving the Great Hall," Caitlin said excitedly. "We best catch up to her."

As Jamie and Caitlin hurried to catch Emily, Randy and Matt slowly got to their feet and followed. Once outside the Great Hall, Caitlin ran and shouted for Emily to wait. "Jamie and I want to talk to you two," Caitlin said, more energized than she had been in weeks.

When Jamie caught up she said, "Caitlin and I have decided to go to the Gryffindor Halloween Party after all. We were wondering if you two would like to come. I'm sure none of the other Gryffindors will mind."

Emily and Kim exchanged glances before Emily shook her head no. "I'm sure we'd have more fun at your party, but it would just drive a deeper wedge between us and the balance of the Slytherins. But thanks for thinking about us."

Caitlin had an extremely disappointed look on her face, but understood Emily's reasoning. "Guess what Jamie and I are going to wear to the party?" Caitlin asked, a devilish expression covering her face.

Emily shrugged her shoulders, not having the slightest idea what to guess.

"We're going to wear the concealment charm," Caitlin said breathlessly.

Kim's jaw hung open in shock as Emily looked to Jamie for conformation. Jamie nodded her head sheepishly.

"You're going to the party nude?" Kim asked, horror-struck. "But what if somebody touches you or asks you to dance?"

"Then they'll see us naked," Caitlin responded, seemingly thrilled at the prospect.

Kim didn't move, her mouth still wide open in shock.

"That sounds like fun," Emily said earnestly. "It almost makes me want to change my mind about coming, but I think Kim and I better stick with our original plan to liven up the Slytherin party."

Jamie and Caitlin looked at Emily questioningly, but not nearly as concerned as Kim.

"What plans?" Kim asked with trepidation.

"Oh! Did I forget to tell you," Emily said straight faced. "I thought it would be fun if you and I streaked the Slytherin party tonight."

Kim's face turned white and she looked at Emily, aghast.

Before anyone could speak, Emily erupted in laughter and hugged her friend. "Kim, you're so easy."

As the girls were all laughing, Randy and Matt caught up to them. Matt gently slipped Caitlin's hand into his. "I don't want to assume anything or take the chance of someone else asking you before me," he said extremely nervous. "Will you go to the Yule Ball with me?"

Caitlin squeezed Matt's hand tightly. "You bet I will," she said and then kissed him on the cheek.

Emily smiled as she watched Caitlin kiss Matt and then glanced toward Randy. This was his golden opportunity to ask her, but Randy wasn't looking at her. Instead, he seemed to be attentively watching Kim, who seemed aware of this and was blushing.

Realization struck Emily. Randy was smitten with Kim and evidently Kim liked Randy in return. That's why she was so concerned about what he thought of her pubic grooming habits.

Randy didn't want to ask Emily to the Yule Ball, but in all likelihood wouldn't ask Kim either out of guilt.

Emily grabbed Kim's hand. "We best be getting down to our common room," she said to the others. "I appreciate you guys thinking of us." Emily and Kim hurried away, but after they'd gone just a short distance, Emily stopped, told Kim to wait, and hurried back to the group. She whispered something briefly in Randy's ear, and as his face turned crimson, she hurried off to rejoin Kim.

"What was that all about?" Kim asked concernedly.

"I just told Randy that you liked him, too," Emily said understatedly.

"You told him what?" Kim said, her face turning bright red. "He's your boyfriend. You're my best friend, I'd never...."

"No you wouldn't," Emily said with certainty, "and neither would he. That's why I did."

"But I thought you two were a couple," Kim asked, by now totally confused.

"I think we were more a couple for convenience sake rather than any other reason," Emily explained. "Caitlin had two best friends, both boys who both wanted to be more than friends. Caitlin chose Matt, which left Randy as odd man out just as I happened into the picture. I think I was sort of a face-saver, plus it evened everything out."

"Then you don't have feelings for Randy?" Kim asked concernedly.

"Oh! I have feelings for him. He's a great friend and fun to be around, but he's not...."

Kim understood. "He's not what you're looking for when the time comes that you have a boyfriend."

"Exactly," Emily said, actually feeling relieved that Randy and her were no longer in a semi-understood unofficial type of relationship. "Now he's free to ask someone he really seems to like to the Ball."

"He'll never ask me," Kim said dejectedly. "You forget that he's turned off by my body hair down there."

"Oh! Don't worry about that," Emily said nonchalantly as they neared the Slytherin Dungeon. "I told him you got rid of that."

"You told him what?" Kim exclaimed in horror. "I can't believe you discussed my private area with Randy!"

"I'd hardly call it a discussion," Emily said defensively. "After I told him that you liked him, I just said that you had gotten rid of that problem between your legs that he didn't like."

"Please tell me you didn't really say that," Kim said, goaded. "I'll never be able to face him, yet alone go out with him, even if he should ask. Besides, that's a lie. I haven't done anything."

"I know that, and you know that, but Randy doesn't," Emily said giddily. "And he won't unless you let him see you nude or touch you there."

"Well, neither of those is going to happen," Kim said with conviction, "but I feel like I'm being dishonest."

"Why? You didn't tell him. I did. And besides, if ever necessary, smoothness is just a charm away."

* * * * *

"Matt, when they start playing music, are you going to dance with me?" Caitlin asked with a very guilty appearance on her face.

"A little, if you want," he said shyly. "You know I'm not the greatest dancer. Besides, you girls usually end up dancing together most of the night."

"Not to the slow numbers," Caitlin, corrected him pleasantly. "I was sort of hoping you'd dance most of those with me. I like when you hold me. Besides, I have a little surprise for everyone that embraces me tonight."

"What's that?" Matt asked rather unconcernedly as he watched a number of his mates playing exploding snap.

"Give me a hug and I'll show you," she said a devilish grin covering her entire face.

"Here, in front of all the house members?" Matt asked rather taken aback.

"Just a little hug," Caitlin whispered encouragingly, a devilish grin gripping the sides of her mouth "I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

Matt placed his arm gently around Caitlin waist, but even before he had drawn her close, it happened. He was suddenly standing in the middle of the Gryffindor common room holding a totally naked Caitlin.

"The charm!" He said with revelation. "You're wearing nothing but the concealment charm." He backed slightly away so that he could take all of her in, but continued to firmly hold her hand.

"You're stunning," he said. "I'm definitely going to cling to you the balance of the evening."

"I was kind of hoping you'd say that." Caitlin whispered in his ear.

"Does Jamie know you're not wearing any clothes?" Matt asked quietly.

Caitlin smiled. "Haven't you noticed how tightly Alex is holding onto her?"

"She naked too?" Matt asked in surprise. "You both have on nothing but the concealment charm. In that case, maybe I'll ask her to dance."

"No you won't," Caitlin said firmly. "I don't want to lose you."

"Lose me?" Matt said questioningly. "Do you think Jamie would be attracted to me?"

"It's not that," Caitlin said, with a laugh, "but with your height differences, I'm afraid you'd suffocate between her breasts if she held you too close."

"Now that would certainly be a wonderful way to go," Matt said purposely trying to rile Caitlin. "But to be completely honest, I'm over the moon being with you."

Caitlin blushed at Matt's remark and then got goose bumps as she imagined his hands tenderly discovering her intimate parts. Finally, she shook herself back to reality. Her desires would have to wait until they were older, much older; the consequences were just too severe.

* * * * *

The Slytherin Halloween party was nearing an end when Tony finally worked up the nerve to approach Bancroft. He detested him but also needed his help.

"Dick, do you have a moment?" Tony asked. It was extremely difficult to ask help from this arrogant bastard, but he was desperate. "I have something important I have to ask you."

"It must be important for you to get off your Gryffindor loving high-horse and come to me," Bancroft responded superciliously.

"Dick, you're the last person I want to ask for help," Tony said candidly, "but frantic people are sometimes forced into unseemly affiliations. Can you for once in your miserable life not be an insufferable git and help some one who is desperate?"

Dick studied Tony carefully realizing that Tony must indeed be desperate to come to him for aid. He liked dealing with distressed people. They gave compromising information so freely.

"All right then," Bancroft said smugly. "Let's ditch this boring party and go to the dorm where we can talk more freely."

Tony followed Bancroft to their room, sickened that he had fallen so low as to necessitate going to Dick Bancroft for aid.

"Now then," Dick said as they entered the dorm, silently shutting the door behind them. "What is this all about?"

"Sit down," Tony said, actually practically ordered. "Remember what you said a couple of months ago, about that practitioner."

"Practitioner? What practitioner?" Bancroft asked rather irritated at not remembering the conversation.

"You know the one I mean, the one for girls. Don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about," Tony said, crossly. "You said you helped a guy out that was in trouble."

"Oh! Oh yeah. Yeah I remember," Dick said uncertainly.

"Well I know somebody that has to get a hold of that guy," Tony said nervously.

"You don't want to get mixed up in a thing like that," Bancroft said warningly, actually sounding genuinely concerned. "I mean you could get thrown into Azkaban."

"You helped that other guy?"

"Yeah, but that's a crime. Why it's murder," Bancroft said bluntly.

"Always yakking. Always bragging." Without warning Tony lunged at Dick, easily pinning him to the floor.

"Get off me," Dick yelled.

"The doctor, who is he? Where does he live?" Tony shouted.

"You're choking me," Bancroft gasped.

"You're not stupid, are you Dick. You know everything. Know all the answers. Who is he, tell me?"

"I can't," Bancroft wheezed. "I was lying."

"You were lying?" Tony released his grip on Bancroft as a look of desperation crossed his face. "Why?"

"I don't know, maybe I have a big-shot complex," Bancroft said, for once being honest. "I never helped the guy, I just heard about it."

Tony looked at Bancroft, his last hope dashed. "What am I going to do?"

Bancroft rubbed his neck as Tony just sat looking frustrated. "I'm sorry," Tony said. "Sometimes I don't know my own strength."

"Ah! Forget it, will you?" Bancroft said, almost compassionately. "You have your own problems. You... You and Amanda Pierce?"

"Who said anything about Amanda? Don't you tell anyone." Tony said threateningly.

"No! No, I won't say anything." Dick said sincerely, acting completely out of character. "Why don't you take her to one of those Muggle abortion clinics?"

"And just how do you propose we get to London," Tony said, frustration filling his voice. "Ask the Headmaster for a day pass and train tickets."

Dick just shook his head, realizing the impossibility of this. "Look, you and I didn't have this conversation," Dick said. "Abortion is strictly prohibited by wizard law and anyone even remotely involved can spend time in Azkaban. I want no part of this and you shouldn't either. It's her problem; let her worry about it."

Tony looked at Dick crossly, on the verge of once more attacking him. "I can't do that, and you know it," he said decisively.

"No," Dick said staring at Tony. "I don't imagine someone like you could. Look! You didn't hear this from me, but I understand there is a guy in Hogsmeade that will help with such problems. You can contact him through the bar man at the Hog's Head." Dick bit his lip. "But from what I've heard, it's expensive and his place isn't the most hygienic. I'd think hard before you make any rash decisions."

"We don't have the luxury of time," Tony said, frustration and fright showing in his voice. "She's already two months gone. Even if I'm able to make arrangements this Saturday, it's six weeks until the next Hogsmeade weekend. She'll be over three months pregnant by then."

* * * * *

When Kim and Emily had returned to Slytherin House after dinner, a few of the students were putting the finishing touches on the decorations for the evening's party. Both girls had offered to provide a hand, but their offer was indecorously rejected. Instead, they spent the next hour in their dorm discussing Randy, a subject Kim now seemed, suddenly, to find riveting.

At eight o'clock they decided to join everyone else in the common room hoping to inconspicuously blend in with the others. Ever since the infamous picture had appeared in the Daily Prophet, Emily's ability to do anything discreetly, unfortunately, had seemed to vanish.

She had no more than entered the common room when Dennis Crow yelled out. "Shucks Zacherley, I was counting on you wearing your birthday suit as a costume tonight," he said sarcastically while actually sounding rather let down. "Isn't that what your sister did last Halloween. Hardly seems fair that she gave those Gryffindor blokes a show and you won't give us one."

Emily tried her best to ignore him as Kim and her joined Becky and Marta. If truth were told, Emily would - in point of fact - prefer to be nude, despite gits like Crow and Dick Bancroft. She had actually seriously considered making a nude appearance hoping it would put an end to the taunting, but reconsidered after realizing it would more than likely simply make things worse and, in all probability, lose her support rather than gain her any. This after all was Slytherin House, definitely not known for understanding and loyalty.

As she listened to the banter of her friends, her eyes fleetingly looked about the room, catching sight of Tyler Bancroft who was looking in her direction, but who quickly turned away from her gaze.

Emily excused herself momentarily and ran back to the dorm, returning in a few moments. Upon her return, Kim looked at her questioningly. "I had to go to the loo," Emily said, almost defensively. "I wanted to make room for more butterbeer."

Kim nodded her head, but didn't necessarily acknowledge as true Emily's explanation.

The party was somewhat slow starting. The boys kept to their own groups, either just talking and messing about or playing exploding snap. The girls talked and occasionally a few of them would dance to a lively musical number.

Very little dancing took place when slow numbers were being played, except for some couples in higher years that were actually dating each other. First year boys were at that age where there were starting to be attracted to girls, but didn't exactly understand why. The idea of touching, yet alone holding a girl, was extreme foreign to most of them.

Therefore, Emily wasn't the only girl sitting out the slow dances; most of the girls found themselves doing the same. Emily soon found the party extremely dull. Slytherins, in her opinion, didn't know how to have fun. They seemed to be afraid to let loose and get off their thrones.

Emily spent most of the night trying to catch Tyler in the act of staring at her. She had the feeling he wanted to ask her to dance, at the very least talk to her, but he was evidently afraid. Every time she noticed him looking in her direction, he would quickly turn away and then look to see if his brother had caught him.

After three hours, Emily had become extremely bored. She told Kim that she was going to go to bed, but Kim begged her to stick around for a little longer. She had no idea why Kim wanted to linger (she didn't seem to be having a fabulous time either), but Emily agreed to hang around a little longer. Five minutes later she was glad she had.

Emily had just caught Tyler looking in her direction again, but this time when they both looked to see if Dick Bancroft had noticed, they saw Tyler's brother headed toward his dorm with Tony Marburger.

As if planned, the music turned soft and slow. Tyler got an 'it's now or never' expression on his face and started walking toward where Emily was seated. She sat nervously waiting, hoping he wouldn't lose his nerve. He didn't.

"May I have this dance," Tyler asked politely.

"I was hoping you'd ask," Emily answered sweetly as she stood and held her hand out to Tyler's. "Try not to look too shocked when you take my hand."

Tyler was confused by Emily's remark, but once he grasped her hand he understood completely. Emily's clothing completely melted away and Tyler found himself holding the hand of a quite attractive, quite naked young girl. "Wow!" was the only word he could muster, but it aptly described his present feelings.

Emily smiled. "Are we going to dance or are you just going to stand there staring at me? I haven't changed that much since the last time you saw me this way," she said with a laugh.

"Yes you have," Tyler said as he nervously put his arm around Emily and pulled her closer. "You're even prettier than I remember." As they began dancing, Tyler looked nervously about the common room. "Am I the only one that can see you're starkers?"

"Yes," Emily said. "My sister and Caitlin said that it was all they were going to wear to their party tonight, and I decided at the last minute to do it, too."

"What if someone other than me had asked you to dance?" Tyler asked concerned.

"I wouldn't have turned them down," Emily answered honestly. "That would have been impolite. Besides, I don't mind people seeing me naked; you know that. But my reason for using the charm tonight wasn't to try and excite anyone. I simply wanted to be comfortable and hopefully enjoy the party."

"I know you have difficulty understanding it, but I'm totally at ease nude. I'd be happy if I could go through the balance of my life never having clothing touch my skin again."

"I think you'd get rather cold in the winter," Tyler said. The thought of Emily standing naked in a snowstorm made him shiver for more than one reason.

"You'd be surprised," Emily answered. "I remember Jamie and me playing naked once in the snow. It was only at our parents insistence that we came inside."

"You are incredible," Tyler said, beaming.

"If I'm so incredible, why have you ignored me the past few weeks?" Emily questioned.

"It's my brother," Tyler said disgustedly. "He's forbidden me to have any contact with you."

"I expected as much," Emily said, understandingly.

"Have you been enjoying the party?" Tyler asked.

"Not really. At least not until now." Emily answered, openly.

"Me either," Tyler said, as he pulled Emily closer and allowed his hand to slip from her waist to her buttocks. "I've never met a girl like you."

"No, I'm sure you haven't," Emily said calmly, "but I'm afraid you might be jumping to an improper conclusion. Just because I'm nude, does not make it permissible for you to touch me anywhere you see fit. You have five seconds to get your hand back on my waist or find my knee someplace that will give you tremendous pain for the balance of the night."

Tyler clearly understood Emily intent and only used one second of his available time. "I'm sorry," he said, appearing to be sincere. "You're right! That was wrong and I never would have done it if you were dressed. It just seemed so inviting."

"I'm not angry," Emily said, candidly. "Actually, it's sort of complementary that you want to touch me there. If you were naked, I'd probably be tempted to pinch your bum too, but just because it's tempting and feels good doesn't make it correct."

"Do nudists dance?" Tyler asked.

"Not so as to have body contact," Emily answered. "Some clubs don't even allow slow dancing, but when permitted there can be no body contact. That wouldn't be proper with strangers or casual friends."

"I have to learn all these things if I'm going to get to know you, really know you," Tyler said excitedly.

"That doesn't seem very likely with your brother around," Emily muttered rather disappointedly.

"I just have to play it cool until after the Christmas holiday," Tyler explained. "After that I don't care what he does or says." Tyler didn't, however, go into further detail. "This is going to sound stupid, really stupid, but if I ask you something, will you promise not to tell a soul."

"No!" Emily answered, promptly.

Tyler looked shocked. He most certainly had expected her to say yes.

"I can't make a blanket statement like that not knowing what you are about to say," Emily added. "You have to make a decision to either trust me or not."

Tyler looked into Emily's eyes. He wanted this so bad. He had to trust her. "Will you please allow me to take you to the Yule Ball?" he asked and then held his breath waiting for her reply.

"Assuming Mum and Dad will allow me to go, yes," Emily replied. She pulled Tyler tightly against her and gave him a hug. "I won't tell the world," she said guessing that Tyler wanted this kept from his brother. "But there are some people I must share it with, people I know I

can trust."

Emily broke the hug, understanding completely why nudists didn't dance closely together. Even with Tyler completely dressed; it felt awkward to be pressed against him. She couldn't imagine what it would feel like if they were both nude, although a part of her was thrilled at the thought.

As the music stopped, Tyler looked longingly at Emily. "I wish we could just sit and talk for awhile, but if my brother...."

Emily gave him a light kiss on the cheek. "I understand," she said. "You will at least cheer for me when we play Hufflepuff in two weeks, won't you."

"I'm your number one fan," Tyler said.

Emily just smiled without commenting. Harry already had taken that position. She squeezed Tyler's hand one more time and then headed back to her seat and the eagerly awaiting, very curious Kim.

Tyler watched appreciatively, as Emily's still naked form leisurely walked away. He preferred the front view, but the rear view was most certainly far from shabby. He had never considered a backside attractive until he saw Emily's bare. Then abruptly, her clothes reappeared. What was it that attracted him so much to her?

Every since the initiation, he hadn't been able to get her out of his mind. At first he thought it was merely because he had seen her naked, a little thing like that has a tendency to make a lasting impression. Later he realized it was much more than that. It was her total attitude, how she was so self-confident, but not the least bit cocky or conceded. She seemed perfect, almost too good to be true.

Then Tyler's dream was shattered. Dennis Crow was looking at him with an evil grin. His brother would know about him dancing with Emily before the evening was over. There would be hell to pay.

Chapter Fourteen -Gatherings

Saturday, November 6, 2004

A queue was forming as the students waited impatiently for Filch to check off their names on the long list of those eligible to participate in the first Hogsmeade visit of the year. Caitlin watched from the third floor balcony. Once their names were checked, the students scurried through the door and toward the path leading down to the small village.

She had been to the village many times during the past summer, along with Jamie and Emily. They had walked there at least three times a week, so she was already familiar with the many shops. Caitlin still had a feeling of disappointment, however, even though none of her fellow second years could attend either.

"You're not going to jump, are you?" Emily said laughingly as she and Kim approached Caitlin. "From the look on your face, one would think you just lost your best friend."

"No, not quite that bad. Just suffering a bout of 'sibling' jealousy," Caitlin said, giving them a weak smile. "I just wish Matt and I could spend the day together in Hogsmeade, like Jamie and Alex."

"Be thankful that at least you have a boyfriend you can talk about," Emily said with a tinge of envy in her voice. "I think I have one, but I have to keep it a secret from most people."

"I just wish I had a secret boyfriend," Kim said dejectedly.

"Don't get discouraged," Caitlin said, supportively. "Matt told me that Randy talks about you a lot. I'm sure he'll ask you to the Ball. He just has to work up the nerve."

"Plus have the opportunity," Emily added. "He's a second year Gryffindor, and you're a first year Slytherin. Your paths don't exactly cross a lot."

"Maybe we could help them cross," Caitlin suggested, her face suddenly beaming, "and at the same time, give you and me time to be with Tyler and Matt."

"What are you suggesting?" Emily asked Caitlin, uncertainly "You have that devilish look in your eyes. Every time you get that look, I get in trouble. What is your evil mind planning this time?"

"Well, Mum and Dad went to Hogsmeade today," Caitlin offered. "I believe they are going to do some early Christmas shopping, plus they have a luncheon engagement with some old classmate at noon. That means the quarters should be empty until at least two o'clock, probably later."

"You're not suggesting what I think you are?" Emily questioned. "I thought you had agreed that it would be best for you and Matt not to be alone there."

"I won't be alone if you are both there along with Tyler and Randy," Caitlin argued.

"Somehow I don't think Mum and Dad will give us their approval," Emily said, concern registering on her face.

"They've already left, so it's too late to ask," Caitlin said coyly. "They'd have no problem with the three of us being there by ourselves. What would be the harm if the boys joined us for a short time? It's not like we are going to do anything wrong. Plus it gives you an opportunity to talk to Tyler without him getting grief from his brother, and maybe Randy will get the nerve to ask Kim to the Ball."

Kim eyes sparkled at the possibility of spending a few hours with Randy, but dimmed when she looked at Emily's worried expression.

"I'd love to spend some time with Tyler, but I think our parents will get really mad if they find out," Emily said, apprehensively.

"They won't find out," Caitlin promised. "We'll set ground rules and make sure the boys are out by one o'clock."

"What sort of ground rules," Kim asked.

"Well, just so the boys don't get the wrong idea, all bedrooms will be off limits, and there will be no kissing or touching beyond hand holding. That should keep matters well under control," Caitlin said.

Emily laughed. "You and Matt are the only ones that need to maintain self-control," she said. "I doubt Randy or Tyler would even consider trying anything with Kim or me."

"Does that mean we're going to do it?" Kim asked excitedly.

"Yes," Caitlin answered, just as enthusiastic. "Mum and Dad have already left, so let's not waste any more time. Kim, why don't you go tell Tyler; his brother hasn't ruled you off limits. I'll tell Randy and Matt. Emily maybe you could ask Dobby if he could let us have some refreshments. We'll tell the boys to wait a bit before coming up so that we can get the place ready."

The girls excitedly ran off in three separate directions.

* * * * *

"Tony! What's going on?" Alex asked as they waited for Jamie and Amanda to return from the dressing rooms. Jamie had just forced them all into Madam Malkin's so that she could try on a dress she saw displayed in the window.

Tony was about to lie and say nothing, but was desperate for assistance.

"Alex, I need your help," Tony said, his eyes filled with anxiety. "If I tell you something, you must promise not to tell a soul, especially Jamie. She'll go right to Professor Granger."

Alex hesitated. His relationship with Jamie was based on mutual trust; they hid nothing from each other, but Tony seemed terribly distressed and desperately needing a friend. Alex said yes, never expecting what followed.

"Amanda is pregnant," Tony said without further explanation.

"No!" Alex said, horrified at the thought and picturing himself in Tony's place. "What are you guys going to do?"

"We can't have it!" Tony exclaimed. "We're both only sixteen; who would hire us, and neither of us can tell our parents. They have such faith in us. It would kill them to never have us finish Hogwarts."

"You're going to abort the pregnancy?" Alex questioned, simultaneously horrified and sympathetic. "But how? It's against wizard law. Is Amanda going to go to one of those muggle clinics during Christmas break?"

"No," Tony said sadly. "Amanda's dad has her vacation all planned out. There is no chance she can get away."

Alex looked at Tony, his face painted with confusion. "Then how?" he asked.

"We found out about this guy who will do the operation," Tony said undecidedly. "I'm going to make arrangements today so it can be done on our Hogsmeade visit in December. That's where you come in. The contact person is the bar man at the Hog's Head. I was rather hoping you'd accompany me. I've heard it's somewhat different from the Three Broomsticks, rather a rough crowd."

"Isn't there some other way?" Alex virtually implored.

"No!" Tony answered forcefully. "Amanda and I have discussed it time and again. It's our only logical choice. Will you go with me or not?"

"I'll go with you," Alex answered without conviction. Tony had trusted him and now that he was aware of the problem, he felt compelled to help, if for no other reason than so he could keep abreast of what was happening. Maybe he could somehow convince Amanda and Tony that there was another way, a safer more sensible way. What would Jamie and he do in a similar situation?

Alex was sure that Jamie would go to Professor Granger. She and Professor Potter would without doubt be upset, but they would understand and help. Somehow Alex had to convince Tony and Amanda to tell their parents, but how?

* * * * *

"I can't believe you persuaded me to meet with her," Hermione said with a shudder as she and Harry reached the entrance to the Three Broomsticks.

"What can it hurt?" Harry said as he opened the door for his wife. "Besides, Luna was a good friend. We owe her the courtesy of listening to what she has to say."

Hermione glared at Harry. "In nine days that rag of hers is going to ruin my life, and you want me to be courteous? What I should do is transfigure her into a cockroach!"

Harry looked at Hermione pleadingly. "You promised there would be no scene, that you'd keep your wand sheathed."

"And I will," Hermione said as they both looked around the crowded pub, filled with Hogwart students. "It's just that I can't understand how she can do this to me."

"Is that her?" Harry asked indicating an attractive willowy dirty-blond haired young woman sitting in a corner booth staring dreamily into space.

"That's her, all right," Hermione said, dislike apparent in her voice. "Look at her, forever lost in a daydream.. How did she ever finish at the top of her class?"

At that moment Luna Lovegood noticed them and sprang to her feet, waving to them.

"Harry," Luna said dreamily as he and Hermione approached the booth. "You're looking quite good. The years have done you justice." She gave Harry a brief hug that he uneasily returned.

Luna then turned her pale, protuberant eyes to Hermione. "I imagine you hate me," she uttered sadly. "Can't say that I blame you."

Hermione was initially stunned by Luna's words. "I don't really hate you," Hermione started to say, but then stopped. "I don't hate you as a person, but what you've done. It's despicable. What did I ever do to you to deserve this?"

Luna didn't answer, only looked blankly in the direction of the waitress until the woman finally approached them and took a beverage order.

For a few moments no one spoke. , Then, Luna broke the silence. "This summer, Frank Lyler, a freelance photographer, who works both in the muggle and wizard worlds was covering a pageant in Cap d' Adge," Luna said, her voice monotone. "He is not an extremely likeable wizard. Although he's never been arrested, many feel he dabbles in child pornography."

"Frank was evidently poolside the morning you went swimming for the first time. Knowing him, I assume he was probably ogling naked young girls when he was surprised to see the famous wizard, Harry Potter. Frank immediately ran to his room and exchanged his muggle camera for an inconspicuous wizardcam. From hidden locations he photographed you and your daughters."

Luna, for the first time since she had started speaking, turned to Hermione. "Frank though he had hit the jackpot until he saw Hermione. To say he was disappointed to find you clothed in a one piece swim costume would be putting it mildly. There was no money in pictures of Harry naked, but you were a different subject. He knew he could get a good price for pictures of you, but only if you were naked."

"But how did he know I was using a concealment charm and not actually wearing a swim costume?" Hermione asked, her interest outweighing her vow not to talk to Luna.

"He didn't." Luna continued on thoughtfully. "Frank was about to give up, when he saw you the morning of the exercise competition. He considered you to still be clothed, but was enticed by the spread position in which you had fallen asleep. You weren't nude, but he thought someone might have a perverted interest in some crotch shots of you."

Hermione shivered, she had guessed what happened next,

"Many wizard celebrities cover themselves with an anti-photographable charm to prevent their picture from being taken when they are not aware," Luna continued. "Although not expecting you to be using such a charm at a muggle resort, he uttered 'Finite Incantatum' anyway. He was pleasantly surprised at the results and started happily snapping pictures until a group of young girls caused him to rush off. Later that day he was banned from the resort for trying to take some crude shots of the young girls in the program."

"Then those pictures are the only ones he took of Hermione?" Harry asked semi-optimistically.

"No, he managed to get others," Luna answered, but not over excitedly. "But many of those were taken with a telephoto lens like the group beach picture and are not of the best quality."

"I don't understand," Harry asked. "It sounds like you aren't very content with the quality. Why are you ruining Hermione's life by publishing pictures that you're not even happy with and in all probability will disappoint your readers."

"Business," Luna said dreamily as she took a sip of her drink. "I doubt you'll believe me, but when Frank Lyler first approached me with his hand full of pictures, I told him that I wasn't interested. I said for the magazine to get involved we needed more pictures and of better quality. I did, however, make him a personal offer to get the pictures off the market, but he refused." Luna looked first at Hermione and then at Harry. "I honestly didn't want this to happen. I had intended to give you the pictures."

"About a month later, my two main competitors and myself received a letter from Frank. He now claimed to have three times as many pictures of Hermione and would sell them to the highest bidder." Luna sorrowfully looked at Hermione. "The pictures were going to be published," Luna said. "The only question was whether in Playwizard or some other publication. I'm truly sorry."

Hermione glanced from Luna to Harry and then said. "Exactly why are we here? Are you expecting me to forgive you for ruining my life because by your reasoning, if you hadn't done it someone else would have? I'm sorry, but I'll not forgive you for what you've done."

"I don't expect you to," Luna said, her voice once again drifting away lazily. "But I sincerely regret what this has done to you and Harry. Some nude photos shouldn't cost a brilliant professor her position, but I'm afraid they will. I can't prevent that from happening, but perhaps, in a small way, I can make amends."

"How?" Hermione asked disgustedly.

"Once the magazine is distributed, the harm is done. Why not make it worth while?" Luna asked.

"What are you going on about?" Harry asked, now becoming frustrated.

"Once someone has seen one picture of you naked, it hardly matters if they see two or three more," Luna stated. "After all you're not going to get anymore naked. I can't get you your

teaching position back, but I can compensate you partly for what you're losing and give you the funds to pursue a new endeavor."

Harry and Hermione both watched Luna impatiently waiting for her to get to the point of her comments and this meeting.

"As I said, I'm embarrassed by the quality of some of the photos Lyler took," Luna repeated. "Hermione, you are a beautiful woman and have an exquisite body. Frank's pictures do you an injustice. Let us run a feature showing how truly beautiful you are. Poise for our photographers in our studios and we'll pay you as much as you would earn the next ten years teaching. Take the money, go on an extended holiday and then prepare for your future. You can't undo what has happened, but you can at least garner some benefits from your distress."

Harry and Hermione sat, neither speaking nor looking at the other. Both deep in thought, realizing that as ludicrous as it sounded, what Luna was proposing actually made good sense under the current situation.

"Here," Luna said reaching into her briefcase. "Two of the first issues off the press. They're yours to keep. Look at them. Decide if this is how you want to be thought of or if you'd rather be depicted as beautiful as you truly are. I'll go get us some more drinks while you decide."

Luna got up to leave as Hermione said, "But I'm two months pregnant."

"And not the least bit showing," Luna replied, with a smile. "We, of course, will have to schedule the photo shoot immediately." Then before walking away, she added, "I have a terrific idea. Three more years of salary if you let us also photograph you full term and another five if we can photograph the actual delivery and first feeding. Totally nude, of course."

Harry and Hermione sat absolutely flabbergasted. Luna was tossing money around as if it were candy. She had just offered Hermione the equivalent of what she would have to teach eighteen years to earn.

Hermione knew Harry would support her no matter what her decision. That was the problem; it would have to be her decision. Could she actually pose for those types of pictures? On the other hand could she reject such an offer when she was about to be unemployed? Either way, the wizard world would see her displayed intimately; one way she would at least be compensated generously. Being a naturist and being nude in front of people was so different than posing for explicit pictures. Hermione couldn't explain why, but to her they were poles apart. One seemed pure, innocent and actually comfortable. The other seemed lurid, erotic and, to her mindset, totally wrong. Yet, they were basically the exact same thing.

"Harry, will you still love me if I agree to do this?" Hermione asked, all ready detesting herself for considering putting money ahead of her self-esteem.

* * * * *

Emily arrived at the family quarters first and, after slipping off her clothes, turned on some music and started preparations. Dobby, of course, had been eager to help any member of the Potter family and had supplied more than an ample amount of food.

Emily was getting out some glasses when Caitlin dashed through the door. After getting comfortable she offered to help Emily, who seemed to have the situation well under control.

"Randy and Matt will be here in a few minutes," Caitlin said excitedly. "Randy seemed extremely nervous. I'm not sure if it's because of Kim or you."

"I hope its Kim," Emily said sincerely. "She likes him rather a lot and will be terribly disappointed if he doesn't ask her to the Ball. Speaking of Kim, I wonder what's taking her so long. I hope she arrives before the boys."

Caitlin was about to comment that it was a long trip from the dungeons to the tower containing the staff quarters, when there was a knock at the door. Caitlin shouted come in and then stared in awe as Kim entered the room. She looked quite striking. Her hair literally glittered in the sunlight.

Kim was wearing a black skirt, short enough to qualify for even Jamie's wardrobe and a cute pink sweater that exposed her belly and clung tightly to her .

"You look great," Emily said with all sincerity. "If Randy doesn't ask you to the Ball, I will."

"You'll have to fight me," Caitlin said, just shaking her head. "Who did you have to kill to get a body like that at eleven?"

Kim didn't answer, but just blushed. "You guys better hurry and get dressed," she finally said. "Tyler was going to leave five minutes after me. He should be here any minute now if he doesn't get lost."

"He's coming!" Emily shouted excitedly. "I wasn't sure if he would or not."

"Actually he seemed extremely thrilled at the suggestion," Kim answered. "He wanted to come with me, but I convinced him it would look better if he gave me a short head start." Kim looked nervously toward the door. "He'll be here any second. You both really should hurry and dress."

Emily and Caitlin exchanged glances before Caitlin spoke. "This is our home," Caitlin said softly. "The one place in the world where we don't have to worry about offending someone else by being naked. You know that we don't wear clothes when we are here."

"Yes," Kim gulped, "but they're boys, boys our age. I thought that today you would surely dress."

"You seem to forget that we don't find being naked anything to be ashamed of," Emily said imperturbably. "Besides, none of them are seeing anything they haven't seen before. All three have seen me starkers before; Matt and Randy more times than I could count."

"Tyler has never seen me, but I'm not concerned," Caitlin laughed. "I doubt he'll spend much time looking at me with you two in the room."

Kim panicked. "You guys aren't expecting me to get naked, are you?" See looked back and forth between Caitlin and Emily actually trembling at the thought.

"Certainly not," Emily said, reassuringly. "You're not a nudist. You'd be as uncomfortable undressed as we are dressed. Actually, I'm surprised you're dressed as skimpily as you are."

Kim looked hurt. "You don't like the way I'm dressed?" she said sadly.

"Actually just the opposite." Emily said. "I've never seen you look so fabulous. It's just that what you have on leaves very little to the imagination. It wouldn't be that big a step to join us."

"It's a lot bigger step than I'm prepared to take," Kim said nervously. "I'm getting to the point that I actually enjoy being naked when it's just you guys. I've even gotten accustomed to being naked in front of Jamie and your parents; they're fine about it. But I still hate being naked in front of Denise and Janice; they make me feel like a tart. I don't think I could ever do it in front of boys our age."

"When the time comes, it has to be your choice," Emily said. "We'll be there to hold your hand if and when you're ready, but we'll never push you."

"They're here!" Caitlin hollered, as there was a knock at the door. Before any of the others could move, Caitlin bolted to the door and flung it wide open.

"OH! Good morning, Professor Malfoy," she said.

Kim looked at Emily and smiled, "I don't think that's any of the boys."

"Not hardly," Emily said with a laugh.

"Mum and Dad went to the village. I don't expect them back until at least mid afternoon," Caitlin said in answer to a question Emily and Kim hadn't heard.

"She's here. I'll call her so you can tell her directly. Emily," Caitlin shouted, "Professor Malfoy would like to speak with you."

Emily hurried to the door and then stood in front of the Professor. "Four o'clock is fine. I'll be there. I'm sorry you were put to the bother of tracking me down," Emily said.

There were a few moment of silence during which the Professor was evidently saying something and then Kim heard Emily speak again. "Actually I have flown like this; it's the grandest feeling. You should try it, but I'll take your advice and dress warmer this afternoon. Thank you sir."

"I'm so glad I was here," Kim said as the door closed. "I never would have believed this had I not witnessed it. You both must have nerves of steel. How could you stand there totally undressed and have a chitchat with the Potions Master?"

"He was on our turf," Caitlin said, assuredly. "When we venture beyond these walls, we must obey the rules of the textiles, but within these quarters we are nudists. If you visit us here, it will be nudists you find."

"You two are over-enthusiastic," Kim laughed.

"Yeah! In a way we are," Emily agreed. "But our type of obsessiveness hurts no one."

They were both about to comment further when there was another knock at the door. But as Caitlin started to dash toward it, Kim shouted a warning. "You better be careful. It might be the Headmaster this time."

"No problem," Caitlin said, grinning. "He's seen us naked quite a few times. He's even seen Jamie and Mum nude."

Kim was speechless, her mouth just hanging wide open. She was rapidly joined in her speechlessness as Caitlin greeted Tyler. For a moment he just stood petrified staring at the naked girl.

"Move it on in mate," Matt said as Randy and he approached the blocked doorway. "If you are going to spent any time in these quarters, you best get used to seeing girls in the buff. Emily and Caitlin loathe clothes and Jamie doesn't care for them a great deal more."

Tyler moved out of the way, but only enough that the other boys could enter before Caitlin closed the door. "I didn't expect this," Tyler said in shock as Emily approached him.

"We never wear clothes here," Emily said pleasantly. "It's the only place in the castle where we can truly be comfortable, and we take advantage of it whenever possible."

"Oh!" was Tyler initial response. The he noticed that Kim was fully clothed. "I thought she was a nudist, too," Tyler whispered softly. "Denise told my brother that the two of you are starkers in the dorm all the time."

"That's a long story," Emily said as she took Tyler's hand and guided him toward the kitchen. "I'll explain it to you sometime if you like, but please do me a favor," Emily asked. Tyler nodded his head yes. "If for some reason you find it necessary to discuss today, please say that Kim was also nude."

Kim wasn't nude, but Randy was certainly looking at her as if she were. There was no doubt the boy was smitten with her.

"Where'd you get all the food and butterbeer," Matt asked as they entered the kitchen.

"We have connections with the house elves," Emily said with a grin.

"You must," Matt said, shaking his head. "The six of us could eat and drink the balance of the day and never finish all of this."

"Unfortunately, we don't have the balance of the day," Caitlin said dejectedly. "We aren't sure when Mum and Dad will get back, so you guys have to clear out by one o'clock."

"That's time enough for a few games," Randy said, momentarily taking his eyes off Kim. "Who is up for a game of Wizard Trivia?" Most nodded their approval, so Caitlin scooted off to get the game.

"We could play as individuals, teams of two or teams of three," Randy suggested.

"Let's play partners, a boy and girl together," Caitlin said as she returned with the game.

"Gee, I wonder who you want as a partner?" Randy asked jokingly. "Okay, Caitlin and Matt, Emily and Tyler; do you mind being my partner Kim?"

"No, not at all," Kim answered slightly flustered. "I'd loved to be your partner."

"Okay, before we start, let's rearrange chairs so that partners are sitting next to each other," Caitlin ordered. "It will make discussing answers easier."

"Among other things," Emily said, giving Caitlin a knowing look.

* * * * *

"I don't think Jamie bought that excuse for one minute," Alex said as he and Tony departed, leaving the girls sitting in the Three Broomsticks.

"Nah! I didn't really expect her to," Tony answered. "Amanda is going to admit to her that we're actually off getting her a Christmas present. She'll believe that. I hope you're actually intending to get her something."

Alex nodded his head yes as they walked past the post office and turned up a side street at the top of which stood a small inn.

"Have you even been in here before," Alex asked as they approached the door to the inn and were greeted by the sound of a battered sign creaking in the wind.

"No!" Tony answered, as they both hesitated outside the door. "But if outward appearances are any indication, I doubt the inside will be anything like the Three Broomsticks."

It was not at all like the Three Broomstick. Instead of the warmth and cleanliness to which they were accustomed, they found themselves in a small, dingy, quite dirty room that smelled extremely rank. The only light in the room came from stubs of candles sitting on the rough tables. There were windows, but they were so filthy that no sunlight could possibly enter the room through them. Alex made a mental note to never bring Jamie here.

"What do you want?" Grunted the grumpy-looking old barman; evidently annoyed at having to service them.

"Two butterbeers, Sir," Tony answered politely.

"That'll be four Sickles," he said miserably as he slammed two dusty, extremely dirty bottles on the bar.

After Tony paid him, the barman deposited the money in an old wooden drawer and then retreated to the backroom.

"He's the person you have to make arrangements with?" Alex asked concernedly. "I've never met a more miserable person."

"Yeah!" said Tony as he tried to wipe his bottle clean; not at all sure he wanted to actually open and drink from it. "I'll ask him when he comes back while there is no one else at the bar."

Alex looked around the room disgustedly. "I'd never want to eat or drink anything here that didn't come in a sealed container," he said, seriously.

Tony nodded his head in agreement as the barman again entered the room, giving them a questioning stare. "Excuse me sir," Tony said nervously. "We've been told that arrangements could be made here to help a girl that is in trouble."

"That explains your presence," the barman said, nodding his head. "Hogwart students rarely come here." He surveyed Tony and Alex. "Which one of you knocked up the young lady, or have you both been poking the little bitch?"

Tony wanted to reach across the bar and wring his neck, but thought better. "She's my girlfriend," he answered. "Can arrangements be made to help her? It would have to be on December eighteenth; that's the next Hogsmeade visit."

The barman shook his head. "He doesn't like to be told when he has to do an operation," the barman said. "The 'doc' likes to be in control of the time and location, but he might make an exception for a young, pretty Hogwarts student. Is she a looker?"

He gives a discount if the patient is easy on the eyes," the barman said, giving them a dirty look.

Alex looked apprehensively at Tony. "Are you sure about this?" he said, concern evident in his voice.

"Amanda and I have discussed it over and over again," Tony answered. "We don't have a choice." He turned to the barman. "How much will it cost?"

"Two hundred fifty Galleons," the barman said, without blinking an eye.

Tony face turned pale. "That much?" he asked.

"Guess you should have thought about that before you dropped your pants and deposited your load in her?" He snarled. "That's the price and not a Sickle less. Should I make arrangements, or will you both be leaving my establishment."

"I can get the money," Tony said in a panic. "Please make the arrangements."

The barman smirked. "I thought you'd agree," he said with an evil snort as he sat two more butterbeers on the bar. "These are on the house. One o'clock on the eighteenth, the girl with the money on the bench in front of the post office. She'll be met and taken to the location. She'll be returned at five."

"But I want to go with her," Tony said defiantly.

"If the girl isn't alone, the agreement is off. If anyone tries to follow, we take the money and

the deal is off. Is that clear?"

"It's clear," Tony answered remorsefully.

* * * * *

As Luna returned to the table, she noticed that Harry and Hermione were both carefully studying the advance copies of the magazine that she had given them. "Do you see what I mean about the quality of some of the photos not being the best?" She said as she sat their drinks down in front of them. "I hope you've decided to pose for us, Hermione. Not only will it allow us to deliver a more quality product to our readers, but the money will hopefully help to make up for your loss of employment."

Hermione gave Luna a brief smile. "I understand that this is all strictly business and that you never intentionally set out to hurt me," Hermione said, politely. "Your offer is extremely tempting, and I would most likely accept it, but Harry feels I will be too busy to pose once the magazine is circulated."

Luna stared at Hermione and then turned to Harry, a more confused than normal look on her face. "Why would she be too occupied to pose?" She questioned.

"Because she'll own Playwizard magazine," Harry said calmly. "It seems that Frank Lyler tricked you, Luna. Over half of the pictures you've used in your photo spread are not of Hermione, but rather of someone who looks extremely much like her."

Luna looked at Harry, not wanting to believe his words. She faked a laugh. "Good try Harry, you had me worried for a moment."

"You should be concerned," Hermione said, earnestly. "It gets worse. It seems that when you told Lyler that he didn't have enough pictures, he added some to the collection. The most explicit and pornographic of the picture are not of me, but rather of Jamie Zacherley. Should that magazine get distributed, not only will you be sued for misrepresenting someone else as me, but you will unquestionably end up in Azkaban guilty of printing and circulating child pornography; Jamie is only sixteen. Nude picture of children in and of themselves are not considered pornographic unless they focus on the genitalia, and the ones you've published of Jamie most certainly do."

Luna Lovegood alternately looked at Harry and Hermione. "You're telling the truth, aren't you?" She said horrified, literally shaking as she spoke. "I'm going to hex Frank Lyler to within an inch of his life!"

"Lyer is your business," Harry said powerfully. "What is more important at this point is that you immediately stop further printing of the magazine and see that all printed copies are secured. After you've done that, we can discuss terms."

"Terms?" Luna asked. "What do you mean terms."

"Luna, you're a friend," Harry said genuinely. "Hermione and I have no desire to see you in Azkaban or to have you lose your magazine, but the only way you will prevent both from happening is do as we say. First I suggest you use that fire," Harry indicated the fireplace just

feet from their table, "to contact your main office and stop the presses."

A look of desperation covered her face. Luna was about to cancel publication of what would have been the best selling issue in the history of Playwizard magazine. Doing so would cost the corporation a fortune and possibly cause their demise. The alternative was unquestionably losing the magazine and, at the same time, being sentenced to Azkaban. She in actuality had no choice as she approached the fire.

After a few minutes, Luna dejectedly returned to the table. "Printing has ceased and all finished copies have been secured." She looked like a child whose favorite toy had just been destroyed. "What are your terms," she muttered dolefully.

"You will destroy all the magazines already printed and any other pictures of Hermione or any other members of our family," Harry stated firmly. "Then you will turn the negatives over to us. These," he pointed to the copies of the magazine Luna had given them, "are our insurance policy that you will act in good faith."

"But what do I tell our readers," Luna moaned. "And it isn't right that Frank Lyler gets off without a scratch."

"You could always tell your readers that you found a conscience," Hermione suggested. "As for Lyler, should you care to take him to court for selling you pornographic pictures of a minor, Harry, Jamie and I would all be delighted to testify and supply the evidence."

Luna looked at Hermione and Harry diffidently. "I doubt that you'll believe me, but I'm not completely sorry things turned out this way."

"Actually I do believe you," Harry said giving Luna a smile.

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The teams turned out to be extremely unevenly matched. Evidently Emily and Tyler had both spent their entire childhood memorizing useless facts, facts that would get you absolutely nowhere in life. That is, unless you decided to make a career out of playing Wizard Trivia.

Everyone had really gotten into the game, giving their partners high fives and hugs whenever they answered a question correctly. Randy and Kim seemed to be especially enjoying the hugs, possibly because they were doing so poorly in the game that it was a special treat when they got to do it.

Around half past eleven, the other teams conceded, and Emily and Tyler were declared Trivia champions of the day. They took a break for lunch and then sat just looking at each other trying to decide what game they could play next, with only an hour left before they had to break.

"No sense starting something we don't have time to finish," Randy said, at a loss for suggestions

"I know what we can play," Emily shouted elatedly. "Twister! It's a muggle game my parents got for Jamie and me. We love it! Play it at parties all the time."

Everyone else shrugged his or her shoulders, never having heard of the game before now. Emily ran to her bedroom and quickly returned with a box from which she pulled out a rectangular plastic mat and laid it on the floor. The mat had four rows of six large colored dots. One row each of green, yellow, blue and red.

"You can play with two, three or four players," Emily explained. "I'll demonstrate the two player game first; it's the simplest. Caitlin, will you help me? Randy, you can be the referee." Emily handed Randy a piece of cardboard with a medal arrow that spun attached to the middle. In a circle were sixteen possible places to place hands and feet.

"Okay, you and I get at opposite ends of the mat facing each other," Emily instructed Caitlin. "Face me with one foot on the yellow circle and one foot on the blue circle closest to your end of the mat. Okay! Randy spin the spinner and call out what we should do."

Caitlin stood nervously with her right foot on blue and her left on yellow waiting for Randy to call the first move.

"Right foot, red," Randy called.

For Caitlin this was an easy move; she just moved her right foot forward and to the right. Emily, however, had to twist her body slightly and ended up facing the corner of the mat.

"Left foot green," Randy shouted.

Once again Caitlin had it easy. She now stood on the second row of dots, her left foot on green and her right foot on red; her body spanning yellow and blue. Emily had to twist herself completely around. She was on the second row of dots from the other end now with her back to Caitlin, also spanning yellow and blue.

"Left hand green," Randy said and both girls leaned forward.

"Right hand red," Randy quickly said. Both girls now found themselves uncomfortably stretched across the mat.

Caitlin looked up from the mat and found she was staring directly at Emily's bottom. "Nice view, Zacherley," she said jokingly.

"You're showing everyone the same picture," Emily said with a laugh, "but I wouldn't get too close if I were you. I had a rather large helping of beans for lunch."

Caitlin thought for a second and then said, "You're disgusting." Everyone broke into laughter.

After Caitlin and Emily finished their game, Matt and Caitlin played, followed by Tyler and Emily. It was evident that Tyler was much more nervous being in close range to Emily's bare body than Matt had been with Caitlin. Nonetheless, everyone was laughing and having fun.

"You guys are next," Matt said to Kim and Randy as Emily and Tyler reluctantly untangled themselves.

Randy seemed eager to play, but when he glanced at Kim, she appeared scared to death. He

glanced at her short skirt and said, "We'll pass. Kim is not really dressed properly for such a game." The words were no more out of his mouth than he realized how ridiculous they sounded considering Emily and Caitlin state of dress.

"No!" Kim said nervously. "You want to play, I know you do. So do I. I just have to...." She looked pleading in Emily's direction. "Emily, would you help me with something in the bathroom?"

"We'll be right back," Kim said fearfully as she grabbed Emily's hand and drug her into the bathroom.

Once inside, Kim rapidly removed her sweater and skirt and then pointed her wand at her thin growth of pubic hair. "What do I have to say to get rid of this?" she asked apprehensively.

"Kim, you don't have to do this," Emily said earnestly.

"I want to," Kim begged. "Randy wants to play the game and so do I. I'm being silly about being nude."

"You're not being silly," Emily said putting her arms around Kim. "I'd love for you to become a naturist, but your reasons are wrong. I'm nude because I'm more comfortable this way. I've grown up loving the feeling of not wearing clothes. You hate being naked. You're not doing this for yourself, but rather for Randy."

Kim turned to Emily, tears in her eyes. "I want do it; I have to. I thought you were my best friend. Please help me with the hair removal spell."

"I'll help you with the spell," Emily said reluctantly, "but please reconsider going out there naked."

Kim stood defiantly, her wand shaking in her hand.

Emily shook her head in frustration. "Just point the wand at yourself and say 'relegare capillago'," Emily said, as a pounding on the door interrupted her train of thought.

Randy was on the other side yelling, "Is everything all right?"

"Everything is fine. We'll be right out," Emily answered Randy, reassuringly. "Kim, don't forget to specify what part of you body."

The horrifying scream that ensued, indicted that the last part of Emily's instructions had come too late.

The door flew open and Randy burst into the room. Kim struggled to conceal her face and head. The charm had removed every single strand of hair from her entire body.

Chapter Fifteen - Not the Foggiest Idea

Tony and Amanda had allowed Alex and Jamie to take the lead as they made the return journey to Hogwarts castle. "How did it go?" Amanda asked, her hand trembling in Tony's firm but sweaty hand.

"Okay, I guess," he answered disconsolately. "We were able to schedule the procedure. It's just that I wish there was another way."

"So do I," Amanda said squeezing Tony hand tightly, "but we've been over this hundreds of times. This is our only way out."

"I know. It's just that I don't like the type of people we've been forced to deal with. I'm worried about your safety," Tony said, unable to look into Amanda's face.

"I'll be fine," Amanda said, trying to reassure herself, as much as Tony. "Besides, you'll be by my side the whole time, holding my hand. You'll protect me and make sure everything goes all right."

"They won't let me," Tony said dejectedly. "If anyone besides you shows up at the contact point, everything is off."

Amanda just nodded her head and once again said, "I'll be fine." Although her voice sounded resolute, her quivering body betrayed her true feelings.

* * * * *

"What's going on, Alex?" Jamie asked in a soft, but firm, voice.

"What do you mean?" Alex answered, as innocently as possible.

"Alex, please give me some credit," Jamie said. "Amanda tried to sell me the story that you were off with Tony buying my Christmas present. I know you better than that. You plan things out too carefully. You would never try to sneak off and purchase a present right under my nose."

"No, I wouldn't," Alex said, guiltily. "Jamie, I can't tell you what I was actually doing. Tony asked for my help and swore me to secrecy."

"I didn't think we had any secrets from each other," Jamie said, sounding extremely hurt.

"Jamie, please trust me on this," Alex begged. "I don't like keeping anything from you, but it's imperative that I maintain Tony's trust so I'm kept aware of what is transpiring."

Jamie squeezed Alex's hand, looked him in the eye and said pleading, "Please, just tell me that Amanda isn't pregnant."

Alex looked at Jamie, amazed at her intuitiveness. "I only wish I could."

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"I thought we'd never get them to leave," Emily said as she turned away from the closed door.

"Especially Randy," Caitlin added. "He seemed genuinely concerned about Kim."

"I think he fancies her even bald," Emily said. "Do you think you can help her, or should we wait for Mum?"

"My regeneration powers are much stronger than Mum's," Caitlin said with conviction. "Do you think Kim trusts me enough to let me try?"

"I hope so," Emily said, optimistically. "She can't spend the rest of her life in the loo crying."

"Suppose you try to get her to come out while I clean up the place." Caitlin suggested. "It will be hard enough explaining Kim being hairless. I don't want to do that and have to give details on the boys being here."

"I'll second that," Emily said as she knocked on the bathroom door. "Kim, the boys are gone. Will you please come out and let Caitlin endeavor to help you?"

Slowly, the door opened, and Kim stepped out. The girl was naked except for her skirt, which instead of being belted around her waist was instead secured at eyebrow level so that it hid her hairless head.

"Does she really think she can help me?" Kim asked timidly.

"There is a good chance," Emily said encouragingly. "I'm sure the hair would grow back naturally of its own accord in time. I must redo the spell twice a week to prevent the growth of my pubic hair. Since a hyperempath can actually cause the regeneration of a body part, causing your hair to grow, theoretically, should be simple. By the way, you really handled Randy seeing you nude quite well."

"I was rather preoccupied," Kim answered, actually giving a weak smile. "I only had two hands and arms. It might sound silly, but I was more embarrassed to have him see me bald than to see my other parts."

"It doesn't sound silly at all," Caitlin said as she joined Kim and Emily. "I could walk down the main street of Hogsmeade completely starkers and not be the least embarrassed, but not bald. Like you, I'd want to run and hide. Suppose you lie down on the couch and let me see what I can do."

Kim stretched out on the sofa with her skirt-covered head against the armrest. "Let's try the eyebrows first," Caitlin suggested, as she got on her knees and started gently stroking the area where Kim's eyebrows should be with her fingertips.

Within seconds light strands of hair appeared. "It's working," Emily shouted gleefully. "I'll tell you when they're the right length." Almost instantly, Emily told Caitlin to stop.

"Let's do the eyelashes next," Caitlin suggested. "Do you want normal or long and alluring?"

"I'll be quite happy with my dull old lashes," Kim answered as Caitlin began running her fingers gently down Kim's eyelids."

"That looks good," Emily said after only a few seconds. "You're amazing!" Emily seemed in awe of her 'sister's' ability.

"I know you're embarrassed, but you're going to have to take that off your head," Caitlin said sympathetically to Kim as she indicated the skirt presently concealing Kim's baldness. "With any luck, it won't take long."

Kim sat up and reluctantly removed the covering so that Caitlin could caress her entire head. Caitlin barely touched her scalp when a fuzz covering appeared followed by an appearance that resembled a boy's very short crew cut.

"Caitlin, stop." Emily shouted excitedly. "Kim, you have to watch this. It's amazing. You're going to be able to have any length hair you want. Let's go in Mum's room so you can watch in the mirror and decide on a style."

What had moments before been a tragedy had now suddenly turned into great fun. The girls ran into the room, with Kim, at first, not wanting to look in the mirror, but eventually obliging. She was ecstatic to see that she once again had eyebrow and lashes, but was not terribly thrilled with seeing herself with a boys' style crew cut. As soon as Caitlin began running her hands over Kim's scalp, however, the hair again began to grow.

"How long do you want it?" Caitlin asked, sounding like a hairdresser.

"It was shoulder length," Kim answered, and then looked yearningly in the mirror. "Do you think? Would it be asking too much? I've always wanted really long hair; hair that actually covered my bottom."

"Your wish is my command," Caitlin said as she continued stroking Kim head. Within a minute, Kim had beautiful silky hair that extended to the desired length.

"You look absolutely breathtaking," the voice said. "I haven't seen hair that long and lovely since I was owned by Lady Godiva."

"Who's there?" Kim asked, nervously looking around the room.

"That's just the mirror," Emily said, matter-of-factly.

"Your mirror talks," Kim asked, her voice sounding shocked. "Can it see us?"

"I don't actually see, but rather reflect," the mirror said, answering Kim's question.

"I don't think I'll ever get completely accustomed to the magical world," Kim said anxiously. "Can we go back in the other room where there are no mirrors to watch us?"

"Sure," Caitlin answered accommodatingly. "I imagine we're done anyway. Your delicate body hair should grow back by itself in a few days." Caitlin glanced at Kim crotch. "It might take awhile for that to get like it was. Did you want me to help it along?"

"No," Kim answered, uncomfortable with the thought of Caitlin touching her there. "This whole episode started with me wanting that removed. If I decide to let it grow back, I'll let it do it on its own."

"Are you sure?" Emily asked out of concern. "Will you be okay with Denise and Janice seeing you like you are?"

"After what happened to me today, I think I can handle just about anything," Kim said, smiling for the first time since she had been rendered bald.

At that moment, the door opened. Harry and Hermione having returned from Hogsmeade. Neither was stunned to find the girls in their quarters, but they were staggered by Kim's hair.

"How did your hair become so long?" Hermione asked, obviously flabbergasted at the sight. "Did you cause it to grow longer?" Her first thought was that Kim had Animagus abilities.

Kim hemmed and hawed at first. "No! Caitlin lengthened it," she finally answered. "I told her how I always wished I had hair this long, and she only had to stroke it a few seconds before it became like this."

"I don't think I've every seen anyone with hair that length before," Harry said, finding it hard to not stare at Kim.

"You never cease to amaze me young lady," Hermione said, putting her arm around Caitlin. "Is there no limit to your abilities?"

"Mum, speaking of my abilities, can I start giving you full body massages?" Caitlin asked.

Everyone just gazed at Caitlin questioningly.

"Why on earth would you suggest doing such a thing?" Hermione asked, completely befuddled by Caitlin's request.

"Actually, Madam Pomfrey initially planted the idea in my head the other day when she was training me on how to control my hyperempathic abilities," Caitlin explained. "We started to talk about you and what part I might take in the delivery of the baby, if allowed. She talked about some of the negatives of childbirth, such as varicose veins, stretch marks, and the premature sagging of breasts."

"What does any of that have to do with giving Mum massages?" Emily asked impatiently.

"Pomfrey says that if a woman receives full body massages at least twice a week from a hyperempath, she won't experience any of those problems," Caitlin explained.

Harry looked questioningly at Hermione, as if to seek verification.

"Is that true, Mum?" Emily inquired excitedly. "You should let her do it. Why take the chance of losing that gorgeous body if it's not necessary?"

Although he didn't say a word, Harry's face seemed to show agreement.

Hermione's face colored. "I couldn't let you do that," she said, mortified. "When they say you must touch and massage everywhere, they actually mean everywhere." Hermione was embarrassed at the thought of anyone touching her other than Harry, but then she looked at Caitlin. The young girl's face now carried a heart broken expression.

"But I love you," Caitlin sobbed. "I'm your daughter. Mothers and daughter should help each other, when they can."

Hermione wrapped her arm around Caitlin's shoulder. "But you have helped me," Hermione answered. "If it hadn't been for you, I would have died last year."

Caitlin looked at Hermione disappointedly. "I didn't realize it was a once and done thing. I was hoping that you'd always be there for me and that I could always be there for you, not only in life threatening situations."

Hermione looked to Harry for support, but could immediately tell by his expression that on this issue he seemed to be siding with Caitlin.

"I'm not vain," Hermione said, truthfully. "I like to exercise and take care of myself physically, but I realize age, gravity and babies change a person's body. I'm not going to look in a mirror and cry if my breasts aren't quite as perky or I have a few stretch marks. My only concern is that I safely deliver a healthy baby."

"But why should you let that happen when I can prevent it?" Caitlin practically begged.

Hermione studied Caitlin's face carefully. "This means an awful lot to you, doesn't it?" she asked. "Why are you so concerned if I look a little older?"

"Because," Caitlin paused, "although you're my Mum and I'll always love you as such, when I'm your age I want people to think you're my sister like they do now with you and Jamie. Besides, I think it's neat that Dad can't tell you and Jamie apart when he's blindfolded. I have the ability to help you continue to look as great as you do now. Please let me?"

Hermione knew she was losing the battle. She always had a difficult time saying no to Caitlin. "Okay," Hermione said, undecidedly. "When do you want to start these massage treatments?"

"Madame Pomfrey says the sooner the better. Why not now?" Caitlin asked enthusiastically.

"Oh! Can Kim and I watch?" Emily asked excitedly.

"You most positively cannot," Hermione said, unconditionally. "I have enough qualms about this. I'm most unquestionably not turning it into a sideshow."

"Does that apply to me, also?" Harry asked.

Hermione nodded her head. "I'm sorry Harry, but if we're going to do this, it is going to be private between a hyperempath and her patient." Hermione looked at Caitlin uneasily. "Let's get started before I lose my nerve," she said, heading for the bedroom.

Hermione closed the door and was just about to disrobe when the mirror spoke. "Professor Granger," the mirror said in what was unmistakably a concerned tone. "May I have a moment

with you in private, it's rather important."

The mirror's concern was instantaneously transferred to Hermione. Never in the six years that she had possessed the mirror had it requested to speak to her with such unmistakable unease, yet alone in private. "Caitlin, I'm not backing out, but can I have a few minutes alone with the mirror before we start?"

Caitlin had also noticed the disquiet in the mirror's voice and gave her mother no argument. As soon as the door closed behind Caitlin, Hermione turned and spoke. "Is there something wrong? What have you seen," Hermione asked, almost in panic.

"Miss Thatcher's hair is beautiful, isn't it? I've always enjoyed reflecting images of women with long hair," the mirror answered, forlornly.

"Yes, her hair is lovely," Hermione responded, "but surely your reason for asking to have a word with me wasn't to discuss Kim's hair."

"Do you remember when we had the conversation about how it would drive people mad if they worried about how each action they took affected their life and that of others?" the mirror inquired.

"Yes! I remember that," Hermione answered, extremely concerned where this conversation was leading.

"I should take my own advice," the mirror said gloomily. "Miss Thatcher is going home for Christmas. Nothing you or anyone else can do will prevent that from happening. During her holiday, her stepfather will try to take advantage of her."

Hermione was aghast. "But certainly it can be avoided! I'll get the Headmaster. You can tell him what you've seen. We can make her stay here at Hogwarts."

"Sadly, some possible futures show you trying to do just that, but to no gain. The mother is a Muggle. She will not believe anyone and insists her daughter be allowed home. It will happen; we can not stop it." The mirror made the state of affairs sound hopeless.

Hermione sat down on the edge of her bed, tears filling her eyes. "If there is nothing I can do to stop the bastard from attacking her, why do you tell me this? What will become of her?"

"Most futures for her look desolate," the mirror confessed. "In some he impregnates her; in others, she is molested and badly beaten. Many show her in the mental ward of St. Mungos. Sadly, in most, she takes her life."

"No! That can't happen," Hermione demanded. "We just can't sit back and let this happen. Certainly, not all her futures show lack of hope."

"All but a very few. That is why I felt the need to talk to you."

* * * * *

"Alex, how can you expect me to just sit by and not do anything?" Jamie shouted, frustration

coating her every word. "Amanda may no longer consider me her best friend, but I still care about her."

"Don't say that," Alex scolded. "Amanda loves you."

"She certainly has an odd way of showing it," Jamie said with frustration. "Why didn't she tell me she was pregnant? I could have gone to Hermione and gotten her some proper help."

Alex put his arm around Jamie and pulled her closer. "That's exactly why she didn't tell you," he said consolingly. "They didn't want her or the Headmaster or their parents knowing. They want to take care of it themselves."

"Take care of it themselves? What do you mean take care of it themselves? Jamie asked, looking dubiously at Alex. "You make it sound like they're planning to abort the pregnancy." She studied Alex's ashen face. "No! Alex, please tell me that's not what they purpose to do. They'll be sent to Azkaban."

"That's why I have to talk them out of it," Alex said solemnly. "I went with Tony to make arrangements for the procedure today. If the abortion takes place, I'm as guilty as they are."

Jamie was horror-struck by the thought of any of them spending even one hour in Azkaban. "We have to go to Harry and Hermione," Jamie begged. "We can trust them; they'll help."

"We can't; at least not yet. Give me time to talk to Amanda and Tony and try to reason with them."

* * * * *

Wednesday, November 10, 2004

Harry and Hermione had not spoken to anybody about their get-together with Luna Lovegood. Although Luna left them with the impression that the magazine would not be distributed, she had to contact her father, who owned the publication, for final approval. Tuesday, Harry had received a protected package containing all the negatives and a letter from Luna assuring him that all printed copies of the magazine had been destroyed.

This morning when Hermione read her copy of the Daily Prophet, she was lastly able to breathe a sigh of relief; her nightmare was over.

Playwizard Magazine Unearths a Conscience
By Justin Finch-Fletchley

This reporter has learned to expect the unexpected, but yesterday's news conference by Playwizard managing editor Luna Lovegood caught me completely by surprise. Of all the publications in the wizard world, Playwizard is the last I ever expected to demonstrate knowledge of a distinction between right and wrong.

You, therefore, can imagine my shock when Luna Lovegood announced that the magazine was canceling their December issue. Miss Lovegood stated that the issue, which was to contain the widely anticipated nude photos of Hermione (Granger) Potter, would not be published. She further acknowledged that the publication had no future plans to publish the

pictures of the famous witch.

When pressed for an explanation, Miss Lovegood said that from the onset the magazine had qualms about publishing the unauthorized pictures. The ultimate decision to cancel was made after Playwizard Publications learned that the Governors of Hogwarts had decided to dismiss Professor Granger upon distribution of the magazine.

"Hermione Granger is more than a beautiful witch," Miss Lovegood said. "She is a hero of the wizard world and an icon to wizard youth. For Hogwarts to lose her as a professor would indeed be a travesty. Playwizard Magazine refuses to be the justification used by the prehistoric minded panel, known as the Board of Governors, to remove her from the position she justly desires. We apologize to our readers, but feel we must do what is in the best interest of our world."

This reporter must confess that he was somewhat looking forward to seeing the attractive professor displayed au naturel, but applauds Playwizard for their courageous and undoubtedly costly decision.

As Hermione handed the Daily Prophet to Harry, he noticed something he hadn't seen in nearly two months; his Mione had regained the smile he loved so much. "Luna stretched the truth slightly," he said smiling widely, "but what's important is that you'll be staying at Hogwarts."

Hermione and Harry embraced, forgetting for the moment that they were having breakfast in the Great Hall. Those students who subscribed to the Prophet had quickly spread the good news, and when the couple embraced, loud applause and whistles echoed through out the Hall.

Hermione blushed, as she wiped a tear from her eye. "Do you think that now we'll be able to get back to a normal life?" She asked Harry after the applause subsided.

"I think, Mione," Harry said, giving his wife a smile, "that you and I will never come to know the true meaning of a normal life."

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Saturday, November 13, 2004

Hermione was surprised to awaken to the sound of silence. For the previous three days she had both gone to sleep and woken to the sound of rain being pelted against the windows by heavy winds.

The weather the previous Saturday for the Hogsmeade visit had been beautiful. By Tuesday, however, the sky had turned overcast, and it had begun to rain heavily. Each day, it seemed, the weather had turned steadily worse as the first Quidditch match of the season drew nearer. Emily's practice session, scheduled for Friday afternoon, had even been canceled due to the intense winds and drenching rains.

"I think it finally stopped raining," she whispered to Harry, lingering to kiss his ear. "I imagine they'll get to play today."

"Of course, they'll play," Harry said groggily, as he opened his eyes. "Quidditch is never canceled because of the weather. Don't you remember me playing during that horrible storm in third year? I thought one of us would either be blown off our broom or be hit by lightning."

Hermione shivered at the memory. "I'd rather forget that game," she said, fretfully. "When the dementors caused you to fall off your broom, I thought you'd be killed." She hugged Harry tightly. "I wouldn't admit it to myself, but I think I already loved you back then."

"We were both quite young and didn't even realize what love was," Harry said. "My feelings for you have always been more than simple friendship. I always knew you were special, but I never realized how special until I almost lost you."

Harry began to get playful, and Hermione knew that unless she stopped him quickly, they would once again be missing breakfast. Normally she'd favor sex over food, but not on a Quidditch day when one had no idea what time his or her next meal would be enjoyed. Plus today was special; Sam and Timmy were joining them for breakfast and the game.

"Not this morning Mr. Potter," she said with a laugh. "I'm not going to the Quidditch match starving." Hermione jumped out of bed quickly and was about to head for the bath when she looked back at the brooding Harry.

"You are such a baby." Hermione said, shaking her head in dismay. "Why don't you join me in the shower? You do such a thorough job scrubbing me up," she suggested naughtily as she peered out the drapes to confirm the weather.

Harry promptly bounded out of bed and darted to join her. "Are you sure they never cancel Quidditch games?" she asked, holding open the drapes. "Not even you could catch the Snitch today."

Although Harry and Hermione were both now standing in front of the window totally exposed, they had little fear of being seen, for they couldn't see more than two feet outside of the window. As they looked about, they felt as if they were floating in a cloud. Not only couldn't they see any of the castle grounds, but also they were unable to see any other parts of the castle.

"I've never seen such a thick fog," Harry commented. "If this doesn't thin out before the game, it will be total pandemonium."

"We could probably watch from here and get just as good a view of the game," Hermione said sarcastically. She shook her head as she thought about the imminent game. "I never thought the day would come that I'd be cheering for a Slytherin team."

"Nor did I." Harry stood behind Hermione with his hands grasping her stomach. "Our child's starting to show," Harry said lovingly.

"That's what the girls said the other night when they took my picture," Hermione said, blushing. "I swear, all three of them are going to end up being photographers for Playwizard. They seem to love embarrassing me by taking those nude pregnancy shots."

"Have you shown Jamie the Playwizard pictures yet?" Harry asked sheepishly.

"I showed all the girls," Hermione confessed. "Of course, I got Jamie's permission first, since most of them were of her."

"How did they react? Harry asked. "Were they upset?"

"Just the opposite," Hermione said, amazed. "None of them even found the close-ups of my pubic area offensive. I'm glad they are so open about nudity, but sometimes they scare me. Nothing seems to disconcert them."

"I know what you mean," Harry said showing the concern of a father. "At times I wish they were more modest. Speaking of being modest, how are your massages with Caitlin going?"

"Harry, Caitlin makes me feel like I'm a silly little girl," Hermione said, uncomfortably. "I'm all shaky and nervous, and she is so calm and professional. It doesn't seem to faze her in the least to touch me anywhere. As much as I enjoy naturism, I don't think I could ever take it to the next step like the girls have."

"They certainly are different, - very different and very special." Harry glanced at the clock. "Speaking of being professional," he said with grin, "if you want a truly professional scrubbing before breakfast, we best hit the shower."

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"Are you nervous?" Kim asked, as she watched Emily squirm and pull at her clothes.

"Not especially," her friend answered. "It's this sodding Quidditch outfit. It's so bulky and restrictive. I don't know how they expect a person to move about in it, and all this cloth creates a wind drag. It would be so much better if we all flew naked."

Kim giggled. "Normally I think you overdo the whole nudist thing, but I must admit I wouldn't mind seeing some of our players nude."

Emily mocked a horror stricken expression. "Kim Thatcher, I'm shocked! One might get the impression that you're interested in more than the broom that the male players have between their legs."

Kim blushed a bright red. "It's not just that," she said. "Well, that is part of it. You've seen hundreds of men and boys naked. The most I've ever seen is drawings and statues. I admit that I'd like to see the real thing."

Emily laughed. "I'll ask Randy if he's willing to give you a showing."

"Don't you dare," Kim begged, turning even a more brilliant shade of red.

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"Emily certainly doesn't take after you when it comes to pre-game nervousness," Hermione said, as Harry and her took seats next to Ron and Sam. "Look at her joking around with Kim and shoveling down her breakfast."

"I'm sure she's nervous," Harry said assuredly. "She's just much better at hiding it. I used to always wear my emotions on my sleeve in full view of the whole world."

"Good morning Aunt Hermyme, Uncle Harry," Timmy said excitedly. He was sitting on his mother's lap supposedly eating breakfast, but much too distracted by all the activity in the Great Hall.

Harry and Hermione greeted Timmy and then exchanged pleasantries with Ron, Sam and the others seated nearby.

"Horrible day for Quidditch," Harry said, sounding irritated.

"Yes, Severus and I were just discussing the weather," Ron answered. "The sensible thing would probably be to postpone the game, but scores of parents and relatives are already here. Many don't like to Apparate and, therefore, fly in ahead of time and spend the evening in Hogsmeade."

"Then the game is still going to be played?" Hermione questioned.

"Yes," Ron answered, "but it will be a farce! The chasers won't be able to see to pass the Quaffle, the keepers won't be able to block shots on goal and I have no idea how the Beaters will know where to hit the Bludgers."

"And," added Harry, "the Seekers will never see the Golden Snitch. I doubt this game will end today unless the fog lifts."

"I'm going to the Idditch game, Aunt Hermyme," Timmy stated proudly.

"So are we," Hermione answered. "We're going to be sitting together, not that there'll be much to see."

"How are the players going to even see each other?" Sam asked. "There is always the concern of collisions occurring, but today I would think that it would be an almost certainty."

"Severus and I had the same concern," Ron agreed. "We're going to have the players attach wands to their brooms sticks. The Hufflepuffs will emit a yellow light and the Slytherins a green. It will be of little help game wise, but hopefully might avoid a midair collision. I sincerely doubt there will be much high speed flying under the current conditions."

Hermione simply shook her head in disbelief. To her mind, nothing justified playing a Quidditch game under these conditions. She was about to say so when the owls entered the Great Hall with the morning mail.

"Nothing seems to prevent the owls from making their deliveries," Sam commented as a large barn owl swooped near her and deposited a letter next to Hermione.

"Big birdies," Timmy exclaimed as he quickly slipped off his mother's lap and sought refuge under the table.

Sam stared at the letter Hermione was holding. "That's Muggle mail isn't it?" She asked after noticing stamps pasted on the front.

"Yes," Hermione replied. "Harry and I both have acquaintances in the Muggle world, so we maintain a post office box in Hogsmeade. An owl then delivers any mail we receive there."

Hermione quickly opened the letter and began reading it as the others continued to discuss the Quidditch game. Hermione didn't notice Severus approach and put his hand on Ron's shoulder.

"It's from Michelle Wolfskill," Hermione said excitedly after finishing reading the letter.

At first Harry simply stared at Hermione questioningly, then he smiled with recognition. "Michelle from Cap d'Adge?" He asked. "What caused her to write?"

"It seems that instead of going to Cap d'Adge this summer, they are going to take a cruise," Hermione said. "Michelle says a number of the people we met will be going, and she wondered if we would be interested or knew anyone else that might be."

"A cruise," Harry said, thoughtfully. "I've always wanted to go on a cruise and now that your job is secure.... What do you think of the idea, Mione?"

"I love it," Hermione said, excitedly. "I'm sure the girls will be thrilled, too! Michelle sent all the information. Let's discuss it as a family and see what they think."

"See what who thinks?" Ron questioned, after finishing his discussion with Severus.

"Harry and Hermione are considering going on a cruise this summer with the girls," Sam said, envy evident in her voice.

"Sam and I were talking about possibly going on a cruise as a sort of a honeymoon," Ron declared. "Wouldn't it be fun if... Nah, I guess you guys wouldn't want us around."

"Nonsense, I think it would be wonderful if we all went," Hermione said, hesitantly. "It's just that...."

"You think Ron and I should discuss it together before making a decision," Sam said, interrupting Hermione. "Oh! Look! The students are starting to head for the pitch."

"I should get out there, too," Ron said, giving both Sam and Timmy a hug and kiss before excusing himself and scurrying off.

"Sam," Hermione said, uncertainly. "You do realize that this is a naturist cruise, don't you?"

"That's one of the reasons why I'm so excited about going," she replied slyly. "I just haven't quite figured out how to break the news to Ron yet."

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As the Slytherin team made their way to the entrance of the Great Hall, something happened that had never occurred before in the history of Hogwarts. They were approached by a group of Gryffindors with their hands extended to wish them luck.

Jamie gave Tony a quick kiss on the cheek and then embraced Emily. "Good luck, Sis! Be careful out there."

As Alex, Caitlin, Matt, Amanda and Randy crowded Emily and Tony, Jamie turned to Doris Burke. At first Jamie extended her hand, but then instead pulled Doris into a hug. "Good luck friend," she said sincerely.

As the hug ended, Jamie noticed that Doris' eyes were watering. "Is something wrong," she asked with unease.

"No," Doris said, a tear dropping from her eye. "Something is right. For the first time since I've been at Hogwarts, I've been hugged and wished good luck by someone who wasn't doing it out of house loyalty or for personal gain, but rather because they sincerely meant it. It feels good."

Jamie gave Doris another brief hug before the balance of the team whisked her off.

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When they reached the castle entrance, it was evident that the fog hadn't lessened. Visibility was still practically non-existent, as too was the path leading to the Quidditch pitch. It looked more like a well-trodden swamp than a path.

"Wait," ordered Hermione. "I'm not about to try to walk through that slop." Hermione took out her wand. "Sam, if you'll just hold Timmy and then take Harry's hand."

Sam did as instructed and then watched as Hermione uttered an incantation that produced what looked like a large electrically charged saucer beneath their feet. Slowly, it lifted them about a foot off the ground.

"Do you have room for one more?" Draco asked, as he burst out the castle door.

Hermione and Harry exchanged questioning glances as Timmy yelled, "Hi Double D."

"Hi Draco," Sam said in a pleasant voice.

Without waiting for Hermione or Harry to respond to his request, Draco jumped onto the magical plate and grabbed Hermione's free hand. "I assume you know how to maneuver one of these?" Draco asked, with his usual sarcasm.

"We're about to find out," Hermione said, confidently as she pointed her wand in what she thought was the general direction of the Quidditch pitch. The group, still holding hands, started to float across the sodden grounds.

"Where do you learn how to do all these spells?" Sam asked with admiration.

"I read a lot," Hermione answered to laughs from both Harry and Draco. "It's just a variation on *lengigum leviso*. The disc doesn't actually exist; the image is only present to make you feel more secure."

"Are you going to your first Quidditch game, Big Guy?" Draco asked Timmy.

"Yes! Did you play Idditch, Double D?" Timmy inquired of Draco.

"Yeah! I played a little. Didn't do too badly either, except when I played against him." Draco indicated Harry. "I never saw anyone as lucky as your uncle at Quidditch."

Harry didn't say anything, just smirked and shook his head.

Hermione gave Sam a questioning look, "What is a double D?"

Malfoy answered before Sam had the opportunity. "Come now Granger, certainly you know your own cup size."

Harry probably should have responded callously to Draco's remark about Hermione breasts, but he was too busy laughing as Hermione blushed.

"Draco, you're such an ass," Sam said. Although it was evident that she was also trying to stifle a laugh. "It stands for Daddy Draco. Once Draco started seeing Timmy regularly on weekends, we had a problem with what Timmy should call him. Calling both Ron and Draco daddy would be confusing, so Draco came up with Double D."

"I thought it was cute - until now," Sam said straight faced. "I didn't realize Draco only came up with it so that you would both be a Double D."

Even Hermione and Draco couldn't help but laugh as they traversed the fog covered ground. Considering how much they'd grown with her pregnancy, her breasts might indeed now qualify for that distinction.

"Where is Ginny?" Hermione asked, as the group started climbing the stairs to the viewing stand.

"She's staying at the Burrow for the weekend," Draco answered, his face taking on a furrowed expression. "It seems that our, 'on-again, off-again', relationship is in an off-again phase."

No one commented as they took their seats. Word had spread through the staff that Ginny was rather miffed at Draco for indefinitely putting off their wedding date.

"Well this should be exciting," Hermione said sarcastically, barely able to make out the hazy circle of yellow and green lights at the center of the field.

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"This is going to be an extremely difficult game to play," Ron said, frustration evident in every word. He knew the players were gathered around him because of the misty lights that surrounded him, but he couldn't make out one single solitary face.

"The Headmaster has placed a spell on the hoops so that they will chime whenever a goal is scored. Also, the Quaffle will emit a blinking white light and the Bludgers will shine a

constant red." Ron sighed. "Unfortunately, I doubt you will have much time to react, but then again I think the Beaters will be hard put to find a target."

"Now, I want a nice fair game," Ron said to the shrouded players surrounding him.

"Excuse me, sir," said a timid bodiless voice, which Ron recognized as Emily's. "Will the Golden Snitch be illuminated in any way?"

"Yes, but it will only intermittently blink varying colors," Professor Weasley responded. "Mount your brooms, please."

Emily went to thrust her leg over the broomstick only to find her boot stuck ankle deep in mud. Instead, she lifted her robes and guided the broom underneath her.

Ron gave a loud blast on his whistle, and slowly the broom extricated Emily from the ground. She felt like a Mandrake about to be repotted. Her feet felt exceptionally heavy, but she was unable to see them to find out exactly how much mud was clinging on them.

The seventh year Ravenclaw game announcer, Jason Turner, squinted as fifteen misty lights rose up, high, high, higher into the air. "It would seem that they're off," he said, not the least bit assuredly. "I would imagine that someone might have located the Quaffle by now, and if so, he or she is probably trying to find the proper set of hoops."

Jason had no more than spoken when the sound of a gong vibrated the air. He held his notes to his eyes. "Gong is Slytherin, bell Hufflepuff. It sounds as if Slytherin has scored. I wish I could tell you who or if the Keeper even tried to stop them," he said with frustration.

Another gong sounded. "That was fast," Jason commented. "Someone did something to get the Quaffle back. Slytherin 20, Hufflepuff 0."

"Mummy, what is he talking about?" Timmy asked. "I can't see the Quaffle or anybody on a broom. How does he know...?"

Without warning, Draco pushed Samantha and Timmy to the floor as a red streak narrowly missed hitting them both.

"Thank you," Sam said, rather flustered as she got back to her feet and tried to calm Timmy. "If it hadn't been for you, we'd be spending the game in the hospital."

"Glad I was here," Draco responded unemotionally. "I can't believe that idiot Beater, hitting a Bludger near the stands with this visibility."

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"That makes the score Slytherin 300 and Hufflepuff 340," Jason Turner said disgustedly, three hours later. "This is a high scoring game. It's a shame none of us got to see any of it. I wonder if the Keeper from either team has even tried to block a goal?"

If she hadn't been astride a broom, Emily probably would have fallen asleep during the first two hours of the game. Not only hadn't she seen a sign of the Golden Snitch, but also no other

players had even come near her. She had actually reached the point where she wished someone would bat a Bludger in her direction just to give her something to do.

Finally, about an hour ago, Doris Burke had checked on her, asking if she had even caught a glimpse of the Golden Snitch. Emily was comforted when told that none of the other players had spied it either.

That was then. Now, the only thing Emily could think about was using the loo. *Don't they ever take a time-out for a piss!* Emily's bladder felt like it was on the verge of bursting. She made a pledge that she would never, ever again drink as much milk and juice before a game as she had today.

Once more she wished she were flying naked. It might not seem very lady-like, but she could just fly over the Forbidden Forest and relieve herself. She wondered enviously if any of the male players might have done this even now. At times like these, she could see definite advantages in being male.

She was daydreaming; wondering if it were possible to transfigure a body part just long enough to get relief when she saw what appeared to be a blinking red light in the distance, but then it was gone. It didn't look like the light given off by the Bludgers, so she decided to investigate. Instead of flying directly in the direction the light had come from, she decided to approach it from the side.

When she reached the point from which the light had originated, she found nothing. She was about to return her full attention back to her bladder, when a green light blinked not more than five feet away from her. It was the Golden Snitch just out of her reach! This most likely would be her only opportunity. She made for the Snitch, but it had sensed her. She had no idea where she was going or who or what was in front of her, but Emily knew she could not let the Snitch get more than a few feet ahead. Otherwise, it would be lost in the fog.

The Snitch alternately climbed and dived while changing directions trying to lose the Slytherin Seeker. Emily, however, was gaining on it; she could now make out the fluttering wings on the little round ball ahead of her. Suddenly, the Golden Snitch went into a dive and headed in the direction of the ground. By now she had no idea of her altitude and just prayed that the Snitch knew when to pull out of the dive.

Unexpectedly the Snitch pulled out; so did Emily. She felt her leg brush the ground as she leveled off. It was now or never; she slid up as far as possible on her broom. Emily wrapped her legs tightly around the broomstick and stretched both arms toward the Snitch. She grabbed for it just as a Bludger glanced off her left shoulder and hit her directly in the jaw. Emily winced with extreme pain as she was hurled from her broom and buried face down in the muddy pitch. She groaned as she felt her bladder lose control just before she passed out.

Chapter Sixteen - The Worst Day of Her Life

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Please be aware that this chapter contains material that some readers will find both shocking and offensive. I am an author who enjoys keeping my reader's in suspense and so, not surprisingly; there is a cliffhanger at the end of this chapter. The problem with cliffhangers is that they are intended to mislead you. Sometimes when you are misled, you also become upset, especially if you are fond of the characters. For that reason it might be best for some readers to wait until they have chapter 17 before reading chapter 16. Please stick with the story, bad things happen to good people in stories to help character development and to teach lessons to characters that they otherwise would not have learned.

Sunday, November 14, 2004

"Amanda, will you be all right? You know, ready, when the time comes?" Tony asked, apprehensively.

"Yeah!" Amanda answered, trying not to show the fear that was swelled up inside her. "I better get back to the Gryffindor Tower." She turned to leave, but then ran back to Tony and flung her arms around him.

"I love you," she said, kissing him before turning and actually leaving.

Alex watched Amanda walk away and then turned to Tony. "I guess that girl's nuts about you," he said, despondently.

"I guess," Tony answered, equally downcast.

"But you're not so nuts about her?" Alex asked, a tinge of anger in his voice.

"You know better than that," Tony answered crossly.

"Well, you certainly have a funny way of showing it," Alex said in a sickened way.

"What do you mean by that?" Tony questioned, defensively.

"Look Tony, I can stand around and be your stooge, or I can be your friend and tell you what I really think."

"You are my friend."

"Okay! If it was me, I'd give up this whole idea," Alex said without hesitation.

"But how can we?" Tony asked with desperation. "What else can we do?"

"You know what." Alex answered, feeling there was only one sensible solution.

"We've been over that. I can't," Tony virtually begged.

"You've got to. It's no good Tony. It's murder," Alex cautioned.

"Will you stop saying that!" Tony shouted, as he balled up his fists. "I've got to take care of Amanda. I don't know how to take care of a baby, too. Besides, it hasn't even got a heart or a name yet. It isn't anything yet."

"It's alive isn't it?" Alex countered. "Tony, these things are dangerous. I mean the guys that do it aren't so hot sometimes."

"I don't want to talk about it," Tony said, trying to block such thoughts from his mind. "It'll turn out all right. It's got to."

"Yeah, well say he uses the wrong spell or a dirty knife or something and Amanda got blood poisoning," Alex questioned, refusing to stop.

"SHUT UP!" Tony yelled, his fists starting to shake.

"Or he slipped up some how and killed her even," Alex added.

"Will you shut up?" Tony beseeched, swinging around and punching the wall behind Alex.

"Then what would you do?" Alex questioned. "Say you left your girlfriend to die because you were scared to tell your folks?"

"I'm not scared," Tony lied. "It's only that they trust me, like I told Amanda."

"You're kidding yourself, Tony. You're scared," Alex affirmed.

"Just come right out and tell them?" Tony hedged.

"Why not?" Alex asked. "Maybe start off by telling them how much you like Amanda and lead into the baby part sort of casually."

"Yeah! Yeah! You're right," Tony agreed. "What do I do? Just go up right now and send them an owl?"

"Either that, or better yet, talk to them," Alex said encouragingly. "I'm sure Professor Potter would allow you to use his fireplace."

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Monday, November 15, 2004

"Are you allowed visitors?" Tyler asked, meekly as he stood outside the infirmary door.

Emily turned on her side and then sat up, her face suddenly displaying an ear-to-ear smile. "Technically, not for another fifteen minutes," she said, "but I'm sure Madam Pomfrey won't complain."

Tyler hesitated as the bedcovers fell to Emily's waist, first exposing her shoulders and then her small, but attention-grabbing breasts. "I'll wait here," he said turning away, "until you put

on a hospital gown."

"Then you'll be waiting a long time," Emily said with a laugh. "I'm not about to put on one of those horrid things. Besides you're certainly accustomed to seeing, my breasts by now."

"But what will Madame Pomfrey say?" Tyler asked as he halfheartedly entered the room.

"She's fine that I'm a nudist and that I won't have a cow if I'm seen naked," Emily answered, happily. "I'm sure she feels it would be more proper if I covered myself, but she doesn't think of me as a tart for not doing so."

"I don't think I'll ever become completely accustomed to you," Tyler said, trying desperately to maintain eye contact and not stare at Emily's chest. "I've never met a girl like you."

"I'm just glad that you want to get to know me better," Emily said, a slight blush covering her face. "You didn't see me immediately after the accident, did you?"

"No, at first no one in the crowd had any idea what had happened. When they finally announced that you had crashed, I tried to get to you, but by the time I was out of the stands they had already put you in stasis, and your Mum was doing a cleansing charm," Tyler answered. "Soon after that, they floated you off."

"Thank god she did a cleansing charm," Emily said, relief evident in her voice.

"I imagine it was necessary before they could check you out any further," Tyler remarked. "You were somewhat coated with mud."

"I think I might have been soaked in my own pee, too," Emily said, not seeming at all embarrassed to admit this. "I had been holding it for what felt like forever, but when that Bludger hit me, I sort of lost control of my bodily functions."

"There you go again," Tyler said in disbelief. "The things you do and say are incredible. I could never admit that happening to me, especially not to a girl. Doesn't anything faze you?"

"Sure," Emily answered. "I'm embarrassed by many of the same things you are. I would have been mortified if you had seen me immediately after the accident. I understand I wasn't a very pretty sight."

"I imagine not," Tyler answered, cringing at the thought of what damage the Bludger must have done to Emily's face, "but you look beautiful now."

"Thanks to Madam Pomfrey, Professor Granger and Caitlin," Emily said in relief. "That Bludger was only hit from about twelve feet away, so it meted out a lot of damage. I'm glad they didn't take me out of stasis until they had completed fixing me up."

"How bad were you injured?" Tyler asked, seemingly genuinely concerned.

"Caitlin told me I was a bona fide disaster," Emily answered, "but that in all probability it would have been worse if the ground hadn't been as mushy as it was. In addition to a cracked shoulder blade and a broken jaw, my face was bruised and swollen, and I had five broken or missing teeth. Not exactly someone you'd look forward to escorting to the Yule Ball."

"I'm thankful they were able to mend you so fast and completely," Tyler said, wincing as he imagined the intensity of the pain Emily must have felt when the Bludger struck her. "I doubt, however, that anything could make me not want to take you to the Ball."

Emily blushed deeply. "See," she said pointing at her face, "I do get embarrassed."

Emily tried to change the topic of conversation to something other than her. "Has your brother relented at all, or does he still hate me and my sister?"

The last thing Tyler wanted to do was talk about his git of a brother. "No! If anything, you catching the Snitch and securing the Quidditch match for Slytherin made him detest you even more," Tyler answered, glumly. "He had a lot of people convinced that Slytherin wouldn't win any games at all this year because he wasn't playing as Seeker. You've certainly proved that to be bollocks."

"Is he still threatening to cause you trouble at home because of me?" Emily asked concernedly.

"No!" Tyler lied. "He's being more reasonable."

In truth, Dick was doing his best to make Tyler's life a living hell. Their father had always held a low opinion of the Zacherleys, feeling that they besmirched the name of wizard. If Dick divulged that Tyler was seeing Emily, there would be no Christmas, no new broomstick and most certainly no Yule Ball.

Dick had offered Tyler a deal for his silence, but the price was steep. Either way it seemed Tyler was destined to lose what was coming to mean more and more to him with each passing day.

"I better get going," Tyler said, disappointingly, trying to forget about his obnoxious brother. "I have your mum's class next, and you know how she is when it comes to lateness."

"Thanks for coming," Emily said as she slipped out of bed and into her slippers. "I'll walk you to the door."

Tyler wanted to say that it wasn't necessary, but the words caught in his throat when he saw all of her. She looked prettier to him every time he saw her.

Emily reached out for Tyler hand. "I should be out of here tomorrow. Madam Pomfrey wanted to be completely sure I didn't have a concussion before she released me. Mum's going to take us all for new Yule Ball robes on Saturday," she added excitedly.

"I'm kind of partial to what you have on," Tyler said frankly.

"You can't imagine how much I wish I could go like this," Emily said sincerely, as she gave Tyler a peck on the cheek. "Thanks again for stopping by."

"Thanks for being okay!"

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Friday, November 19, 2004

"Sam, I do love you," Ron proclaimed. "This isn't about love; it's about.... well, it's about me being naked. I don't think I could do it."

"But last Saturday you seemed enthused at the idea of us going on a cruise with Harry and Hermione," Sam argued.

"That was before I learned it was a nudist charter," Ron answered defensively. "I'd love to go on a cruise for a week and live like a king, being waited on hand and foot - not forgetting about being able to eat twenty-four hours a day - but this king isn't about to walk around bare arsed in front of his best friends and a horde of strangers."

"But they'll all be nude, too. So will I," Sam argued.

"I know and that just makes it all the worse," Ron admitted. "I'm not sure I like the idea of hundreds of men ogling my wife. Plus, I'd feel weird about seeing and being seen naked by Harry and Hermione; they're my best friends."

"Ron, you and Harry were roommates for seven years. Are you trying to tell me that you never saw each other naked in all that time?" Sam questioned. "Didn't either of you ever change clothes or take a shower?"

"That was different," Ron disputed. "Besides, that was when we were youngsters. We're adults now."

Sam shook her head in frustration. "As for Hermione, you told me that the two of you did practically everything when you were dating short of having actual intercourse. Are you telling me now that you both kept your clothes on all the time? Hell! She floored naked to our apartment just a few weeks ago."

"You just don't understand," Ron said. "Going without clothes is a lot easier for girls than guys."

"Ron, that's a very chauvinistic comment," Samantha said, stunned. "How exactly is it easier for a girl?"

"Well, even when you're naked, your sex organ is still hidden," Ron answered tentatively. "Guys have all their parts on the outside while yours are inside and in most cases even the entrance is hidden behind a carpet of hair. Even when you're naked, you're not really naked. The whole world, most certainly, can't tell if you're aroused."

"Ron, is that what you'll really afraid of?" Sam asked compassionately. "Some other woman getting you aroused. Things like that happen. I'm most certainly not going to leave you if some other woman causes you to get excited."

"I didn't think you would, but I'd still feel embarrassed and like I was cheating in a way," Ron said guiltily.

"Ronnie, I love you. Girls look at guys as much as guys look at girls, but just because I look at another guy and think he's handsome doesn't mean I want to crawl in bed with him or that I don't love you anymore." Sam laughed. "I won't get angry if you get an erection looking at another girl. I'll just hex off the offending member."

Ron winced in pain at the thought.

"I'm just kidding, honey. If it really bothers you, the brochure says it's not absolutely necessary to go nude," Sam said. "The organizer would prefer it, but they realize that some couples don't share a fancy for naturism. You're allowed to keep on clothes if you wish."

"I'd feel weird doing that, too," Ron admitted. "People will think I'm some sort of voyeur. Can we think about it for a while? How soon does that Michelle person have to know?"

"Hermione said that to get the best rates we must book by January first." Sam said, giving Ron a hug.

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Saturday, November 20, 2004

"How did the shopping go today?" Harry asked a beleaguered looking Hermione as she entered their quarters, laden with packages.

"I survived, but I'm afraid our budget took a whacking," Hermione answered as she tossed the packages on the couch and started to slip out of her clothes. "Maybe I should owl Luna and see if that offer to pose is still open."

"That bad?" Harry questioned as he started to rub Hermione's shoulders. "I'm sure many wizards would appreciate that decision, but I'm not quite certain I want to share you with the entire world."

"Oh! Please don't stop," Hermione begged, as Harry's hands worked their magic on her shoulders. "That feels really good. Have you been taking lessons from Caitlin?"

"No," he answered. "Am I to gather that you are becoming accustomed to her massages?"

"It's hard not to relax," Hermione answered. "Her Hyperempathic powers make you feel like you're floating on a cloud."

"I know," Harry said with a smile. "Remember, I'm married to a Hyperempath."

"Not one nearly as powerful as her," Hermione answered almost enviously. "In time I think she might be capable of doing practically anything healing wise, short of resurrecting the dead. Our daughter will be famous."

"I hope she can deal with the changes life has in store for her," Harry said concernedly. "She looks so sweet and innocent when she scampers around here. In three years she'll receive her inheritance and be a wealthy young lady. Soon after that she'll be finishing Hogwarts and out

on her own. I dread seeing her change."

"Maybe she won't," Hermione said hopefully. "As for her being sweet, none of the three were terribly sweet today."

"Did the girls give you a hard time shopping?" Harry asked, incredulously.

"I can't blame it all on them," Hermione admitted. "I loved the dresses we had last year and I was disappointed that I had to buy something more conservative because I'm pregnant."

"Not too conservative, I hope," Harry said boldly.

"Harry, can I be completely honest with you?" Hermione asked shyly. "I think the whole problem today was that none of us really felt comfortable in anything we tried on."

Harry looked at Hermione guardedly. "You and the girls aren't considering going to the Yule Ball dressed with only the concealment charm?"

"No," Hermione said disappointedly, "although we did discuss it at great lengths. The girls wouldn't be the least bit hesitant and I..." She paused briefly. "Harry, don't think dreadfully of me, but I'm beginning to despise clothing."

"I know," said Harry with a perceptive smile. "I think you've become faster at shedding your garments than the girls."

"It's not just that, but I've actually become exceedingly comfortable with being naked almost to the point that I don't care who sees me this way."

"Does that mean you will soon be entertaining our guests in the all together?"

"Maybe," Hermione answered sheepishly, "but only if it's acceptable to both our guests and you."

* * * * *

Friday, December 17, 2004

"Tony what happened to your finger?" Amanda asked with concern as she stared at the band-aid.

"It's nothing, just an owl peck," he answered. "They're spoiled and get upset when you don't give them a treat."

"Does it hurt?" she asked worriedly. "You should have Caitlin heal it."

"Forget it, will you?" Tony responded, somewhat angrily.

Amanda gave Tony a hurt look. "I'm already late meeting the other girls in the library. I better get going," she said giving Tony a quick kiss on the cheek.

Tony and Alex stood silently watching her hurry down the long corridor and then turn out of sight.

"What are you doing, trying to make it bleed?" Alex asked as Tony prodded at the owl bite.

"She was worried about me," Tony answered guiltily. "Because I have a tiny bite on my stupid finger."

"Yeah, she's crazy about you," Alex said in frustration. "We've covered that more than a few times. Well... good night Tony; see you later."

"Wait a minute, where are you going? Stick around," Tony said, almost begged.

"Look!" Alex said angrily. "I said I'd help and I did and I'll keep on helping until this whole damn thing is over, but I want you to know something." He looked directly at Tony, a combination of sadness and disgust creeping into his eyes. "I'm sorry I got into it. This whole thing makes me sick. You make me sick."

"Alex, what's the matter?" Tony asked urgently.

"I'll tell you, what's the matter," Alex practically shouted. "This cry baby act of yours. You, pulling a band-aid off your hand, wanting me to stay with you, and right now she's less than twenty-four hours away from..." Alex couldn't finish the sentence.

"I told you my parents wouldn't listen," Tony pleaded. "All Dad did was give me a lecture on how expensive everything is and that I should get a good education before I worry about girls. And Mum, she sent me that stupid book on dating."

"You didn't give them a chance," Alex said crossly. "You said Dad, Mum, I want to talk to you. Did you ever once say, Dad I'm in trouble? I urgently need your help. Stop telling me you love her and show it."

Alex turned and walked off before Tony could respond

* * * * *

"Jamie, is everything all right between us?" Alex asked nervously. "You're not still angry about Amanda?"

"I'm still upset, but I was never angry with you," Jamie answered, giving Alex a smile and a gentle hug. "I just thought that Amanda and I were close, special friends. For her not to have shared her problem with me hurts."

Jamie looked tenderly at Alex. "I'm sorry," she said, sincerely. "I told you that I wouldn't make you wait a long time before we joined and here it is December. It's just that I wanted everything to be perfect and..."

"And everything has been anything but perfect since the start of school," Alex said

understandingly. "First it was the custody trial, then the magazine pictures and now Amanda being pregnant. Honestly, Amanda being pregnant even gave me qualms about us having sex."

"We don't have to worry about that, but I understand how you feel." Jamie hugged Alex. "I love you. Maybe you can't plan this like a wedding or a party. Maybe you just have to let it happen," she said undecidedly. "Do you want to go to the Room of Requirements now?"

Alex kissed Jamie and returned her hug even more securely. He was ready; he'd been ready for this for what seemed like years. His body kept telling him to lift this girl into his arms and carry her off, but his principles wouldn't let him.

"We can't; not now," Alex said sorrowfully. "Neither one of us would be able to stop thinking about Amanda and what's going to happen tomorrow."

"No we wouldn't, and it would ruin everything." Jamie said honestly, looking into Alex's eyes as if begging. "I promised you that I'd stay out of this and let you try to talk some sense into them, but it hasn't worked. I have to go to Amanda, tell her that I know and somehow stop her from making a horrible mistake."

"She's going to hate us both," Alex said shaking his head, "but she has to be stopped. If you can't talk some common sense into her, we'll have to go to your parents in the morning and prevent her from keeping the appointment."

Jamie just nodded in agreement.

* * * * *

"I was waiting for you," Jamie said desolately, as Amanda entered their dormitory from the common room. "You've been ignoring me the last few weeks. Can we please talk?"

Amanda looked piercingly at Jamie. "He told you, didn't he?" she asked calculatingly. "I told Tony that Alex couldn't keep a secret from you."

"He didn't tell me," Jamie answered in defense of Alex. "I guessed it the day we were in Hogsmeade - the day you made the plans."

"And you never said anything," Amanda responded in surprise.

"I wanted to, but Alex advised against it," Jamie said glumly. "He said you specifically didn't want me to know."

"It's not that I didn't want you to know," Amanda said, tears coming to her eyes. "You're my best friend. You can't imagine how many times I wanted to talk to you; cry on your shoulder. It's just that you're so close to Professor Granger. I was afraid you'd go to her and that she'd contact my parents and Tony's."

"Amanda, that's what you should do," Jamie said emphatically. "This plan is dangerous and illegal; you could even die."

"Don't you understand," Amanda said, tears now flowing freely. "I'd rather die then have to tell my parents that I've totally disappointed them. I'm their little girl. Mum had three miscarriages before she was able to carry me full term. They think I'm special."

"I'm not going to be kicked out of Hogwarts at sixteen because I'm pregnant. I can't hurt them that way. Besides," she added desolately, "it would ruin Tony's life, too. His father has plans for him to work at the Ministry. I doubt very much that they'd hire him at sixteen without him finishing Hogwarts. How would we take care of ourselves, yet alone a baby? It wouldn't be fair to the child."

"It's not exactly fair to the child to terminate its life either," Jamie said harshly, without thinking.

"Don't you think I've been anguishing about that," Amanda cried. "What if I have problems like my Mum and I'm never able to have another child? I could be aborting my only chance of having a baby."

Jamie put her arm around Amanda and drew her friend close to her. "But if anyone finds out, you could go to Azkaban. Is the clinic safe? Where did you get the money?"

"Jamie, that's why you must promise not to tell anyone," Amanda begged. "I wouldn't last a day in that horrible place." Amanda got off the bed and started to pace the room. "Tony had an account at Gringotts. He had to close it plus beg some money off his parents. Of course, he didn't say what it was for. He gave it to me tonight."

"What about the clinic?" Jamie pushed.

"There is no clinic," Amanda answered hesitantly. "I'm not exactly sure where the procedure will take place."

"Amanda, there must be another way," Jamie implored. "Please talk to Professor Ganger. Hermione is a wonderful person. You can trust her."

Amanda turned and looked at Jamie resolutely. "Jamie, I love you," she said calmly. "You are my best friend and I think the world of you. But if you try to stop me or go to Professor Granger, I'll hate you and never speak to you for the balance of my life."

* * * * *

Saturday, December 18, 2004

Amanda stepped through the magnificent wrought iron gates, flanked with stone columns topped with winged boars and proceeded down the long sloping road that lead to Hogsmeade. Briefly, she stopped and looked back at the many turrets and towers of the ancient castle wondering fearfully if she would ever view them again. The instructions the owl delivered at breakfast had been specific and she had followed them precisely.

For the security of all involved, the time of your appointment has been altered. Upon delivery of this letter, gather your belongings, including the fee, and immediately proceed to Hogsmeade. Come alone and tell no one.

You will be watched. Should it appear, in any way, that you are being followed, you will not be contacted.

Follow all instructions and you will be returned to the main gate late this afternoon.

It was shortly after nine when she was logged out by Filch, who had looked at her skeptically, but made no comment. Amanda was sure Filch was wondering why she was departing so early and unaccompanied.

As she nervously ambled down the lane tightly clutching the bag containing the 'healer's fee', she frequently looked from side to side, but saw no one. The air was chilly, but it promised to be a beautiful sunny day for the students visiting the village. Today's visit would not be one that she would likely enjoy or soon forget.

Amanda, feeling extremely jumpy, was frightened by the voice of an aged witch, who seemed to have appeared from nowhere, standing beside the road. "Not lost are you, my dear," the old woman cackled.

Amanda clutched her sack of Galleons tightly as she nervously shook her head, no.

"If you be Amanda Pierce, then it would be I that you are seeking," the woman hooted.

"Are you the 'healer'? I thought you were meeting me outside the post office?" Amanda questioned, her body feeling sweaty despite the cool temperatures.

"Healer? You use the word slackly," the old woman said with a snicker. "No, I'm just the delivery person. I am here to take you to your appointment. Now quickly step off the road and into the cover of the trees before anyone sees us."

Amanda did as she was instructed and soon they were out of sight of the road.

"I must do a blinding spell on you," the old witch said almost apologetically. "We can't have you knowing details of his location."

Amanda nodded her head grudgingly.

"The walk will take in the region of an hour, but most of it is on smooth paths. Take my hand and I will guide you," the elderly woman ordered after performing the charm.

The woman's hand was rough, due to both age and over a century of toil, but Amanda held it tightly. She had no alternative but to trust this witch.

After what seemed like hours, the woman told her to stop and then guided her through a doorway. "I'll remove the spell in a moment," she crackled. "Close you eyes now and then open them very slowly in order to allow them to adjust to the light gradually."

As Amanda opened her eyes and attuned to her environment, she was on the verge of tears.

This was certainly no clinic; in fact, it had no resemblance to any health facility she had ever seen. It had more the appearance of a store, a very filthy, grimy store that specialized in the dark arts. Evil-looking masks stared down at her from the walls. Rusty spiked instruments hung from the ceiling and an assortment of dust covered human bones lay upon the counters.

"I trust you had no trouble," Amanda heard a man's voice inquire of the witch. "Does she have the fee?"

"Everything went smoothly," the elderly witch replied. "I imagine the fee is in that sack she is clutching to her chest ever so tightly. What time should I return for her?"

"If everything goes in the approved manner, she should be ready to be returned by three," he said.

Amanda heard a door close and then there was silence, chilling silence. The old witch evidently had left by a rear door and now Amanda was alone in this place with him. She waited nervously. Part of her, a very large part, wanted to turn and dash. She wanted to open the door and run back to Hogwarts, never giving a glance back. But then what?

Instead she just stood, trembling and waited until he entered the room.

"Well now, you are a pretty one," he said, slimily. "I can certainly see why the boys would be anxious to poke you. Have you brought the fee?"

At first Amanda just stared at the man aghast, then she handed him the sack of Galleons.

"I don't even have to count these, do I?" he asked. "I bet your arms are tired from carrying all that weight."

"Are you the one that is going to...?"

"Rid you of that bastard growing within you?" he interrupted. "Yes, that would be me."

Amanda tried to hide the horror she felt inside. She didn't want this filthy, greasy man touching her. Her eye dropped to his hands. Although they appeared semi-washed, his fingernails were embedded with dirt.

"We'll be doing the procedure in the backroom," he said matter-of-factly. "Take your clothes off and come back as soon as you're ready."

"Take off my clothes?" Amanda said, alarmed.

The man looked at Amanda incredulously. "There is no magical way to unimpregnate you lass. I have to go in and take that fetus out the same way Muggles do. It's very messy and you're wasting valuable time. Take everything off and be quick about it."

Amanda was about to ask if he had a dressing gown for her, but after taking another look around the room, deduced the answer.

He returned to the backroom and once again Amanda studied the door to the shop. She could run. He wouldn't come after her. Of course he wouldn't; he had the money now. But if she ran,

she'd still be pregnant.

If she lived, this would most assuredly be remembered as the worse day of her life. Amanda took a deep breath and started to slowly remove her clothes. First she removed her winter robes, followed by her boots and socks and then finally her skirt and blouse. She hesitated for a few moments and then undid her bra. Finally, she took a deep breath and slipped out of her knickers.

Amanda was naked, but her legs refused to move. There was no way she could just strut starkers into that room with him there.

"I could have undressed and dressed three times by now," he bellowed, sternly. "You have ten seconds to get back here or you can end up delivering that bastard child of yours."

Tears streamed from Amanda's eyes as walked toward the backroom, covering herself as best as possible with her hands and arms.

The first sight that greeted her was him, dressed in his dry-blood splattered smock taking a quick drink from his hip flask. Then she saw the operating table; an old workbench with a stained sheet covering the wood.

"You certainly are a pretty one," he said as he studied Amanda, lecherously, all the while puffing on a cigarette. "Sit your pretty arse on the end of the table."

Amanda did as ordered and than sat with her legs squeezed together and arms crossed across her chest, her hands covering her breasts.

He handed her a glass containing a bubbling potion. Amanda sighed, in relief that at least the glass appeared clean. "That is a sleeping draft," he said, while his eyes remained fixed on her body. "Once you are completely prepared, I will also put you in stasis. The combination of the two should prevent you feeling any pain. When you wake up, it will all be over."

Amanda looked at the glass apprehensively, recognizing that once she swallowed the potion, she would be helpless in this man's hands.

"Drink it now," he said impatiently. "Every last drop."

Amanda leaned her head back and drank. As she swallowed the last bit, she thought of Tony and wondered if she would ever see his face again.

"It will take a few minutes for the potion to take affect," he said in a businesslike manner. "Meanwhile I'll begin to prepare you. Lie back on the table with you head at this end."

Amanda did as instructed, realizing the futility in trying to any longer hide her shame.

"Now then, spread your legs as far apart as possible. If you can, grab the sides of the table with your toes," he ordered.

Amanda blushed deeply as she once again followed his orders.

"The pubic hair will have to go," he said reaching for his wand and performing the hair

removal spell. "It's not hygienic."

The sleeping potion was evidently starting to take hold because Amanda was beginning to feel drowsy. She almost laughed at the absurdity of his remark. Considering the pains she had taken washing this morning, her body was more than likely a great deal cleaner than anything in this room. This was her last thought prior to falling into a deep sleep.

He hesitated before proceeding. This one was indeed quite attractive, younger and far better looking than he would ever legitimately enjoy. He couldn't stop gawking at her. Finally, he was overwhelmed by the temptation. He started caressing her nude body, first with one hand and then both, being sure not to miss a spot and paying special attention to the moist folds between her legs.

The more he caressed her, the more intense his needs became. His body was begging for pleasurable relief and the vessel for such liberation lie just before him. She'd never know. He hastily removed the bloodstained smock and then dropped his pants and boxers to his ankles.

Chapter Seventeen - From Frying Pan to Fire

Saturday, December 18, 2002 9:00 AM

"Where is Amanda?" Jamie asked as she seated herself next to Caitlin.

"She just had a little juice and then left immediately after the mail delivery," Caitlin answered. "She looked really nervous for some reason."

I'm sure she is, Jamie thought to herself as Alex sat down and squeezed her leg lovingly.

"The procedure is scheduled for one o'clock," Alex whispered to Jamie. "Tony is going to walk Amanda into Hogsmeade. They're going to leave at noon."

Jamie gazed at Alex, a look of desperation covering her face. "Alex, what are we going to do?" Jamie said dejectedly. "Amanda said she would hate me for the rest of her life if I tried to stop her, but I won't be able to live with myself if anything happens to her."

"I'd rather have a living, breathing Amanda hating me, than have to live with the fact that I could have stopped this and didn't," Alex said receptively. "We have to tell someone."

Jamie squeezed Alex's hand. "Will you go with me to talk to Harry and Hermione?"

Alex nodded his head, "We'll go up to their quarters immediately after breakfast," he answered.

Just as Alex began filling his plate, Tony approached the table. "Have you guys seen Amanda?" he asked no one in particular. "She was suppose to meet me right after breakfast, but I can't find her."

"I think she might have returned to the dormitory," Caitlin said helpfully. "She didn't look too well; maybe she decided to have a lie down. I'm headed back there now if you want to follow me. I'll go in and get her for you."

"Thanks," Tony said with appreciation as he followed Caitlin out of the Great Hall.

"Poor Amanda," Alex said concernedly. "She must be petrified."

"I'm positive she is," Jamie replied. "Lets hurry and finish breakfast so we can go talk to Harry and Hermione."

* * * * *

"Where are you guys off to in such a hurry?" Emily asked, as Caitlin and Tony scurried past her and Kim with only a pithy hello.

"We're on our way to the Gryffindor common room," Caitlin answered hurriedly. "Tony wants to speak with Amanda."

"Then you're headed in the wrong direction," Emily said knowingly. "Kim and I saw her sign out with Filch more than a half-hour ago."

"She couldn't have," Tony cried, his face turning ashen. Without a word he dashed off in the direction of the main door and the crotchety caretaker.

"I wonder what's troubling him?" Emily said to an equally stunned Caitlin.

"I'm not certain," Caitlin answered, a confused expression on her face, "but something weird is going on. I think we should tell Jamie what just happened."

The girls rushed into the Great Hall and hurried over to Jamie and Alex. The couple listened intently to what the girls had to say until they reached the part about Amanda having already checked out with Filch.

"We're too late," Jamie said, horror-struck. "I'll never forgive myself if she's hurt in anyway."

Without explanation Jamie grabbed Alex's wrist and literally pulled him out of his seat. Caitlin, Emily and Kim just stared, thunderstruck, as the two ran from the Great Hall.

"What's going on?" Kim asked innocently.

"I haven't the slightest idea," Emily responded, "but if we want to find out, we better follow them."

* * * * *

Jamie and Alex burst into the Potter's quarters without a knock only to find Hermione standing there waiting for them with an expression of grave irritation on her face.

"I can't believe you two," she sobbed disappointedly. "You both knew about this and neither of you had the intelligence to say anything. I thought you were both smart, but you've certainly displayed a lack of common sense. How could you both sit by and let them plan this? They're your friends. Do you want to see them in Azkaban or, in Amanda's case, maybe dead?"

"I was afraid I'd lose her friendship," Jamie said tearfully. "We've been best friends since first year. I couldn't handle not having her talk to me."

"Did either of you ever stop to think how little communication you'd have with her from Azkaban or the grave?" Hermione asked brusquely. "I just pray they find her in time."

"Find who?" Emily asked shyly as she, Caitlin and Kim entered the room.

"Please tell me you three didn't know about this," Hermione begged.

"What's going on?" Caitlin asked meekly as Emily and Kim tried to blend into the nearby wall.

Hermione shook her head in frustration. "Sit down," she ordered, not too pleasantly. "All of you!" she emphasized, looking directly at Jamie and Alex. Hermione walked slowly over and looked out the window worryingly for a few moments and then turned back to the group.

"Sometimes friendship requires the making of extremely difficult and hurtful decisions. In acute circumstances, you have to decide which is more important to you, the friendship or the friend."

"We tried to talk them out of it," Alex said, trying to hold back tears. "When we failed, we knew we had to come to you, but it's too late. Evidently they changed the meeting time and Amanda has already left."

"You were successful with one of them," Hermione acknowledged. "Tony didn't want to go through with it, but he missed Amanda this morning too. He came to Harry and me as soon as he heard she had left the castle. They've flown off to try and find her. I only hope they're in time."

Kim, Emily and Caitlin, completely at a loss as to what was transpiring, glanced back and forth at each other, but were all too afraid to ask any questions.

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"Who the hell do you think you are, banging on my door like that?" the grungy barman yelled as he peered through the slightly open door. "We don't open 'til eleven; come back then."

"You won't be in any condition to open if you don't give me some answers and fast," Harry shouted as he kicked the door wide open and grabbed the man by the collar. Tony watched from the doorway, speechless.

"Where is this so called medical practitioner you deal with located?" Harry demanded.

"Get your ruddy hands off me," the barman demanded. "I haven't the foggiest idea what you're talking about. Does this look like a bloody medical facility to you?"

"I don't have time to play games with you," Harry said, shoving the man aggressively against the closest wall and reaching for his wand.

"I want information, and I want it now" Harry shouted, angrily, pointing his wand at the cowering barman, "unless you'd prefer to spend the balance of your life consuming your meals from garbage dumpsters"

"You wouldn't dare," he said in a defiant voice. "Without me you have no chance of finding the girl."

"Hogsmeade isn't that large," Harry said, irritably. "If need be, we'll search every building in town. Mark my word; she'll be found. I give her better odds of surviving the day than I give you of out running the cat population of Hogsmeade."

Harry turned toward Tony, "We've wasted too much time already on this bloke." He pointed his wand at the barman.

BANG!

Tony watched in terrified silence. Professor Potter's wand was now pointing at a large black rat that was shivering on the filthy floor where the barman had lain.

"No you don't," Harry roared, as the rat gave a terrified squeak and took off for the backroom. He pointed his wand again and the rat flew into the air, hitting the ceiling, and then falling with a smack to the crusty floor.

Harry pointed his wand once more, and with a loud snapping noise, the barman reappeared, lying in a heap.

"That was just a brief demonstration of what your new life will be like," Harry warned. "Now, are you ready to talk?"

"I'm just the middle man," the barman begged. "He only pays me a pittance to make the arrangements."

"I'm not concerned with your financial arrangements," Harry bellowed. "Where is the girl?"

"Three shops past the post office, the dark artifacts store," the barman confessed. "Please, I beg you, don't transfigure me again."

"You're not worth the effort," Harry said with distaste as he turned to leave.

* * * * *

"What are your plans for the holidays?"

"I don't really have any," Severus answered disconsolately. "This, unquestionably, is not my most favorite time of the year."

"I know what you mean," she said with sensitivity. "Christmas is for children and people who have children. If you don't have family, it can be a very depressing period."

"What are you planning to do over the holidays?" he asked, conversationally.

"The same as you: be bored stiff and alone," she answered miserably. "Unless.... Severus, do you feel two people have to be in love to share time together and be intimate?"

He was taken aback. Could she possibly be suggesting that they spend the holidays together?

"I know you still love her," she said unhappily. "I'm not trying to take her place in your heart, only in your bed. I'm not expecting any type of obligation on your part."

He just stared at her in amazement. They had formed a friendship, but he had no idea she was

willing to take it further.

"You probably think me a tart for even suggesting this," she said pessimistically. "I just don't see why we should both be alone and depressed during holiday when, if nothing else, we can give each other physical comfort."

He was flabbergasted. How could he possibly reject such an invitation? Part of him felt it was morally wrong, as if he were cheating. But how can you cheat on someone who has discarded you to be with another?

* * * * *

"Why do you think she wants to see us?" Madam Hooch questioned Damien, as they waited with Crabbe and Goyle for the arrival of the Great One.

"Maybe she wants to give us all a Christmas bonus," Crabbe interjected.

Damien looked at Crabbe with incredulity. "You really should rent out that empty space between your ears," Damien said, before turning back to Hooch. "I'm just glad we have some good news for her; it might muffle her anger slightly."

At that moment the door slammed opened, and the Great One entered the room, mumbling irritably to herself. She appraised her minions and then motioned for them to be seated as she paced the room furiously for a few minutes before addressing them.

"I abhor wasting time," she said adamantly, "but unfortunately it seems that is exactly what we have done the past few months. Obviously, I was displeased when my plans to resurrect Salazar Slytherin were put on hold due to the innocent heir of Gryffindor not yet being born, but I had to accept that as something out of my control.

"Therefore, I decided we should concentrate our efforts on discovering the identities of the other innocents and, at the same time, cause panic throughout the world with increased terrorism.

"The year is about to close, and you have brought me no fresh information relating to the innocents. Worse, others have received all the recognition for the acts of horror that we have conducted in the Muggle world. This must change.

"From now on, our terror efforts will be concentrated in our own world. Diagon Alley, Hogsmeade, wizard schools and even the offices of the Ministry will be our new targets. We shall instill fear in the hearts of wizardkind like it has never been seen before." A look of delight shone upon her face.

She turned and looked scornfully at her underlings. "Do you bring me any news on the innocents?" she asked threateningly.

Crabbe and Goyle stared blankly into space as Hooch and Damien each encouraged the other to speak. "We believe we know who the healer is," Madam Hooch, finally offered.

Emma Wrong gave what almost could have passed as a smile. "Yes! Tell me more," she said excitedly.

"The stars indicate that the healer was born to parents none, raised by the ages and left to die only to be reborn in the hands of true loves," Hooch said hesitantly.

"I don't want to hear riddles!" the Great One shrieked. "I want a name."

"Caitlin Garrison," Hooch said timidly. "The young girl Hermione Granger adopted. It seems her low life Muggle father took off when he found out her mother was with child. The mother died giving birth, hence, born to parents none. Her elderly grandparents raised her until they died, that's why the phrase raised by the ages."

"Yes! Yes! That makes sense. Go on," The Great One exclaimed enthusiastically.

"I left her to die," Hooch said admittedly. "And one could say that her life started fresh when taken in by Granger and Potter."

"It makes sense; it all fits," Emma sputtered breathlessly, "but has she shown any abilities at healing?"

"She's a hyperempath," Damien added. "It was being kept rather hush, but word got out when she restored the hair of a girl that had been rendered bald. It seems that she is extremely accomplished for her age."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" the Great One proclaimed. "Finally! We have some progress. Two down, two to go.."

"Conceivably only one to go," Damien said with some hesitation. "All signs point to Malfoy's child as being the heir of Slytherin."

"But you told me that papers had been altered?" the Great one questioned. "You said that Draco Malfoy was definitely not descended from Lord Slytherin."

"He isn't," Damien explained, "but Lord Voldemort's mother had a sister who left home at an early age and moved to the United States."

"The mother!" Emma Wrong shouted. "How dense of me. That's why her ancestral records were sealed. The U.S. wizard government was protecting the family. Samantha Bowman's grandmother was undoubtedly the sister of Lord Voldemort's mother. She is the link to Salazar Slytherin. Her son is the heir of Slytherin."

"Perhaps all is not as bleak as I originally surmised," the Great One said, buoyantly. "Is there any progress on the fourth?" she asked optimistically.

"Sadly no," Madam Hooch replied. "We researched the ancestry of all current Hogwarts students for a history of seers. Two sisters, currently in the school, come from a family that has produced seers for hundreds of years, but unfortunately the trait only manifests itself in males. Their father, who is now deceased, was the last."

"We have three," the Great One declared assertively. "You have done well. We have five

months before the Potter child is born in which to locate the seer. I have confidence in you. I think a celebration is in order."

"See!" Crabbe whispered to Goyle. "I was right! We are getting a bonus."

* * * * *

"Do you think that barman was lying?" Tony said as he and Harry studied the derelict building that housed the dark arts shop.

"We'll know shortly," Harry said, as he tapped the locked door with his wand and whispered, "*Alohomora*,"

They leaned their brooms against the wall as the lock clicked and the door swung open, revealing the grimy interior of the shop. Tony was about to comment, but Harry placed a finger to his lips, indicating for the boy to remain silent.

Silently as they passed the counter piled high with dusty bones, Tony nervously tapped Harry on the back and indicated the only mound which wasn't covered in dust, a mound of female clothing. Harry merely nodded his head in acknowledgement, as he came within reach of a door to what was obviously the backroom.

Harry held his wand steady in his right hand as he reached for the doorknob with his left. It was unlocked. He slowly opened the door and then momentarily stood appalled as his eyes absorbed the disgusting sight before them.

A man had just slid his pants and boxers to his ankles revealing a rather large white hairy backside. He was about to climb on the table, where an unconscious naked young girl lay spread eagle.

Harry raised his wand.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" he cried, pointing it at the man.

The bare arsed man's arms snapped to his sides. His legs sprang together. His whole body rigid, he swayed briefly where he stood and then fell flat on his back, stiff as a board.

"I would have preferred the bastard fell on his face," Harry said, as he picked a hat off a nearby counter and successfully scored a ringer.

The man lay totally rigid. He couldn't move; he couldn't speak. Only his eyes were moving, looking at Harry in fear.

Harry raised his wand once more. "*Accio Amanda's Clothes!*"

Tony watched in amazement as the clothing soared into the room and then magically dressed the naked girl.

For the first time since they had left the castle, Harry gave Tony a hint of a grin. "The

Summoning Charm is rather easy if you have a good teacher," Harry said. "Dressing someone magically is quite another story. Sometimes the garments go on in the wrong order, leaving things rather in disarray."

Once Amanda was fully clothed, Harry approached her, muttered a few words, and then cast his wand over her body from head to foot. The wand glowed a bright green, as Harry finally smiled.

"Amanda's fine," Harry said, relief evident in his voice. "Their both fine. The sleeping draft will last a few hours." Harry glanced at the rigid body on the floor. "Fortunately we got here before this git had his way with her."

"What about him?" Tony asked. "He should be punished. If we had arrived minutes later, he would have ..." Tony couldn't bring himself to say what would have occurred.

"Unfortunately, we can't turn him or the barman over to the authorities without also risking you and Amanda being sent to Azkaban. Even Jamie and Alex could face punishment," Harry said.

"We can't see him punished properly, but perhaps we can teach him a lesson he won't quickly forget," Harry said with a slight smirk. "Tony, would you please remove the balance of his clothes? You'll probably have to cut or rip them since he is rather inflexible at the moment."

Tony for a moment just stared at his professor.

"I know its not a pleasant job, but please mollify your Professor," Harry said as he picked up the hat with which he had made a ringer and laid it on the counter. Harry pointed his wand at the hat and muttered, "*Portus*." The hat glowed blue, trembled for a few seconds, and then became still once more.

Harry waited patiently for Tony to finish undressing the 'doctor' before saying '*Finite Incantatum*'.

The words had barely left Harry's mouth when the room was filled with obscenities; the now naked man, was ranting and raving. Harry uttered not a word to the scumbag that stood before him, but simply tossed the hat back to him and then counted, "One...two...three..."

He was gone.

"Did you make that hat into a Portkey?" Tony asked, amazed at his professor's abilities. "Where did you send him?"

Harry smiled. "I thought a nice leisurely walk in downtown Muggle London would give him the opportunity to think about his life and possibly consider mending his ways."

Tony just stared at his professor in awe.

"I think that bag of Galleons belongs to you," Harry said before pointing his wand at Amanda and causing her flaccid body to float inches off the table. "I'll float her back to the castle between our brooms. It will be much better if she wakes up among friends rather than here."

* * * * *

"Please, don't hate us," Jamie begged as Amanda slowly opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she said groggily as she fought to get her bearings.

"My room in Harry and Hermione's quarters," Jamie whispered.

"What happened? How did I get here?" Amanda asked woozily.

Tony squeezed her hand. "It's a long story, but I couldn't let you go through with it," he said lovingly. "Professor Potter helped me find you. He is amazing."

Amanda took her free hand and placed it on her stomach. "Then I'm still pregnant?" she asked apprehensively.

"Yes, and our parents know. I just finished talking with yours," Tony confided. "No one is exactly happy about the situation, but they're not yelling either. They're all going to meet us at the train; the six of us will discuss the future over lunch."

"Discuss your future maybe," Amanda said dejectedly. "I'm afraid I already know mine; sitting at home bored, getting fatter and fatter until the baby decides to pop out. There is no way the Board of Governors will allow a pregnant girl to remain in school."

"Is that what you want to do?" Hermione asked. "Do you want to remain in school?"

Amanda hadn't even realized that her professor was in the room and was caught by surprise by her question.

"If I keep the baby, I'll probably miss my seventh year," Amanda conceded. "But yes, I'd like to at least finish my sixth."

"You talk to your parents and make a decision," Hermione said supportably. "If you decide you want to remain in school, I'll fight those old fogies tooth and nail for you."

Amanda turned to Jamie; tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry," she said, "I should have listened to you."

"Does that mean we're still friends?" Jamie asked, hopefully.

Amanda didn't answer. She didn't have to. The hug she gave Jamie expressed what words couldn't possibly say.

* * * * *

December 23, 2004

"Kim, there will be other Balls and other boys," Emily said compassionately as the girls headed to the Great Hall for breakfast. "It's Randy's loss that he's too blind to see how fantastic you are."

"I'm far from wonderful," Kim said dejectedly, "but I did believe he liked me. I guess I'm rather a poor judge of other people's feelings."

"Why don't you come to the Ball anyway," Emily suggested. "You can spend the time with Tyler and me. I'm sure he won't mind, and truthfully I'm a tiny bit nervous at the thought of being alone with him all evening."

"Thanks, but no," Kim uttered sadly. "I'd feel awkward, besides I don't have formal robes." Kim tried to look at the situation optimistically. "It will give me a few extra days with my Mum. She misses me a lot."

The girls entered the great Hall just as the owls completed delivering the morning mail. The Great Hall was filled with its usual twelve Christmas trees, glittering with golden stars. The entire castle, in fact, was magnificently adorned with beautiful Christmas decorations despite the fact that hardly any of the students would be remaining to enjoy them. Most of the students would be departing this morning to spend the Christmas holiday at home.

"The castle looks so festive," Kim remarked. "In a way, I wish I were remaining here for the holiday."

"I wish you were, too," Emily said genuinely.

The girls had no more than seated themselves when Randy and Matt scurried up to them. Randy especially seemed flustered and out of breath. "Can I talk to you?" he asked Kim nervously as the other Slytherins stared ominously at him and Matt.

"I guess," Kim said, although unmistakably not pleased with Randy. She got up and the two of them moved out of hearing range of the table.

"What do you want?" Kim asked in an annoyed whisper.

"I just got an owl from my parents," Randy said anxiously. "They're rather upset with me, but they've agreed."

"Agreed to what?" Kim asked, uncaringly.

"The family has vacation plans to visit my grandparents between Christmas and the beginning of the next term," Randy announced. "We've written back and forth numerous times and finally they've agreed."

"Agreed to what?" Kim asked again, indifferently.

"They've agreed to me spending my vacation here," he answered blissfully.

"Why would you want to stay here rather than go with your parents?" Kim asked, bewildered. "Won't you be bored and lonely here?"

"It won't be that bad," he answered. "Matt is spending the holidays here and, of course, Emily and Caitlin live here. The real reason I want to stay is so I can attend the Yule Ball."

Kim just stared at Randy, not sure where this was leading, but suddenly she felt very hopeful.

"That is, I want to go if you'll go with me. I'm sorry I waited so long to ask, but until now I didn't think I'd be able to attend." Randy looked at Kim, his eyes almost begging. "Will you please go to the Yule Ball with me?"

Kim reached for Randy's hand and held it tightly. "I want to go," she said enthusiastically. "But I can only give you a tentative yes. I'll try to convince my Mum to let me return early, but I'll have to owl you."

"Knowing you want to go is what's important," Randy said excitedly. "I'll let you get back to your breakfast. Would it be okay if I came down to the entrance hall and saw you off this morning?"

"It would be more than okay," Kim said, happily. "I'd really like it if you did." She squeezed Randy's hand once more and for the first time in many days she smiled before returning to the Slytherin table.

* * * * *

Hermione watched from the third floor balcony as the students hurried out the huge, oak front door to the waiting carriages. Christmas was always so beautiful at Hogwarts, but this year, despite all the festive decorations, Hermione couldn't get in the spirit of the season.

She watched as a young boy shepherded a very pretty young girl with thigh length hair to the door. They stood talking for a few moments and then the girl clumsily gave the boy a brief kiss on the cheek before departing. The boy stood watching the girl disappear through the door and then slowly turned and walked away, touching his fingers to his face where she had kissed him.

Hermione was startled as a hand cupped hers. "You've done everything within your power," he said optimistically.

"But what if it isn't enough?" she asked despondently.

"Then sadly it was meant to be. We're not gods, Hermione; we're teachers. Unfortunately, all we can do is prepare our students for the evils that the world will cast in their path. We can't be there to fight all their battles.

"We've warned the mother, contacted the Muggle authorities and even arranged through Tonks to have her watched. Once the doors to their home close, we can only pray."

"Are prayers enough?" Hermione asked, holding his hand tightly.

Harry shook his head. "Sometimes no, but often they're all we have left."

* * * * *

Saturday, December 25, 2004

"Hi!" Caitlin said happily as she opened the door for Ron, Sam and Timmy. "We were wondering when you guys would arrive; it will be dark soon."

"Look what Double D got me for Christmas!" Timmy said excitedly as he showed Caitlin his broom.

"Caitlin, are you going to ask our guests in or make them stand in the doorway all night?" Harry asked good-naturedly.

"Does that really fly?" Emily asked as she gave Sam and Ron each a hug.

"Yeah! It does." Ron said uneasily. He still found the nudity of the young girls disquieting. "It only goes about two miles an hour and doesn't go more than two feet off the ground, but Timmy loves it."

"I love it too because it has numerous safety charms," Sam said with a smile. "He can't fall off and can actually fly it indoors without ever hitting anything."

"They never had toys like that when I was his age," Jamie said, as she entered the room.

Ron found himself staring fixedly at Jamie. She, unlike her sisters, was definitely not a little girl.

"Darn, girl," Sam said, genially. "Give the other girls your age a break, will you? You get more gorgeous every time I see you."

Jamie blushed as she gave Sam a hug. "Merry Christmas!" She then turned and gave an extremely red faced Ron a hug.

"Mommy, can Timmy get nudie, too," he asked.

"Sure, Honey," Sam said, without hesitation.

"I was starting to worry about you," Hermione said as she entered the room dressed in her winter robes and carrying blankets and pillows. "We better get down to the dungeon. Severus will be waiting."

Harry smiled and shook his head. "I see you are roughing it again tonight."

Hermione blushed. "Can I help it if I like a pillow and blankets? Just because I'm an Animagus doesn't mean I have to act like an animal."

"Thank you for suggesting Timmy and I stay here the next three nights," Sam said gratefully. "It's always lonely this time of month, but especially at this time of year."

"The girls have been looking forward to you and Timmy being here," Hermione said with a giggle. "I think they're expecting you to practice for the cruise."

Sam blushed, but didn't respond.

"Hermione tells me that you are progressing quite well with your training," Harry said, changing the subject. "I understand that by this time next year you should be able to join us."

"Maybe even by this summer," Sam said, hopefully.

"What animal are you going to be," Emily questioned.

"For now, I'm keeping that as a surprise," Sam grinned. "You'll see soon enough."

* * * * *

"How did you ever talk him into it?" Jamie asked as she sat talking to Samantha. Timmy, Caitlin and Emily were busy taking turns riding Timmy's broom.

"You mean the cruise?" she asked. "It wasn't easy."

"I'm afraid he's going to have an extremely difficult time," Jamie said with apprehension. "He seems petrified just being around me and my sisters."

"He is," Sam admitted. "I feel guilty because I know he doesn't really want to do this. He's just doing it for Timmy and me."

"How about you?" Jamie asked.

"I think I'll be okay," Sam replied uncertainly. "It has been seven years since I've been in a nudist environment, but I don't imagine I'll have a problem."

"You should practice," Jamie suggested. "It's important that you feel totally comfortable if you are going to give him the support I think he'll need."

"Exactly what are you suggesting?" Samantha asked with trepidation.

"Take your clothes off and keep them off," Jamie said with no explanation.

"What?" Sam said shocked.

"You should at least be acclimated to being nude around the people you will be spending the most time with," Jamie said. "You're staying here at the castle with us until after the third night of the moon, that's Tuesday morning right? Except for when we leave the quarters, you should be nude like my sisters and me."

Sam looked at Jamie with bewilderment. "You want me to simply take my clothes off now in front of you and keep them off even when they return in the morning? Stay nude in front of Hermione and Harry? I don't think I can do that," Sam said candidly.

"I don't want you to do it for me, but if you can't do it now," Jamie said straightforwardly, "I don't see how you propose to do it this summer, or furthermore, how you expect to be much help to Professor Weasley."

"I'm an adult; it seems wrong for me to be naked in front of you girls," Sam argued.

"If you were doing it for some perverted reason, most certainly. We all know that's not the case," Jamie said emphatically.

Sam just sat thinking for a few minutes. Everything that Jamie said made sense. How could she expect to do something in the future if she couldn't do it now? And if she was nervous and ill at ease, how could she possibly be any help to Ron?

"Is it necessary for me to do it here or can I undress in the bedroom?" Sam asked tensely, after a few minutes.

"Will it make it any easier?" Jamie inquired.

"Not really," Sam admitted, as she kicked off her shoes. She took a deep breath. It wasn't like she had a lot to remove. As Sam had revealed to Caitlin last year, she never wore knickers and seldom wore a bra. Tonight was one of the times she was braless, meaning she only had a skirt and top to remove. Don't think about it. Do it.

In seconds, the top was over her head and the skirt had dropped to the floor.

* * * * *

"What smells so good," Hermione questioned as she, Harry and Ron made their way through the entrance door. "I'm famished."

"Me too," agreed Ron as he looked around for Sam and Timmy.

Emily, as if reading Ron's mind, said, "Timmy is still sleeping. We were all up rather late last evening. Sam and Jamie are in the kitchen; they're responsible for the enticing aroma in the air."

Ron immediately headed for the kitchen, but Caitlin held Hermione and Harry back. "Best wait and see what his reaction is," Caitlin suggested. "Sam is giving it what I believe Muggles refer to as the 'old college try'."

"Do you mean she's unclothed?" Hermione asked, stunned.

"More than that," Emily added gleefully. "Jamie even talked her into grooming her twat. I can't wait to hear Professor Weasley's reaction."

From the looks on their faces, Harry and Hermione appeared anxious to hear Ron's reaction too. None of them had to wait long or strain their ears.

"My god Sam, you're starkers!" Ron roared. "Absolutely starkers!" He added, when he noticed the total absence of pubic hair. "Are you crazy? Harry and Hermione are in the next room. Quick, put something on! We're not at home."

"Ronnie," Sam said holding her ground and indicating Jamie. "Perhaps you haven't noticed, but being in the buff is rather the norm in this household. Jamie suggested that it might be a good idea for me to get accustomed to being naked in front of them. She thought it might help prepare me for the cruise, and I agree."

"But what about Harry and Hermione," Ron gasped. "What will they think?"

"I think it's a brilliant idea," Hermione said, entering the room. Ron initially turned toward her voice, but quickly turned away. Hermione was now as equally naked as his wife.

Hermione squeezed Samantha's hand in support. "Are you okay with Harry seeing you like this?"

Sam bit her lip, and nodded. "Is he nude?" she asked nervously.

"No," Hermione answered. "He's not." She glanced at Ron who seemed to be inspecting the ceiling. "I think Ron has about all he can handle at the moment."

Sam smiled in agreement. "Harry, Emily, Caitlin," she called. "Breakfast is ready."

The three entered the room; Harry immediately walking over to Sam and giving her a hug. "You've got pluck girl," he whispered encouragingly. "You also have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. You look lovely."

Sam blushed slightly at Harry's critique of her body, but returned the hug. "Thanks!"

"Okay," Ron said edgily. "That was a good start. Harry and I have each seen the other's wife in their birthday suit. Now, why don't you two get dressed so that we can all enjoy breakfast?"

"Ron," Hermione said compassionately. "I realize this is difficult for you, but this is the way the girls and I are all the time in the privacy of our quarters."

"Honey, I'm not getting dressed either," Sam said tentatively. "Except for when we leave the quarters for meals, Jamie thinks I should remain nude. It will make it easier when we go on the cruise."

"Right," said Ron, rubbing his forehead and still avoiding any look at Hermione. "Then the five of you intend to be naked the next two days except for when we leave the quarters?"

Ron's question received a loud firm yes from all the females.

"I'll go wake Timmy for breakfast," Caitlin offered helpfully and then bounced off.

"Maybe we could all take a walk to Hogsmeade today," Ron suggested hopefully. Anything, he thought, to avoid being surrounded by all this female flesh. Oddly, it wasn't the nudity of Jamie or Hermione that was causing him the most difficulty, although they were certainly both gorgeous.

Ron simply couldn't take his eyes off Sam. It was like he was seeing her for the first time, and he most certainly liked what he saw. He hoped they would all sit down to eat soon before anyone noticed the swelling in his trousers.

Ron's proposal to visit Hogsmeade went unanswered as everyone served themselves buffet style and then took a seat at the table which had been magically elongated to seat the eight of them. Harry and Hermione sat at the ends of the table, the girls on one side and Ron, Sam and Timmy on the other.

At first they ate quietly, everyone seemingly prioritizing food over conversation. Ron tried not to look up from his plate. When he did, the sight of the young bare chests across the table momentarily transfixed him. How does Harry manage to cope with this?

His napkin, slipping off his lap, broke Ron's trance. As he reached to grab for it, his hand brushed Sam's bare leg and he instantly found himself dealing with a full-fledged erection. Why had he agreed to go on a nudist cruise? How did he expect to control himself in front of hundreds of naked people when he couldn't even control his desires for his own wife at the breakfast table?

"Mum, what happens to the baby when you change into your Animagus form?" Caitlin asked, breaking the silence.

"The baby transforms, too," Hermione answered. "While I'm a wolf, the baby is a cub."

"But what if you gave birth while a wolf?" Emily asked, horrified at the thought. "Would the baby stay a wolf?"

"That can't happen," Hermione answered. "Even if the Animagus doesn't have the sense to transform back, their body does. I couldn't possibly remain a wolf during childbirth; not that I'd ever try."

"What about werewolves?" Emily inquired. "They can't control their transformation, can they Professor Weasley?"

"No," Ron answered uncomfortably. He still found it difficult to discuss his lycantropy.

"What if a female werewolf is pregnant?" Emily asked. "I know that normally the baby wouldn't be a werewolf, but what if the birth took place at night during a full moon?"

Hermione just stared at Emily, not saying a word. Then she excused herself, without any explanation, and headed for the study.

"Now you did it," Jamie said, looking angrily at Emily. "We won't see her for the balance of the day now, at least not until she has a response. You know Hermione can't stand not knowing the answer to a question."

"I have a question," Timmy said, out of the blue. "Am I ever going to have a baby brother or sister?"

Sam blushed as Ron caressed her bare leg. "Mommy and Daddy were just talking about that

the other day," Sam answered, self-consciously. "Timmy, would you like to move into the castle?"

"Here," Timmy said excitedly, "with Cadin and Emily."

"Well, not exactly with them," Sam explained. "We'd have our own quarters. The lease on our apartment expires the end of October. Daddy and I were thinking that with the money we'd save not paying rent, we could afford to expand our family."

"Does 'spanning mean havin' a little brother or sister?" Timmy asked uncertainly.

"Yes, it does," Sam said assuredly.

"Let's move now!" Timmy said excitedly.

"We can't do that," Sam said giving Timmy a hug, "but autumn will be here before you know it."

Timmy looked elatedly at Caitlin and Emily. "We're going to live with you!" Timmy shouted excitedly.

Caitlin beamed. "Emily and I will give you discounted babysitting rates."

"Speak for yourself," Emily said, trying to hide a giggle. "I don't do diapers."

* * * * *

December 30, 2004

"Hermione, we must talk," Severus said concernedly, as he leaned over and whispered in her ear. "Please come to my office after you've finished your breakfast."

Hermione's eyes followed the Headmaster as he departed the Great Hall. The hunger in her stomach suddenly replaced by nauseating anxiety. "Harry," she said, her voice quivering, "Severus wants to talk to me. You don't think anything has happened to Kim, do you?"

"I trust not," Harry said optimistically. Although he too had all of a sudden lost his appetite. "She's in Slytherin House. Wouldn't he be talking to Draco rather than you if there were a problem?"

"I'm not sure," she said shaking her head worriedly. "He's acquainted with the fact that Emily and Kim are best friends, and I did tell him of the mirror's warnings. Plus, Draco isn't the most sensitive person when it comes to dealing with misfortune."

"Let's not jump to conclusions," Harry said, still trying to be upbeat.

"I can't help it," Hermione said in anguish as she dropped her fork on the plate. "I'll see you back in our rooms as soon as I've talked to Severus." Hermione pushed her chair aside and dashed out of the Hall.

* * * * *

"Hermione, you could have taken time to finish breakfast," Snape said as she rushed into his office. "But I'm glad you didn't." Severus had a concerned look on his face.

"I was just contacted by the Ministry. It seems there has been a rather serious incident involving one of our students." He clasped his hands and seemed for a moment to be intently studying his fingers. "The young lady is a Slytherin first year. Normally I'd be talking to her head of house, but due to the circumstances of what took place, I thought it best I confer with you first."

"Is it Kim Thatcher? " Hermione asked, already knowing the answer.

"Yes," Severus confirmed. "It seems, unfortunately, that your mirror was correct about what would occur over the holiday vacation."

Hermione's face paled as she stared at Severus.

Chapter Eighteen - The Model

Hermione's face was ashen as she stared desperately at Severus. The mirror had warned her that the chances of saving Kim were miniscule, but still she had held onto hope until now.

"What's happened?" Hermione asked fearfully, letting the energy drain from her as she fell into the chair.

"I don't have all the details," Severus answered, "but it seems Miss Thatcher performed magic outside of school." The headmaster handed Hermione a copy of the letter that the Ministry had sent to Kim.

Dear Miss Thatcher,

We have received intelligence that a transfiguration spell was performed at your place of residence this morning at fifteen minutes past three.

As you know, underage witches are not permitted to perform spells outside school, and further spellwork on your part may lead to expulsion from said school (Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery, 1875, Paragraph C.)

We would also ask you to remember that any magical activity that risks notice by members of the non-magical community (Muggles) is a serious offense under section 13 of the International Confederation of Wizards' Statute of Secrecy.

I hope you are enjoying your holiday!

Yours sincerely,

Percy Weasley

Percy Weasley
IMPROPER USE OF MAGIC OFFICE
Ministry of Magic

"Then she must be all right," Hermione said, somewhat relieved. "Certainly the Ministry of Magic wouldn't send her an admonition if she had been hurt."

"Normally not," Severus agreed. He got up slowly from his desk and approached Hermione. "Have you been giving the young lady private instruction?"

"Yes," Hermione answered guiltily. "I felt she needed more skills than a first year would normally possess in order to defend herself."

"Obviously you are an excellent teacher, and she must be an exceptionally quick learner," Snape said brandishing a smile. "Tonks owled me that it was necessary for her to capture a pig that ran out the front door of the house screaming 'help me'."

Hermione smiled. "I wasn't sure if she would be able to do it or not; that's seventh year ability,

and even then we never practice with a living person."

"Tonks was able to retransfigure him before the Muggle authorities arrived, but he now has the tendency to oink occasionally," Severus said. "The girl's mother had been beaten rather badly by her husband and was taken to a muggle hospital. She will, however, recover and thankfully be pressing charges against the bastard this time. She requested that Tonks put Kim on the morning train. She should be arriving in Hogsmeade prior to dinner."

"If it's all right with you, I'd liked to go meet her; perhaps she could sleep in my quarters until school resumes," Hermione suggested.

"My thoughts exactly," the Headmaster concurred.

* * * * *

Hermione did a warming charm on both Emily and Caitlin's robes as they waited with her on the platform for the arrival of the train. The temperature was only in the teens, and now that darkness was settling, the swirling snow made it feel even colder.

"I allowed you two to accompany me because you're such good friends with Kim. But I don't want you questioning her about what occurred," Hermione warned. "Whether and when she decides to talk about it has to be her choice."

"We won't pressure her," Emily said earnestly as she struggled to keep the wind from blowing her robes and skirt about.

"Days like this, you wonder if it will ever get warm again," Caitlin complained as she too struggled against the wind.

"I don't know about you girls, but I can't wait until August arrives," Hermione said, longingly.

"Are you anxious to go on the cruise?" Caitlin inquired.

"I'm eager for the cruise, warm weather and not being pregnant," Hermione answered.

"That's right," Emily said with comprehension. "The baby will be two months old by then. Have you and Dad decided on a definite name yet?"

"No. We're down to a short list, but not making much progress," Hermione said, as she heard a train whistle off in the distance. "Thankfully, the train is on time."

As soon as the train slowed to a stop, passengers began to get off. Most of the students that would be attending the Yule Ball were riding this train. Hermione and the girls watched impatiently for Kim. The warming charm had worn off, and they were once again all freezing.

Emily was also hoping to see someone else - her date for the dance. When Tyler stepped off the train, Emily was about to shout and wave to him, but his brother disembarked immediately behind him and looked lecherously in Emily's direction. Quickly, Emily checked to make sure her skirt and robes were properly covering her, not that she'd be embarrassed if anyone else

accidentally got a show, but she certainly didn't want to give Dick that satisfaction.

Emily was busy watching Tyler and didn't see Kim until she heard Caitlin shouting her name. Kim at once ran to Hermione and wrapped her arms around her Transfiguration Professor. "Thank you," she said, as she hugged her professor tightly.

"You're more than welcome," Hermione said as she gave her student a kiss on the cheek and then plucked a tear out of her own eye. "Come on," she called to the girls, "let's hurry to the carriage so we can get out of this cold."

As they reached the carriage, Caitlin stopped momentarily, reached into her pocket and pulled out a carrot. She fed it to the thestral and then patted the animal on the head before jumping into the carriage with the others.

"I thought they were meat eaters," Emily said as they were seated.

"They are," Caitlin said, "but they like carrots as a treat. Sort of the same as we like sweets."

Emily and Caitlin cuddled together for warmth on one side of the open carriage as Kim snuggled next to her professor on the other side. "You'll be staying with us until classes start," Hermione whispered to Kim. The girl didn't answer; she only huddled closer.

* * * * *

"Thank you," Kim said as she stared intently at her reflection in the mirror. "I wish you were alive so I could give you a hug. I dread to think what could have happened if it hadn't been for you and Professor Granger."

"I likewise dread the thought," the mirror responded. "I'm only pleased I was able to help. I would have sorely missed reflecting you."

"You're very special," Kim said leaning forward and kissing the reflective glass before scampering off to join the others.

Hermione and Jamie were preparing hot chocolate as Kim entered the room. Harry and Caitlin merely looked at her in surprise, but it was Emily that commented. "You're nude," Emily said in surprise. "I thought you were ill at ease being naked. After what occurred I didn't..."

Emily stopped mid sentence when she noticed the censorious look she was receiving from Hermione. She had forgotten that they weren't to mention what had happened to Kim.

Kim gave Emily a weak smile. "It's a matter of perspective," Kim said, trying to explain. "I'm more comfortable here with you guys starkers than I would be around him if I had on ten layers of clothes. I think my comfort level is more measured by the people I'm around rather than my clothing or lack of it."

Everyone else nodded.

"I suppose you'd like to hear what happened?" Kim asked, warily.

Harry and Jamie sat expressionless, but Caitlin and Emily bobbed their heads enthusiastically.

"Only when you're ready to tell us," Hermione said compassionately.

"At first, I had high hopes that the mirror was mistaken," Kim sighed. "Although Mum and George, my stepfather, were both rather taken aback by my hair when they saw me, he didn't look at me like - well, in that way - like he had most of last summer.

"I hoped that we would have a nice family holiday, which actually we did. Although everything seemed to be going smoothly, I remained vigilant, never letting my guard down. I even showered with my wand at hand as you had suggested," she said, giving Hermione a little smile.

"Mum told me that she had threatened to leave George unless he stopped drinking. Evidently he had believed her, and it made a tremendous difference in his personality and actions. He was once again the George that Mum had married; the man I had started to think of as a father.

"That was until yesterday. He received word that his company had lost out on a huge contract they were bidding on. That meant no bonus, no overtime and the possibility that he could even be laid off. He started drinking early in the afternoon, and then after he and Mum argued, he went off to a pub.

"I fell asleep with great difficulty, remembering how wicked he could be when he returned home drunk. It was about three in the morning when I was awakened by their arguing. But it wasn't just arguing, there was also a thudding sound as well; I could tell that he was hitting my Mum." Kim took a deep breath.

"She was crying, begging him to stop and not to do it. I had no idea what she was pleading for him not to do, but I knew he was hurting her. I jumped out of bed and ran to their room. The first thing I saw was my Mum lying on the bed, her face all bloody and tear soaked.

"He was standing beside the bed. When he saw me, his face beamed. 'Now isn't that perfect timing,' he said as if he hated me. 'You'll be able to watch the little one get it for the first time.'

"I suddenly realized what they had been arguing about. He had decide to ra... rape me... and Mum had been begging him not to."

Emily and Caitlin sat motionless, hanging on every word. Jamie and Harry were exchanging appalled looks, and Hermione moved to sit next to Kim, putting her arms around the now shaking young girl.

"To boot, I became conscious of the fact that I was standing way too close to him. As I went to back away, he reach out and grabbed at my nightdress. He ripped it off me as if it were made of tissue paper."

Kim forced a nervous laugh. "I must have been a sight, standing there nude except for the wand sheath that Professor Granger had given me attached to my thigh.

"He had me cornered. I reached for the wand, pointed it, and said the incantation I was

taught." Kim glanced toward Emily and Caitlin, "I had no idea if it would work, but it was my only chance. I didn't even see him transform. I had closed my eyes in fear, and was expecting the worse.

"Then I heard a loud 'pop', and without warning, there was a strange woman standing next to me - pretty, but with the weirdest orange hair. She took a quick look at my Mum and me and then raced after the pig. In a few moments, she returned with a cage containing the squealing animal suspended in mid air."

"Tonks," Caitlin said gleefully, immediately understanding who the Auror must of been. She looked questioning first at Harry and then at Hermione. "But if you had Tonks watching the house, why did she wait so long before Apparating inside?"

Kim explained. "Without my knowing, Tonks and some of her friends had been watching my home in shifts since the beginning of vacation, but they couldn't just pop into the house unless they had reason to suspect that something was amiss. With the house fully insulated for winter, the argument couldn't be heard outside, but somehow Tonks immediately knew when magic had been used."

"I hope Tonks left George a pig," Jamie declared disgustedly. "It would serve him right to spend the balance of his life wallowing in mud."

"I think that would have suited Tonks just fine," Kim answered, "but since Mum and George are both muggles, it was determined that the situation would best be handled by the Muggle authorities, so she had Mum dial for help. For that reason, she also didn't make any effort to treat Mum's injuries, once she determined that none were life threatening."

Harry looked at Kim in a bewildered manner. "But it would take the Muggle police at least five or ten minutes to get to your home. How did you explain that George just stood there waiting for ten minutes until the authorities arrived?"

"We didn't have to," Kim said, sounding slightly in awe. "That's why I'm glad Tonks is on our side. She transformed George back to his human form just before my Mum called the police, but she did it at the top of the stairs just outside my Mum's room. George was drunk and confused, so it was easy for her to shove him down the steps. Then she broke his arm and leg and zapped him unconscious so he wouldn't get away before the police arrived.

"She left right after Mum called for assistance, taking my wand and all other traces of my being a witch with her. I got them back when she put me on the train."

Hermione just shook her head. She didn't normally approve of physical violence, but she had to admire Tonk's style. "So you simply altered the truth slightly to eliminate the fact that magic was used?"

Kim nodded her head. "I said that he stumbled and lost his balance as I was struggling to get away from him."

"How is your Mum?" Jamie asked.

"Physically, she will be okay in a few weeks. Mentally, I'm afraid her getting better will take a long time, but finally she's admitted to herself what he is and is getting help."

"How about you?" Hermione asked, squeezing Kim's hand. "Do you have any lasting scars?"

"No! Actually, I feel better than I've felt for an awfully long time. I feel like a tremendous load has been lifted from my shoulders. It's like a black cloud was hanging over my life, and now suddenly the sun has come out."

* * * * *

December 31, 2004

"Why aren't you with the other girls?" Hermione asked when she entered her quarters to find Kim lying on the sofa staring aimlessly into space.

"They're all charming their hair and taking tanning potions for the Ball tonight, but I decided not to bother since I'm not going," Kim said, sounding downcast.

"That's understandable," Professor Granger, said comfortingly, "I imagine you're still upset from your encounter."

"That's what I told them," Kim answered, "but it's not the truth. I want to go, but I haven't anything to wear. Mum and I were going to shop in Diagon Alley before I caught the train back, but.... Well, you know what happened."

"Have you told Randy yet?" the Professor asked.

"Yeah, he was rather bombed out," Kim said dejectedly. "It would have been our first date."

"I wish I had know sooner," Hermione said, realizing how disappointed the girl must be. "I could have taken you to Hogsmeade, but by now the shops are closed for the holiday."

Hermione started to walk away, but than had a brilliant idea. "Do you have a favorite color?" she asked.

"Not really," Kim answered, sounding more disheartened by the minute. "Mum says I look best in red."

"I have an idea," Hermione said enthusiastically. "If you don't mind wearing a hand-me-down, you can wear my robes from last years Ball. I only wore them half the night."

Kim followed Hermione as she rushed off to her bedroom. "Professor, I truly appreciate the offer, but if you haven't noticed, we're rather different in size."

Hermione seemed to ignore Kim as she searched her closet for the dress, nearly tripping over a box that had been there since her wedding. Finally, she pulled the dress from its protective covering and showed it to Kim.

"Its beautiful," Kim sighed, "but it would never fit me, especially up top. My breasts are miniscule compared to yours."

"You, young lady, have an exquisite body for an eleven year old. I would have killed to look like you when I was eleven. You forget that this isn't a muggle dress. These robes are designed to conform to the body of the wearer. Try them on and you'll see what I mean."

At first Kim just stood in front of the mirror, holding the robes against her and admiring their beauty.

"Will you please put them on?" the mirror said impatiently. "I'm anxious to reflect how beautiful you'll look in them."

Kim had a full body blush, but she slipped the garment over her head and then watched in amazement as it adjusted to her body frame. "What holds it up?" She gasped as she realized the dress was totally backless with no back or shoulder straps.

"It's charmed to hug your body in the front. I was nervous at first when I wore it," Hermione admitted, "but I promise it won't drop off in the middle of the night leaving you exposed."

"I love it," Kim said, practically swooning, "but I think the adjustment charm malfunctioned on the length. It barely covers my bum. I can't help but give a show whenever I move." Kim looked shockingly at Hermione. "Did you actually wear it this short?"

"No I didn't," Hermione admitted, "but the temporary alteration they did for me was minimal. Jamie and Caitlin had the exact dress, but in different colors and wore it as designed."

Kim looked at Professor Granger in disbelief. "You allowed them to go to a school dance knowing that they would be exposed whenever they leaned slightly in any direction?"

"No I didn't. Most certainly I was concerned about the girls wearing such extremely short dresses, especially since they never wear knickers. But no one got a show; they just saw an awful lot of leg. The skirt of the dress is made of a modesty-charmed material."

"Modesty-charmed?" Kim said skeptically.

"I can see that you'll require a demonstration to be convinced. Lift the skirt to your waist, please," Hermione said.

Kim felt weird. A few minutes ago she was standing starkers in front of this woman and thought nothing of it. Now with a dress on she felt like it was wrong to lift the skirt and expose herself, but she did as requested although she blushed deeply.

Hermione smiled at Kim, realizing how strange the girl must feel. "Okay, now point your wand at the skirt of the robes and say "Modestio."

"Modestio"

"Now try to take the dress off," Hermione suggested.

Kim tried to remove the garment, but although she had drawn yards of material over her head, the hem remained firmly in place covering her private area. "Okay, I'm convinced," Kim shouted, as if conceding a battle. "How do I get out of this?"

"For the next hour you don't," Hermione answered with a laugh. "You must wait for the charm to expire."

Kim adjusted the dress until it was once again fitting properly. "I won't get in trouble if I wear this?"

"No," Hermione said, smiling. "Just remember to renew the charm before the hour is up and always sit with your legs together."

Kim hugged Professor Granger excitedly. "I have to get word to Randy that we're going to the ball after all."

* * * * *

"Where are the boys going to meet us?" Kim asked anxiously.

"At the bottom of the marble staircase, just outside the Great Hall," Caitlin answered nervously. "That reminds me, be sure to walk behind us going down the steps."

"Why?" Kim asked, looking at Caitlin incredulously.

"Jamie and I wore similar dresses last year," Caitlin said. "When you go up and down stairs, anyone at the bottom of the steps gets a rather revealing show."

"Oh! I imagine they would," Kim said, blushing intensely as she realized the modesty charm would be of little help in that situation.

"I hate my dress," Emily said, first pulling at the waist and then the bodice. "It clings too tightly. I've only had it on for thirty minutes and it's already digging into my skin and giving me welt marks. I'll never make it through the night."

"What do you think they'd do if the four of us showed up at the Ball starkers?" Caitlin said as she also tried to adjust her dress.

"Do you mean before or after they expelled us?" Jamie said. "I hate clothes as much as you guys, especially when they are tight and restricting, but I'm afraid we have little choice but to suffer tonight."

"I don't understand," Kim said. "I'm not the least bit uncomfortable. Actually, I almost feel as if I don't have anything on."

"That's because your robes are made of magical materials that conform to your body supernaturally," Jamie explained. "This year the three of us ended up buying robes that are actually sewn and fitted. If I had realized how uncomfortable they would be, I'd have stuck with what I wore last year."

"Personally, I'll take my bare skin anytime over any material," Emily said. "I don't know why most people have such an aversion to nakedness."

* * * * *

"Do you mind if we go for a walk?" Emily asked, pulling at her dress in an irritated fashion.

"No, actually it's a grand idea," Tyler said grabbing his camera off the table and then taking Emily's hand and letting her guide him out of the Great Hall.

As they walked down the corridor, Emily tried every door they passed looking for one that was unlocked. Finally they came to classroom eleven, which was never used. When Emily tried the door, it opened, and they found themselves staring into the middle of a forest clearing. At first they both stood stunned in disbelief.

"This must have be Firenze's old classroom," Tyler finally offered.

"Whose?" Emily said, confused.

"Before the war, Cornelius Fudge was the Ministry of Magic," Tyler explained. "He appointed a Hogwarts High Inquisitor whose job was theoretically to purge the school of what the Ministry considered to be sub-standard teachers. When the Inquisitor sacked Trelawney, the divination professor, Headmaster Dumbledore hired a centaur named Firenze to take her place. This must have been his classroom; it was made to look like the Forbidden Forest."

"How do you know about all that stuff?" Emily asked, obviously impressed.

"It's all in *Hogwarts, a History*. Haven't you ever read it?" Tyler asked.

"No," Emily answered, "but this is perfect." She pulled Tyler into the room and did a locking charm on the door.

"Tyler, these dress robes have been annoying me all night. They feel like they're cutting into my skin. Would you mind if I just took them off for a few minutes to get some relief?" Emily asked, candidly.

"You're asking me if I mind?" Tyler uttered in disbelief. "Of course I don't mind, I love seeing you naked."

Emily hastily removed the garment, hanging it on a nearby tree limb and then plopping her bare bum on the springy mossy classroom floor, lying back and relaxing.

"This is more like it," Emily said, stretching. "The Ball was fun, but I could lay here for hours."

"I could look at you lying there for hours," Tyler said as he laid down his camera and then seated himself next to Emily. "Your robes must have really been tight," he said sympathetically. "You have red marks on your waist and chest."

Tyler began to gently rub Emily's waist.

"That feels nice," she said almost purring. Then she laughed. "But before you get any ideas,

don't try massaging the ones on my chest."

"I wouldn't," Tyler said, truthfully.

"Maybe some day," Emily said innocently, wondering how it would feel. "Why have you been carrying that camera around all night? I haven't seen you take even one picture."

"I was hoping to get a few pictures of you before the evening was over," Tyler answered. "You know, to look at when you're not around. I imagine that will have to wait a little longer now."

"What! You wouldn't want a picture of me like this?" Emily said with a laugh as she struck what she thought to be a sexy pose.

"I'd give anything in the world to have a picture of you as you are now," Tyler said earnestly, "but you'd never let me. Would you?"

"No! I doubt that would be a good idea," Emily answered. "Especially after what the family just went through with Playwizard."

"Yeah," Tyler said disappointedly. "I imagine you'd have to trust someone an awful lot before you'd consent to letting them have a nude photograph of you. With my brother's reputation preceding me, I doubt you'd ever trust me that much."

"Tyler, I know you're nothing like him. And as for trusting you, look at me. I doubt I'd be standing here like I am, alone, in a locked classroom with you if I didn't trust you," Emily said with conviction. "It's just...."

"I can't always do what I want because I have to worry what others will think," Emily explained, "and how it will affect those I love. If it were my choice, I'd walk back into the Great Hall just like I am and you could take a million pictures because it wouldn't bother me in the least to be seen like this."

"But the textile world won't accept me like this," Emily said, dejectedly. "I'd be thrown out of school and cause the Potters a great deal of embarrassment."

"The very last thing I'd wish, is to see you being thrown out of school," Tyler said, passionately.

"No, I didn't think you would," Emily said tenderly, wishing once more in her life that she had Jamie's infallible ability of judging people. She gazed at Tyler. From the look in his face, it was evident this meant a great deal to him.

"I hope I don't live to regret this," Emily said hesitantly, "but you can take my picture."

"Can I take more than one?" he asked optimistically. "I'd like to finish this roll of film."

"I guess," Emily said, giving Tyler a smile. "How many pictures are left on the film?"

"Only thirty-six," Tyler said with trepidation.

"Thirty-six," Emily cried in amazement. "I thought you just wanted one picture; that sounds like a profession photo shoot." She looked around the simulated forest. "Well, at least we have a grand place to take the pictures. I've never had my picture taken by a 'expert' photographer before so you'll have to tell me how you want me to pose."

* * * * *

"Have you seen Emily?" Kim asked Caitlin during a break in the music. "It's only thirty minutes before midnight."

"I wouldn't worry about her," Caitlin said matter-of-factly. "Her dress has been bothering her all night. She probably just went to find some place where she could take it off for a short while."

"But Tyler was with her," Kim said, as if shocked.

"And?" Caitlin said, cynically. "Do you think for one minute that would bother Emily?"

"No, I guess not," Kim said, shaking her head. "Actually, I guess we should be thankful she didn't just up and take it off right here in front of everybody."

"That's what I'm about ready to do," Caitlin said in frustration. "I can't wait to get back to our quarters and strip. Next year, I'm wearing nothing but the concealment charm whether Mum likes it or not. I just won't dance with anyone that I would mind seeing me naked."

Kim shook her head in disbelief. "I could never be like you two."

"I'm not so sure about that," Caitlin said. "Your bare butt was almost totally exposed the last half of that slow dance."

"It wasn't?" Kim said nervously as she checked her dress. "It couldn't have been, I've been very careful to renew the charm every hour."

"Just kidding," Caitlin said with a laugh. "I wish you could have seen your face. Oh! Here come Randy and Matt with our drinks. What are you going to do if Randy tries to kiss you at midnight?"

Kim colored deeply. "Probably kiss him back," Kim said apprehensively. "I just hope I don't get so keyed up that I pee my pants."

"That's rather an impossibility," Caitlin said, laughingly. "Or have you forgotten that you're not wearing any?"

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"The girls look like they're having a good time," Hermione said as she and Harry surveyed the room.

Harry nodded his head. "I'm so glad the situation with Kim worked out," he said, "she's a lovely girl. I wonder how much longer she'll keep her hair that length?"

"I overheard her talking to Caitlin today; I think they plan on shortening it before the resumption of classes. Even with magic, hair that long is difficult to deal with."

"I imagine," Harry said, momentarily staring at Kim. "Her hair is actually longer than the skirt of her dress robes. She looks very attractive in them, but not nearly as beautiful as the person who wore them last year."

"You sir, are very prejudiced and incredibly sweet when it comes to my looks," Hermione said, giving Harry's hand a squeeze. "We made it through our first year back together, should we try for another?"

"Do you expect an answer immediately, or may I think about it?" Harry said mischievously.

"Don't think too long," Hermione said threateningly. "Neville might be taken now, but the last I heard Severus and Draco are both currently available."

"You're a tease Hermione Jane. Always threatening me with Slytherins. I guess I'm lucky Salazar Slytherin is long since dead or he'd probably be lined up to challenge me for you as well."

"He'd be wasting his time," Hermione said lovingly. "As far as I'm concerned, you have no competitor. You are the undisputed title-holder to all my love."

Harry didn't care how many students might be watching; he took Hermione in his arms and kissed her with passion.

"Should we be taking notes, Professor?" Alex said good-naturedly as he and Jamie approached the couple.

"Only if you think they might be helpful in future endeavors," Harry responded with a laugh. "I've found that kissing is something you don't necessarily want to get right the first time around. Practicing can be quite enjoyable, especially with the right partner." He gave Jamie a quick smile.

"Jamie, you look troubled," Hermione said concernedly.

"I'm worried about Amanda," Jamie answered. "I didn't expect her and Tony to be at the Ball, but I had hoped to hear from her by now. I hope her parents don't take her out of school."

"That would be a tragedy," Hermione responded. "That is a prehistoric response parents and educators once took to young girls being pregnant. If anything, having a child makes it all the more important that she finishes her education."

"Will the Board of Governors allow her to remain in school pregnant?" Alex asked, tentatively.

Harry chuckled. "They will if they don't want to face the wrath of Granger. Take my word; no

one wants to fight my wife when it comes to discrimination."

"When I was a fifth year, I seriously considered a career as an activist for elfin rights," Hermione said, "but that was before Professor McGonagall asked me to consider teaching.

"I was going to be an Auror," Harry added. "Instead, Hermione and I both ended up teachers."

"I'm sure you would have both been successful no matter what career you selected," Alex said, "but I'm glad I had the opportunity to be taught by both of you."

"Alex, you're doing fine in both our classes; there is no need to butter us up." Harry said with a laugh, but then turned stern. "I would, however, suggest you stop carrying your wand in your back pocket before you have a serious accident and lose your buttocks."

"Can that actually happen?" Jamie asked with grave concern. Not at all liking the vision her mind had conjured up of a butt-less Alex.

"It's elementary wand safety," Hermione said, shaking her head at Harry. "I've never actually heard of anyone losing their butt; you're more likely to break your wand."

"Did you see them anywhere?" Harry called out to Ron and Sam as they approached.

"No, we even checked the classrooms on the main floor that were open," Sam responded.

"Who are you hunting?" Jamie questioned.

"Your sister, Emily," Hermione responded worriedly. "It's been an hour since I've seen her. She's probably perfectly fine, but after what happened to me last year, I'm concerned."

"Do you want us to help search?" Jamie offered restlessly.

"Let's give them till midnight, then we'll all go look," Harry suggested.

* * * * *

"I've always considered myself rather a tomboy and not particularly attractive," Emily said sighing, "but you make me feel like I'm some sort of eleven year old supermodel."

"Soon to be twelve," Tyler said, remembering Emily's birthday was a week after Valentines Day. "You are a tomboy, and in some ways you are totally unorthodox. I know you could probably out wrestle every boy in our class, me included. Yet you have such a pretty face and your body gets more appealing every time I see it."

"I could stand here all night and listen to you tell me how great I am," Emily said with a chuckle, "but I think its time we get back to reality and the Ball. How many more pictures do you have left to take?"

"Six, but I've run out of unique poses," Tyler confessed.

"I have an idea," Emily said excitedly. "Caitlin and I have been challenging each other at hand stands and I've become rather accomplished."

Before Tyler could respond, Emily was on her hands, her legs and feet pointed directly to the ceiling. Then she did a perfect split, her legs forming a large capital T with her body.

Tyler had the camera in his hand, but he hadn't taken a single picture. He was too enthralled by the image before him.

"Wake up if you want to take a picture," Emily yelled. "I can't hold this position all night."

Tyler reluctantly brought the camera to his eye. This girl trusted him completely. How could he be about to betray her? He snapped one picture and then another. He was as appalling as his brother, perhaps even shoddier. At least his brother was open with the fact that he was a rotten bastard.

* * * * *

"... nine, eight, seven..."

"There they are!" Jamie shouted in relief and pointing to the large oak entrance doors from which Emily and Tyler had emerged.

"Talk about cutting it short," Alex declared.

"...two, one. HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

"Happy New Year, 'Mione," Harry said taking his wife in his arms and kissing her fervently.

"I love you Sam," Ron whispered before their lips joined.

Neither Jamie nor Alex said a word. They stared longingly into each other's eyes as they drew closer. Only closing their eyes once their lips met; then embracing.

Matt leaned over and kissed Caitlin gently on the cheek, but when she returned the kiss, Matt's cheek wasn't her target.

"I've never kissed any body on the lips," Randy said nervously. "I don't want you to think I'm being presumptuous."

"I never have either," Kim said shyly, "but I like the idea of us learning together."

"I feel like I'm living a dream and I'm afraid I'll wake up," Tyler said, looking at Emily's glowing face.

"If this is a dream, please kiss me before it's over," Emily said, earnestly.

They kissed lightly on the lips and then Tyler embraced Emily in a hug. Unexpectedly, Emily felt moistness on her cheek and pulled away slightly. "Tyler, you're crying," Emily said in

astonishment. "What's the matter?"

"You wouldn't understand," he said gloomily, squeezing her even tighter.

* * * * *

"Harry, why do most of the professors dread having to chaperone the Yule Ball?" Hermione asked, as she and Harry cuddled in bed together. "I'd be willing to do it every year."

"You would now because we're young and have personal attachments to a number of the students. You might well feel different in seven years when all our girls have departed," Harry pointed out.

"I hope not," Hermione answered. "I'd feel left out if we no longer went to the Ball."

"Hermione, what are you going to do about Kim and the other students that are friends of the girls when they come to our quarters?" Harry questioned, out of the blue.

"Do about what?" Hermione asked, confused as to what Harry was talking about.

"You made the statement that you were considering staying unclothed at all times in our quarters even when we have company like you did with Ron and Sam. I don't see how that's possible," Harry said.

"Are you referring to the students?" Hermione asked.

"Yes," Harry responded. "I talked to both Jamie and Emily. They did indeed grow up in a totally nude home environment. Neither remembers ever seeing their parents clothed when they were at home. I was especially interested in how they handled their school friends."

"I had asked them about that, too," Hermione said. "It seemed that before any friend was allowed to come over, there was a discussion with the friend's family informing them what to expect. Be that as it may, there were still some problems. Most of the girls who visited handled the state of affairs rather well; some even went as far as disrobing themselves."

"It would seem girls are much more mature when it comes to handling nudity than young boys," Harry agreed. "Some of Emily's friends, who were mostly boys, seemed, on the surface, to handle things fine while at the house, but once they returned to school, had rather a field day describing what they had seen."

"Based on their experiences, you're wondering how I could possibly consider letting the girls' friends, who happen to also be my students, see me in that state? I can't," Hermione said flatly. "I'm an adult and their teacher. No matter how innocent my intentions, others would see it as immoral. There might be a few exceptions, but only with the consent of their parents."

"Who?" Harry asked with concern, "They're still students."

"Amanda for one, assuming she returns to school and Alex for another," Hermione said

confidently. "If it hadn't been for Alex, you wouldn't be holding me in your arms right now. That boy found me and carried me to help, but has never revealed to a soul that I was naked."

Harry nodded. "They're both special and mature enough to handle the situation. I agree that you should alert the parents first and have their go-ahead. I assume none of the younger boys, though."

"No, I don't think they possess the necessary maturity. I would like to include Kim if she and her mother are comfortable with the idea. Emily and Caitlin seem to have adopted her as a sister."

Harry nodded. "I still haven't figured out how a girl as sweet as her ended up in Slytherin House."

"Harry, not all Slytherins are mean and evil or have you forgotten we have a daughter in Slytherin?"

"Do you think she'll ever consent to adoption and become our real daughter?"

"I doubt it," Hermione answered, "but it's only a piece of paper. We love her and she loves us. The name Zacherley is a link to her parents that I doubt she'll ever want to break."

"Nor should she."

* * * * *

Saturday, January 1, 2005

"I can't believe you two," Caitlin said, shaking her head in frustration. "Professor Malfoy assigned us that homework three days before vacation began. Why on earth did you both wait until today to start it?"

"It's called procrastination," Randy answered wincingly. "Something I'm sure you're incapable of. You know, you could be a sweetheart and help Matt and me."

"I could, but then you would miss out on two lessons," Caitlin said stubbornly.

"Two lessons?" Matt questioned.

"Yes, two!" Caitlin emphasized. "If you don't write your own foot of parchment on the subject, you won't grasp the theory. You also won't learn not to postpone 'til tomorrow what should have been done two weeks ago."

"Did anyone ever tell you that you have a mean streak?" Matt asked. "What happened to the sweet loving girl that kissed me last night?"

"She still here," Caitlin announced, "but since her homework is done, she's going to go frolic in the snow with her friends while you spend your day cooped up in the library."

* * * * *

"I told you it wouldn't work," Matt said as Randy and he trudged their way toward the library. "She'll literally give you the shirt off her back, but when it comes to letting you copy her homework- forget it. By the way, how did things go between you and Kim last night? Are you guys an official couple now?"

"Unofficially, official!" Randy said. "We didn't exactly put it in words, but some things you can just feel."

"That is called assuming, my friend. When it comes to girls, you should never take anything for granted," Matt recommended. "That's what caused you and Emily to break up."

"No it didn't," Randy said defensively. "We were a couple for convenience sake until we both found the right person."

"So, is Kim the right person for you?"

"I don't know. I'm only eleven," Randy answered. "I only know I like her, and I get nervous and shaky around her."

"That's the way I feel around Caitlin," Matt said as he thought back to the day they had been alone together and almost...

"What do you think of Tyler?" Randy interrupted.

"I'm not sure," Matt answered honestly. "He seems like an okay guy and treats Emily well, but it's hard to believe that he could be nothing like his brother and parents."

"I know his brother is an arse, but what's the story on the parents?" Randy asked.

"They were Death Eaters," Matt explained. "Two loyal followers of He-Who-Must-Not- Be-Named. They ran one of his death camps where they experimented on and tortured people before finally putting them out of misery."

"Then why aren't they in Azkaban?" Randy asked, loathingly.

"They were for a short time," Matt answered as they entered the library. "They probably would still be there, but they ratted on a lot of other people in order to get their sentence reduced to practically nothing."

As they were seated and went about organizing their work area, they heard chairs move on the other side of the bookcase that separated them from the next table.

"Did you do as I instructed?" A voice asked arrogantly.

"Yes," was the meek reply.

"Was she cooperative? Did she allow you to take any pictures?" he continued to question.

"She trusts me. She only hesitated slightly."

"How many pictures did you get?"

"All thirty-six."

"Thirty-six," he said excitedly. "All of them nudes? Do they show everything?"

"They're all full nudes and some are extremely revealing, just what you asked for. Now will you tell me what you intend to do with them?"

"Certainly, little brother. I'm going to ruin Emily Zacherley's life, like her parents did the lives of our mother and father. I'm going to get her expelled from Hogwarts and humiliate her in the wizard world. If I'm lucky the disgrace might even spread to the Potters so that Hogwarts can be purged of him and his mudblood bitch of a wife."

Matt motioned to Randy to silently gather their possessions together.

"How do you hope to accomplish all that?" Tyler asked.

"I have a contact who dabbles in child pornography on the wizard net. He has assured me that Emily Zacherley can become extremely well known overnight. But I don't want him having all the fun. I'm going to have the pictures blown up to poster size and hung in every hall of Hogwarts. I only wish I didn't have to wait until the next Hogsmeade weekend to put my plan into action. Until then this camera with its valuable contents will remain secure in my underwear drawer"

"Let's get out of here," Matt whispered. "We've have to tell Caitlin, so she can warn Emily. I can't believe I was stupid enough to think that bastard truly liked Emily."

Randy and Matt silently slipped away from the table and hurried back to the Gryffindor common room.

"Emily's parents weren't the only ones to testify against Mum and Dad. Plenty of others did, too," Tyler pleaded.

"But it was their testimony that was the most compelling and sealed our parents' fate. Well, they got their due in that so called accident. Thus far, I've screwed up my chances at getting their older daughter, but I'm going to get the little bitch."

"But they never did anything to us. They're both extremely nice girls," Tyler begged.

"You only think they're nice because they strut around displaying their tits and pussy for you. Forget the tart. Be thankful that I love my brother and didn't tell Dad. He would have hexed you from here to hell and back. Instead, you got your new Enterprise for Christmas and even got to help me with the revenge. Maybe, there is still hope for you to end up like me," Dick said, sanctimoniously.

Chapter Nineteen - Nothing to Brag About

"I can't believe he'd do that to me," Emily sobbed, as Caitlin updated her with all that Randy and Matt had overheard. "Are they positive it was Tyler?"

Caitlin looked incredulously at her 'sister' and shook her head with frustration. "No they're not positive," Caitlin said, her voice filling with irritation. "They didn't actually see his face. It could have been two other boys. I imagine you've posed for nude pictures with dozens of boys in this school that have a brother that wants to see you expelled and your life ruined."

"I really thought he liked me," Emily mumbled, ignoring Caitlin's outburst, seeming to be in a trance. "How could he do something like that?"

"It easy when you're a low life creep," Caitlin responded. "The prat has evidently been setting you up since the first week of school."

"How can he hate me so? I've never been anything but nice to him." Emily turned to Caitlin, tears now filling her eyes. "I liked him. I really liked him a lot."

Caitlin put her arms around Emily and pulled her into a hug. "I know," said Caitlin understandingly.

"If you don't mind, I think I'll have a lie down," Emily said pulling herself away. "I haven't felt this awful since my parents were killed." Emily made for her bed and then turned. "Caitlin, please don't tell Mum and Jamie what a fool I've been. I'm ashamed enough, without them knowing."

"You have my word," Caitlin said genuinely as she left their bedroom and quietly closed the door behind her. She wondered how Emily expected to keep her Mum and Jamie from seeing the posters when they appeared in the school passageways.

* * * * *

Sunday, January 2, 2005 4:00 AM

Ginny felt like she was going crazy. If anyone saw her parading around the halls of the staff quarters at this time of the morning, in her slippers and nightdress, they would think likewise.

She'd woke up again this morning at about three and was unable to go back to sleep. At first she had paced her room, hoping to become drowsy. She'd even tried reading, but to no avail.

Whenever she tried to lie down, she felt like she couldn't breathe. She felt so alone and depressed. This wasn't the first time she had felt this way, and she was fearful it wouldn't be the last. Was she having what Muggles referred to as panic attacks? Did she even know what they were?

What's the matter with me? I'm only twenty-four, certainly not unattractive, but I can't seem to maintain a lasting relationship. I don't want to be alone the remainder of my life.

Ginny grew up in a crowded house. She was used to noise and activity. She hated being by

herself, but worse, she hated the feeling of being unloved and unwanted. Last summer she had both Draco and Severus vying for her attention, and now she had only solitude. How she longed to have someone tell her that they cared for her. She'd forgotten how wonderful it felt to be tightly held in someone's arms and be told that they love you.

She stopped in front of the Headmaster's quarters. *Did I make the wrong choice? He loved me, and I cared for him. We could have been happy together. If only I could have gotten damn Draco out of my head. What is it about him? Why can't I let go?*

The door opening and Katie Bell stepping into the corridor interrupted Ginny's thoughts. Ginny's presence went unnoticed until the door closed, and then Katie jumped backward, startled.

At first both women froze, speechless. Ginny gawked at Katie, who was clothed only in a tiny, revealing, panty-less teddy. "What were you doing in there?" Ginny asked naively. "Dressed like that?"

Katie just looked incredulously at Ginny. "Spending quality time with a wonderful man who deserves to be loved, not hurt," Katie said boldly.

"Are you two a couple?" Ginny asked, trying to convince her mind that this was reality and not just a bad dream.

"No," Katie answered piteously. "I'm just the substitute, but I'm available for the fulltime position if he can ever bring himself to trust a woman again." Katie turned to walk away and then stopped. "You have no idea how much he loved you, do you? Or how much you hurt him? Or do you just not care?"

"Don't presume to tell me how to manage my life!" Ginny said angrily. "I think the world of Severus." She hesitated. "I just had a choice to make and he..."

"He was expendable because you had Draco Malfoy and his Slytherin tongue ready to satisfy you," Katie interrupted. "I don't know Draco that well, but I doubt he could ever love you as much as Severus did. Sod it! Still does!"

Katie paced momentarily not sure she wanted to come clean to Ginny. She took a deep breath. "More than once, he has called me by your name in the heat of passion," she said. "If you walked in there now and told him that you loved him, we'd be history."

Katie looked threateningly at Ginny. "I only tell you this because I love him and want to see him happy. But I swear that if you hurt him again, I'll hex you from here to hell and back. I know I love him," Katie said, passion showing in her eyes, "and I can live with being a second choice. Don't you dare go back to him unless you're absolutely convinced and have every intention to remain with him the balance of your life."

Katie turned away from Ginny, tears in her eyes and walked down the corridor toward her own quarters. Ginny watched enviously as Katie's bare bum turned the corner and disappeared from sight. It must be wonderful to be so sure of your feelings about someone!

Ginny turned and looked at the door to Severus' quarters. All she had to do was knock and he

would take her in his arms. She would no longer be alone. Then she thought of Draco. Tears came to her eyes, and she collapsed sobbing to the floor.

* * * * *

Hermione opened the door just enough to see who was knocking. "Amanda, you're back," she said with pleasure. "Just wait a moment please while I slip something on."

"It's not necessary, but if you'd feel more comfortable," Amanda said. "I've grown rather accustomed to female nudity living with Jamie, and I know you like to be nude in the privacy of your quarters, but I can understand if as a professor you'd prefer not to be seen by one of your students."

Hermione deliberated briefly and then opened the door entirely. "You're not only a student, you're a friend of the family. Did you just get back? Have you talked to Jamie yet?"

Amanda couldn't help but for a split second gaze at her professor. "You're beautiful Professor Granger. Jamie told me that you both had identical figures and you do." Amanda paused. "Well, you look like you would if you weren't pregnant. Actually, right now I guess we have that in common."

"Do you have any idea when the baby is due?" Hermione asked, getting the subject off her figure.

"I think either late May or early June," Amanda answered. "Conception took place on September fourth."

"You're positive of the date?" Hermione asked. "Because that's when Harry and I conceived. We'll likely deliver within a few days of each other."

"It was definitely the fourth," Amanda repeated sorrowfully. "It was the only time we ever had sex."

"You only did it that once?" Hermione shook her head sadly. "It doesn't seem quite fair. Some women try so hard to have a child and can't. You most certainly didn't want one at this time in your life, and it only took that once."

"Yeah! Lucky me," Amanda replied, disgruntled.

"Why don't we go have a seat in the kitchen, and I'll get you something to drink," Hermione suggested. "Then you can tell me how your meeting went with your parents and what course of action you've planned."

Amanda followed her professor to the kitchen and sat looking forlorn as Hermione got them each a beverage and performed a chilling charm.

"Smile, Amanda," Hermione said as she put her hand on the girl's shoulder. "I know you're not happy to be pregnant, but it's not the end of the world."

"Maybe not if you have a wonderful job and you're married to your true love," Amanda said,

looking enviously at Hermione, "but if you're sixteen and about to be kicked out of school, it sure seems that way."

"Yes, I imagine it does," Hermione said. "I can't envision what I would have done if I had been in your position at sixteen. You getting kicked out of school, however, is something that is not about to happen- assuming you desire to remain here."

"I would like to stay in school," Amanda answered emphatically, "but according to both my parents and Tony's, there is little chance of that happening. They doubt the Board of Governors would allow a female student to remain in school once visibly pregnant; which I most certainly will be soon."

"That is a ridiculous policy. I'm going to be as visibly pregnant as you, and I'm allowed to teach. Do the governors feel the other girls will be jealous and all want to become pregnant?" Hermione asked sarcastically.

"I doubt it," Amanda said dejectedly. "If anything, I'd think it would cause others to abstain or at the least be more careful. You'd think my being there would act as a deterrent."

"My views exactly," Hermione agreed. "Now all I have to do is convince the Headmaster and, in turn, the Board of Governors. Are you going to keep the baby or give it up for adoption?"

"A combination of both," Amanda said issuing a faint smile. "Really it would be crazy for Tony and me to consider getting married at our young age and trying to raise a baby. Both sets of parents were vehemently against that." Amanda shrugged her shoulders. "Deep down, I guess I have to agree with them. Tony and I don't have an idyllic relationship to begin with; the odds would be stacked against us."

Amanda glanced at Hermione dismally. "I'm not even sure he'll be allowed to continue seeing me. His dad really reamed him out for being so naively careless. I don't think it helped any that I'm from Gryffindor," she added bleakly.

"If your love is strong, it will keep you together," Hermione said, encouragingly. "If not, then its better you find out now."

Amanda nodded her head half-heartedly. "My Mum is going to raise the baby. My parents always wanted another child, but were unable to conceive. I guess my child will sort of be the little son or daughter that Mum could never have."

"But eventually you do intend to let the child know that you and Tony are the real mother and father?" Hermione questioned.

"Actually, right from the beginning. I'll be known as Mum, but my parents will do most of the upbringing."

"Then if we can manage to keep you in school, this situation won't turn out as awfully as you expected," Hermione said, trying to be positive.

"I guess not," Amanda answered, still looking rather glum. "But I'm afraid that's a big if. I'm not exactly getting any smaller."

"I know precisely what you mean," Hermione said, placing her hand on her belly.

* * * * *

Monday, January 3, 2005

Emily was able to spend most of the weekend in the faculty quarters and thus avoid Tyler, but with the recommencement of classes on Monday, it was just a matter of time before their paths eventually crossed. After all, they were in the same house, had all their classes together, and Tyler had no knowledge that he was a marked man.

Had Tyler known that Emily was aware of his deception, he probably would have given her a wide berth, but he didn't and, therefore, walked right up to her and Kim before the start of Potions class.

"Hi," he said awkwardly. "I was looking for you all weekend." He seemed to be stumbling for words. "We have to talk."

"You are the last person on earth that I want to talk to!" Emily practically screamed.

Suddenly everyone in the class was staring in their direction. She turned and started to head for her seat, but Tyler reached out and grabbed her arm. He had instantly realized that somehow she was aware of his digression.

Emily pulled away. "Keep your filthy hands off me," she roared, turning back toward him. "Don't you ever touch me again, you lying miserable shite! We have absolutely nothing to talk about, nor will we ever again." She once more turned away.

"Please, Emily, let me explain," Tyler begged. "It's not what it seems." He once more clutched her shoulder.

Kim could see it coming. Emily face was crimson. The anger, rage and hurt that had been building all weekend peeked. Emily turned, her eyes hurling daggers at Tyler. Kim expected Emily to slap Tyler, but she didn't. Instead, she clenched her fist and socked him squarely in the face. Caught off guard, Tyler fell to his knees and brought his hands to his face, his nose broken and bleeding.

"What have we here?" Professor Malfoy asked as he slammed the dungeon door. "A lover's spat?"

"Definitely not lovers," Emily snarled. "Not in this lifetime."

Malfoy's lip curled into a sneer. "Perhaps neither of you bothered to take notice, but this is the Potions dungeon and not a boxing arena," he snapped. "As much as it pains me to deduct points from my own house, you have each caused Slytherin the loss of ten points."

"But Professor," Emily started to plea.

"Silence!" Malfoy shouted. "You have already wasted enough of our valuable class time."

Bancroft, go see Madam Pomfrey and have her realign your snout. Miss Zacherley, since you were obviously the aggressor, I feel two nights detention is in order. Perhaps Mr. Filch can find a less combative use for your hands."

Before leaving the classroom, Tyler glanced back at Emily; she was purposely not looking in his direction, but he could see that her face was enraged. He had lost her.

* * * * *

Tuesday, January 11, 2005

"Oh! My!" Hermione cried as she read the Daily Prophet headline.

"What is it?" Harry asked with unease.

"There's been another terrorist attack attributed to that so called Great One," she answered. "It was at the Ministry of Magic. This time it seems they were actually hoping to kill Minister Wrong. The Minister had only just departed the scene of the bombing minutes before it was detonated. Harry, the poor woman might have been murdered."

"In my book, terrorists are all cowards," Harry affirmed. "Declared war is dreadful enough, but to attack innocent civilians and children is appalling. Emma warned us about this Great One last year. It seems her worst fears are becoming reality."

"Is there going to be another war Harry?" Hermione asked tentatively.

"I'm not sure," Harry said. "This Great One doesn't seem to have a legion of followers like Voldemort did, but then, neither did he at first. But Voldemort did have an agenda that appealed to purebloods. He wanted to purify the wizard world of Muggle blood. The Great One seems to simply want to rule our world as a dictator, but other than that, has no program that would entice followers."

"At least this time we're not at the forefront of the battle," Hermione said, with small relief. "You're not part of some kill or be killed prophecy."

Harry smiled. "None of us is totally safe from this type of conflict, but it is good to know that you and your family are at no more peril than anyone else. Speaking of conflict, what time do you meet with Severus about Amanda?"

"Ten o'clock, but he doesn't know what the meeting is about," Hermione answered slyly.

Harry studied his wife's expression. "I've seen that look before," he said with a laugh. "Poor Severus doesn't stand a chance."

* * * * *

"Hermione, please have a seat," Severus offered graciously as Hermione entered his office. "How are you feeling? The baby isn't giving you any problems?"

"I'm fine, except for feeling slightly on the large side," she grinned. "Although at this stage

the baby is only about the size of a pickle, I feel like I'm carrying a watermelon."

"You still look lovely," Severus said truthfully. "Now what can I do for you?"

"Actually, I wanted to talk to you about pregnancy," Hermione offered. "Would you prefer if I took a leave of absence until after the baby was born?"

Severus looked thunderstruck at Hermione. "Only if you're feeling ill or you find your schedule too tiring," he responded, surprised by the question. "Knowing you, I rather expected that you would want to teach right up to your due date."

"That's my desire," Hermione answered, hesitantly, "but I was concerned that conceivably you or the Board might have a problem with me teaching once my circumstance was obvious. Then you don't think seeing me pregnant will have a harmful effect on the students?"

Severus gave Hermione an amazed look. "A woman being pregnant is a normal part of life; there is most certainly nothing off-putting about it."

"I guess I'm just being silly," Hermione said. "I was concerned that one of the students might try to emulate me."

Severus laughed. "Hermione, you are an exceedingly popular professor, and I'm sure that many of your student desire to follow in your footsteps. I doubt, however, that scores of young girls will suddenly have a desire to be pregnant simply because someone they admire is. Give your students more credit. They can see the countless negatives of teenage pregnancy."

"Then you would agree that seeing one of their peers pregnant would act as more of a deterrent than an incitement to students to have sex?" Hermione questioned.

Severus stared intently at Hermione. "We're no longer talking about you, are we?" He asked.

"No," Hermione stated. "Amanda Pierce is pregnant; she's having a baby about the same time as me. She understands how important a good quality education is and wants to remain a student at Hogwarts. I promised her that I would fight for her before the Board of Governors."

Hermione looked hopefully at Severus. "Will you be standing with me or against me?"

Severus gave Hermione a wink. "I'll be by your side," he said receptively.

"Thank you," she said optimistically before turning to leave.

She had just about reached the door, when Severus said, "Would you have a moment to advise me concerning a personal quandary?"

* * * * *

January brought with it raw, biting winds and exceedingly cold temperatures. Gryffindor played Ravenclaw a week after the start of term. Although the Ravenclaw chasers had positioned their team well in the lead, Jamie was able to catch the snitch, securing a win for

Gryffindor.

January faded imperceptibly into February with no change in the bitterly cold weather or Ravenclaw's luck. Hufflepuff managed to barely etch out a win the first Saturday in February giving Ravenclaw its second loss and virtually eliminating that house from cup competition.

Slytherin would be playing Ravenclaw in March and was favored to win, as was Gryffindor when it played Hufflepuff in April. Although all the teams tried to concentrate on their upcoming match ups and not look to the future, everyone else was already speculating on the game of games, Slytherin versus Gryffindor in May. It was now being billed as the battle of the sisters.

Emily wasn't concerned about Quidditch, especially not a game three months in the future. She was having enough trouble concentrating on her studies knowing what Dick and Tyler had planned for her in approximately a week.

Sunday, February 6, 2005

"I realize you liked Tyler a lot, but don't you think its time you stopped feeling sorry for yourself and did something about thwarting him and his brother from getting that film developed," Kim asked as she, Caitlin and Emily studied in the Potter quarters.

Both Emily and Caitlin looked disbelievingly at Kim. "Just how do you recommend I do that?" Emily asked somewhat snappily. "Should I simply walk up to Dick and ask him to please give me the roll of undeveloped film that has my naked pictures on it? Somehow, I don't think he would be overly receptive to that proposal."

"I'm not suggesting anything of the sort," Kim said defensively. "I'd never want you to give the git the pleasure of knowing that what he was doing bothered you."

"Then what do you propose she do?" Caitlin asked, all of a sudden intrigued.

"We know where he has the camera hidden," Kim said calmly. "Let's just go get it."

"Are you suggesting that we sneak into the sixth-year boy's dorm and steal the camera," Emily asked aghast.

"Of course not," Kim replied. "It would be wrong to pilfer his camera." Kim reached in her book bag and pulled out a fresh roll of camera film and started tossing it in the air. "I'm only suggesting we switch film."

Caitlin and Emily stared back and forth at each other until a smile slowly developed on each of their faces.

"How are you two going to avoid being seen?" Caitlin asked, seemingly jealous that she couldn't be a part of the adventure. "It almost makes me wish I was in Slytherin house so I could help."

"But you can help," Kim said with conviction as she looked at Emily. "Didn't you say that Professor Potter had an invisibility cloak and that you were allowed to use it?"

Caitlin eyes practically burst from her head. "I think I'm finally understanding why you were sorted into Slytherin," she said excitedly. "That is a cunning idea."

"When do you think we should do it?" Kim asked anxiously.

"I say now," Emily declared. "Few people are ever in their dorms or common room on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. I'll go get the cloak."

Caitlin and Kim both sat exchanging energized glances as they waited for Emily to return.

"Come in here!" Emily shouted from the study, which doubled as Jamie's bedroom.

Caitlin and Kim entered to find Emily behind the desk unrolling a ragged old bit of parchment.

"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good," Emily said as she touched the parchment lightly with her wand.

"Is that the Marauder's Map you told me about?" Kim asked as she watched thin lines spread about the parchment until they formed a map.

"Yes," Caitlin answered as she pointed to the Slytherin common room, which only contained three labeled dots, and then to the sixth-year boys' dorm, which contained none. "I doubt we could pick a better time."

"I agree," Emily said, as she again tapped the map and said, "Mischief managed." The parchment was once again blank. Emily placed the parchment back in the drawer and then returned her wand to its thigh sheaf.

"Shall we do it then?" Emily said grabbing the invisibility cloak and heading for the door.

Kim laughed nervously, as she followed in Emily and Caitlin's tracks. "Haven't you guys forgotten something," she said anxiously. "We're nude. Don't you think it might be prudent to dress before we journey off into the castle."

Caitlin and Emily both looked at her dubiously.

"Why!" Caitlin asked. "No one will see us under the cloak."

"Where's your sense of adventure?" Emily asked.

Kim muttered something about it being quite enough adventure to slip into the boy's dorm, yet alone doing it nude, but neither Emily nor Caitlin seemed to hear her protests. They merely guided her under the cloak and departed the safe haven of the faculty quarters.

The girls made it down to the marble staircase and then to the main floor of the castle without any unpleasant incidents. They were just passing the huge, oak front door as it flew open allowing a cold wind to enter the castle. The wind caught them by surprise and practically blew the cloak out of their grasp. Fortunately they were able to hold on and cover themselves again before anyone caught sight of the naked trio.

They hurried down the stone steps toward the labyrinth of dark passages that led to the Slytherin common room. Luckily the passages were deserted, so no one heard Kim's incessant complaining that her bare feet were cold. They walked deeper and deeper under the school until finally they came to a stretch of bare, damp stonewall.

Emily was about to give the password when Caitlin suddenly muffled Emily's mouth with her hand.

"We can't go in," Caitlin whispered.

"Sure we can," Kim quickly responded. "There is no portrait, like at your entrance, to see that we are not an embodied voice. All we have to do is say the password."

"But what if someone, from inside, sees the stone door slide open? Won't it cause suspicion when no one enters?" Caitlin asked.

"She's right," Emily said disgustedly. "We're going to have to wait here next to the door until someone either decides to enter or leave."

They waited and then they waited some more. After what seemed like an hour, the girls finally heard what sounded like footsteps. It was a solitary individual who was shuffling along at a slow pace. Emily nearly gasped aloud when Tyler turned the corner and approached them. He looked terribly forlorn as he mumbled blood traitor and waited for a stone door, concealed in the wall, to slide open.

Caitlin and Kim had to each grab Emily by the arm and pull her through the door as she seemed lost in thought. They stopped just inside the door, watched Tyler cross the long, low underground room and then head for the hallway that led to the dorm rooms.

Despite a fire crackling under an elaborately carved mantelpiece, the room still gave Caitlin the shivers. The Gryffindor common room seemed so warm and cozy compared to the cold gloomy atmosphere of Slytherin.

"Which way do we go?" Caitlin asked.

"Down the same hall as Tyler went," Emily said, her voice cracking. "Give him a few minutes because we have to pass his dorm."

Caitlin had only begun to take in her surroundings when Emily gave her arm a tug and the girls headed down the narrow passageway to the dorm rooms. They first passed a door that had a placard reading 'Second Years' and then one reading 'First Years'. The hall came to a T shape.

"Seventh and Sixth on the left, I believe," Emily said with little conviction; however, the first door they came to read 'Sixth Years'.

Emily placed her hand on the door, slowly opened it a few inches and then surveyed the room. "It appears empty, but some of the four posters have their drapes closed, so we'll have to be careful," she advised. "We best check the shower room, also."

The girls stayed concealed under the cloak until they checked all the beds and then peeked

into the bathroom area. "Everything is clear," Emily said with relief as she shed the cloak. "Caitlin, will you stand watch at the door while Kim and I try to figure out which dresser belongs to Bancroft?"

Caitlin pulled the door ajar and stood tensely listening and watching for the slightest indication of someone approaching. Meanwhile, Kim and Emily started looking at items on top of the dressers, hoping for a hint as to the owner.

"Emily, I think this is his," Kim said excitedly, as she spied a wrist bracelet, engraved, Richard A. Bancroft. "I wonder what the 'A' stands for."

"That's easy," Emily said with a laugh. "Arsehole."

Kim opened the top drawer and then quickly closed it again.

"What's wrong," Emily asked, seeing the revolted expression on Kim's face.

"That's probably the drawer. I saw some socks and boxers, but I'm not opening it again," Kim said, looking like she was about to heave.

"Why?" Emily inquired.

"I think he recycles his socks and boxers," Kim said disgustingly. "I'll puke if I open it again."

"Let me do it then," Emily said bravely as she squeezed her nose shut and then picked up a quill off the dresser. She slowly opened the drawer as Kim turned away. Emily used the quill to move the contents of the drawer about. Finally as her face was beginning to turn purple from a lack of oxygen, she saw the camera in the back-left-corner. She harpooned the strap with the quill and pulled the camera out of the drawer, quickly closing it.

She hurried to the other side of the room and took a breath. Then she held the quill out to Kim, the camera dangling from the end. "Kim, I don't know how to change the film. Can you do it please?"

Kim looked at the camera, not really wanting to touch it without protective gloves, but finally made the sacrifice for her friend. She handed Emily the new unexposed film to hold, while she rewound the exposed roll and then removed it from the camera.

Kim had just finished reloading the camera, when Caitlin shut the door and ran toward her and Emily. "Someone is coming," she cried terrified.

The girls exchanged panic-stricken looks, then threw the Invisibility Cloak back over themselves and retreated into a corner. They stood holding each other, trying not to make a sound, as the door slowly opened.

"Who the hell does that girl think she is?" Bancroft growled maliciously. "Insinuating that I need a shower."

"Don't pay her any mind, Dick," Dennis Crow said in his normal sycophantic fashion. "She's one of those girls who thinks she is better than anyone else. Probably thinks her farts smell like roses."

"Yeah, I shouldn't let it bother me," Bancroft said, as he sniffed each armpit. "It's just that she had to open her big trap in front of Zacherley and those other Gryffindor pansies." He sniffed his armpit once more. "I just took a shower on Friday. I don't think I smell, but maybe I should take another anyway."

Crow lifted his arm, took a deep breath and nodded his head. "Yeah, I guess it wouldn't hurt if I took one, too."

The girls watched as Bancroft and Crow slowly began to shed their clothes. Emily and Caitlin could literally feel Kim shaking between them.

Emily's attention was fixed on Bancroft. Not that she was in anyway attracted to him, but because he had just opened the drawer in which the camera has been concealed. What if he noticed it was missing? Who would he blame?

Dick first removed his robes and next his shoes. As he took off his socks, he sniffed them and then tossed them in the drawer. Next he removed his shirt and pants and tossed them on the bed.

Kim's head kept bobbing back and forth between the two boys as if she were watching a tennis match. Finally Bancroft removed his undershirt and boxers; tossed them back in the drawer and then looked admiringly at himself in the mirror while he waited for Crow to finish undressing.

Kim was no longer shaking or bobbing, but rather staring disappointedly as the two boys departed the dorm for the showers.

"Did you enjoy the show?" Caitlin asked.

"Truthfully, no," Kim said rather disappointedly. "I thought there would be more to see."

"More what?" Emily asked, confused.

"I'm always reading about men comparing size and well... Neither of them had much to brag about," Kim answered honestly.

Emily laughed. "Spend vacation with us at a nudist resort and you will learn that part of the male anatomy comes in endless sizes. But yes, they were both rather short changed in that department."

"I can't think of any two nicer guys to come off short," Caitlin chuckled. "Now as much funs as this is, let's go while we still can."

They scurried over to Dick's dresser and then held their noses as Emily used the quill to once again lift the items at the rear of the draw. Instead of replacing the camera, however, Kim hesitated, and then urged the girls toward the door to the showers.

"I have an idea," Kim said, perkily. "Quick! Let's put the Invisibility Cloak on and sneak into the shower room."

Caitlin held back, wanting instead to make their getaway, but Emily urged her to let Kim have another look. It wasn't another look that interested Kim. She peaked in the room to find both boys with their backs to the door and then hustled Emily and Caitlin quickly inside.

Before Emily realized what was transpiring, Kim had the camera to her eye and was snapping pictures. She didn't stop until the entire film was exposed, and then she herded Emily and Caitlin to the door. They replaced the camera and then hurried out of the dorm, only pausing to laugh once they reached the hallway outside the Fifth-Year dorm.

"Kim, you are evil," Emily laughed, embracing her best friend.

"Truly a Slytherin moment," Caitlin chuckled.

"I felt sorry for Dick," Kim said, laughing so hard that tears came to her eyes. "I hated to see him denied the nude pictures he wanted so badly."

"Who's there?" A male voice yelled.

The girls muffled their laughter and hugged the side of the wall as Tyler turned the corner. First he looked to the left and then the right. Then he just shook his head and walked back down the hall toward the common room. They allowed him a head start and then the girls made their way in the same direction.

They made it out of the common room and back to the staff quarters without problem. Once safely inside, they discarded the Invisibility Cloak and broke into uncontrollable laughter.

* * * * *

Wednesday, February 9, 2005

"Hermione, do you remember Harry warning Alex on New Years Eve not to carry his wand in his back pocket" Jamie asked indecisively.

"Yes," Hermione answered at first unconcernedly, but then quickly becoming extremely panicky. "He didn't do it, did he?" she exclaimed in shock. "I mean lose his buttocks?"

"No," Jamie responded with a laugh, "but as angry as his parents are, he might well wish he had. He broke it; snapped it right in two. I tried using the Reparo spell, but it had no affect."

Hermione shook her head. "It wouldn't," she said. "That spell can only repair non-magical items. Magical items require a much stronger spell, but wands unfortunately are beyond repair."

"Alex even tried repairing it with Spell-o tape, but that was just a waste of good tape," Jamie added.

"I hope he didn't try casting any spells," Hermione said concernedly. "Ron tried repairing his wand with tape in our second year, but the results were rather disastrous."

"He was afraid to use it," Jamie admitted. "It kept emitting sparks. Anyway, once his parents

calmed down, they agreed to buy him a new wand, but he has to go get it because the wand must select him."

Hermione didn't speak, but nodded her head in agreement.

"Alex has special permission from the Headmaster to take the early morning train to London on Saturday, go to Diagon Alley and then take the afternoon train home. That's two very long, boring train rides." Jamie looked at Hermione hopefully. "Do you think it would be possible for me to accompany him?" she asked imploringly.

"I don't see why not," Hermione answered, smiling. "I'm sure you'll both enjoy the quiet time together. I'll make arrangements with the Headmaster."

* * * * *

Friday, February 11, 2005

"I wish I was an Animagus," Kim said seriously as she and Emily headed for dinner.

"Why? Emily asked, intrigued.

"If I were a fly, I could follow Bancroft into Hogsmeade tomorrow," Kim responded. "I'd give anything to see his face when he sees those finished prints."

"I just hope he orders the posters before he sees the prints," Emily said, with a chuckle. "Imagine him trying to tear life-size posters into tiny unrecognizable pieces."

"One of his parts is already rather tiny and unrecognizable," Kim said with a giggle.

"Unfortunately, neither of us is an Animagus," Emily sighed, "and even if we were, the odds are that we wouldn't be flies. Mum says that you don't actually choose your animal. It's sort of like a wand; it chooses you."

Suddenly, Emily had a wicked thought. "We could use the Invisibility Cloak and follow them to town."

"I don't know," Kim said apprehensively. "We'd have to walk past Mr. Filch and Mrs. Norris. The cloak might fool the caretaker, but I'm not sure about his cat. Not only that, but it's snowing outside. Our tracks in the fresh snow would give us away."

Emily then had another brilliant thought. "The Marauder's Map!" she said breathlessly. "It shows a number of secret passages, and I think some of them lead directly to Hogsmeade. We could leave early, and position ourselves at the edge of town. The snow in Hogsmeade would probably be trampled down and the Cloak would conceal us. We could follow Bancroft and Crow all over town and they'd never be the wiser."

"Are you going to tell Caitlin?" Kim asked eagerly.

"Of course, she'd never forgive us if we embarked on such an adventure without her," Emily retorted.

Kim stopped before entering the Great Hall, her eyes almost pleading. "Emily it's freezing outside. Please tell me that we're going to wear boots and clothes tomorrow."

"Where's your sense of adventure?" Emily joked. "Certainly we're going to wear clothes. Caitlin and I are nudists, not masochists."

* * * * *

"Hooch, you have my sincerest admiration," The Great One said. "That attack on the Ministry was a stroke of brilliance. The dim-witted populace fell for it completely. They now look upon me as a hero; my approval rating has skyrocketed."

"Most wizardkind is as credulous as Muggles," Hooch replied. "You, however, had me greatly alarmed when you were late leaving the Ministry."

"Yes, I couldn't shake that insipid Percy Weasley," Emma Wrong responded. "Every time our paths cross, he inundates me with trifling questions. I respect someone who desires to get ahead in life, but he is simply an unadulterated arse-kisser."

"Tell me," Emma inquired, "what do you have planned as an encore?"

"I think you will be pleasantly surprised," Hooch cackled evilly. "Your minions strike again tomorrow. Expect to have your afternoon tea interrupted by an urgent call from the Ministry."

The Great One smiled.

Chapter Twenty - You Never Know What's Around the Corner

"Mum it's time to have your picture taken," Caitlin shouted, as she took the camera off the mantelpiece and waited impatiently with Emily.

"I don't believe I allowed you to let them talk me into this," Hermione proclaimed to Harry, her face blushing.

"I don't understand why it embarrasses you so much," Harry asked, puzzled. "They're your daughters and they see you nude all the time. Why are these picture sessions so discomforting to you?"

"I don't think it's the pictures as much as the clinical observations," Hermione admitted with a sigh. "The girls and I are nude around each other all the time, so much so, that none of us really think about it any more. But when they take these pictures they really examine me, as if they are healers and I'm a patient. It's disconcerting to have them talk about how various parts of my body are changing as the baby develops."

"It doesn't seem to bother you when I examine you," Harry said sweetly.

"That's extremely different," Hermione argued. "You do most of your scanning of my body with your hands and tongue. I become rather distracted."

"MUM! We're waiting," Emily bellowed.

"Watch," Hermione said as she led Harry into the room where the girls were eagerly waiting.

"It's about time," Emily said tapping her foot impatiently. "Look Caitlin! The brown area of her breast has increased even more since the last picture."

"Your right!" Caitlin agreed. "Mum will that change back or will you always have huge brown circles around your nipples now?"

Hermione glanced at Harry as if to say 'see what I mean'. "That brown area is referred to as the areola," Hermione said, trying to remain unruffled. "It sometimes grows extremely large during pregnancy, but usually returns to normal within a year of giving birth."

Both girls nodded their heads. "Let's take the front view first," Caitlin suggested. "These shots should be labeled week twenty-three."

"Caitlin, look!" Emily said sounding distressed. "Perhaps you should increase your massages. She seems to be getting some faint red streaks on her breasts and tummy."

"Let me see," Caitlin said, trying to get a closer look. "As long as they stay that faint, they shouldn't be a problem, but maybe I should add another night a week?" She looked at her Mum who had a defeated look on her face, but nodded yes.

"Girls, I know you don't have classes tomorrow, but your mother and I both had a hard day and would like to get to bed early. Could you please finish up with the pictures?" Harry suggested.

Hermione gave Harry a wink, as if saying 'thank you' while the girls quickly finished the profile shot and then replaced the camera on the mantelpiece. After they both kissed Harry and Hermione good night, they bounded off to their bedroom.

"Do you think they wanted us to go to bed so they could make love?" Caitlin asked as she slid into bed.

"I don't see why tonight should be any different than any other night," Emily answered. "I think it's part of their going to bed ritual. You and I brush our teeth and take a pee before going to bed; they have sex, then brush their teeth and have a pee."

"Do you actually think they have sex every night?" Caitlin asked, astonished.

"I think it's a rarity when they don't," Emily answered. "Do you think either of us will ever find someone that will love us as much as they love each other?"

"I hope so," Caitlin answered optimistically. "We have plenty of time. We're both rather young to worry about that."

"But how do you know when it's the right person?" Emily sighed. "I felt such an extraordinary connection with Tyler." She buried her head in the pillow and started to cry.

Without a word, Caitlin slipped out of her bed and nestled herself against Emily. "Let me share the hurt," she said softly as she held Emily tightly. They fell asleep in each other's arms.

* * * * *

Saturday, February 12, 2005

Although he had taken a shower, it had done very little to actually wake Alex up. He was not a morning person, never had been and never would be, but he was especially not a four o'clock in the morning person. He was quite content knowing the ungodly hour simply existed; he didn't see the necessity of actually experiencing it.

Unfortunately, he had no choice today. The train for London departed at five, making such an early wakeup necessary. As he stumbled bleary eyed down the stairs to the common room, he wondered if Jamie had been able to drag herself out of bed. His question was answered as soon as he reached the bottom of the steps.

"How in the world can you look so happy and beautiful at this hour?" he asked.

"Beauty, sir, is comparative and in the eye of the beholder," she answered. "I'm happy because we're going to be spending the entire day together, just you and me."

"Together, yes, but for two boring train rides," Alex moaned.

"Only boring if we allow them to be," Jamie said with a smile, "but we better get moving or we're going to miss the train." Jamie picked up a huge picnic basket and a small suitcase.

"What's all this?" Alex asked sleepily, as he took the large basket from Jamie and headed for the door to the common room.

"Just my clothes and a nice lunch that Dobby packed for us," she answered.

"From the weight of this basket, I think it's more like breakfast, lunch and dinner," Alex whined.

"Knowing Dobby, it probably is."

* * * * *

Nature's call woke Emily before Caitlin, but ahead of quietly slipping out of her sister's arms, she gently kissed her cheek. I hope we are always there for each other.

After a relieving pee, Emily brushed her teeth, showered and then returned to the bedroom where she started gently tickling Caitlin until she awoke.

"It's a shame you're not a boy," Caitlin sighed playfully. "I'd really like to finish the dream I was just having."

"Sorry to disappoint you," Emily said, as she laughed and grabbed at her own crotch. "I seem to be missing some necessary equipment, besides we have to get a move on. After breakfast we're off on an adventure to Hogsmeade."

"We're what?" Caitlin exclaimed.

"Get your shower, and I'll tell you what Kim and I have planned for our day," Emily said, refusing to say more until Caitlin was dressed and ready to head to the Great Hall for breakfast.

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"Breakfast is served, or do you intend to snooze the entire trip away? Jamie asked.

"What smells so good?" Alex asked as he rubbed his eyes and then sat up startled. "How in the world did you cook all that food in a train compartment?"

"I didn't," Jamie admitted. "I just used a heating charm on the breakfast items Dobby packed for us. You were correct about the basket. He crammed all three meals in it for us. I'm going to have to give him a big kiss when we get back to Hogwarts."

"If you're giving away kisses, I'd like a few," Alex said lovingly.

"I think I can manage that. How about one now and then a bunch after breakfast?" Jamie teased.

"I'm not sure if I can stop after just one," Alex said, as he took Jamie in his arms. "Your kisses are like potato chips. I can't end at just one."

"Then we just won't stop."

* * * * *

"But what if Mum and Dad don't leave our quarters? How will you get the map and cloak out of the desk without them noticing?" Caitlin asked as she and Emily hurried toward breakfast in the Great Hall.

"That, dear sister is the difference between the Gryffindor and the Slytherin mind," Emily answered smugly. "Gryffindors bravely run off to battle without a clue as to how they are going to defeat the enemy. Slytherins think and make plans before taking action."

"Forgive me for doubting your wisdom, Oh Great Slytherin," Caitlin said mockingly. "Will you share your great and evil plan with me or is it necessary to keep the lowly Gryffindor in the dark?"

"Nah! I'll tell you," Emily said with a giggle. "I imagine you can be trusted. I already moved the map and cloak to our room and hid them in my closet. Kim will join us after breakfast, and we'll decide which tunnel to use."

* * * * *

"That was a delicious breakfast," Alex said, looking longingly at Jamie. "I know one doesn't normally have dessert with breakfast, but I could certainly go for one of your delicious kisses about now."

"I can do better than a kiss," Jamie said naughtily as she drew the window covers and did a locking charm on the compartment door. "I thought perhaps we could practice a little for Monday night. You know, not the main feature, but the preliminaries."

"Then we're really going to join at last?" Alex asked, his faith in miracles restored.

"Can you think of a better way to celebrate Valentine's Day than giving ourselves to each other?" Jamie asked, her eyes glistening. "I love you Alex. I can't imagine my life without you by my side."

"Nor I," Alex agreed, as he pulled Jamie tightly against him, their lips first lightly touching and then devouring each other.

Jamie whispered softly in Alex's ear. "I have a surprise for you. Undo my robes."

He didn't question her, but did as instructed and then froze as the robes dropped to the floor revealing her luscious naked form.

* * * * *

"This map is fantastic," Kim said as she pointed out various tiny ink dots moving around the parchment.

"Look," Caitlin said. "It looks like Bancroft and Crow are taking a shower. Want to go have another look, Kim?"

"We don't have any time for such frivolity," Emily chided. "We have to figure out which of these secret passages will get us to Hogsmeade."

"How many total did you find?" Kim inquired.

"Seven, but this one seems to start at that evil Whomping Willow," Emily replied.

"Well cross that one off," Caitlin said quickly. "That will get us killed. What about the other six?"

"I guess we just try one," Emily suggested.

"How long do you think we will be in a tunnel?" Kim asked nervously.

"Probably about forty-five minutes to an hour," Caitlin answered. "It's a rather lengthy walk to Hogsmeade."

"I just hope its safe. I don't fancy being buried alive," Kim mumbled fearfully.

"Thanks for bringing up that cheery thought," Caitlin said. "Just for that, you can pick a passage."

"Let's try this one," Kim suggested as she pointed to a passage that appeared to start at a mirror on the fourth floor.

"Sounds as good as any," Emily said, rolling up the map and stuffing it inside her robes.

The girls departed the staff quarters, giving Harry and Hermione the impression that they were headed to the library, but instead they went directly to the fourth floor. When they arrived at the mirror, they were dumbfounded. Caitlin tried to pry it open like a door with her fingers, but the mirror appeared affixed to the wall.

"This isn't working out too well," Kim said, looking questioningly at Emily. "Are you sure this is the correct mirror?"

"I'm sure this is the place," Emily answered, pulling out the map.

She was surprised to see three tiny ink figures labeled with their names. The figures were standing exactly where they were, but the figure labeled 'Caitlin' appeared to be tapping the mirror with her minute wand.

"Caitlin, try tapping the mirror with your wand," Emily suggested.

Caitlin did as instructed, but nothing happened. Caitlin shrugged her shoulders as Emily once more looked to the map for guidance. The tiniest speech bubble appeared next to the figure of Caitlin. The word inside said, "Ianua"

Emily showed the map to Caitlin. "Try saying Ianua as you tap the mirror," Emily recommended.

"Ianua!" Caitlin whispered, tapping the mirror again.

This time the mirror opened like a door revealing a small room which the girls hastily entered before the mirror closed.

"Lumos!" Caitlin said.

The room was empty except for a ladder in the far corner that extended up through the floor.

"I assume we go down that ladder," Caitlin said as Emily and Kim both drew their wands.

The girls pointed their wands at the hole, but could not see more than a few feet into the darkness.

"Let me go first," Emily volunteered, as she held her wand in her mouth so that she could hold the sides of the ladder with both hands.

It was a chilling feeling that surrounded Emily as she descended the ladder. She could see the ladder directly in front of her, and if she looked up, she could faintly see Caitlin and Kim. Looking down she saw nothing but darkness as she slowly counted each ladder rung as she proceeded downward. Her count reached ninety- seven before her feet touch earth.

As soon as Caitlin and Kim joined her, the group headed off. The passage was tall enough to stand upright, but they had to walk single file. They had only gone about two hundred yards when Emily came to a halt.

"Looks like this passage is history," Emily said surveying the blocked tunnel. "There must have been a cave in."

Caitlin and Kim didn't speak, but exchanged nervous glances. Anyone caught in such a cave in would also be history.

"We just wasted a half hour," Emily moaned. "Lets hurry back and try another route. I just hope Dick takes a long shower."

* * * * *

"Alex, you have no idea what you do to me," Jamie sighed contentedly, as she stared at him mesmerized. "Now its my turn to make you feel good."

"I'm not sure if that's a good idea," Alex said concernedly, his faced flushed. "Doing you has me highly aroused. I'm afraid that as soon as your lips touch my.... Well, I'm not sure if I'll be able to hold back."

"Then don't," Jamie said empathically. "That will be something we've never tried."

"Are you sure?" Alex asked, a look of surprise covering his face.

"Honestly no, but I want us to try every way possible to give pleasure to each other. I'll never know if I can do it if I don't try."

* * * * *

"Caitlin, you pick a passage this time," Emily said. "Try to make it one that is still serviceable."

Kim gave Emily a hurt look. "Its not my fault the stupid tunnel caved in."

Emily shook her head. "You, girl, take everything too much to heart. I was just taking the mickey out of you."

"Let's try this one," Caitlin suggested. "It's only down one floor, and I think I recognize the statue. I believe it's the one of that hump-backed, one-eyed witch."

"Why are witches always depicted as old and ugly while wizards are made out to all be handsome and dashing?" Kim inquired, angrily. "Its chauvinistic."

"I'm sure our Mum would be willing to discuss that at lengths with you," Caitlin commented, "but right now we best get a move on."

The girls hurried to the nearest staircase and then descended to the third floor where Caitlin led them directly to the statue.

"This passage best work or we'll have to give up," Emily said with distaste. "Bancroft and Crow have probably left for Hogsmeade by now."

Emily quickly checked the map for instructions. "The word inside the bubble this time is "Dissendium," she advised Caitlin who was already waiting with her wand at the ready.

"Dissendium!" Caitlin whispered, tapping the stone witch.

At once, the statue's hump opened.

"I'm glad none of us is on the beefy side," Kim said.

Emily nodded in agreement because the opening was only large enough to admit a comparatively thin person. Emily glanced around, quickly tucked the map away and the hoisted herself into the hole headfirst.

"That was very ladylike," Kim chided, but Emily had already pushed herself forward and disappeared from sight.

"Sorry," Caitlin said, "but I'm afraid I'm about to give you the same view. Without a ladder, we haven't much choice but to go head first." With that Caitlin hoisted herself into the hole and disappeared from sight.

Kim glanced up and down the corridor, shook her head in frustration, and then climbed into the hole headfirst and vanished from sight. The hump closed behind her.

Kim slid a significant way down what felt like a stone chute, then landed face first on top of Emily and Caitlin.

"Kim, will you please get your nose out of my butt so I can get up," Emily shouted good-naturedly. "This ground is cold and damp and I can't see a damn thing."

Slowly the girls untangled themselves from each other and then one by one held up their wands and muttered, "Lumos!"

Once again they were in a narrow earthy passageway, but this one was lower than the previous. They could walk standing upright, but a taller person would have to walk stooped. They glanced anxiously at each other and then set off with Emily once more in the lead.

Unlike the previous passage that, until they reached the cave-in, had been fairly straight, this passage twisted and turned making them feel as if they were constantly changing directions. Emily set a fast pace, knowing that their chances of reaching Hogsmeade before Crow and Bancroft were slim.

The dirt floor was uneven and occasionally one of the girls stumbled, but they continued to move rapidly, only stopping once when Kim tripped on what appeared to be a concealed locked trap door. They didn't take time to investigate because they were already fighting time.

Finally after what seemed like ages, the passage began to rise. By now the girls were all out of breath and winded because of the brisk pace Emily had set. They traveled another ten minutes, the ground still rising and then finally the passage ended at the foot of some worn stone steps that rose out of sight above them.

Once again they exchanged nervous glances but, without comment, began to climb. Soon they had climbed over one hundred steps and could see neither what was in front of them nor what was behind. They continued on, ever so carefully. To fall would mean certain death, another one hundred steps and still no end. Then Emily winced in pain, her head hitting something extremely hard.

Emily slowly pushed up on what was impeding her progress. It seemed to be a trapdoor that opened into a cellar; an extremely crowded cellar filled with wooden crates and boxes. Emily climbed out of the trapdoor and then helped Caitlin and Kim before replacing it.

"Where are we," Kim asked, "and what is that luscious smell?"

"Chocolate," Emily and Caitlin seemed to respond simultaneously.

"We must be in the basement of Honeydukes!" Caitlin exclaimed.

Emily removed the Invisibility Cloak from her bag, and the girls gathered together under it before slowly creeping toward the wooden staircase that lead upstairs.

"We have to stay close together and under the cloak at all times," Emily warned as they reached the top of the stairs. Emily opened the door a tad, peeped out and then as one; the girls crept through the door and then out from behind the Honeydukes counter.

Fortunately it was still rather early. Although Honeydukes was busy, it was not so packed that they couldn't make their way out of the store without bumping into anyone.

* * * * *

I can do this Jamie kept telling herself as she struggled desperately not to gag. She swallowed hard, fighting off the urge to heave and then finally regained her composure. With her eyes still watering, she sucked gently as she backed off, swallowed again and then kissed the tip. She kept kissing and licking until his arousal completely subsided. Only then did she look up at Alex's face. He appeared to be in seventh heaven.

It wasn't her most pleasant experience, but then it was the first time; she could get accustomed to it, possibly even enjoy it in time. That look of total ecstasy on his face made it all worthwhile. She desperately wanted to kiss him and tell him how much she loved him, but hesitated. Would he want to kiss her immediately after she had done that? It didn't bother her in the least to kiss him after he had pleased her, but that was different.

"Jamie, I doubt I could possibly love you any more than I already do," Alex said as he stood and gently helped her to her feet. He embraced her, loving the feel of his arms and hands on her bare skin. He pulled her into a tight squeeze and then sought out her mouth. At first he gently kissed her lips, but the kissing became more and more insatiable as their tongues searched out each other.

Two days until they joined. It seemed like forever. Could they wait? Did they even want to consider waiting? His hands caressed her smooth back, finally coming to rest on her perfectly shaped bum. He held her cheeks tightly in his hands. She was perfect; she was a goddess; a goddess that loved him.

"Ten minutes," the voice announced. "We will be arriving at King's Cross station in ten minutes."

"I better get dressed," Jamie said reluctantly as she endeavored to break Alex's hug. "As much as you get pleasure from me being like this, I doubt if London and Diagon Alley would approve."

Alex didn't want to let her free, he wanted to hold her like this forever; never chance losing her or the sensation he had at this moment.

"I adore you, Jamie Lily Zacherley."

* * * * *

Completely hidden beneath the Invisibility Cloak, Emily, Caitlin and Kim emerged into the sunlight outside Honeydukes.

"It's a beautiful sunny day," Caitlin announced. "I wish we had left our clothes back at the castle. We could have gotten an early start on an all over tan. I understand Invisibility Cloaks only have a SPF level of 1."

Kim looked at Caitlin skeptically. "You can't be serious? It was only forty degrees in that passage. We would have frozen to death."

"Will you two please keep you minds on business," Emily scolded. "We have to find Bancroft; I have to see his face when he gets those pictures back."

They wondered through town toward the road that led to Hogwarts, hoping to run into the Slytherin bullies, but with no luck. Finally after about a half hour of searching, they gave up and started walking through town pointing out the various sights to Kim, who had never visited Hogsmeade. They climbed a slope to see the Shrieking Shack, the most haunted dwelling in Britain; then they visited Zonko's.

They were just approaching the post office to show Kim the hundreds of owls from Great Grays down to tiny little Scops owls, when Emily pulled them to an abrupt halt. There, exiting the post office was Dick Bancroft and his faithful subordinate, Dennis Crow.

"It's them," Emily whispered excitedly. "Maybe we're not too late. Let's see if we can get close enough to hear what they are saying."

The girls held onto the cloak and each other tightly as they crept within a few yards of the two Slytherin boys.

"The pictures and posters should be done by now," Crow mumbled, checking his watch.

"Perfect timing," Bancroft said, beaming. "I'm supposed to meet Mr. Lyler in front of the camera shop at eleven o'clock. I can't believe that people will actually pay money for pictures of a naked young girl. She doesn't even have anything worth looking at."

"Your brother seemed quite enthralled by her," Crow laughed. "I bet he can't wait to see the pictures."

"Actually, the little jerk told me to shove the pictures up my arse," Dick admitted. "The boy has no respect for his elders. He thinks that I'm a bastard for what I'm doing. Can you believe it? He was actually fond of that little tart? Lucky that I was able to blackmail him into taking those pictures or he'd probably still be licking her proper little arse."

Kim and Caitlin exchanged glances and then looked at Emily who seemed impervious to this revelation.

Dennis and Dick turned down the side street next to the post office with the girls trying to stay

within hearing range without being detected.

"I've never been down this street before," Caitlin whispered.

"And I won't be upset if I never step foot on it again," Kim said as they passed a shop with what appeared to be real shrunken heads hanging in the filthy window.

"I guess all villages and shopping areas have their dark sides," Emily said, maintaining a safe distance from Bancroft. "I imagine this area is to Hogsmeade as Knockturn Alley is to Diagon Alley."

"A good place to avoid," Kim declared, as they suddenly came to a stop in front of a shop displaying the name 'XXX Pictographic'.

Dick had gone up to greet a short, thin, balding man who was waiting next to the steps of the shop.

"Good morning, Mr. Lyler. Its extremely nice to see you again," Dick said in his most flattering fashion. "I hope you haven't been waiting long."

"I just now Apparated," Lyler said curtly. "I hope these pictures you have are worth my time and effort."

"I'm sure you be pleased," Dick said. "Please, wait here, and I'll run inside and get them."

"This is going to be great," Caitlin whispered, hugging both Emily and Kim.

It was only a few minutes before Bancroft reappeared. He had a long cardboard tube under his arm and was holding an envelope.

"I haven't had a chance to look at these yet," he said tensely, "but I'm sure they'll meet your high standards. I had the shop make up two sets so that Crow and I could keep a set. You can have the other, and I imagine you'll want the negatives as well."

Lyler took the envelope that Bancroft handed him and started perusing the contents in a very business like manner, dividing the pictures as he went.

"These aren't exactly what you led me to expect," he said, looking at Bancroft with a strange expression on his face. "However, I believe I have a buyer who will be interested. Just out of curiosity, why do you want to keep a set?"

Bancroft and Crow looked at each other in a guilty manner, but it was Crow that finally answered. "Guys our ages, you know, get urges and don't always have a cohort to help us satisfy them."

"Yeah," Dick added. "Sometimes you have to literally take matters in your own hands, you know - wank off. We kind of hope these picture will help us."

Frank Lyler just nodded his head, rather taken back and at a loss for words. "And what's in the tube," he inquired.

"That's the best part," Dick said enthusiastically. "We had the pictures blown up to poster size so that we can hang them all over the castle for everyone to see. It's going to be great."

"Yes, yes. I'm sure it will be interesting," Frank said, now shaking rather than nodding his head. "It's not my position to judge others. Here is the agreed upon fee and your set of pictures." He handed Bancroft a small sack of coins and one set of pictures. "Should you take more pictures, please contact me." Then without a warning or even a good-bye, he Apparated.

Had Emily, Caitlin and Kim not been trying to hide; they would have in all probability been rolling in the snow with laughter. As it was, they were all trying desperately to suppress their laughter. They had even backed a little further away, and were now leaning against the building trying to maintain control.

"He was acting rather strange," Crow said, looking at Dick questioningly.

"Yeah!" Dick agreed. "I think being weird is a requirement to be in his line of work."

"Let's have a look at the pictures," Dennis said impatiently. "I want to see what your brother fancied so much."

It only took one picture for enthusiasm to turn to shock, then anger and finally rage.

"That little prick," Bancroft shouted, forgetting he was on a public street. "I'm going to hang him from the common room ceiling by his balls. He hoaxed me! The little bastard never took pictures of the slut."

"Wait." Crow disputed. "We've really been had, but this is way beyond your little brother's talent. Whoever took these pictures must have gotten into Slytherin Dungeon with an Invisibility Cloak. How else could they have gotten these pictures?"

Dick tried to repress his angry and think intelligently. "Zacherley, fucking Jamie Zacherley. She did this! It all makes sense. Somehow Emily realized she had been duped by my brother and went to her sister for help. Jamie was there the day that damn Ravenclaw said I smelled. She must have followed us back to our dorm, switched film and then took these pictures of us in the shower."

Crow thought about this momentarily and then panicked. "You mean Jamie Zacherley was watching us take a shower? She was there in the same room while we were naked? She couldn't have been," Dennis declared. "Invisibility cloaks are hard to come by and extremely expensive. Her dead-beat parents could have never afforded to buy one."

Caitlin and Kim had to then restrain Emily. She was attempting to discard the cloak and charge at Crow in a fit of anger. Fortunately, no one else was in the vicinity and Bancroft and Crow had their back to the group of girls.

"No, her parents could have never afforded an Invisibility Cloak," Bancroft spouted murderously, "but I bet either Potter or his mudblood bitch own one. I wish a plague would curse that entire damn family."

"What are we going to do with the posters and pictures?" Crow asked.

"Burn them, of course," Bancroft cursed. "It's the Zacherley girls we want to humiliate, not ourselves."

Dennis hesitated momentarily and then asked. "What about the negatives that Frank Lyler has?"

Dick face became wan. He'd never get Lyler to return those pictures. "Damn! That's why that clerk in the store tried to touch my hand when he gave me my change," Bancroft cried. "He even asked me out for coffee. Everyone who sees those picture will think you and I are poofs!"

Crow seemingly had ignored Bancroft's outburst. "Can I please see my posters before you burn them?" he asked pleadingly.

"Come on," Caitlin urged. "Let's get out of here and show Kim the nicer parts of Hogsmeade. We've had our revenge."

Emily smiled and agreed, but she hadn't found reprisal nearly as gratifying as she thought she would. The hurt and emptiness that she had felt since learning that Tyler deceived her still remained. It would be a long time, maybe never, before those feelings subsided.

* * * * *

"Do you like London?" Alex asked as they hustled by bookshops, restaurants and cinemas en route to the Leaky Cauldron.

They were now wearing muggle clothes, having put their robes in Jamie's suitcase and shrunk both it and the picnic basket. They were now being carried in Alex's right hand jacket pocket.

"Not really," Jamie answered. "It's too crowded and the people are in too much of a rush."

"Where would you like to live?" he asked.

"In a dream place that doesn't exist," she replied. "You'd laugh."

"No I wouldn't," Alex said truthfully as he held her hand even tighter. "Please tell me about it."

Jamie blushed. "It would be a quiet little village, something like Hogsmeade, but without all the Hogwarts students. The people would all be nice and friendly and you would be judged solely on your inner being."

"And they wouldn't mind if you went natural," Alex added with a smile.

"They wouldn't even raise an eyebrow," Jamie confirmed with a smile. "Nakedness wouldn't be considered dirty or sexual, but simply a matter of personal preference."

"Sounds like a nice place," Alex said.

"It would be if it were real, " Jamie said longingly, "but it only exists in my dreams."

"Jamie, how will we handle the nudity issue when we get married?" Alex asked, concernedly. "I don't think I could ever be like you."

Jamie stopped walking, pulled Alex into her arms and kissed him fervently as people passed them on either side.

"Wow! What did I do to rate that?" Alex said, when their lips finally parted. "Whatever it was, remind me to do it again."

"It wasn't anything you did," Jamie remarked. "It was what you said."

"All I said was, 'how will we handle nudity when we get married'," Alex repeated.

Once again, Jamie blocked pedestrian traffic as she kissed him. "I love you Alex Ward," she shouted, so all around her could hear. Then she lowered her voice. "You didn't say if we get married; you said when we get married."

"I did, didn't I?" Alex questioned. "I guess I shouldn't assume such things."

"Alex, I expect to be asked properly when the time comes, but I'll give you a hint as to what my answer will be. It's a three letter word beginning with 'y' and ending with 's'."

"Yos," Alex guessed before Jamie jabbed him in the ribs.

They were so caught up in each other that they nearly passed the tiny pub, unnoticed.

"It never changes, does it?" Alex asked, as they entered the Leaky Cauldron.

"I hope not," Jamie said as she looked lovingly around the dark, shabby, grubby-looking pub. "Some things just shouldn't be messed with."

"Hey, why aren't you two at Hogwarts?" Tom, the old bartender called out.

"We must go to Ollivanders," Alex answered, slightly embarrassed. "I sat on my wand and broke it."

"Weren't carrying it in your back pocket, were ya?" Tom questioned. "That's a very dangerous thing to do. One could lose their backside that way, they could."

"That's what Professor Potter warned him," Jamie said.

"Harry Potter! You have Harry Potter as a Professor? You listen to him! He's a great wizard, he is. You know your way?" Tom asked, pointing to a door, leading to a small, walled, courtyard.

Jamie gave Tom a friendly smile and nodded her head.

"I've always loved this," Jamie said as the little girl in her watched the bricks moving about

and finally forming an archway to Diagon Alley. "I wish we had time to walk around and window shop."

"So do I," Alex agreed, "but it's already nearly noon. We're going to have to rush as it is just to get my wand and return to King's Cross in time to catch the train. I doubt it would go over well if we had to spend the night at the Leaky Cauldron."

"I think Hermione and Harry would be cool about it," Jamie replied, "but I don't want to ruin our plans for Valentine's Day in The Room of Requirement."

"Neither do I," Alex said as they hurried down the street. "I'm concerned enough about holding back on the return train ride."

"I know what you mean," Jamie said, squeezing Alex's hand tightly as they passed under the sign that read Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C., and entered the narrow shabby shop.

The shop looked empty at first, but then Mr. Ollivander stuck his head out of a backroom and said, "I'll be right with you."

"I was just about to close for lunch," the soft-spoken man said as he approached them. "Miss Zacherley and Mr. Ward, isn't it? What can I do for you today?"

"I need to get a replacement wand," Alex said, guiltily as he reached in his pocket and pulled out the two pieces of wood that had once formed his wand.

Mr. Ollivander looked sternly at Alex. "Young man, I hope you're not in the habit of carrying your wand in your back pocket. It's against the rules of elementary wand safety and a very good way to lose a buttock."

"So I've been told," Alex said, resigned to hearing this story the balance of his life.

As Mr. Ollivander began fitting Alex with a wand, Jamie meandered around the tiny shop, marveling at how anyone could find what he or she was seeking in what appeared to be total disarray. She was just sticking her head nosily in the backroom when she heard a clock begin to chime the noon hour. She wondered if Alex heard the clock because that meant they only had an hour remaining in order to catch their return train.

* * * * *

Hermione just picked at her lunch, looking worriedly out at the students in the Great Hall. The Hall was unusually quiet due to most third years and above being in Hogsmeade. It wasn't the quiet, however, that bothered Hermione - it was the absence of three faces.

"Harry, I'm worried about the girls," Hermione confided. "I haven't seen Kim, Emily or Caitlin since early this morning."

"I thought you said they went to the library?" Harry asked placidly.

"I had assumed they went to the library when they left our quarters early this morning, but evidently I was misdirected," Hermione answered. "I just came from the library and Madam Pince told me she hasn't seen them all day. Now they're not at lunch."

"Hermione, try not to worry. Those girls can take care of themselves. They're probably just off on a little adventure."

"Harry, do you know something that you're not telling me?" Hermione asked, staring directly at Harry as if daring him to lie to her.

"I'm not sure, but I think the girls might have used one of the secret passages to go to Hogsmeade," Harry admitted.

"Harry, they're first and second year students. They're not allowed in Hogsmeade on their own. Surely they'll be seen and reported," Hermione said. "Doesn't it bother you that they are breaking rules? How do you know all this?"

"I don't know for a fact, I'm just guessing," Harry acknowledged. "I wanted to speak with Severus this morning and instead of searching the castle, I decided to use the Marauder's Map. It wasn't in the desk drawer and neither was the Invisibility Cloak. I imagine the girls have them both and are currently strolling through Hogsmeade."

"And you are all right with that? You condone them breaking school rules?" Hermione said tersely.

"Hermione, how many school rules did we break during our seven years as students?" Harry asked. "Kim and Caitlin are both at the top of their classes and Emily isn't far behind. If she had your thirst for knowledge instead of mine for adventure, she'd be ahead of them both. They're good girls; trust them."

"Harry, I do trust them, but I worry about them too. What if something happens and one of them is hurt?" she asked.

"We can't constantly watch over them and keep them locked up like china dolls. They need freedom to grow and mature, just like we did. I'm not saying that there are no dangers out there, but at least they aren't living under the constant threat of death by Voldemort like we did."

"You think we should just let them get away with this as if we never knew they left the castle?" she inquired, shaking her head in a frustrated fashion.

"It's what I'd suggest," Harry answered, "but if you don't agree, we can confront them. I..."

Harry never finished his sentence. His attention, along with that of every one else in the Great Hall, was drawn to the Phoenix that had entered, circled the hall and was now holding his leg out to the Headmaster. As soon as the message was detached, the bird disappeared with a flash.

Severus read the message, seemed ready to stand, and then read the message again. He either didn't believe or didn't want to believe what was written upon the parchment. Slowly he rose to his feet. The hall, already silent, was ready for him to speak.

"I have sad news to report," Severus began slowing. "If you've been keeping up with the news, you are undoubtedly aware that both our world and the Muggle world have in recent years been suffering at the hands of terrorists, cowards that seek to control the world by killing innocent children and civilians in an undeclared war.

"One of these groups is headed by an individual who has the audacity to call himself 'The Great One'. The only thing great about this coward is his ego. Unhappily, two attacks were carried out today which have been credited to this individual. The attacks took place simultaneously at noon. One occurred in Diagon Alley and the other in Hogsmeade. Regrettably, there were numerous innocent people injured today, many of who are Hogwarts students. One of our own was killed."

Suddenly the hall was filled with murmurs and questions.

"Please," Severus almost begged, his eyes now actually tearing. "May we observe a moment of silence for our injured and departed friends."

Harry and Hermione just stared at Severus, their hearts in their throats. Certainly they dreaded the loss of any of their students, but what if it was one of the girls. It couldn't be; they were too young with too much to live for.

Without warning there was a hand on Harry's shoulder.

"Hermione, Harry, we have to talk," Severus said despondently.

"Should we come to your office?" Hermione asked fearfully.

"No, that won't be necessary," he said quietly. "Just enough so we are away from prying eyes."

He led them into the chamber directly behind the staff table.

"What is it Severus?" Harry asked as soon as the door closed. "Is there something you need us to do to help with the injured?" Harry held Hermione's hand tightly. He didn't like at all the look of desperation on the Headmaster's face.

Hermione's eyes were already tearing as if she could read the Severus's mind.

"I'm deeply sorry," Severus said, as Harry flung his arms around Hermione to comfort her. "The causality is one of your girls. I'm sorry, but we've lost...."

Chapter Twenty-one - Too Young to Die

What is it Severus?" Harry asked as soon as the door closed. "Is there something you need us to do to help with the injured?" Harry held Hermione's hand tightly. He didn't like at all the look of desperation on the Headmaster's face.

Hermione's eyes were already filling up with tears as if she could read the Severus' mind.

"I'm deeply sorry," Severus said, as Harry flung his arms around Hermione to comfort her. "It's one of your girls. I'm truly sad, but we've lost Jamie Zacherley."

Hermione didn't speak, but rather buried her head in Harry's shoulder, crying too copiously to even consider conversation.

Harry too was on the verge of tears, but managed somehow to ask Severus what had happened.

"I don't have all the details," Severus said, gently. "The ministry promised to pass on additional information as soon as available." He bit his lip, trying to suppress his own sorrow. "They don't think she suffered at all. Her injuries were such that... she was gone... before young Mr. Ward was even able to reach her."

"H... How is... Alex?" Harry asked, no longer able to hold back his tears.

"Neither he nor Mr. Ollivander were more than scratched physically, but Alex was taken to St. Mungo's to be treated for shock. He should be returned here by Portkey sometime before dinner."

"Severus, I'm... going to take Hermione... to our quarters," Harry said, each word an effort to speak. "Please apprise me of any developments."

Harry and Hermione turned and slowly departed by a rear entrance that would enable them to reach the staff quarters without encountering any students.

"Harry, the girls!" Hermione sobbed. "What about the girls?"

"I'll contact Ron as soon as we get to our quarters," he assured Hermione. "The two of us will find them."

* * * * *

"Not much left of the Three Broomsticks, is there?" Ron commented sadly to Harry as they approached the smoldering ruins of the building.

"No, it's amazing no one was killed," Harry replied, the word 'killed' pounding in his ears.

Harry couldn't accept the fact that Jamie was gone. "It's not right Ron, those bastards setting off bombs for a lark, maiming and killing innocent people just to create fear. They get away with no clue as to their identity while they leave all this pain and suffering behind."

Ron nodded sorrowfully in accord as Harry and he walked among the injured that were being treated by the many volunteers. Many of the injured were Hogwarts students who, up until an hour ago, were enjoying a carefree Hogsmeade weekend.

"There's Madam Pomfrey," Harry said, noticing the school nurse busily helping mend wounds. "Let's ask her if she's seen the girls."

Harry didn't even have to open his mouth. As soon as Madam Pomfrey spied him, she pointed to a makeshift tent that had been hastily erected. "Go easy on them, Harry," she said. "They've been a tremendous help."

Ron and Harry turned and walked toward the tent, wavering before entering. Kim and Emily were busy tending to victims trying to make them comfortable until Caitlin or one of the healers could get to them.

Harry watched in quiet amazement as Caitlin treated an injured student that, despite all the blood, he could recognize as Doris Burke, the Slytherin Quidditch captain. He didn't know what other injuries she might have sustained, but a deep gash on her face was extremely evident. A Muggle receiving the same injury would have a permanent and hideous scar.

Caitlin held Doris' hand as she calmly talked to the older girl, trying to reassure her. Then Caitlin placed her hand on the wound and concentrated. As Harry watched, a cut appeared on Caitlin's cheek; it bled momentarily and then healed and disappeared. As Caitlin's wound vanished, so did the one on Doris. Emily handed Caitlin a damp cloth with which she wiped Doris' face. There was not the slightest evidence of a cut having ever existed. Caitlin gave Doris a hug and got up to move to her next patient. As she did, she noticed Harry.

Caitlin remarked to Kim and Emily and all three girls looked apprehensively in Harry's direction.

"What can we do to help?" Harry asked.

* * * * *

They remained until the injured had all been treated and then started walking quietly back toward the castle.

"I imagine we're in big trouble," Emily said, breaking the silence.

"You could say that," Harry answered. "Tell me. Why didn't you guys stay under the Invisibility Cloak and run back to the castle?"

"We couldn't do that," Caitlin cried. "There were people hurt, many of them our friends. We had to stay and help."

"You did the right thing," Harry said, making no further comment.

Ron glanced at Harry questioningly, but Harry shook his head, no.

The walk back to the castle was quiet, the events of the day seeming to catch up with the girls.

Once they were inside the castle, Kim made to head for the Slytherin dungeons, but Harry asked her to accompany them to the family's quarters. Emily, Caitlin and Kim exchanged glances. They knew they were going to be reprimanded.

The girls didn't think anything of finding Sam in their residence when they got there, but seemed confused when Sam said that Hermione had cried herself to sleep. Sam and Ron went to the kitchen as Harry asked the girls to come sit on the chesterfield with him.

"Can we get out of our clothes first," Emily pleaded.

Harry nodded his head dejectedly and waited for the girls to rejoin him. Kim and Caitlin hurried and sat down on either side of Harry. Emily dejectedly went to sit on the chair, but Harry patted his leg. Emily smiled and readily crawled up on his lap.

"What happened today in Hogsmeade... was... appalling," Harry said, searching for words. "You saw first hand how horrifying terrorism and war can be. It can hurt and cripple people we love. Sometimes... sometimes it even takes ones we love from us. Hermione, Professor Weasley and I all lost our parents in the wars against Voldemort."

The girls all listened attentively.

Harry gulped, tears by now imminent. "There were two attacks today. At the precise time the Three Broomsticks was bombed, there was also a bombing in Diagon Alley. Ollivander's Wand shop was destroyed."

Emily body became stiff, as she looked in terror at Harry.

"Alex and Jamie were going to Ollivander's today," she said fearfully.

Harry couldn't hold back the tears. "We've... lost her," he said, mournfully. "Jamie's joined your parents."

"No... NOOOO!!!," Emily cried hysterically, as she buried her head in Harry's chest.

Caitlin, who was also uncontrollably crying sank her head into Harry's side as Kim moved to comfort her two distraught best friends. Sam and Ron, who had purposely left Harry alone, now entered the room. Ron just stood in the doorway, feeling totally helpless, as Sam, herself again in tears, went to offer comfort and support to the girls.

* * * * *

As Severus had indicated, Alex returned to the castle by portkey, just prior to dinner. He graciously accepted the Potters' offer to dine with them and then spend the night in their quarters rather than sleeping in the dorm. Amanda, having been Jamie's closest friend was also invited, but declined amiably. Amanda insisted that she didn't want to intrude on the family, but the truth was she just wanted to remain in the dorm alone where she could bury her head in a pillow and cry her heart out.

Ron and Sam had departed for their home and Kim had return to the Slytherin dorms by the

time they sat down for dinner. Hermione had joined the others, but couldn't bring herself to eat. Everyone sat solemnly around the table, not speaking, but all with the same nagging thought in their mind. Why?

"Alex," Harry finally said, softly. "Do you feel up to telling us exactly what happened?"

The boy stared grimly at his professor and then nodded his head, his voice cracking as he began.

"The train... was late pulling into the station... and then the journey to Diagon Alley took rather longer than we had planned," Alex said slowly. "Jamie and I were both apprehensive that we might not get back to the station on time to catch the return train. Neither of us was prepared for the possibility of having to spend the night together in London."

Normally such a remark would have raised eyebrows and drawn a quick biting response from either Emily or Caitlin, but not tonight - not under these circumstances. They both sat quietly gazing at their plates, their minds adrift, and their hearts distraught.

"When we entered the shop, it appeared empty," Alex continued. "At first, I thought perhaps Mr. Ollivander had forgotten to lock up when he went to lunch, but then he stuck his head out of the backroom.

"If only he had been at lunch..." Alex said, his voice breaking, "we... we would have left the shop... and she'd be alive now."

Hermione, who was sitting next to Alex, reached over and grasped his hand; holding it tightly. "I lo- loved her so much," Alex wept.

Hermione nodded her head as she continued to hold Alex's hand tightly. "We know."

"Jamie roamed around the shop while Mr. Ollivander had me try out a few wands. He had just taken the second wand from me and gone to get another when I heard the clock outside begin to chime the noon hour. I looked nervously for Jamie, realizing our time was growing short. She was near the back of the store, smiling and shaking her head; I suppose at the dirt and total disorder.

"The next thing I knew, I was lying on the floor. The pressure from the explosion had knocked me off my feet. Mr. Ollivander had been thrown against the counter, knocking it over. He appeared to be okay, but when I looked to the back of the shop where Jamie had been standing, I saw nothing but a haze of dust over a pile of rubble."

Alex glanced from face to face around the table. "I tried desperately to get to her," he moaned, as if begging them to believe that he had done everything possible. He began openly crying, unable to any longer hold back the tears. "I... prayed... that what my eyes told me... was false."

Alex took a deep breath. "A ceiling pipe had p- pier- pierced her chest. There was nothing I could do but caress her face and close her beautiful eyes for the last time. If only I could have at least said good-bye and told her one more time how much I loved her."

Emily jumped for her chair and ran to her room, tears streaming down her cheeks. Caitlin,

running after her, also was in tears. Hermione started to follow, but Harry stopped her.

"They need some time alone to just let it all out," Harry said. "Give them tonight to cry. Nothing we say now can take away the hurt they feel at this moment."

Hermione nodded her agreement and returned to her chair.

* * * * *

"Gryffindor House will never be the same without her," Lisa said, as she, Susan and Mandy tried to comfort Amanda.

"Professor Snape announced at dinner tonight that a memorial service will be held for her on Monday," Mandy said, knowing that Amanda had missed the evening meal.

"She's going to be buried on the Hogwarts grounds," Susan added, tears filling her eyes. "In the war memorial cemetery overlooking the Quidditch Pitch."

Amanda eyes were red and swollen; she'd been crying almost constantly since receiving the news of Jamie's death. "She'd like that," Amanda said, trying unsuccessfully to suppress her tears. "Jamie always loved Quidditch."

"Jamie loved everything and everybody," Susan said mournfully. "I never heard her murmur a cruel word about anyone, not even that Bancroft git."

"As smart as she was," Lisa added, "she never learned how to be cruel or hate. I think that's why everyone loved her so."

"I'll never forget that Halloween," Mandy said, "when Jamie's robes got stuck in the portrait opening. She was just so cool and confident."

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.

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'd 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.

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 Playwizard Centerfold.

"Now that I have your attention." Jamie said. 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 be 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.

"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."

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

"My Dad once told me that a person never truly dies as long as someone loves and remembers them," Amanada said softly.

"If that's true, then Jamie will be walking the halls of Hogwarts for many years to come," Mandy offered.

"I wonder if she'll be in her robes or naked?" Susan asked.

"Definitely naked," Amanda said, a tiny smile breaking through the tears. "I'm sure where she's gone they don't discriminate against nudists."

"Do you remember when we first discovered she was a naturist?" Lisa asked.

"I remember saying 'A what?'" Mandy answered. "I had no idea what a naturist was."

"I had doubts about going along with the idea of her being nude in the dorm, but she was so nice that I figured, why not," Susan said. "I figured she grow out of it once her body started to develop. I was certainly wrong about that, but I've never regretted the decision."

"It seems like such a waste," Mandy said. "She had the potential to be someone who could make a difference in the world, and now she's gone and, with her, all that promise."

* * * * *

"Alex, Harry and I have to meet with the interment director tomorrow to discuss the final arrangements," Hermione said sorrowfully, after she had magically cleared the table of their barely touched meal. "Would you like to accompany us?"

"Me?" Alex questioned, stunned by the query.

"You most definitely should have a say in the planning," Harry agreed. "You were much more than a boyfriend to Jamie, you were her chosen."

Alex slumped his shoulders. "Just a few hours ago, Jamie and I were discussing when we would get married," he said forlornly. "I feel now like everything I was living for has suddenly been torn from my heart."

"Harry and I can empathize with you," Hermione said, nodding her head. "We've both gone through periods in our lives when we thought we had lost the other. When you feel that you've lost the person that completes you - that makes you a whole - you wonder how you can continue to survive. Actually, you wonder if you even want to try..."

"That's exactly how I feel," Alex replied, bursting into tears. "I don't want to live without her."

"Hermione and I feel that way about each other," Harry added, putting a comforting hand on Alex's shoulder. "We pray that when our time comes, we'll be taken together so that neither must face the agony of being permanently torn from the one we love most."

"But things don't always work out like we want," Hermione cautioned. "You have a long life ahead of you, sadly without the one you loved dearly. Somehow for the sake of your well-being and in her memory, you must find the strength to go on. Jamie loved you; wherever she is, she still loves you and always will. She'd want you to remember her, but in a positive way by making the most of your life."

At the moment Alex couldn't visualize a future without Jamie by his side. It seemed like she'd been there forever, and until now, he thought she always would be. His mind wondered back to the day Jamie had first shown her ultimate trust in him.

Alex slowing 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 is

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 yanked 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.

Deep inside Alex realized that the words Hermione spoke were true. He could best honor Jamie's memory and her love by making her proud of him, not by sulking his life away.

"Have it be a closed casket ceremony," Alex blurted out shuddering between tears. "Let people remember her as she was, vibrant and full of life and love. Don't let them see her as an empty shell. What's left is only a body. The soul that made her that beautiful person we loved is gone forever."

By now both Harry and Hermione were trembling, their eyes filled with tears. Hermione felt more drained then she had even when her own parents were killed at the end of the war.

Alex looked at them almost pleadingly. "And please bury her nude," he said.

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.

"She loved playing Quidditch; maybe you could place her uniform next to her. And she adored the dress you purchased for her to wear to the Yule Ball last year; maybe you could put that in the casket. But Jamie was born nude and her happiest times on this earth were when she was allowed to be unclothed. Let her leave as she came and as she enjoyed life most."

Harry and Hermione both nodded in agreement, wondering, but not really caring what the director would think of this request.

"Is there anything else you'd like to bury with her?" Hermione asked uncertainly. "Something special, that you've shared, a ring, a letter?"

"No," Alex whispered softly. "She's already taking my heart with her."

* * * * *

"We were always so close, but these last few months we didn't get to spend nearly as much time together. I can't even remember the last time I told her that I loved her," Emily said, hugging her tear soaked pillow as she and Caitlin lay on their separate beds. "Now I'll never have the chance again."

"I know you wish you had put it into actual words," Caitlin said reassuringly, "but Jamie knew how you felt about her."

"I feel all alone in the world," Emily sobbed. "First my parents are taken from me and now, less than a year later, my sister. My family is completely gone."

"I know the feeling," Caitlin said. "The worst years of my life were spent in that orphanage. Not that they were cruel in any way to me, because they weren't, but I was just a number; unloved and unwanted. My life only started when I met Jamie."

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."

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?" Caitlin implored.

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. If it hadn't been for my Knight in shining armor, he would have in all probability, raped and 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 just as much 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 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?" Caitlin asked, tears still filling her eyes.

"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 the tiny unicorn, but right now Caitlin required him a good deal more than she did.

"What will we ever do if anything happens to Harry and Hermione?" Emily asked with a panic stricken tone.

"I don't know," Caitlin answered, the mere thought giving her the chills. . "It doesn't seem possible that a person could grow to love someone in a year's time as much as I love them. They are my Mum and Dad, and I couldn't love them more if they were my actual birth parents."

"They both love you a lot," Emily said.

"Not any more than they do you!" Caitlin argued. "Actually sometimes I think you're Dad's favorite."

"I love it when he holds me on his lap," Emily confessed. "Caitlin, do you think I might be gay?"

"Why would you ask that?" Caitlin asked disbelievingly.

"Because I like it when you hold me, " Emily admitted. "I feel all warm and loved."

"It makes me feel good, too," Caitlin agreed as she moved from her bed to Emily's and they hugged each other, "But it has nothing to do with being gay. When I have dreams at night, it's not you I see doing things to me. Did Jamie ever tell you that I once thought she was gay?"

"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. It's not what you think." Jamie rushed 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 walked 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," Jamie proclaimed. "I have gay friends, but I am 100% heterosexual. Do you know what a naturist is?"

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

"Caitlin, I'm a nudist." Caitlin's jaw dropped slightly and she hung her head realizing she had just called Jamie weird. Jamie continued. "I've been a naturist or nudist, take your 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."

"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," Jamie acknowledged.

"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 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.

"Jamie, gay? Emily said in disbelief. "She could be a poster girl for heterosexuals." She hesitated and then said sadly, "Could have been..."

"I know that now," Caitlin said, "but the first time I walked in on her nude when she was alone with Amanda, I sort of jumped to conclusions."

"Yeah, I guess if anyone saw us they might jump to the same conclusion," Emily sighed. "Did you know they were planning on making love for the first time on Valentine's Day?"

"Jamie and Alex?" Caitlin questioned.

"Yeah! Now instead she is being buried. I don't think Alex will ever be the same," Emily commented.

"I don't think any of us ever will be the same without her," Caitlin added. "Jamie always left a lasting effect on people whose lives she touched."

* * * * *

Monday, February 14, 2005 10:00 A.M.

"How are the girls doing?" Harry asked, as Hermione slipped back into their bedroom and closed the door.

"For the moment they seem to be holding together, but I doubt any of us will be able to last long once the choir starts singing," Hermione said.

"What about Alex?" Harry inquired.

"I don't think he's stopped crying for more than ten minutes at a time," Hermione answered. "He's dressed and ready for the ceremony, but just keeps sitting on the bed, clutching Jamie's pillow and staring at her picture."

"I did a lot of that last winter when you were kidnapped," Harry said understandingly, "but I at least had hope you'd make it back to me. His hope is lost and about to be buried."

"Professor Granger, Professor Potter, may I speak please?" the mirror asked, tentatively.

"Certainly, Mirror," Hermione answered. "You should know by now that it isn't necessary for you to ask permission. We consider you part of the family."

"Thank you," the mirror responded. "It is pleasing to know that I am consider more than a possession. It is just that I am troubled. This time is not as it should be."

"We feel the same way," Harry said with a sigh. "No one so young should have their life ended so needlessly."

"No, but... yes," the mirror said, sounding confused and at the same time confusing Harry and Hermione.

"I agree that human death is a tragedy, especially when the victim is a child or not much more than one," the mirror answered. "Tragedy, however, is a part of the human world and inevitable. The current situation, however, is simply wrong."

"I don't understand," Hermione said, first looking at Harry and then staring into the mirror awaiting an explanation.

"Although I can see many different possible futures," the mirror attempted to explained, "I have no way of telling which one will actually become reality, but once the future becomes the present, I know it was meant to be - or not meant to be. The thread of time you are now living is wrong. Jamie Zacherley was not supposed to die on Saturday."

"But she did die," Harry said, tears threatening to burst from his eyes. Both angered and confused, his voice shook. "Are you saying... that someone deliberately went back in time... and altered the events of that day... and caused Jamie's death? Who would do such a thing?"

"That is one possibility," the mirror admitted. "The other would be that someone failed to prevent the tragedy."

"That makes no sense, Mirror," Harry said pointedly.

"Yes it does," Hermione said fearfully. "You and I have done it; we've prevented tragedy. In our third year we went back in time and saved both Buckbeak and Sirius."

"Yes, but we had a Timer Turner then," Harry said impatiently. "If we had one at our disposal on Saturday we could have gone back and prevented Jamie death, but we didn't."

"But what if we did, and didn't use it!" Hermione said horrified, bursting into tears. "Harry, I think I'm responsible for Jamie dying."

Harry stared at Hermione incredulously as she dashed to their walk-in wardrobe and started throwing things all over the place.

Finally, she found the object of her search buried behind some shoes and books. She looked at the box nervously as she thought back to her wedding night.

"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."

Hermione hurried to the bed and dumped the contents of the box. There it was, a tiny, sparkling hourglass attached to a very long, very fine gold chain.

Hermione threw herself on the bed and began bawling uncontrollably.

"Hermione, don't cry," Harry begged. "We can make it right. I can go back."

Hermione shook her head, as she tried to regain a smidgen of self-control.

"It's too late," she wailed. "I had the power to save Jamie in my possession and didn't use it. Time Turners are only supposed to be used for a few hours. It's now nearly forty-eight!"

"We can still try," Harry insisted.

"You don't understand," Hermione tried to explain between sobs. "It's different. When I had my Time Turner in third year, I read that the further back you go, the more careful you have to be. A few hours is fairly safe, but beyond that, you really have to mind what you are doing. A perceivably insignificant act can theoretically create a cascading effect that could cease your existence. Even if we were able to prevent her death and manage to not wipe ourselves out, we'd be drastically affecting time; time we've actually lived. We'd be changing something that happened two days ago and certainly wiping out our present."

"I have to try," Harry said. "We can't correct an error by doing nothing."

"You're right," Hermione agreed, "but it's me that's going back in time, not you. Minerva gave me the turner, and I left it unpacked. I as good as killed Jamie."

"You forget," Harry said, compellingly, "that you and I made a pledge to each other that we wouldn't run off and get killed alone. Whatever we do, we're doing it together."

"We should tell someone," Hermione urged, "in case something does go horribly wrong."

"That's not going to happen," Harry said, his words more confident than he felt. "I was going to suggest we tell Alex what we were doing, but if there is a chance that we could just disappear, the girls should know."

"I'm not sure how they'll take it," Hermione said concernedly. "They've just lost Jamie. I doubt they'll be pleased at the possibility of losing us as well."

"They're not going to lose us. I'll get them," Harry said assuredly, checking his watch. "We have to do this before others start arriving to attend the ceremony with us."

Hermione nodded and started changing as Harry rushed off to get Alex, Emily and Caitlin.

"Are you wearing that to the ceremony?" Caitlin questioned as she entered her parents' bedroom and was surprised at seeing Hermione no longer dressed for the service.

"Harry and I aren't going to the ceremony," Hermione stated resolutely. "If all goes correctly, neither will you."

"But..." Emily started to say before being interrupted by Harry.

"Hermione and I have come into possession of a Time Turner," Harry announced. "We intend to go back in time forty-eight hours and prevent Jamie's death."

"Isn't that verging on dark magic?" Emily inquired.

Hermione nodded her head. "Usually yes, but not in this case. The mirror informs us that Jamie should not have died. This current timeline should not exist. Either someone went back in time and caused Jamie's death or someone who was supposed to prevent it failed to do so. We intend to make time exist as it should, but what we propose to do is not without risk. A Time Turner is not intended for use over such a long period of time, plus we are changing the thread of time from which we exist. We could be lost in time, neither a part of this thread or the one we hope to create. We could conceivably cease to exist."

"Then don't do it," Emily pleaded. "I love Jamie. I'd give almost anything for her not to have died, but I can't bare to lose you both, too"

"Neither can I," Caitlin begged. "We both love you."

"Let me go instead," Alex beseeched. "The girls need you and without Jamie, my life isn't worth living."

Harry shook his head no. "You're our student," Harry said. "We couldn't allow you to take such a risk. Besides, there are many who place great value on your life."

Harry then looked lovingly at his daughters. "Your Mum and I would never leave you on purpose. We feel there is a good chance of succeeding, or we wouldn't be attempting this."

Hermione gathered the girls to her and gave them both a hug, followed by a kiss. "There is always the chance that something could go wrong. We didn't want to risk the possibility of just disappearing and you never knowing what happened."

"Will we remember this conversation?" Caitlin asked apprehensively. "Hopefully, no," Hermione answered. "From what I have read - in theory at least - if we succeed, this timeline will cease to exist and everything will be back to noon on Saturday for you. You shouldn't remember us talking to you now because you never lived it."

If we fail to change the timeline, however, you probably will, unfortunately, remember this conversation. In the worst-case scenario, we cease to exist and will seem to just disappear before your eyes. You will be aware of what happened and your lives will continue. You'll bury Jamie, and Ron and Sam will take care of you. But we intend to be as careful as possible so that does not happen. Should we fail but manage to make it back here anyway, we will simply seem to return a few minutes from now.

Harry and Hermione both kissed the girls and hugged Alex.

Hermione, then fumbled with the neck of her robes, and pulled from beneath them the very long gold chain. She threw the chain around Harry's neck too and then turned over the sparkling hourglass hanging from it forty-eight times as Harry counted.

* * * * *

The room was then empty. It was eleven o'clock on the previous Saturday.

"It looks like we made it back to Saturday," Harry said, relieved.

"Yes," Hermione said sighing. "Now I wish we had given ourselves a little more time, but forty-eight hours already seemed extremely long."

"Our first course of action is to get to Diagon Alley," Harry said. "Should we fly off Hogwarts grounds and then Apparate, or would you prefer I create a Portkey?"

"Considering my current situation, I'd prefer a train ride," Hermione said, "but I imagine that's not an option. I don't feel at ease Apparating under my present condition. Could you fashion a Portkey? It also most likely affords us the best chance of not being seen"

"That's probably our best option," Harry said. "Besides we'd be wasting valuable time flying off grounds in order to Apparate."

Harry walked over to the rubbish bin and gave it a slight tap with his wand, causing it to immediately regurgitate a dented beverage can. "Should we Portkey directly to Diagon Alley?" Harry asked.

"We don't have much choice," she murmured. "Since the girls have our Invisibility Cloak. We'd better get as close to our destination as possible. I just hope we aren't seen."

Harry laid the can on the kitchen counter, pointed his wand at it and muttered, "Portus." The can glowed blue and trembled noisily for a few seconds and then became still.

"Are you ready," Harry said.

"We're ready," Hermione said, placing one hand on her pregnant belly and the other on the can that Harry was already clutching.

"On three then," Harry said placing his free arm tightly around Hermione's waist.
"One...two...three..."

It happened immediately: Hermione felt she would be sick as what seemed like a invisible hook pulled from behind her navel and jerked her irresistibly forward. As her feet left the ground, she could feel Harry gripping her tightly around the waist; they were speeding forward in a howl of wind and swirling color. They were being pulled onward as if being magnetically sucked toward a target and then-

Her feet touched the ground as Harry released his grip. "Nice landing, Mr. Potter," Hermione said, before quickly surveying their arrival point.

Harry had deposited them directly in front of Ollivanders. They both looked around to see if anyone had noticed their arrival. Fortunately, this end of the street was sparsely occupied, and their arrival had apparently gone unnoticed. Harry and Hermione held each other tightly as they stared at the display window of the shop, much like a young couple window-shopping for engagement rings.

"Do you see any sign of them yet?" Hermione asked.

"No," Harry answered. "I think we have a few minutes yet. We better get away from the shop."

"Over there," Hermione said, indicating a narrow passageway between two shops on the other side of the street. "We should be able to observe from there undetected."

They waited until no one was nearby and then crossed over to the unobtrusive passageway.

"Have you given any thought as to how we'll stop them from entering the shop? Hermione asked.

"I was in charge of transportation," Harry said, clutching Hermione's hand. "I was leaving that up to you."

"Well," Hermione said with a little thought. "Didn't Alex say that Mr. Ollivander was about to go to lunch? I could do a locking charm and conjure an 'out to lunch' sign for the door just prior to Jamie and Alex arriving."

"That should do the trick," Harry said confidentially. "If we can keep them out of the shop until after the clock has sounded twelve, the timeline will have been changed."

Hermione looked apprehensively into Harry's green eyes. "And then we'll find out what happens to us."

"Are you having second thought?" Harry asked.

"No " Hermione said, certainly. "I'm still worried about us altering time this far back, but whatever the consequences; I'm ready to take them."

"Here they come," Harry said interrupting Hermione. "Will you look at the two of them? Have you ever seen two people so obviously in love."

"Not since I last glanced at you and me in a mirror," Hermione said, grasping Harry tightly as with her other hand she drew out her wand. She first performed a locking charm and then magically changed the wording on the window sign from 'OPEN' to 'OUT TO LUNCH.'

"I love you Harry," she said, looking nervously into his eyes. "No matter what happens, never forget that I love you and always will."

Harry held Hermione tightly, wondering if he should be more concerned. Was there something she hadn't told him? They clutched each other tightly as they watched Jamie and Alex approach the door and notice the sign but still try to gain entry..

Alex checked his watch and then after shaking his head in frustration, grabbed Jamie's hand and led her down a sheltered path that went by the side of the shop.

"All we have to do now is wait for the clock to chime," Hermione said, her body quaking.

"I wish there was a way we could have prevented the destruction of Mr. Ollivander's shop," Harry sighed, "but without the Invisibility Cloak, there was simply too much chance of being seen."

"Mr. Ollivander!" Hermione shouted in panic as the clock began to chime twelve. "Alex said he was in the backroom when they came into the shop. With them not entering the shop, he's had no reason to leave it. Harry, by saving Jamie we've killed Mr. Ollivander!"

Harry didn't hesitate. He released his grasp on Hermione and began to dart toward the shop.

"NO! HARRY!," she screamed, lunging for him, but instead of grabbing him and stopping his progress, her arm passed through his body as if he were a ghost. Hermione found herself lying in the street watching helplessly as Harry, still running toward the shop, faded out of existence.

She reach out and squeezed her wrist tightly; it unquestionably felt solid. WHY! Why if Harry had faded out of existence was she still here. Whatever the consequences of their action, they were supposed to be together.

Chapter Twenty-two - Joining

"No, Harry!" she screamed, lunging for him. But instead of grabbing him and stopping his progress, her arm passed through his body as if he were a ghost. Hermione found herself lying in the street and watching helplessly as Harry, still running toward the shop, faded out of existence.

She reached out and squeezed her wrist tightly; it unquestionably felt solid. WHY? Why if Harry had faded out of existence was she still here? Whatever the consequences of their actions, they were supposed to be together.

Then suddenly she felt as though the very ground on which she'd been lying had been pulled out from underneath her quite violently, and she felt herself falling, tumbling through space and blackness. Her mind was crying out through the void, *Help me!*

But then she felt something solid under her, and she groaned with pain. She suddenly realized that she had a body - a body that hurt - or rather, a head that hurt. She tried unsuccessfully to sit up; she wanted to rub the back of her head but she couldn't. Cautiously, she opened her eyes. The world didn't come into focus right away, and she struggled to prop herself up on her elbows.

"Hermione, are you all right?" Madam Pince asked concernedly. "Did you hit your head, my dear?"

"I'm fine," Hermione said, not at all reassuringly, as she rubbed her head. "What happened?"

"You were asking me if I had seen your girls today. Just as I answered, 'no', you seemed to pass out. Perhaps you should see Poppy," Madam Pince suggested, "especially considering your condition. Would you like some assistance?"

"No, really. I'm fine," Hermione insisted. "All I need is a bit to eat." Hermione glanced at the wall clock and noticed it was a couple of minutes past twelve.

"If you're positive," Madam Pince said, not the least convinced. She watched apprehensively as Hermione departed the library and headed toward the Great Hall.

Hermione unquestionably felt odd, but she had no idea if the symptoms were physical or mental. She wasn't even sure that she had actually passed out; however, she felt she must have because she had a dream. No, it was a nightmare, and she remembered it more vividly than any dream she had ever experienced. It seemed so real.

Hermione shivered as she approached the Great Hall, her dream constantly replaying in her head. She gave Harry a gentle peck on the cheek as she quietly took the seat next to him. Then she noticed Harry was rubbing his head.

"What's wrong, Harry? Do you have a headache?" she asked with disquiet.

"Yeah! Banged my head on the staircase wall coming down from our quarters. Must be getting clumsy in my old age," he said kiddingly. "I'm lucky it happened near the bottom, or

I'd be having lunch in the infirmary.

"Weird thing is, I must have passed out for a moment." Harry said, rubbing his eyes. "I have memories of the weirdest dream."

At the mention of the word dream, Hermione froze. "Harry," she said anxiously, "was the dream about Jamie? Did she die?"

Harry didn't have to respond. The shocked appearance on his face was sufficient enough answer.

"How did you know?" he asked, both amazed and skeptical.

"Harry, I think we both had the same dream and at exactly the same time. What are the odds of that happening: two people having the same dream? Do you think it was some sort of forewarning?" she asked, nervously playing with her necklace. Abruptly, Hermione remembered that she hadn't put on a necklace when she dressed for breakfast.

She fumbled with the neck of her robes, pulling from beneath them a very long, very fine gold chain. Harry looked completely bewildered until Hermione was holding the chain out, a tiny, sparkling hourglass hanging from it.

"It wasn't a dream," he said in disbelief. Harry shuddered. "Jamie actually died, and we violated wizard law and went back in time to prevent her death."

Hermione nodded her head desolately in agreement. "We saved Jamie, but in doing so, I fear we caused the death of Mr. Ollivander."

Comprehension dawned on Harry's face as he remembered lastly hurrying toward the little shop before the ground seemed to be pulled from under him. "Then we're about to experience those forty-eight hours again," he said. "That means Severus should be receiving notification from the Ministry before long."

Harry barely completed his sentence when his attention, along with that of every one else in the Great Hall was drawn to the Phoenix that had entered and circled the hall and was now holding his leg out to the Headmaster. As soon as the message was detached, the bird disappeared with a pop.

Severus read the message, seemed ready to stand, and then read the message again. He either didn't believe or didn't want to believe what was written upon the parchment. Slowly he rose to his feet. The hall, already silent, was ready for him to speak.

"I have sad news to report," Severus began slowing. "If you've been keeping up with the news, you are undoubtedly aware that both our world and the Muggle world have in recent years been suffering at the hands of terrorists, cowards that seek to control the world by killing innocent children and civilians in an undeclared war.

"An individual who has the audacity to call himself, 'The Great One', heads one of these groups. The only thing great about this coward is his ego. Unhappily, an attack was carried out today which has been credited to this individual. The attack took place at twelve-noon in Hogsmeade. Regrettably, there were numerous innocent people injured today, many of whom

are Hogwarts students."

Abruptly the hall was filled with murmurs and questions.

"Please," Severus almost begged, his eyes now actually tearing. "May we observe a moment of silence for our injured friends."

Harry was deep in thought when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Hermione, Harry, we have to talk," Severus said despondently.

"Should we come to your office?" Hermione asked fearfully.

"No, that won't be necessary," he said quietly. "Just so we are away from prying eyes."

He led them into the chamber directly behind the staff table.

Hermione and Harry exchanged worried glances. If they had indeed succeeded in changing the time lines, why was Severus wishing to talk to them?

"What is it Severus?" Harry asked as soon as the door closed. "Is there something you need us to do to help with the injured?" Harry held Hermione's hand tightly.

Hermione's eyes were tearing, fearful that they had somehow failed and Jamie had still died.

"I wanted to discuss this in private with you both until I've received more details," Severus said softly, "but it appears that there were suppose to be two synchronized attacks today. It seems that Alex Ward and Jamie Zacherley happened upon and prevented an assault on Ollivanders Wand shop."

Harry and Hermione once more exchanged glances, but this time of relief rather than worry.

"Then no one was hurt in Diagon Alley?" Hermione questioned, obviously relieved.

"No," Severus confirmed. "There were numerous injuries in Hogsmeade, however. Poppy has already rushed to the village. I'm sure she would appreciate any assistance you could give her."

"We're on our way," Hermione said, as she grabbed Harry's hand, an unmistakable look of great relief on her face.

* * * * *

"Not much left of the Three Broomsticks, is there?" Hermione commented sadly to Harry as they approached the smoldering ruins of the building.

"No, it's amazing no one was killed," Harry replied, thankfully.

"There's Madam Pomfrey," Harry said, noticing the school nurse busily helping mend

wounds. "Let's ask her what we can do to help."

Neither Harry nor Hermione had to open their mouth. As soon as Madam Pomfrey spied them, she pointed to a makeshift tent that had been hastily erected. "Go easy on them," she said. "They've been a tremendous help."

Hermione and Harry turned and walked quickly toward the tent, dithering slightly before entering. Kim and Emily were busy tending to victims, trying to make them comfortable until Caitlin or one of the healers could get to them.

Harry watched in quiet amazement as Caitlin treated an injured student that, despite all the blood, he could recognize as Doris Burke, the Slytherin Quidditch captain. He didn't know what other injuries she might have sustained, but a deep gash on her face was evident. A Muggle receiving the same injury would have a permanent and hideous scar.

Caitlin held Doris' hand as she calmly talked to the older girl, trying to reassure her. Then Caitlin placed her hand on the wound and concentrated. As Harry watched, a cut appeared on Caitlin's cheek; it bled momentarily and then healed and disappeared. As Caitlin's wound vanished, so did the one on Doris. Emily handed Caitlin a damp cloth with which she wiped Doris' face. There was not the slightest evidence of a cut having ever existed. Caitlin gave Doris a hug and got up to move to her next patient. As she did, she noticed Harry and Hermione, both beaming with pride.

Caitlin remarked to Kim and Emily and all three girls looked apprehensively in the direction of Hermione and Harry.

"What can we do to help?" Hermione asked.

* * * * *

They all remained until the injured had all been treated and then started walking quietly back toward the castle.

"Are we in trouble?" Caitlin inquired.

"For the moment let's just say you've equally won and lost points today," Hermione responded. "Neither your father or I are happy about the three of you sneaking off to Hogsmeade today. The school has rules in place for a reason, and you should not consider yourselves above them."

"But," Hermione paused, "your father and I broke a small number of rules when we were in school." Harry looked at Hermione and raised his eyebrows. "On this particular occasion, it seems that the benefits of you being here to help with the injured outweighs the severity of the rules broken."

"Why exactly did you three find it crucial to sneak into Hogsmeade?" Harry inquired as they slowly made their way out of the village and headed toward Hogwarts.

The girls looked nervously from one to the other before Emily sighed and said, "It was all my

fault. I did something brainless at the Yule Ball and Caitlin and Kim were helping me make it right."

Emily proceeded to tell the entire story. Harry and Hermione were both unable to restrain from venting their fury when Emily told how she had removed her dress and allowed Tyler to take pictures of her nude.

"Emily, I realize you've been a naturist all your life," Harry said after somewhat gaining his composure, "but nudist or not, a young lady just does not lock herself in a room alone with a boy and strip in front of him."

"And as if that wasn't bad enough, you let him photograph you. Didn't you learn anything from my experience with Playwizard Magazine," Hermione asked, exceedingly upset.

"Girls," Hermione continued, "being nude among family and friends or even in a naturist environment is one thing. Being nude when you are alone with a boy is asking for trouble."

Emily shook her head furiously. "That's a lot of rot. Most of my childhood friends were boys. Not one of them ever tried to take advantage of being alone with me when I was naked. Clothes are no different than Muggle locks."

"What do you mean by that?" Harry asked.

"Locks won't prevent a thief from stealing from you, but they aren't necessary to protect your valuables from an honest man," Emily replied.

Harry and Hermione both stared at Emily, neither able at the moment to argue with her logic. Therefore, the subject was at least temporarily put aside and Emily was allowed to go on with her story. She continued uninterrupted, until she got to the part where the boys undressed and were then followed into the showers.

Initially Hermione reacted with shock, but in next to no time, her face was covered with a smile and the same pride as Harry's.

"You turned the tables on them completely," Harry said, trying to maintain an adult fatherly approach, but in actuality wanting to give the girls all high fives.

"And the final chapter was this morning. You guys just had to see their reaction to the pictures," Hermione stated, looking at Harry and just shaking her head. She was already holding Harry's hand, but gave it a tight squeeze as she winked at him.

"Hermione and I have to walk a fine line as we play separate but entwined roles in your lives," Harry said. "We are Hogwarts professors and, as such, have a responsibility to see that the rules of the school are obeyed. In that roll, I'm afraid we will have to recommend that you each receive detention and a deduction of house points for your escapade."

"But the detentions will be served under our supervision and in our quarters," Hermione said with a smile. "I'm also confident that your actions today during dreadful conditions warrant you receiving house points at least matching those that you have lost."

Caitlin, Emily and Kim all exchanged thankful fleeting looks.

"As parents, we want you to know that you had us extremely concerned. That includes you," Harry said, giving Kim a hug. "Will you girls please learn to trust us and come to us when you have a problem. We are not the enemy; we're on your side."

"We might be your parents and professors, but we are also your friends," Hermione said beaming. "As such, we're proud of you, proud because you had a problem and solved it on your own. But we're especially proud because when it came to choosing between running home and hiding what you had done or staying and helping injured people, you did the right thing and stayed."

* * * * *

Upon returning to the castle, Kim excused herself and then hurried off in the direction of the Slytherin dungeon while Caitlin and Emily returned to the staff quarters with their parents.

When Harry quickly, but silently opened the door to their quarters, the group of four was stunned, but not nearly as staggered as the young couple lying on the floor. The boy was fully dressed, but the girl, as was her custom, was completely nude.

It wasn't the state of dress of the girl or even the fact that they were lying together on the floor that caused everyone to act in response; it was rather, the position of the boy's head and what he was doing to the girl.

Jamie and Alex maladroitly leapt to their feet, both turning a vivid red. Jamie's blush visible along the full extent of her body. Hermione took a quick look in the direction of Caitlin and Emily, hoping that they had not seen what Alex was doing to Jamie. From the expressions on their faces, it was quite evident they both had.

"I'm sorry," Jamie said, thrown off balance. "We were just..."

"Harry and I know what you were doing," Hermione said quickly, trying fruitlessly to gain her composure. Her face now also a bright red. "I just wasn't expecting either of the girls to witness such... Well, I guess it will make explaining it a little easier."

Emily shook her head in frustration. "Mum, Caitlin and I aren't six years old. We know all about sex and oral sex." Emily turned toward Jamie. "Do you return the favor and suck Alex's penis?" she asked Jamie without the least trepidation.

Although seemingly impossible, Jamie and Alex turned even a brighter red. Harry meanwhile just stared at Emily in shock.

"I didn't mean either of us ever did it," Emily cried defensively, observing the expression on her Dad's face.

"We haven't," Caitlin swiftly added, but then she looked at Jamie. "The expression on your face before you realized we were here. You looked like you were in ecstasy."

"Okay you two," Harry said, pointing to the chesterfield. "Time for a father, daughter, mother

talk."

"Can we get comfy first?" Caitlin asked innocently.

"I suppose so," Harry said, trying very hard to sound strict. "Hermione, did you want to get comfortable, too?"

Hermione stared questioningly at Harry and then glanced toward Alex.

"It's your option, Professor Granger," Alex said timorously. "My parents had no problems with me visiting Jamie parent's last year and they knew the Zacherley's would all be nude." Alex squeezed Jamie's hand to comfort her. "I'm past the ogling at naked women stage. I guess it all comes down to whether you trust me?"

If the decision came down to whether or not Hermione trusted Alex, then there was no choice to be made. Hermione went to her bedroom and returned a few minutes later unclothed.

"Now that every one is comfortable," Harry said, "suppose you all grab a seat."

Hermione went to sit next to Harry on the sofa, but Caitlin nudged her way in between them. At first Emily looked disappointed, but then Harry patted his leg and she enthusiastically climbed up on his lap.

"Are we going to talk about sex?" Emily asked keenly.

"Should we?" Harry inquired. "You just told me that you and Caitlin knew all about it."

"Not all about it," Caitlin said candidly. "We know the nuts and bolts of what goes where and that we can't do it until fifteen without causing major grief, but what about what Jamie and Alex were doing. Do you have to be fifteen to do that?"

Hermione gave Harry a trenchant look as Harry felt a large knot form in his stomach. Suddenly the idea of facing Voldemort all over again seemed attractive, certainly more appealing than a discussion of oral sex with his two young daughters.

"No, you don't have to be fifteen to do what Jamie and Alex were doing, but it is something that should not be taken lightly," he said nervously. "Doing that sort of thing is very personal and should only be done with someone you have a strong relationship with. Usually someone you love and if not already married, have plans to marry."

"Alex, are you and Jamie getting married?" Emily asked bluntly.

Alex was caught off guard, but looked lovingly at Jamie who was now sitting on his lap. He gave her a brief hug. "Yes, we are. Actually we were just discussing it today. We still have a year at Hogwarts and then hopefully Auror training, but after that we want to get married."

"I'll be an aunt," Emily said joyfully, "Aunt Emily."

"Let's not rush things," Jamie said cautiously. "We both want children, but not too soon."

"Sometimes you can't plan out your life," Hermione said, first clutching Caitlin's hand and

then patting Emily's thigh. "But children are something you love whenever they pop into your life."

"Can we get back to talking about sex," Emily said with annoyance as she looked at her Dad. "How are we expected to know how to do things if no one ever teaches us or at least lets us watch them do it?"

Harry was both flustered and tongue tied. Was Emily suggesting that her and Caitlin be allowed to watch Hermione and him make love?

Hermione gave Harry a sympathetic look and then decided to come to his rescue. "When you're old enough and have found that special person, you'll know what to do. It isn't anything you need learn out of a book or by watching." She blushed. "It's one of the few things in life that you don't have to get right from the very beginning. Practice with the right partner can be very enjoyable," she said as she smiled and squeezed Harry's hand.

"Enough talk about sex," Harry said. "You two are much too young to have such an insatiable curiosity on the subject. Besides, we have two heroes in our presence. I want to hear all the details of what happened today. How did you get back so early? Did the Ministry portkey you back to Hogwarts?"

"Yes, the Ministry did give us a portkey to get back to school. As for what happened, it was all a case of being in the right place at the right time," Alex said.

"The remarkable thing, is that it all happened because of some prankster's joke," Jamie said.

"Joke?" Hermione questioned.

"When we approached Ollivanders, there was a 'Closed for Lunch' sign in the window." Jamie explained. "Later, Mr. Ollivander told us that although he was preparing to close for lunch, he hadn't as yet hung up his sign. He had no idea where the brand new sign in the door had come from."

"That's strange," Harry said, giving Hermione a shrewd look.

"The shop being closed really put us in a panic," Alex admitted. "We only had little more than an hour to purchase my wand and get back to the train station."

"Rather than wonder off, we decided to just nose around, hoping that Mr. Ollivander would return shortly," Jamie said. "There was a pathway between the two stores and so we decided to have a look around."

"I was inquisitive as to what was behind the shops to separate them from Muggle London," Alex added.

Hermione and Harry both exchanged glances, neither, until now, having ever given this a thought.

"Our mere surprise presence evidently gave the two beefy oaths that were prowling about a fright because they immediately drew their wands on us. They caught me off guard and Alex unfortunately was unarmed," Jamie stated. "Before we knew what was happening; we were

both struck by curses that sent us crashing against the back wall of the shop."

"Mr. Ollivander, who was inside the shop, came bursting through the door like some superhero in a Muggle movie or comic book," Alex said admiringly. "He might be elderly, but it certainly hasn't lessened his magical ability. Those two oafs didn't know what hit them."

"Harry, it... it was the same two that attacked me after the World Cup Match," Jamie said nervously. "Mr. Ollivander must have sounded some sort of silent alarm, because within minutes, the area was swarming with law enforcement. Once everything was deemed safe, even Minister Wrong Apparated along with some Aurors."

"Then they took the culprits into custody?" Harry asked. "No one was hurt? You're both heroes!"

"That's what Minister Wrong said," Jamie acknowledged. "Although all we did was get ourselves thrown against a building."

"But that apprised Mr. Ollivander of the dangerous situation and afforded him the opportunity to capture the perpetrators," Harry said proudly.

"What exactly did they intend to do?" Harry asked.

"They had Muggle explosives planted all around the rear of the shop," Jamie explained. "They had intended to blow it to bits."

"But why bother with Muggle means when they could have used an explosive curse from their wands?" Hermione questioned.

"The Minister seemed to think that whoever was behind the attack wanted Muggles to be blamed," Alex stated.

"Either that or they wanted time to get far from the area and not have their wands linked to the incident," Jamie suggested.

"Minister Wrong says we will probably receive an award," Alex said meekly, "but Mr. Ollivander already gave us both something to show his appreciation."

"What did he give you?" Emily asked excitedly as if it were Christmas.

"Well, he gave Alex his new wand free of charge, but he gave me something really neat," Jamie said nearly as excitedly. "Emily feel my thigh where I normally wear my wand sheath."

Without hesitation Emily jumped off Harry's lap and hurried over to her sister. She began to rub her hand on the upper part of Jamie's leg, but suddenly stopped, looking at her sister in disbelief. "He gave you an invisible wand?" she questioned with awe.

"No, but almost as good," Jamie said elatedly as she withdrew her wand. "It's an invisible sheath, but what makes it in fact great is that it projects its spell to include the portion of the wand protruding from the sheath."

"Harry, we have to look into those," Hermione said, obviously impressed. "This is where Fred and George lack proper direction. Remember those hats they invented that made the wearer's head disappear. I'm sure this works in a similar way, but with a much more practical purpose."

Harry nodded his head in agreement. This wouldn't be the first time someone made a fortune off one of Fred and George's idea. They too often got caught up in the joke side of their products, neglecting to see the practical implications.

* * * * *

"Emily, did you get a good look at what Alex was doing to Jamie when we walked in the door?" Caitlin questioned, as the two girls lay in their beds talking, neither able or actually wanting to fall asleep.

"Not as good as I would have liked to have gotten," Emily admitted.

"Yeah!" Caitlin said, her voice sounding envious.

"If I tell you something will you promise not to make fun of me?" Emily asked, hesitantly.

"Emily, you should know by now that I'd never make fun of you in a way that was hurtful. You're my sister and I love you," Caitlin declared.

"I love you, too," Emily said, as she bounded from her bed and gave Caitlin a hug before crawling into bed and nestling next to her sister. "You know how evil I am about making fun of boys and men when they get a stifee."

Caitlin laughed. "You do have a nasty habit of making sure that no one within a mile radius misses it."

"Up until two years ago, I thought it just meant they had to go to the bathroom," Emily admitted, feeling rather naïve and stupid. "I had no idea that it indicated that they were sexually aroused. I thought this," she touched herself between the legs, "and penises were only different equipment men and women had for peeing. I had no idea a penis was used for sex and that they put it inside of a girl. Some men are really big; they'd never fit."

Caitlin shuddered, thinking about some of the rather large tools she had seen last summer on vacation. "I think that is one of the reasons we're not allowed to have sex until we are fifteen," Caitlin said. "We're too small down there, but I imagine we'd probably be able to handle boys our own age. They aren't nearly as big as full-grown men."

"Caitlin, have you ever played with yourself?" Emily asked curiously. "You know, put your finger or anything else inside of you?"

Caitlin visibly shook, remembering the ordeal she had been subjected to by Madam Hooch. "I used to," Caitlin admitted, "but ever since the attack, I just can't."

"I'm sorry," Emily said, quickly. "I forgot about the awful things that vicious woman did to you."

"I try not to think about it," Caitlin said. "Mum was amazed that I could even consider being a nudist after what had happened."

Emily nodded her head in agreement.

"I think everyone plays with themselves at one time or another," Caitlin said, trying to get off the subject of Hooch. "But I think it's sort of like tickling yourself. The results are so different when someone else does it. I had goose bumps all over when Matt touched and kissed my breasts."

Caitlin leaned over and whispered in Emily's ear. "I know I'm too young to have actual sex, but I'd love to experience what Alex did to Jamie today. She looked like she was in seventh heaven."

"I know what you mean," Emily agreed. "From the expression on her face it must have been pure delight."

Emily laid back and thought for a while. "Caitlin, I love you. You've always been here to comfort me. You helped me through the loss of my parents and most recently through my situation with Tyler. I'm not Matt, but I'm willing to do it if it means that much to you."

"Do what?" Caitlin said lazily and then suddenly she realized what Emily meant. "But were both girls."

"I know and don't get the idea I'm a lesbian because I'm not," Emily said empathically. "I couldn't do it to anyone else, not even Kim or Jamie, but for some reason, I know I can do it to you. Actually, I want to do it to you. I want to try to make you feel as good and as happy as Jamie looked."

"You're not kidding. You're serious, aren't you?" Caitlin asked in disbelief.

"I've never been more serious," Emily said, "but I swear if you ever tell anyone that I did this, I'll kill you."

"You won't have to worry about me saying anything," Caitlin promised, "because I'll only let you do it on one condition."

"What's the condition?" Emily asked suspiciously.

"You have to allow me to do it to you in return," Caitlin said, completely somber.

"Do you mean it?" Emily asked, elatedly.

"I'm quite serious," Caitlin declared. "If you can do something like that to me, I'm going to do it to you as well. You should experience how it feels, too."

Emily and Caitlin nervously hugged each other. "I can't believe we're going to do this," Emily said nervously. "Who goes first?"

Caitlin got on her knees and gave Emily a light kiss on the lips. "This was your idea," Caitlin said. "You were caring enough to volunteer to do this to make me feel good, so I think it's

only fair I do it to you first."

"Are you sure?" Emily asked, expectantly.

"No. Actually I think we're both crazy, but I honestly want to go through with it," Caitlin said.

"What do I have to do?" Emily asked.

"If the expression on Jamie's face was any indication, just lay there and enjoy yourself." Caitlin stared at Emily.

* * * * *

"That was a relief," Harry said as Hermione nestled in his arms. "I'm not sure if I could have handled the knowledge that our saving Jamie had cost another life."

"I'm not certain that mortals should have the power to change time," Hermione said disquietingly. "Part of me feels I should destroy the time turner, but I can't. If it hadn't been for that device, Jamie would be dead. Harry, that's three innocent lives we've saved."

"Innocent in different ways, but yes," Harry agreed. "I only hope that Jamie's stay on earth is a great deal longer than that of Sirius. I used to lie in bed feeling sorry for myself because of the terrible childhood I had. Look at me now. I have every thing a man could desire. Sirius was the one that had a truly awful life. Firstly, coming from that horrible family of his, but then to be sent to Azkaban for all those years for a crime he didn't commit."

"Then spending years on the run, only to die at that evil woman's hands. At least she finally got what she deserved," Hermione said.

"Yes, but in many ways, death seemed too good for her," Harry responded. "There simply is no proper way to make a person as evil as her atone for all the pain and suffering they have caused. In ways, she was more wicked than Voldemort himself."

"They're both gone," Hermione said. "Suppose I try to make you think of something more pleasant."

"Did you here a moaning sound?" Harry asked, sitting up with a start.

"No," Hermione lied. "Maybe it was one of the ghosts."

"I don't think so," Harry said listening intently. "There it is again. That sounds like Caitlin. I better check on the girls" He started to move to get up, but Hermione stopped him.

"Don't Harry," Hermione begged, "you'll embarrass them. I think they may be doing a little experimenting."

"Experimenting?" He said questioningly. "What do you mean?"

But before Hermione could answer, he realized exactly what she meant. He looked at

Hermione as if panic stricken. "But they're both girls. I'll go make some noise in the living area so that they stop," he suggested.

"Leave them be, Harry. If either of us do what you suggest, it is likely to cause far more harm than good. They will probably try again somewhere outside our quarters where getting caught would be very detrimental. Trust me - they are alright." Hermione said, calmly.

"But they're only twelve! Do you think they are lesbians?" Harry asked, dismayed at the thought.

"Harry, I am no expert in adolescent psychology, but I have read some as Head of House. It is not uncommon for pre-teens to experiment. Often it is with a same-sex partner, but that has nothing to do with whether or not they will be homosexual as adults," Hermione proclaimed. "Besides, we've discussed this before. I don't think they are lesbians and could ever possibly be 'in love' with each other, but I do believe that they love each other a very great deal and would do anything for each other."

"I know what you said," Harry answered with annoyance. "In school Ron and I were best friends. Dumbledore thought in year four that he would be the thing I would miss most. And I did go to him first in the Triwizard tournament." Harry looked at Hermione quite seriously. "But there is no way in hell that I would ever consider sucking his cock. Yet the girls are doing virtually the same thing to each other and it doesn't even phase you."

"Well, that was the case for you and Ron. The girls, however, have an emotional intimacy that I don't think you two felt, so after Emily started asking all of her questions about sex and oral sex after seeing Jamie and Alex, I knew that they might do this, regardless of anything I might say to dissuade them. Harry, even if they were lesbian or bi-sexual, I know you would not love them any less."

"No! Of course not."

"Even so, I think that Caitlin and Emily will in time find love of both a mental and physical nature with someone of the opposite sex, just like you and I have, but I think they will always have a special love between themselves. I think those girls would not only die for each other, but would also do anything else for the other, and I mean anything."

"I'm just going to have to trust you on this one," Harry said shaking his head.

"Do you remember the three of us back in first year? By the end of that year, we were willing to die for each other, yet we were hesitant to put a comforting arm around each other. Isn't it weird that we don't think twice about dying, but shudder at the thought of physical intimacy, especially with someone of the same sex?"

* * * * *

February 14, 2005

"Are you sure you want to skip dinner?" Jamie asked, as she and Alex nervously made their way up to the seventh floor.

"I can't think about food," Alex answered, holding her hand even tighter. "The only thing I want on my menu tonight is you."

"Oh! That sounds bad in a good sort of way," Jamie teased as they hurried along the corridor to the stretch of blank wall opposite the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy. "Okay, we must walk past this wall three times, concentrating hard on what we need."

"I'm holding the hand of the only thing I need," Alex said, finding it difficult to fathom that in a few minutes he would at long last be making love with his best friend.

"Forget about me for a few minutes and concentrate on the room," Jamie scolded.

When they turned for the third time, Alex said sharply, "Is that it?"

The high polished door that Jamie told him about had appeared in the wall. Jamie reached out, grabbed hold of the brass handle, and pulled the door open.

"Wow," Alex said in amazement as they crossed the threshold of the cozily lit room. "This is unbelievable."

The room was toasty warm, thanks to a crackling fire in the ornate fireplace. In the center of the room was a heart shape bed easily large enough to sleep six. The floor, although having the appearance of being made of stone, was soft and springy with silk cushions flung all about.

On the side of the room opposite the fireplace was a marble, rectangular shaped pool sunk into the floor. The pool even had a diving board, and around the pool's edge stood about a hundred golden taps, each with a colored jewel set into its handle.

"This certainly beats the Astronomy Tower," Alex said as he soaked in the ambiance of the room.

"But don't you think it lacks the intimacy of the train compartment," Jamie joked.

Alex ignored Jamie's remark as he became lost in her eyes. "Are you nervous?" he asked.

"Not when I'm with you," she responded. "Are we just going to stand here looking at each other or did you have something else in mind that you'd like to do?"

Alex didn't answer, but instead took Jamie in his arms and kissed her, first slowly and gently, but then ever more intensely as her robes dropped to the floor. Alex fumbled to open the buttons on Jamie's blouse and then froze looking at her in amazement.

"You're wearing a bra," he said in amazement. "You never wear a bra."

"It was Hermione's idea," Jamie said with a giggle. "She said that every guy should get to take a girl's bra off at least once in his life. This is your first and last time."

"You two really have a special relationship, don't you?" Alex asked, as he sought to discover the secrets to removing the stubborn garment.

"Very special," Jamie confirmed. "I'd do anything for her and I think she feels the same way about me."

"Right now I wish you'd do something for me and that's show me how to get this darn thing open," Alex pleaded.

Jamie smiled as she undid the clasp, allowing her breasts to burst free from the tight garment.

"I am so glad to be out of that," Jamie remarked as Alex plied her breasts with kisses.

"Do you have knickers on, too?" Alex asked as he began to undo the buttons of her skirt.

"She tried to talk me into wearing them, but I flatly refused," Jamie said. "Cloth will never touch those lips."

As her skirt slipped past her knees, Alex just stared at her now bare body. "I've seen you nude at least a thousand times since we were first years, but you always take my breath away."

"No need to sweet-talk me Mr. Ward. I'm not about to change my mind," Jamie said "but I also don't propose to be the only one in the room naked." Jamie wasted no time removing Alex's clothes,

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"That was amazing," Alex gasped. "I didn't realize it was possible to feel that great."

"Hermione tells me it only gets better and better with practice," Jamie said hesitantly, not sure if bringing up Hermione again was a good idea.

"If that be the case, I think we should schedule a practice session nightly," Alex said.

"Considering our current living arrangement, that might be rather difficult, but I'm in favor of doing it as often as possible," Jamie agreed.

"Are you ready for that swim?" Jamie said encouragingly as she slithered out of Alex's arms. Alex watched as she walked over to the side of the swimming-pool-sized bath, knelt down and turned on a few of the taps,

The more taps Jamie turned on, the faster the pool filled. Alex joined her and soon they had every tap flowing. Each spout carried a different sort of bubble bath, but not ordinary bubble bath. The bubbles were huge and the foam was so thick that it looked like you could walk on it. Soon, Alex and Jamie found themselves hurriedly closing off the taps the deep pool having filled with hot water, foam and bubbles quickly. With their feet touching bottom, the water came to Jamie's shoulders.

They swam a couple of lengths of the pool before swimming back to the side and treading water as they fooled around with each other.

Jamie grabbed two towels with which to dry off and tossed one to Alex. Jamie laughed. "You do know that my sister would be unmerciful if she saw you like that. Personally, I wish it

stayed that way all the time."

"So do I."

Jamie and Alex both looked nervously about. They weren't alone.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE - THE SEER

Jamie dropped her towel and reached for her wand.

"You won't need that," said the ghost of a very glum-looking girl sitting cross-legged on the bed. "I'm just window-shopping for something I'll never have. You're very pretty."

"Thank you," Jamie said timorously.

"Not you!" said the ghost. She pointed to Alex who had hastily wrapped a towel around his waist. "Him!"

"You're...you're Moaning Myrtle?" Jamie said. "I've heard tell of you. Don't you haunt one of the toilets in the girls' bathroom on the first floor, the one that's always out of order?"

"The name is Myrtle," the ghost responded indignantly. "You'd have occasion to moan too if you'd spent the last sixty years existing in the U-bend of a toilet."

"You live in a toilet?" Alex questioned unbelievably.

"All alone, ever since I was killed," she moaned. "There was a nice boy with black hair and glasses that I invited to share my toilet with me, but he..." She broke into tears. "He didn't die in the Chamber of Secrets like I had anticipated he would."

"Are you referring to Harry, Harry Potter?" Jamie asked.

"Yes," Myrtle said dreamily. "Harry was built nice like him." Myrtle cast voracious eyes at Alex.

"You wouldn't be planning on dying soon; would you?" she added hopefully.

"No he wouldn't," Jamie shouted protectively. "Is that all you do? Spy on Hogwarts boys as they bathe."

"No," Myrtle said defensively. "I spy on the girls, too. There isn't exactly a lot for us ghosts to

do. I remember seeing you in the prefect's bath last year. You were only there that once; did I frighten you off?"

"No," Jamie said, the memory of that morning returning. "I simply preferred being with my friends in the dormitory, but I remember that morning and feeling as if I were being watched."

"That was me," Myrtle said, almost proudly. "You're different than most girls. Usually they clutch their towels to their bodies tightly and yell for me to go away. You're talking to me and don't seem remotely embarrassed."

"That's because I'm a naturist," Jamie proclaimed, "but if I promise to come visit you in the girls' bathroom, would you go away for now? I don't want to be rude, but Alex and I were sort of busy."

"Were you going to have sex?" Myrtle asked breathlessly. "May I stay and watch? It's something I've never seen and something I'll never get to experience."

Jamie hesitated momentarily, feeling very sorry for Myrtle, until she saw Alex's face. There was no way that they could be intimate in front of an audience, even a ghost.

"Myrtle, sex is something private between two people that are in love. We couldn't do it with you watching; it would make it seem sordid," Jamie said. "I promise you though that if you give us our privacy now, I'll come and visit you tomorrow and tell you what it feels like."

Myrtle was reluctant to leave, but decided that a descriptive conversation was better than nothing. "You won't forget; you promise?" Myrtle practically begged.

"I'll come visit you in your bathroom immediately after my last class," Jamie promised.

"Would it be possible for him to drop the towel before I leave?" Myrtle asked, almost pleaded.

"I don't think so," Jamie said. "Alex isn't a naturist. He's rather embarrassed for his privates to be seen."

As Jamie was speaking, however, Alex did something extremely unanticipated. He loosened his towel and let it drop to the floor. "Myrtle, if it's all right with you, I'd like to come and visit you with Jamie tomorrow," Alex said.

Myrtle stared at Alex, her face carrying an expression that actually resembled a smile as she stuttered, "Th... that would b... be nice," before disappearing, with a swooshing sound, down the drain.

Jamie just stood staring at Alex and shaking her head. "You never cease to amaze me Mr. Ward. What possessed you to drop that towel and tell Myrtle you'd accompany me tomorrow?"

"Everyone makes fun of her; calls her 'Moaning Myrtle'." Alex said. "Jamie, she was no older than us when her life was taken from her. She never got to experience love like we have. What if that had happened to one of us? And now she's destined to spend eternity in the Hogwarts plumbing system."

"I feel sorry for her. If dropping my towel gave her a smile and made her existence more bearable, I'm glad I did it," Alex admitted unashamedly.

Jamie had a tear in her eye. "Add another entry to the long list of reasons why I love you," she said. "Meet me in the middle of the bed, and I'll show you just how much."

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"Do you suppose they've done it by now?" Hermione asked as Harry held her tightly stroking her pregnant belly.

"I'm sure," Harry said. "You and I would be on our third go round by now."

"Yes, but Alex might not be a sex maniac like you," Hermione suggested.

"ME! Are you insinuating that you weren't an enthusiastic partner in our sexual antics?"

"No, I'm not saying that," Hermione admitted. "Sex with you will always be on top of my list of favorite activities." Hermione paused briefly and then said. "Harry if anything ever happens to me, promise that you'll remarry. I don't want you alone for the balance of your life."

"Is this a case of 'do as I say and not as I do'?" Harry asked. "If I recall correctly, two years ago you had sentenced yourself to die an old maid. Besides, I thought we had a pact to die together."

"We do, but something other than battle could take one of our lives. Women sometimes die giving birth," she offered as an example.

"That won't happen to you," Harry asserted. "Poppy and Caitlin wouldn't allow it."

"I know. That was just an illustration," she said. "It's just that you're so young. I wouldn't want you to be alone the rest of your life."

"Nor would I you," Harry agreed. "I just don't think it would be fair."

"Fair?" Hermione questioned.

"To marry someone when your heart will always belong to another," Harry said. "I can't picture myself ever holding or kissing another woman without thinking of you and wishing she were you. That wouldn't be fair to her. What woman would want to enter a relationship knowing she would always be second in someone's heart?"

"One that loves a man very much and is willing to be second choice rather than not be a part of his life at all. Katie Bell is that sort of woman," Hermione confirmed.

Harry looked at his wife in a confused manner. "We're not talking about us any more, are we? I mean Katie and I were together for a while during the summer between my six and seventh year, but that was more a case of convenience and desire for sexual fulfillment rather than real

interest or love."

"No, I'm not talking about us," Hermione said. "Severus asked my advice, and I didn't know what to tell him to do."

"Then he is seeing Katie; the sly old dog. I thought there was an awful lot of smiling and winking going on between them," Harry said.

"He is, and likes her quite a bit, but he can't seem to get over Ginny and move on with his life," Hermione said, sounding rather frustrated with the situation. "He keeps thinking what if...."

"Weird isn't it?" Harry commented. "To my mind there is only one sensible choice. Forget about Ginny, because she'll never be fully over Draco, and go on to someone who loves you beyond a doubt: Katie. Only problem is that I wouldn't have taken my own advice."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked, looking at Harry disbelievingly.

"If I had returned to the wizard world and found you and Ron married, I wouldn't have gotten on with my life and sought out a wife," Harry said truthfully. "I would have been supportive of you and Ron because you were my best friends, but I wouldn't have been able to stop loving you. I think my heart would have broken a little more each time I saw the two of you kiss or hug."

"When I was living in the Muggle world, I kept having a recurring dream about you and Ron." Harry said shaking his head. "At times it seemed so real. The two of you had, of course, married shortly out of school. He was a famous Quidditch player and you were a successful Healer."

"My parents had always wanted me to be a doctor," Hermione said.

"I know," Harry replied. "That's probably where I got the idea. Anyway, to make a long story short, you both fell out of love and he cheated on you with his agent. They ended up getting married and having loads of kids."

"Did you and I eventually get together in the dream?" Hermione asked, kissing Harry's cheek.

"Yes, but I had to chase off to Brazil after you," he said. "You were so obstinate and independent."

Hermione smiled. "That's why you and I are so good together. You let me be an individual and don't try to direct me."

"Speaking of direction," Harry said, changing the subject. "What course will our lives take if you are unable to convince the governors on Friday to consent to Amanda remaining in school?"

"You know me too well," Hermione said, nestling closer to Harry.

"I don't have any plans to quit my job in protest, if that's what you asking." Then she added, looking dismayed, "Severus doesn't think our chances are very good. The real stumbling

blocks will be Phineas T. Buster and his wife, Balla. They've been on the Board for over a century and both loath change. Severus says Balla is a real prude."

"Does that mean that your pictures and the little detail that we are nudists will be more of an issue than Amanda being pregnant?" Harry asked.

"Probably," Hermione said disgustedly.

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"I can't do this!" Ron grumbled. "People are only supposed to be naked when they have sex or take a shower. Not when they sit down to dinner."

"You never seem to have a problem with me being nude the majority of the time," Samantha protested.

"That's because you're a girl, a very attractive girl. Girls look good naked, but it's gay for a guy to parade around like this," Ron argued. "What will Timmy think?"

"I don't know," Sam admitted. "I only know that if we're going on this cruise, you have to start somewhere and being nude at home in front of Timmy and me seems the logical first step."

"Maybe this whole cruise thing was a bad idea. Perhaps we should just forget it and see if we can get our money refunded," Ron suggested.

"Is that what you really want to do?" Sam asked, dejectedly. "I'll have Hermione check into it, if you like."

One look at the disenchanted expression on Sam's face and Ron realized he couldn't back out. "It's just.... Look at me! I'm a tall scrawny, pile of freckles. Maybe if I was some Greek Adonis it wouldn't be so bad."

"Ron. You're not skinny. I happen to find you extremely handsome. Besides, being a nudist isn't about having a perfect body. There will be people of all ages, sizes and shapes on the cruise. No one will take notice of you."

"Yeah! Sure!" Ron said, not sounding the least bit persuaded. "With my pallid skin and bright red hair, it should be effortless for me to just blend in with the crowd." Ron just shook his head in a combination of frustration and amazement. "I don't know how Harry does it? He hugged you when you were naked at Christmas and didn't seem the least bit disturbed."

"He's become desensitized," Sam responded. "Most guys relate female nudity to sex. Harry doesn't anymore because he's become accustomed to seeing Hermione and the girls naked all the time. After a few hours on the ship, you'll be the same way."

Ron sincerely doubted this. He found it impossible to believe that he could ever become acclimatized to seeing bare buns and bouncing boobs without having a response. Just the very thought gave him a reaction - just as Timmy came bursting into the bedroom.

"Mum! Daddy's nudie like you and me." Timmy said excitedly. Then his eyes became engorged as they came to rest on Ron's organ.

Little Timmy looked up at his Mum in amazement. "Daddy has a great big wee-wee."

Sam couldn't help but giggle as Timmy stared in wonder at Ron who had turned crimson red and was trying to hide his erection. "Yes he does. He most certainly does," Sam said lifting Timmy into her arms and giving him a big hug.

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Friday, February 18, 2005 10:00 AM

"Do you have any idea why the change of location for the meeting?" Hermione asked as Severus and she hurried toward the conference room.

"It was made to sound like it was being done out of deference to you," the Headmaster responded, "but I imagine it's more of a surprise inspection of the school."

"I'm sorry Severus," Hermione said guiltily. "I didn't mean to make trouble for you. It's just that I couldn't sit idly by and let Amanda be tossed out of school without even trying to prevent it."

"There's no need for you to apologize," Severus said. "I totally support your viewpoint. I'm just concerned that this meeting may turn out to be more about Professor Granger than Amanda Pierce. The board was rather backed into a corner and compelled to keep you on after the Playwizard incident. They might see this as an opportunity to vent their frustration."

"Amanda doesn't have a chance of staying in school, does she?" Hermione asked, aggravation evident in her voice. "I can't believe the Board of Governors would use her to get back at me."

"I doubt they would allow Amanda to remain under any condition," Severus answered.

"Phineas Buster and his wife will, however, take great pleasure in making you think the outcome is because of you."

Hermione came to a sudden stop. "If they've already made their decision, why are we wasting our time?"

"Because Hermione, I believe in miracles, and I believe in you," Severus said, putting his arm around Hermione, encouragingly. "If anyone can pull this off, it's you."

"I wish I had your faith."

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12:15 PM

"I believe that concludes all the business before the Board with the exception of the Amanda Pierce issue," Phineas Buster announced. "I move that she be immediately expelled. Those in agreement please signify."

"Excuse me," Severus said interrupting Phineas, "Aren't we going to discuss the matter first? Professor Granger has been waiting in the outer chamber for over two hours to address the Board on the subject."

The governors exchanged glances of varying surprise, most seemingly unaware that Hermione was planning to testify.

"Yes, I received your owl stating that the learned Professor would like to address us," Mr. Buster said patronizingly. "I really feel it is a waste of our valuable time."

"It most certainly would be," Balla Buster, concurred. "The little trollop got herself pregnant and thus must pay the consequences. Hogwarts is a school of witchcraft and wizardry, not a school of sin and fornication."

"But if Professor Granger has been waiting that lengthy a time to address us, we should at least afford her the respect of listening to what she has to say," Amelia Bones urged.

Much to the chagrin of Phineas Buster, many of the other governors agreed with Ms Bones.

"Very well," Phineas said reluctantly. "Headmaster Snape, will you please ask Professor Granger to join us?"

As Severus stood to go and get Hermione, Phineas commented not the least bit softly to his wife. "This should be good; the tart defending the trollop."

As Hermione entered the room, she glanced at the faces of the twelve governors, trying desperately to hide her feeling of total despair. At age fifty, Amelia Bones was easily the youngest board member; she at least acknowledged Hermione with a smile. As introductions were made some of the others gave her a polite nod, others simply glanced at her grumpily.

Hermione had immediately recognized Professor Tofty and Griselda Marchbanks from her O.W.L. tests and was shocked to discover that Neville's grandmother was on the board as well. The balance of the members, she had never met before, but they all shared one commonality; they were, for the most part, ancient.

"Professor Granger, the Headmaster informs us that you would like to address us prior to our expelling of Amanda Pierce," Phineas Buster echoed in an irate voice. "Please make it brief since it is already past noon."

Hermione had intended to maintain her composure, knowing that it would serve no good purpose to anger the governors, but the way this arrogant bastard addressed her made it sound like she was an annoyance and that Amanda was already out.

"I'm sorry that you feel I am wasting your time," she said, addressing the entire board, but directing her gaze at Phineas Buster, "but I feel a young woman's future is of more importance than stuffing our faces. I'm sure you can survive." Hermione looked intently at Buster's portly

stomach.

Severus grimaced. He had doubted that Hermione had any prospect of convincing the board to allow Amanda to remain, but had hoped the meeting would at least be civil. Evidently, neither Phineas Buster nor Hermione intended to restrain him or herself.

"We have to guard the reputation of the school," Balla Buster said, smugly. "Perhaps Miss Pierce should have been more concerned about her future when she decided to act as foolishly as she did."

"And perhaps Hogwarts should take more responsibility in counseling our students," Hermione said testily. "Muggle schools at minimum offer proper sex education classes. We on the other hand, house our students in adjoining dormitories with no supervision and expect that there will be no fraternization."

"It is the responsibility of the parents to instruct their offspring in such matters, not the school," Phineas said passionately. "Our business is witchcraft and wizardry, not sex education, or have you gotten your career and sordid private life confused, Professor Granger?"

Hermione was livid. Severus watched her nervously, ready to restrain her if required.

"Phineas!" chided Amelia Bones. "We are here to discuss Amanda Pierce, not assault Professor Granger."

"Thank you Ms. Bones," Hermione said, leaning her elbows on the table and rubbing her face. "But its okay. I'm becoming accustomed to having to defend my lifestyle. If Mr. Buster wants to deride me for being a nudist, he is welcome to do so, but only after we have finished discussing Amanda."

"Expelling Amanda is taking the easy way out rather than trying to solve a problem. A problem, by the way, that is only going to grow if not taken in hand."

"No, we are not their parents, but we have in effect, assumed the roles as their guardians. After age eleven, these students have contact with their parents two months out of the year. They enter Hogwarts as little more than children and leave here as adults."

"Our primary goal might be to teach them witchcraft and wizardry, but we must also tutor them to be responsible adults. Sex is part of being an adult and as one of my daughters said the other night, 'how are we suppose to know what to do if no one tells us or shows us.'"

"They should abstain," Bella Buster bellowed. "In my day a young lady never considered having sex before marriage."

Hermione studied Bella, who had to be at least one hundred fifty. "Was yours a prearranged marriage," Hermione asked.

Bella was caught off guard and became flustered. "Well, yes, but what does that have to do with it? Brides were all virgins. Our generation had morals."

"May I ask how old you were when you and Mr. Buster were married?"

Bella dithered before finally saying, "Thirteen."

"In your day some young girls were forced into marriage before they had even truly become women. Times have changed and even men and women have physically changed since you were married. We have now outlawed prearranged marriages and made consensual sex illegal until age fifteen, but at the same time, children now physically mature sooner.

"The majority of wizards and witches today wait until they are at least in their twenties before marrying. Although the conception of abstaining until marriage might be best, it is also naïve. Like it or not, we must accept as fact that a large percent of our students will experiment with sex and that many will become sexually active teenagers before they leave our school."

Balla Buster and a number of the other governors fidgeted nervously in their seat at this pronouncement.

"Our job is to help our students reach their full potential so that they can successfully make their way in the wizarding world. Denying them an education because they made a mistake is not helping, but rather hurting their chances of succeeding."

Amelia Bones seemed intrigued. "Professor Granger, what do you feel the school should do?" she asked.

"We have to stop living in the past and recognize that many of our students will engage in sexual activity while at school. Although we should certainly be encouraging abstention, we should also make students aware that potions are to be had that will prevent pregnancy. These should be available to young ladies without question or lecture. Potions that cure and prevent sexually transmitted diseases should likewise be available to any student."

"You, Professor Granger, are a disgrace to the teaching profession!" Phineas Buster blasted. "What you propose would have our students running naked in the halls and fornicating at every available opportunity. But then I imagine that would be consistent with your lifestyle."

Hermione was finding it difficult to remain civil with Buster continually insinuating that she was some sort of low life slag.

"I doubt that very much as I don't consider causal sex to be healthy and consider it to be quite the opposite," Hermione answered tersely. "Students should also be counseled as part of a general sexual education curriculum that having sex can have serious emotional ramifications and should not be engaged in lightly or without thought and certainly not without precautions. If these practices were in effect, we wouldn't have girls in the situation of Amanda Pierce."

"I think I can guess how you would handle that state of affairs," Amelia Bones remarked, "but for the record, please inform the other governors."

Hermione gazed around the room. Just looking at the expressions of consternation told her that the battle was lost. "As I'm sure you've noticed, I too am pregnant. I intend to work up until the time I go into labor. I think Amanda should be allowed to continue attending classes until she delivers and then return for the rest of this year and next."

"But a pregnant girl living in the dorm and attending classes. What kind of message will that

send the other students?" Mrs. Longbottom asked.

"I think it will send a strong message not to have sex, at least not without serious thought and proper precautions," Hermione stated. "I doubt many girls will be tempted to follow in Amanda's footsteps. She will be a living poster girl for what not to do."

Amelia Bones nodded her head in agreement as did a few others, but Phineas Buster and the majority of the Governors seemed not the least bit converted. Buster cleared his throat for attention. Evidently he was tiring of the discussion and ready to put the matter to a vote. A banging at the door interrupted him before he could speak.

Buster looked extremely annoyed as Severus went to answer the knocking. The Headmaster stood talking animatedly for several minutes as Buster and the other Governors waited impatiently. Then Severus reluctantly allowed Draco Malfoy to enter the room.

"Professor Malfoy asks that he be allowed to address the governors," Severus said, worryingly. "He has information he feels the Governors should be aware of before they vote."

Phineas Buster shook his head crossly as he looked at the clock. "Very well, but make it brief," he bellowed. "We've already wasted more time on this matter than it is worth."

"Thank you, sir," Draco said smugly. "I just felt it my duty to advise the board that this issue has gone beyond a matter of simple expulsion. It seems that a few imprudent members of the staff have decided to support Granger in her effort to change long standing school policy."

"What exactly do you mean by support?" Buster asked heatedly.

Draco gave one of his unnatural laughs. "It seems that they intend to go out on a sympathy strike if Miss Pierce is ejected from the school."

"Fools," Buster said pompously. "We'll terminate the egg headed bastards. Severus, you have a list of qualified substitutes, do you not?"

"I have a few, but only for certain subjects," Severus answered. "Something like this has never happened in the history of Hogwarts. Exactly how many of the staff are we talking about?"

Draco wavered before saying, "Two."

"Two!" Phineas snorted as his wife chuckled. "We'll have them out on their arses if they miss one class," he said viciously.

Hermione sighed, starting to think this was all a bad idea. She wanted to help Amanda, but instead it looked like she might end up causing two of her colleagues and friends their jobs. What she despised most, however, was the grin on Malfoy's face. The bastard seemed to be enjoying this.

"I'm sorry," Draco said. "I'm afraid I inadvertently misled you. When I said two, I meant that only two of the staff hadn't agreed to the work stoppage."

The expression on Phineas' face suddenly turned to one of concern. "You mean that only

you...." He hesitated as he thought. "Only you and Filch? You two are the only ones to show loyalty to the board over her." Buster gave Hermione a look of disgust.

"Actually, Argus, was a great help to me in obtaining everyone's support. The two teachers that haven't agreed are Potter and Granger. They weren't asked," Draco said with a smirk.

Phineas was livid. "If you think you can coerce this Board, you are quite mistaken young man. If necessary we will run this school ourselves," Buster said. The other members looked at him questioningly.

"Are you going to be teaching, cooking, cleaning, or doing the laundry?" Draco asked. "It seems the Potters are very well liked by the house elves, but you have more pressing problems. At lunch, I informed the students of what was transpiring and had them owl their parents. Is it true that a Governor can be recalled if the parents of over fifty percent of the students so vote?"

Buster was speechless, as was his wife. Hermione just stared at Draco. What had happened to the boy that thrived on calling her a mudblood?

"Professor Malfoy," Amelia Bones said, "before you entered we were about to vote on whether or not to expel Amanda Pierce. Although we normally just vote with a show of hands, I think perhaps under the circumstances it might be an excellent idea to record each member's vote. Severus would you be so kind.

"Also, I'm inclined to agree with Professor Granger when she says that the school should offer a sex education program. After we complete the vote on Miss Pierce, I suggest we discuss and vote on adding such a program to our curriculum."

Both Buster and his wife stared at Amelia, daggers in their eyes. They had a simple choice: either vote in support or face certain recall.

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Hermione ran to catch up with Draco. "Draco," she yelled. He stopped and turned toward her.

"Thank you," she said, kissing him on the cheek.

"Don't go all mushy on me, Granger. It's still me, Ole Draco. I've not suddenly become one of the good guys."

"But what you did in there," she said, looking confused.

"Nothing has changed. At some future meeting, we'll undoubtedly be at each others' throats again," Draco said dismissively. "Some things will never change. I'm a pure blood and you're a muggleborn."

"But..."

"I was concerned that you might have a fit and end up quitting," Draco admitted. "You might

be an insufferable, know-it-all, but you're too damn good a teacher to lose."

Hermione simply smiled. "Protest all you want, but I think there still might be hope for you."

* * * * *

The passage of time, although always constant, does seem to vary depending on a person's perspective. The day that seems to fly by for the person on holiday at the same time drags for the person incarcerated.

Although not on holiday or imprisoned, Hermione and Emily had quite the same varying opinions on the passage of the next few months. Hermione, who was not at all enjoying being pregnant, thought May would never arrive.

Emily, who dreaded the thought of playing against her sister in the last Quidditch match of the season, couldn't believe how fast the months had flown. Despite their different perspectives, May arrived at the same time for them both.

The early spring Quidditch matches had been as predictable as a poorly scripted Muggle movie. Ravenclaw scored first in their game against Slytherin in March. It was, however, their only score as Slytherin won 200 to 10.

Hufflepuff fared no better when it met Gryffindor in April. It appeared that the Quidditch cup would be decided by the game everyone was anticipating, Slytherin versus Gryffindor, the battle of the sisters, and it was only one week away.

I hate sleeping in a windowless dungeon, Emily said to herself as she stretched and opened her eyes. Every morning looks the same whether it's snowing, raining or the sun is brightly shining. I wonder why no one has ever thought to charm the ceiling in here to resemble the sky like the one in the Great Hall does.

Emily seldom closed the drapes of her four-poster, preferring not to be so restricted. Her best friend Kim, on the other hand, not only closed her drapes tightly, but also charmed them to alarm her if they were touched. Kim didn't trust two of her dorm mates. She had this mental picture of herself sleeping while Denise and Janice gave guided tours pointing out her various body parts. Emily thought she was paranoid.

"Kim, time to get up," Emily shouted. "It looks like everyone else has already gone to breakfast." Emily put on her slippers and headed for the bathroom.

In a few minutes, a half-awake Kim joined her. "I like it when the other girls aren't here," Kim said. "I don't feel nearly as self conscious being nude."

Emily looked disappointedly at Kim, "I was hoping that you were getting used to being naked. It doesn't seem to bother you any more around Caitlin and me."

"You and your family are... well, I feel like I'm almost part of the family. It doesn't seem weird with any of you. The other girls still look a lot. Becky and Marta aren't nasty like Janice and Denise, but they still look."

"Becky and Marta don't mean any harm and the other two are just jealous. Hell, I'm jealous. Your twelve with the body of a fifteen year old," Emily said. She hesitated looking for the right words. "I was hoping that you felt different about being nude because I had something to ask you."

"What?" Kim asked.

"Well... you know we're going on a cruise for ten days in August," Emily started. "Mum and Dad booked two staterooms. One for them and another for Caitlin, Alex, Jamie and me."

"Alex!" Kim said in shock. "Alex is going on a naturist cruise and sleeping in the same room as you girls?"

"No," Emily said, sounding a little bit disappointed. "He really loves Jamie and said he could handle being nude around Caitlin and me, but didn't think he could do it on a cruise around all those strangers."

"I bet Jamie was disappointed," Kim said.

"She was, but she understood," Emily answered. "The whole idea was so that she would have someone her age. I guess Mum and Dad figured Caitlin and I had each other and wanted Jamie to have someone."

"What about Amanda?" Kim asked.

"That was Alex's suggestion," Emily replied. "Amanda wasn't that thrilled about running around naked for ten days either, plus she wants to spend the summer with the baby."

"Jamie has a lot of friends, but none as close as Alex and Amanda," Kim said.

"No, she doesn't. That's why she suggested you."

"Me!" Kim shouted excitedly, and then she hesitated. "But I'd have to be naked for ten days in front of all those people."

"Kim, you're naked now, our dorm-mates see you naked," Emily reminded her. "You're always nude in my parents' quarters. Besides these will all be strangers that you'll never see again, and they'll all be nude."

"You're sure this is okay with Jamie and your parents?" Kim asked excitedly.

"One hundred percent sure. They know how close Caitlin, you and me are. They'd love for you to join us."

Kim looked at Emily, elatedly. "Your dad will be nude. I'll get to see Professor Potter naked."

"Maybe even Professor Weasley," Emily added, with a giggle, "but I wouldn't count on that."

He really has a hang up when it comes to nudity."

"I'm crazy if I say yes and a fool if I say no," Kim said animatedly. "I want to go. I'm sure my Mum will let me, only...."

"Only it might be a good idea to skip the fact that it's a naturist cruise," Emily finished.

"Yeah," Kim said. "What with everything she has gone through recently, I'm not sure if she could cope with that much detail."

"Great, we can tell my parents after breakfast. Let's have a shower and get dressed," Emily suggested.

The girls each grabbed soap and headed for the showers, Kim not realizing it, singing.

"I've never heard you sing before," Emily said, astounded. "You really have an appealing voice. Have you ever thought of being a professional?"

Kim never heard Emily's comment or question; both were drowned out by the sound of running water. The girls had finished their showers, dried off and were about to get dressed when Marta entered the room.

"What's the weather like today?" Emily asked.

"It's beautiful and sunny," Marta said, giving both girls an approving look. "The temperature is supposed to be rather warm. You should be quite comfortable as you are."

"Don't I wish," Emily said in frustration as Kim searched for her favorite shorts and a mini top.

"I know! I'll wear my little sundress," Emily declared, wanting to dress somewhat like Kim. "My birth Mum got it for me three years ago and it's still my favorite."

Kim didn't respond, but simply shook her head in wonderment. She had trouble fitting into clothes just purchased last year. No way could she manage to squeeze into anything three years old. Kim went to her dresser and brushed her hair as Emily search for her dress.

Kim's first look at the dress didn't come until Emily said. "What do you think of it? Isn't it pretty?"

Kim just stared. She couldn't believe her eyes. Yes, the dress was pretty, quite pretty. It was a bright floral pattern that really caught your eye. The color brought out the highlights in Emily hair. It was a two-piece out fit, composed of a short skirt and a loose midriff exposing top. It was beautiful and would look great on an eight year old that it fit.

"I've grown a little, but it still fits," Emily said happily. "Are you ready to go for breakfast?"

"You're not seriously going to wear that?" Kim asked, not able to take her eyes off Emily. "It barely covers what it has to cover and I'm not even sure the skirt does that."

"You're exaggerating," Emily said defensively.

"No I'm not," Kim insisted. "The top just barely covers your breasts. If you reach your hands above your head, they'll doubtlessly pop out."

"Then I'll be sure not to do that," Emily said unconcernedly.

"And as for the skirt," Kim continued, "if it even covers everything that it should, it only does so barely."

Emily gave the skirt a little tug, which accomplished absolutely nothing. "Other than it being a tiny bit small, what do you think of it?" Emily asked.

"It's very pretty," Kim said, accepting defeat. "I can understand why you love it and hate to give it up. You wouldn't just this once consider wearing knickers?"

Emily looked at Kim as if she had said a bad word.

"Okay then, let's go to breakfast, but please be careful," Kim sighed apprehensively.

* * * * *

"I think perhaps I should have listened to you," Emily said in a conceding voice as they seated themselves at the long Slytherin table. "I'll change clothes immediately after breakfast."

"What made you change your mind?" Kim asked.

"My bare bum against the wooden bench. If there isn't enough skirt for me to sit on, it must really be short," Emily admitted. "It's a weird thing about being a nudist. I'm not the least bit bothered if anyone sees me totally naked or even gets a glimpse of my so called private parts, but it does bother me if people think I am purposely dressing to expose those areas."

"Most people probably wouldn't understand, but I believe I do," Kim said supportingly. "You don't dress skimpily in order to be sexy, but rather just because you hate wearing clothes."

"That's it," Emily said, relieved that Kim understood, "but most people can't identify with how naturists feel having to be clothed all the time." Emily looked around the Great Hall. "Fortunately for me, most people either ate early or are skipping breakfast today."

The Great Hall, which on a school day was always crammed with students grabbing a good breakfast before the start of classes, was normally much calmer on weekends due to many students and even staff opting to sleep in. That was either apparently especially true today or everyone had eaten early, because with only fifteen minutes left before the end of breakfast, there were only about fifty students total at the four house tables.

The Slytherin table was especially empty with huge gaps separating those present. Dick Bancroft and his ever present shadow, Dennis Crow were seated at the end closest to the staff table, so naturally Emily and Kim had sat at the extreme other end. The only other Slytherins present were Denise and Janice who were on the other side about two-thirds of the way down the table and Tyler, who was on their side about mid table, sitting alone.

Emily and Kim were enjoying this relative privacy; using the time to talk about the cruise. Emily had just taken a sip of her orange juice when it happened. At first Kim thought the glass had slipped for Emily's hand and broken, but then she saw the blood and realized that Emily had crushed the glass.

Emily seemed oblivious to her injury as she stood up from the table, blood dripping from her bleeding hand. Kim tried talking to her friend, but Emily appeared to be in a trance, not even aware of her surroundings. When Emily spoke; it was with a voice not her own, but deep and raspy and so loud that her words echoed through the Hall.

"THE STARS PROCLAIM THE RETURN OF THE GREATEST DARKLORD

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TWO OF HIS ENEMIES, HEALER AND HEIR,
TWO DROPS OF EACH, NOT ANY MORE,*

*WITH THEIR DEATH BY HIS HAND,
TO HIS BODY HE WILL BE RETURNED,
TO WALK THE EARTH A MORTAL MAN,
BUT WHEN SLYTHERIN AND EVIL ARE JOINED,
NOT EVEN THE COVENANT WILL BRING THE RESULT DOWN.*

*THE DARKEST OF TIMES THEIR JOINING WILL BRING,
SORROW AND PAIN WILL OFT BE THE FAME.
MANY WILL DIE DREADING THE NAME,
SALAZAR SLYTHERIN.*

*THE WORLD WILL HAVE BUT ONE HOPE
AND THAT IS TWO CUBED TO EIGHT
WITH HEALTH AND SIGHT AND SPIRIT BRIGHT,
THE HEART AND SOUL AND MIND WILL ADD THEIR WEIGHT*

*BUT ONLY WHEN THE FLAMING DAUGHTER
AND THE MOONCHILD JOIN THE FRAY
WILL THE WORLD DEFEAT EVIL
AND RETURN SLYTHERIN TO HIS GRAVE"*

When she finished speaking, Emily collapsed to the floor in an epileptic type of seizure. Kim was at a loss as to what to do as her friend violently gyrated on the floor, shaking and tossing about. Since Emily and Kim had been seated on the wall side of the Slytherin table, none of the members of other houses were aware of what had happened to Emily. Most were discussing what she had said, thinking she had perhaps fainted and would be attended to by staff. That was until Denise yelled to her cousin.

"Dick! Hurry, you can't miss this," Denise shouted. "Zacherley is having some sort of fit, she's tossing and turning about on the floor. Her skirt is nearly up to her waist and she doesn't have any knickers on."

You would have thought that she had announced that Honeydukes was giving away free candy. Not only Dick, but also every other student in the Hall, both male and female, ran frantically to witness the sight. But Tyler was nearest and, despite the fact that Emily hated him, he didn't hesitate to run and throw his body on top of hers to obstruct the other students from viewing her.

"Her breasts," Kim shouted in panic to Tyler. He had successfully succeeded in covering Emily's lower extremities with his body and was doing his utmost to maintain that coverage despite her gyrations, but now her breasts were also exposed. Not knowing what else to do, he quickly covered them with his hands.

"Just what type of perversion is going on here?" Professor Malfoy said, looking down scornfully at the couple on the floor.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR - A NEW GENERATION

"I...I...was just trying to cover her, Sir," Tyler said nervously to the Potions Master. "She was having some sort of seizure or something, and I didn't want her being exposed."

"A likely story. From here it looks more like you were taking advantage of an opportunity to cop yourself a feel, or is this something you and Miss Zacherley do on a regular basis?" Malfoy asked sarcastically.

"No Sir," Tyler said defensively. "We aren't seeing each other any more and even if we were, I'd never take advantage of her."

As Tyler was trying to defend himself to his Professor, Emily's seizure had come to a close, and unfortunately for Tyler, she was now regaining her bearings.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, you little creep?" Emily yelled as she simultaneously jostled Tyler off her while she adjusted her clothes and jumped to her feet.

"Yes, yes indeed," Draco said. "I think you and I should pay the Headmaster a visit Mr. Bancroft. Miss Thatcher will you please accompany Miss Zacherley to the infirmary and explain to Madam Pomfrey exactly what transpired." Without further comment, Professor Malfoy grabbed Tyler by the shoulder and led him out of the Great Hall.

They had barely departed the room when Dick Bancroft rounded on Emily. "You fucking little tart!" Dick screamed. "You dress like a tramp, and who gets in trouble - my little brother? If he gets expelled, consider yourself as good as dead!"

Emily just stared dumbfounded at Dick. She had no idea what had just happened. The last thing she remembered was picking up her glass to take a drink. How had she gotten on the floor with Tyler on top of her, and why was her hand bleeding? Emily looked helplessly at Kim for some sort of explanation and assurance that she wasn't going crazy.

"Let's get out of here," Kim whispered. "We have to let Madam Pomfrey look at your hand

first, but then we have to talk to your parents." Kim put her arm around Emily and guided her from the room.

* * * * *

"What happened?" Hermione queried anxiously as Harry and she rushed into the hospital wing with Jamie and Caitlin right on their heels.

"I'm not quite sure," Poppy answered. "She has a bump on her head and a few minor cuts, but other than that she seems fine physically. Emily doesn't remember what happened, but Miss Thatcher says she went into some sort of trance followed by a seizure."

Jamie's face turned insipid. "Did she talk when she was in the trance?" she asked.

"Yes, but Miss Thatcher said it was in a deep raspy voice, sounding nothing at all like Emily," Pomfrey said.

"She's a seer!" Jamie said, sounding both nervous and confused. "That's the way Dad was when he gave a foretelling. But only males in his lineage ever had the gift. Why Emily?"

"Perhaps because there are no additional males to insure the legacy continues," Hermione theorized. "May we see her Poppy?"

"Oh yes, most certainly. She is ready to leave whenever you are." Poppy pointed to a bed near the window with the drapes drawn shut around it. "Miss Thatcher is with her now," she said before scurrying off to her office.

"How are you feeling Slytherin?" Harry said as he opened the drapes to find the two girls seated on the side of the bed, absorbed in conversation.

"I'm..." Emily started to say that she was fine, but upon seeing Jamie, she instead hesitantly said. "I'm a seer."

"So we've heard," Harry said leaning over to give her a kiss.

After everyone was contented that Emily was indeed satisfactory, Hermione asked. "Exactly what happened at breakfast?"

"She'll have to tell you," Emily said, indicating Kim. "My body was there, but my mind evidently took a short holiday. I remember taking a sip of my orange juice and then the next thing I knew, I was laying on the floor with Tyler on top of me."

Harry expression abruptly turned to one of anger. "We heard what he did to you," he said comfortingly. "Bancroft has been suspended pending an inquiry."

"No, they can't" shouted Kim. "He was only trying to help."

"Trying to help?" Hermione said incredulously. "How exactly does lying on top of my daughter and cupping her bare breasts qualify as helping?"

"I think he actually was trying to help," Emily said guiltily as she got to her feet. "I didn't listen to Kim's warning this morning and dressed rather too revealingly."

"I'd say revealing was an understatement, young lady," Harry said, sounding quite the upset father. "I don't see how you could possibly move about in that outfit without exposing yourself."

Hermione shook her head in dismay. "Emily, I know you're a nudist. We all are, but even though we'd prefer to be naked, we live in a textile world. You can not go about the school dressed like that."

"I know," Emily said sounding sincerely repentant. "By the time we had reached the Great Hall, I realized I should have paid attention to Kim. I had intentions of changing immediately after breakfast, but ... I sort of lost control of the situation."

"Kim, can you tell us from your view point exactly what came to pass," Hermione requested.

"Well," Kim began apprehensively, "we were talking about the cruise. By the way, thank you very much for inviting me."

Harry and Hermione both smiled and nodded their heads. At the moment, the cruise was a low priority.

"Emily had just taken a sip of her juice," Kim continued. "I initially thought the glass had slipped and broken, but then I noticed her hand was bleeding. She must have squeezed the glass so hard that it crushed."

Caitlin and Jamie both flinched at the thought.

"I asked her if she was okay, but she didn't answer me. Emily had the strangest look on her face," Kim explained. "She seemed to be staring off at something in the distance, yet not really looking at anything."

Jamie nodded her head, indicating that was the way her father acted when giving a divination.

"Then she got to her feet and spoke, but it wasn't Emily's voice. It sounded like some man with a deep raspy voice had took over her body," Kim explained. "And loud, the voice was so loud that everyone in the hall dropped what they were doing and looked in our direction."

"Do you remember what she said?" Caitlin asked.

"Not all of it," Kim admitted. "It was about Lord Slytherin returning and the blood of innocents. I think ..."

But Kim didn't have to go any further. Something she had said seemed to have triggered a response in Emily. She got to her feet and in the same deep raspy voice as before proclaimed:

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TWO OF HIS ENEMIES, HEALER AND HEIR,
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CAN THE WORLD DEFEAT EVIL
AND RETURN SLYTHERIN TO HIS GRAVE"

When Emily finished, she again, like in the Great Hall, fell to the floor and went into a spasm.

Madam Pomfrey had by now joined them, having rushed out of her office as Emily had once more bellowed out the prophecy.

"It's best not to touch her," Jamie warned as Emily gyrated on the floor. "It only lasts a few minutes. Our goal with my father was to make sure he did harm himself."

"That's why Tyler jumped on her," Kim said, indicating Emily's skirt, which had once again ridden to her waist. "And then I yelled 'her breasts' when they too became exposed. He was only trying to cover her, not assault her."

Harry and Hermione exchanged meaningful glances. Their first priority once Emily regained control would be to contact the Headmaster in regards to young Bancroft. Then they would need to have a long discussion. If this was indeed a genuine prophecy, it was one that significantly affected their family.

* * * * *

"So do you think it was the real thing?" Ron asked as he and Sam joined Harry and Hermione for afternoon tea a few hours later. "After a few years of Trelawney, I can't say that I have much faith in divination."

"This was real," Harry said assuredly, "Just like when Trelawney predicted the return of Voldemort at the end of our third year."

"It was definitely authentic," Hermione confirmed from the kitchen, where Sam and her were gathering some snacks. "I think palm reading, crystal balls, tealeaves and all that are total rubbish, but this seemed incredibly real."

Ron nodded his head, but avoided looking in the direction of the kitchen. Sam and Hermione were doing their normal nude bonding thing that they now did whenever together. Ron was finding it extremely difficult to not stare at the eight plus months pregnant Hermione.

"Ron, did you notice how firm and perky Hermione's breasts are even though she's pregnant and they've gotten so large? It's because Caitlin gives her Hyperempathic massages three times a week. She doesn't have one single stretch mark either."

"I didn't notice," Ron mistakenly lied as his face turned red, once more reminding his old friends of the violent shade of red his hair.

"Well then come and take a look at her," Sam insisted. "I'm going to asked Caitlin if she will give me treatments when we get pregnant."

Ron looked at Harry helplessly.

"Ron, it's Hermione, one of your best friends. She isn't going to slap you if you look at her naked and neither will I," Harry said. "Nudists accept that occasionally people will stare."

Ron, extremely uncertain, got to his feet and went to join Sam and Hermione.

"Look at her breasts," Sam urged as both Hermione and Ron blushed. "Aren't they beautiful? And her stomach and legs, not a single stretch mark. She'll look like a teenager again a month after she gives birth."

Ron took a quick glance, nodded his head in agreement and hurried back to his seat. An eight-month pregnant woman had just nearly caused him to have an erection. How would he ever survive a cruise where all the women were nude?

As the Sam and Hermione took their seats at the table, Ron wanted to talk about anything but the cruise and nudism.

"Have you figured out any of the prophecy yet?" Ron inquired.

"We think so," Harry replied. "At least we are confident we have it recorded properly. I hardly remembered any of it, but between the brain trust of Hermione, Kim, Jamie and Caitlin, they easily pieced it together."

Harry handed Ron a parchment on which the prophecy was written. Ron studied the document for a few minutes and than stared sorrowfully at Harry. "They just won't leave you alone will they? Why can't you and Hermione live a normal quiet life? You've both done more than your share."

Sam looked questioningly at Ron; consequently he passed the Prophecy to her. "Read the first

part," he said.

From the blood of innocents four,
The great lord Slytherin's spirit shall pour.
Two of his own, seer and heir,
Two of his enemies, healer and heir,
Two drops of each, not any more,

With their death by his hand,
To his body he will be returned,
To walk the earth a mortal man,

Sam read the first two sections and then froze, staring at Ron and Harry with a terrified look on her face.

"Yeah!" Ron said reading Sam's distraught expression. "Emily is the Seer, Caitlin the Healer and the child Hermione is carrying will be the new heir of Gryffindor." Ron reached out and grasped both Harry and Hermione's hands in support. Sam remained petrified.

"What I don't understand is the part about Slytherin's heir," Ron continued. "I thought He-Who-Must-Not-Be Named was the last of his family tree. He's dead and gone and he was certainly no innocent."

"Ron, for heaven's sake, call him Voldemort," Hermione declared. "You were instrumental in his defeat."

"Timmy," Sam whispered, still not moving. "He's the heir."

"No he's not," Harry said reassuringly. "All that stuff about Draco being related to Slytherin was lies, forged documents just to get the Malfoy family in tight with Voldemort. Malfoy isn't related to Voldemort or Slytherin."

"You right!" Sam said, looking tentatively at Ron; dreading his possible reaction to what she was about to reveal. "Draco isn't a descendant of Salazar Slytherin, but I am."

For a few moments, no one spoke; then Hermione said, "The documents in court that the judge couldn't reveal, but proved you a pure-blood?"

Samantha nodded her head. "As far as official ministry records are concerned, Tom Riddle was the last living descendent of Salazar Slytherin. All records of the very existence of his mother's younger sister have been erased.

"You see, my grandmother had dishonored her family by becoming pregnant out of wedlock at the age of thirteen to a muggle. Such was the disgrace that she was given passage and adequate funds by her father and sent off to America, never to be contacted again.

"My grandmother was a powerful witch and quickly gained renown and respect in the United States. Her lineage became a highly guarded family secret. My grandmother was a wonderful woman and so were my parents. The US Ministry of Magic is aware of the lineage and has endeavored, for our safety, to keep secret our heredity."

Sam looked pleadingly at Ron, who seemed transfixed. "I love you Ronnie. I know I should have told you before, but I was afraid of losing you. Please don't leave me," she begged.

Ron got up and went over to Sam's chair, leaned over and kissed her. Then as he hugged her tightly, he said, "I could never leave you. You're what makes my life worth living."

* * * * *

"Emily, may I please talk to you," Tyler said rushing up to her and Kim as they were headed toward their dormitory.

Emily was about to ignore him, but reconsidered, indicating for Kim to go ahead without her.

"What do you want?" she asked distastefully.

"I wanted to thank you for having your parents speak to the Headmaster about me," Tyler said, genuinely. "He was on the verge of expelling me."

"Then it is them you should be thanking and Kim, she's the one that explained what actually happened," Emily suggested sharply. "If it wasn't for Kim, I'd have also thought that you were taking advantage of the situation."

Tyler looked at Emily, an expression of intense hurt on his face. "Do you hate me that much? You must know that I'd never do anything like do that to you."

"After New Year's Eve, I have no idea what you would and wouldn't do. I thought you were special and that we had something special!" she blasted. "Shows how good a judge of character I am."

"Emily, I'm sorry," Tyler pleaded. "I feel awful about what I did. I had no idea what my brother intended to do with those pictures. Please forgive me, for being such a coward and not standing up to him."

"That I can do," Emily agreed, "but I can't forgive you for not trusting me."

"Not trusting you?" Tyler questioned, a look of confusion on his face.

"Yes, not trusting me," Emily emphasized. "Tyler, I'm a nudist, almost certainly some would say an extremist nudist. I push the boundaries. It was only because of repercussions to others that I was concerned about those pictures. Plus I was irked that your brother had gotten the best of me. I would not have cared if those pictures had been published."

"And though I appreciate your concern today, the seizure itself was more of an embarrassment to me than being exposed would have been. Tyler, I hate clothes. Nothing would make me happier than being able to be nude the balance of my life. Somehow, I'd even brave the cold and snow. I think it is totally ridiculous that people make such a huge deal over seeing certain body parts."

"What hurt me is that you didn't trust me! I thought we had a special relationship, but you

didn't even have enough faith in me to share your problem."

"But I couldn't tell you," Tyler argued. "If I didn't get those pictures, Dick had threatened to tell my parents that I was seeing you. You can't imagine what their reaction would have been. The holidays would have been dreadful, I would have had no Christmas, but worst of all, I would have been forbidden to take you to the Yule Ball or even talk to you ever again."

"What do you think I would have done if you had trusted me and told me the truth?" Emily asked.

Tyler didn't answer, but rather shrugged his shoulders.

"I would have posed for the pictures, without hesitation," Emily answered, fervently.

Tyler nodded his head, a glum look on his face. "Yeah! You would have," he agreed. "Emily, I'm sorry. Please forgive me and say we can get back together."

"Tyler, I'll stop treating you badly, but as far as us being a couple.... I don't see that ever happening again; at least not until you learn to trust."

She turned away, "I have to go, Kim's waiting."

Tyler watched as Emily disappeared down the passageway leading to the girls' dorms. Why did he have to lose her in order to realize how special she was and how much he cared for her? It would take a miracle to get her back, but he made a promise to himself to try.

* * * * *

Saturday, May 28, 2005

"Ron if you have a moment before you need to start preparations for the match, I'd like to have a word with you."

"Certainly Headmaster, would your office in about fifteen minutes be convenient?" Ron asked.

Severus didn't respond, but instead gave a nod of approval before departing the Great Hall.

"Wonder what he wants to see me about," Ron inquired fretfully to no one special. Harry shrugged his shoulders, but Hermione concentrated on her plate, apparently trying to avoid eye contact.

Ron quickly guzzled down his remaining food before saying, "I guess I best be off. No logic in worrying about what he wants when I can go find out first hand."

Hermione gulped. "Good luck Ron," she said as he departed.

Ron was barely through the door when Harry turned to Hermione. "Okay, out with it," he said. "What's going on?"

"Oh Harry! Ron is going to be so upset."

* * * * *

"Ron, please have a seat," Severus said as he indicated an empty chair. "I'll not beat about the bush, but rather get straight down to business."

Ron twiddled his fingers nervously. He didn't like the somber tone of Snape's voice.

"Ron, wizards and Muggles are very different and at the same time very similar. As an example, Hogwarts is run on a budget, just like a private Muggle school. I might add, a very tight budget. Sometimes there just isn't enough money in the budget for everything we desire to do."

Ron looked at Severus uneasily. "Does that mean I'm being sacked at the end of the semester due to budget cuts?" he asked pessimistically.

"Certainly not," Severus laughed. "I apologize if I made our situation sound that calamitous. There are no plans to cut any existing staff or activity, but the Board of Governors has voted to make certain additions to our curriculum.

"These additions create a dilemma because I do not have the funds to hire additional staff. You and Ginervra have the lightest class loads, and therefore, I'm afraid I must ask the two of you to shoulder this additional burden. Only first through forth years will be taking the subject and since it will only meet once a week that only entails eight additional classes for you each. Ginny has agreed to teach the first and second years, that leaves you the third and forth."

"That will be no trouble at all," Ron said, a feeling of great relief spreading over his body. Sam and he had plans to move into the castle in the fall. He didn't want to even think about how disappointed Timmy and she would have been if he were discharged.

"Wonderful," Severus said. "You and Ginny should get together as soon as possible and select course books. We like to advise Flourish & Blotts in advance of sending book lists to the students, so that they have sufficient time to stock adequate textbooks."

"Not a problem," Ron said, wiping the sweat from his brow and finally smiling. "I'll get together with Ginny this week. I want to get my hands on the textbook as soon a possible so that I can begin preparing. By the way, what is the new subject Ginny and I are teaching?"

"Oh! I'm sorry," Severus said. "Did I neglect to mention? 'Anatomy of the Sexes', it's a sex education course."

Ron sat ridged in his chair, powerless to move or speak. He couldn't believe that he'd just eagerly agreed to teach sex education to thirteen and fourteen year old witches and wizards.

* * * * *

"Aren't you going to eat anything?" Kim asked, as Emily played with her food.

"I'm not very hungry," Emily responded.

"You're not ill are you?" Kim asked concernedly. "You usually give the boys a challenge when it comes to scoffing down food."

"No, just a little down in the dumps," Emily answered. "I always imagined coming to Hogwarts and playing Quidditch. But in my dreams Jamie and I were on the same team. I always pictured us celebrating a win together. I never envisioned myself having to play against her."

"What colors will Caitlin and your parents be wearing today?" Kim asked.

"That makes matters even worse," Emily muttered. "Caitlin is in Gryffindor and Mum is head of house so, of course, they'll be cheering for Gryffindor and Dad will be sitting with them. I feel relatively on my own."

Kim grasped Emily's hand and gave it a squeeze. "I'll be cheering for you," Kim assured her, "And so will all of Slytherin House and many others. It's not like it used to be; not everyone hates Slytherin."

"I guess your right," Emily said, although her spirits were still low.

"Emily, why don't you give Tyler another chance?" Kim asked. "He worships the ground you walk on."

Emily snuck a glance in Tyler's direction. He was, as usual, sitting alone, quietly eating his breakfast. "I would, but he has to learn to trust first."

"What do you want him to do?" Kim questioned.

"I'm not even sure I know," Emily answered, glancing once again in his direction.

"I don't believe this," Hermione said disgustedly slamming her copy of the Daily Prophet on the table.

"What? What happened?" Harry asked as he reached for the paper.

"They escaped," she exclaimed. "Somehow Crabbe and Goyle got out of prison. According to this article, Ministry Wrong is furious; says heads will roll."

"I imagine she would be angry," Harry acknowledged. "Those two were the first supporters of the Great One ever apprehended. Now Emma's lost the opportunity to get any information out of them."

"Everything seems to go wrong for that poor woman," Hermione sighed.

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"Alex, why such a depressed look?" Jamie asked as she took the seat next to him and began filling her plate.

"I was just reviewing the tournament statistics," he said gloomily. "We might be tied with Slytherin in games won, but they're leading the tournament by two hundred-seventy points."

"How many?" asked Jamie in amazement. "That means that for us to win the Cup I have to catch the snitch, but can't do it until we're over one hundred twenty points in the lead."

She looked at Alex overwhelmed. "Slytherin's Chasers are superb. The way they work as a team, we'll never get that far in the lead." Then she added gloomily, "And my sister isn't going to take forever to find the Snitch."

Alex looked at Jamie understandingly. "You'll have to play the game on your gut instincts," he said. "If we have a lead and there seems to be any hope of us winning, then you have to keep Emily away from that Snitch even if it means us getting a little rough with her."

Jamie knew what Alex meant and it was only good Quidditch, but she didn't like the idea of playing a rough game against her little sister.

"If things don't go our way, try to grab the Snitch and end the game," he suggested.

"What?" she gasped; not believing Alex would suggest this. "But we'd lose the cup."

"We might lose the cup, but we'd keep our pride."

* * * * *

"Let's go," Captain Doris Burke said, as she hurried the team off to the field before the other students had finished their breakfast.

"Good luck," Tyler said warily as Emily passed him.

She didn't answer, but rather just nodded her head and gave him a forced smile.

As they approached the pitch, Emily couldn't believe how still and quiet the grounds were. No breath of wind troubled the treetops in the Forbidden Forest. Except for the occasional bird, their footsteps were the only sound. Conditions for the match looked as though they would be perfect. Then, in the distance, the front doors of the castle opened and the rest of the school began spilling onto the lawn.

Burke urged them toward the locker rooms and as they changed into their green robes she addressed them, "The Quidditch Cup is all but ours. Gryffindor can't win it; we can only lose it. We currently lead this year's tournament by two hundred seventy points. Depending on the final score, Gryffindor could actually win this game and we would still win the Cup.

"That in my eyes would be an empty victory. A true champion beats all competition. Not

defeating Gryffindor would take the luster off winning the Cup. We have the best team. We know it; let's go out there now and show the rest of the school!"

Everyone applauded as they took to their feet and walked out onto the field where they were met with cheers from the Slytherin supporters.

"And here are the Slytherins!" yelled Ravenclaw commentator, Jason Turner

Behind the Slytherin goal posts, two hundred people wearing green and waving flags embossed with the silver serpent of Slytherin cheered wildly. Emily was surprised and pleased to see the occasional Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw also wearing green and cheering. Professor Malfoy, sat in the front row, accompanied by Professor Weasley, both wearing Slytherin colors.

As Turner announced their names, Emily stared in the direction of the Gryffindor stands where everyone sat quietly except for three people who cheered wildly when the name Emily Zacherley was announced. She broke into a wide grin when she saw Harry giving her two enthusiastic thumbs up.

"And here comes the Gryffindor team. This is the final game for the major part of this team. Only Zacherley and Ward will be returning next year," Turner said.

"Captains, shake hands!" said Professor Weasley.

Doris Burke and Kevin Stern approached each other and actually exchanged smiles and a friendly handshake. Jamie and Emily also exchanged smiles and gave each other thumbs up.

"Mount your brooms!" said Professor Weasley. "Three...two...one..."

The sound of Ron's whistle was lost in the roar from the crowd as fifteen brooms rose into the air. Jamie glanced around and saw that Emily had already started searching the sky for the Snitch. She quickly sped off in the opposite direction.

"And Burke scores again," Jason Turner shouted excitedly. "That makes the score, Slytherin: 150, Gryffindor 80."

Jamie shook her head in frustration. The Slytherin Chasers were playing a superb game. Their movements were so well coordinated that they appeared to be reading one another's minds. If Slytherin kept scoring two goals for every one Gryffindor achieved; it soon wouldn't matter which Seeker captured the Snitch.

Then Jamie saw it, but the Snitch was positioned just beyond Emily. If she made any movement in Emily's direction, her sister would surely react by turning and capturing the Snitch. Instead Jamie went into a dive, plunging toward the center of the field.

Emily reacted by launching herself toward her sister at break neck speed. The two girls were blurs, one green and one red, but both descending rapidly toward the ground and each other.

"They're going to crash!" screamed Caitlin, as she buried her head in her mother's shoulder.

But at the very last second, both girls pulled out of the dive and spiraled off to their respective right. Hermione sighed in relief as Emily hoisted her fist and shook it at her sister; now realizing that Jamie had been feinting. She wasn't angry with Jamie, but rather at herself for having fallen for the Wronski Defensive Feint. She also comprehended that Jamie had more than likely used the diversion to lure her away from the Snitch. Emily wanted to kick herself, but found this quite impossible while straddling a broom.

Both girls were now once again circling high above the pitch, their eyes ever searching for the elusive Snitch. After fifteen more swift and furious minutes Slytherin had extended their lead.

"Slytherin 210, Gryffindor 100," shouted Jason Turner.

Jamie searched the sky desperately, Alex's earlier advice echoing in her head. Gryffindor could not win the Cup; they could, however, still win this match, but only if she found the Snitch; and found it quickly.

But it was too late, Emily had suddenly gone into a dive, and Jamie was sure that this was the real thing.

"She's seen the Snitch!" Turner barked.

Jamie laid herself out as flat as possible and urged her broom forward. She'd never make it; Emily was within reach of the Snitch. But the Snitch didn't want to be caught. It kept zigging and zagging, just barely keeping out of Emily's grip. But it did remain out of her grasp long enough for Jamie to draw level with Emily.

Then Emily made a critical mistake. She allowed her attention to stray momentarily and in that brief second, Jamie caught the Snitch.

"Jamie Zacherley catches the Snitch," Jason Turner shouted. "Gryffindor wins the match, but Slytherin wins the Quidditch Cup."

Jamie turned to where she expected to find Emily, but her sister was flying in the direction of the Gryffindor stands, where rather than the normal celebration, there seemed to be confusion and panic taking place. Someone was being levitated onto a stretcher. Jamie wasn't sure, but it looked like... It was Hermione!

* * * * *

"Harry, I'm fine," Hermione scolded. "There was no reason for you to conjure a stretcher, I could have walked."

"Don't you pay her any mind, Harry," Madam Pomfrey said. "You did the correct thing. A woman about to give birth should not be navigating the stairway of a Quidditch viewing tower on her own."

Hermione shook her head in annoyance. "Because I'm about to give birth does not make..."

She was interrupted by a cry of pain coming from a bed surrounded by drapes in the far side of the room.

Madam Pomfrey looked intently in the direction of the bed. "Foolish girl," she said dejectedly. "Refuses to let me give her anything for the pain. Says that she deserves to suffer. It's her punishment for getting pregnant."

"Amanda! Is that Amanda?" Jamie inquired excitedly. "Is she going to deliver tonight, also?"

"Yes," Madam Pomfrey answered. "It seems I'm about to have a rather busy evening."

Jamie, Hermione, Caitlin and Emily all hurried over to Amanda's bed, leaving a confused Harry standing alone, not sure whether he should be invading the privacy of the cloaked bed.

Amanda's face broke into a smile when the drapes opened and she saw her best friend and her family. At that moment Hermione had a contraction and grabbed onto Jamie for support.

"Are you delivering tonight also?" Amanda asked hopefully.

"It would seem so," Hermione said taking a deep breath and regaining her equanimity.

Hermione took the frightened girl's hand in her own. "Would you like it if I had Madam Pomfrey slide our two beds together? Then we could give each other support."

"Is that possible?" Amanda asked hopefully.

Madam Pomfrey stared at Hermione questioningly. "It would be possible," she said waveringly, "but I would advise against it. If we did that, neither of you would be afforded any privacy."

Amanda looked from Jamie to Caitlin, then to Emily and finally Hermione. "I don't want to be alone," she all but begged, "but I'll understand if you want to reconsider."

Hermione only had to look at Amanda's imploring expression to realize she could only give one answer. "Where should I put the beds?" she asked Madam Pomfrey as she took out her wand.

Pomfrey looked incredulously at Hermione as she pointed toward the middle of the room. With a mere flick of her wrist, Hermione moved Amanda's bed to the center of the room where it was joined by an empty sheeted bed.

"Now that you've gotten that out of the way," Pomfrey said skeptically, "suppose you slip out of your clothes and put this on so that I can check how far along you are in regards to dilation." She handed Hermione a hospital gown.

"Ugh! You're not actually going to wear that hideous thing, are you?" Emily said, sounding utterly grossed out.

Hermione looked at the revoltingly gown, rubbed her head and said, "No, I'm not." She handed the gown back to Madam Pomfrey, who took it with a befuddled look on her face.

Hermione squeezed Harry's hand and gave him a brief light kiss on the lips. "I imagine this erases any existing doubts about whether I'm a true nudist or not," she said as she disrobed

and climbed into the bed.

"You're beautiful," Harry said, his eyes caressing his pregnant wife's naked form.

"I bet you say that to all the beached whales," Hermione said as she reached for Harry's hand. "Harry, I understand that pregnant women sometimes call their husbands rather nasty names during delivery. If I do, please forgive me and be assured that I don't mean it. I love you very much and wanted to have this baby as much as you."

Emily looked from Hermione to Harry and then leaned into Harry. "Dad, when you have a child of your own, will you still love Caitlin and me?"

Harry lifted Emily to him, and held her with one arm then while he moved toward Caitlin and put his other arm around her. "If Hermione and I have a hundred children, we'll never stop loving you girls." He looked at Jamie. "You girls mean the world to us. We didn't physically give birth to you, but you are our daughters."

Emily looked concernedly toward Jamie and then at Harry. "Could you make it official? I mean... I know you're not my real parents. I'll never forget them or stop loving them, but I love you and Mum and Caitlin, too." She looked at Jamie, tears in her eyes. "I love you too Jamie, but I don't want them being my guardians anymore; the term sounds cold and unloving. I want to be a real part of the family. I want them to be my Mum and Dad and Caitlin my sister and I want the baby to be my little brother or sister."

Emily's eyes watered and then tears streamed down her face. "I know it's asking a lot, but would you adopt me?" She asked.

Harry squeezed her tightly. "Slytherin, I was hoping that someday you'd ask us that." He kissed her cheek. "What do you think, Hermione? Should we make this little trouble-maker an official part of our family?"

Hermione couldn't answer, she was crying too hard. She reached toward Emily, and Harry plopped the young girl on the bed next to Hermione. They embraced and kissed each other on the cheek. Emily looked up at Jamie. "Are you angry?" she asked.

"Angry?" Jamie repeated. "Jealous maybe, but certainly not angry. I've been praying that you would come to this decision."

Amanda, wincing in pain, brought them all back to the reality of why they were in the hospital wing.

Caitlin quickly rushed to Amanda's side and placed a hand on her abdomen. Immediately, her eyes watered as she shared the pain of the contraction, thereby lessening the hurt for Amanda.

"Hermione, is everyone staying for the birth?" Madam Pomfrey asked.

Hermione nodded, "We talked about it and the girls all want to be a part of the delivery if you'll allow them to hang about."

"That decision rests completely in your hands, however," she looked at the somewhat grimy condition of Jamie and Emily's Quidditch robes, "they'll both need to return to their dorms

and change first."

Jamie and Emily exchanged quick looks, neither wanting to leave for fear of missing something.

"Couldn't we just take our Quidditch robes off and stay," Jamie asked hopefully.

"Certainly," Madam Pomfrey replied. "I didn't realize you had other clothes on under your team uniforms.

"We don't," Emily said timidly. "Is that all right?"

Pomfrey gazed at Emily and Jamie. "You two are unbelievable," she said in disbelief. "Actually that would be acceptable. A sanitizing charm is in reality more affective on bare skin than clothing."

"Dad, could I also?" Caitlin said with anticipation, as Jamie and Emily began to remove their clothes.

"Go ahead," he said with a smile on his face. "Hermione, where did we find these three?"

But Hermione wasn't paying attention; she was concentrating on taking quick breaths until her contraction passed.

The girls had only just finished disrobing, when Tony and Alex rushed into the infirmary unannounced. Tony took one look at Jamie and stopped in his tracks, quickly turning his head away.

"I'm sorry," he said, totally flustered. "When I returned to Slytherin House, I was told Amanda was here."

"Get a grip man," Alex said, placing a hand on Tony's shoulder. "Jamie's a naturist. It doesn't faze her or the other girls if you see them nude. It's their preferred way to be."

"What about you?" Tony asked nervously. "Don't you mind if other's see her naked."

"At one time it bothered me quite a bit," Alex said honestly, "but Jamie is an individual who has the right to live her life as she deems. I love her; I don't own her. Besides," Alex winked at Jamie, "others may get to see how truly magnificent she is, but I'm the one that gets to hold and kiss her."

"Is it okay if we come in?" Tony asked.

Madam Pomfrey faltered, looking to Hermione for guidance.

Hermione didn't mind Alex's presence, but she was hesitant about being exposed in front of Tony. Emily and Caitlin seemed to have sensed her uncertainty and simultaneously reached for a sheet from a nearby bed and covered their mother.

Hermione gave her daughters an appreciative smile as she advised Madam Pomfrey to admit the boys if Amanda had no misgivings about it. Amanda had reservations, loads of them, but

she still nodded her approval.

It wasn't like Alex and Tony hadn't both seen her naked before, but this, for some reason, seemed entirely different. Alex had seen Amanda bare last Christmas at Jamie's house, but everybody else there had also been nude. Tony, obviously saw her nude when they had sex and had seen her partially exposed at other times, but he was always rather occupied doing nice things to really study her body.

Today, they'd have nothing to do but look at her and study the area between her legs that had already been prepared for delivery by Madam Pomfrey. As discomfoting as this was, she wanted them both with her. Tony was the baby's father, and although she wasn't sure of his current feelings toward her; she still loved him. And Alex.... Well, Alex was a special friend.

Pomfrey had been checking on her and had momentarily left her bedside leaving the cover pulled up to her waist and her exposed. Part of Amanda wanted to quickly cover her; the other part felt that would be foolish and was only postponing the inevitable. So she just lay there, looking nervously at the ceiling as the boys approached her bed.

Alex stopped briefly to kiss Jamie and then the three together approached Amanda's bed. Tony went to the side of the bed in order to take Amanda's hand and kiss her cheek, while Jamie and Alex remained standing at the foot end of the bed.

Alex could have pretended not to look, but instead grinned. "I like what you've done with you hair, Amanda. But then I've always liked the smooth look," he said as he mischievously patted Jamie's bikini area.

"Behave yourself, Alex," Jamie said half-heartedly, a blush on her face. "We're not alone."

Instead of being discomfoted by Alex's comment, Amanda was instead giggling. "Alex, you've always had a knack of putting me at ease." Suddenly the smile and the giggle were replaced with a shrill scream as Amanda endured another contraction, her worst yet. Caitlin again rushed to absorb a part of the pain, but this time her face turned red and tears filled her eyes."

"Is it that bad?" Jamie asked, putting her arm around Caitlin and looking helplessly at Amanda.

"It's fucking hell!" Amanda screamed, answering Jamie's question. "So help me Tony, if you ever try to touch me again, I'll cut it off! Get away from me, you bastard!"

Tony backed away in shock. Amanda had just been laughing; she had returned his kiss; now she was cursing him and telling him to leave. "I'm sorry Amanda," he said turning to leave.

"Don't go, Tony! Please don't go!" begged Amanda. "I need you, please hold me."

Tony eyes glanced to Alex for guidance, but Alex simply shrugged his shoulders and looked questioningly at a bewildered Jamie.

"She doesn't mean half of what she says," Madam Pomfrey said, as she applied a cooling charm to Amanda's forehead. "The pain.... Well, she's enduring unbelievable pain to bring your child into the world. It's enough to bring out the bitch in even the meekest witch."

Tony looked jealously at Professor Potter, who seemed not to be suffering any wrath at the hands of his wife. Professor Granger seemed in fact quite calm, simply breathing harder than normal and whimpering occasionally.

"Who screamed," Kim asked timidly, poking her head in the door.

"It was Amanda," Emily yelled. "Come on in! The babies should be popping out any time now." Emily turned to her Mum. "It's okay if Kim watches, isn't it? She's like a sister to Caitlin and me."

Hermione nodded her head, but her face was twisted and red as if she were in tremendous pain.

"Maybe we should just move the beds down to the Great Hall," Madam Pomfrey said sarcastically.

Harry was about to comment, but was interrupted by the oak door of the hospital wing flying open, followed by Samantha rushing into the room. "Ron and I were two corridors away when we heard a scream. Is everything okay?"

"That was Amanda," Hermione gasped. "I'm glad you're here. Where's Ron?"

Sam turned and looked toward the door, shaking her head in frustration. "Ron, come on in," Sam urged. "Hermione wants you at hand."

"But... Is she decent?" a voice asked from the other side of the door, apprehension evident in every word.

Sam's eye went from Amanda, who was exposed from the waist down to Caitlin, Emily and Jamie, who were totally nude, and finally came to rest on Hermione, who was completely covered with a sheet. "Hermione's covered," Sam replied. "Now get in here, you know she wants us both here for the birth."

The door swung open, but before Ron had taken three steps, his eyes fell on Jamie and he stopped abruptly. "You said that she was covered."

"And so she is," Sam said indicating Hermione. "Ron, please stop acting ridiculous. The girls are all at ease with you seeing them nude. Nobody expects you to undress, so please get a grip and come over to the bed."

"We don't have to get undressed?" Kim asked. "What a relief! I thought perhaps disrobing was required for sanitary reasons."

Madam Pomfrey, after giving Caitlin some instructions, returned to Hermione's bedside. "May I have a few words with Hermione in private," she asked.

Everyone hesitated, pending Harry's lead, but once Hermione motioned for them to leave, they all moved to the far side of the room.

"Now then, young lady," Poppy said with authority, "what exactly are you trying to prove?"

You're dilated just as far as Amanda. I'm sure your contractions hurt just as badly as hers. Why are you keeping it bottled up inside? You must stop holding back."

"I won't. I can't," Hermione protested, her eye squinting with pain. "I can't have Harry knowing how much pain I'm in. It would destroy him."

"It won't destroy him," Poppy said. "He will most certainly be upset. In all likelihood he will feel extremely guilty for getting you pregnant. I've even heard men make the empty threat that they will never touch their wife again. Right now you probably feel like you don't want to ever be touched again so as to not ever take the chance of becoming pregnant for a second time. You'll both forget all that the moment that precious baby is placed in your arms. I'd rather not use a spell to make you relax. There can occasionally be side effects, but I will if necessary."

"I'll try," Hermione promised, just as she felt another spasm commence. This was the worst yet and all the breathing in the world wasn't going to ease the pain. As the contraction hit its peak, Hermione finally let go.

Everyone in the room jumped as Hermione's scream pierced through the relative silence of the room. Harry ran to her bedside followed by the others on his heels. Hermione's face and skin was red, the brightest, most agonizing red. Ron took one look; his complexion turned a ghastly white and he dropped to the floor in a faint.

"She had a large head of steam built up in her," Poppy said reassuringly. "Not to worry." Could someone please take care of Professor Weasley?"

* * * * *

"Okay, Amanda. We're almost there," Madam Pomfrey said.

"That's what you said two hours ago," Amanda moaned.

"This time I mean it," Poppy said. "Would you like me to separate the beds and put a privacy screen around you?"

"I think it's a little late to worry about privacy now," Amanda answered.

"Tony!" Pomfrey said as the most recent pain subsided. "The time has come to meet your baby."

Tony gave her a weak, nervous smile.

"Baby," Ron said groggily, getting to his feet and staggering toward the bed that everyone was gathered around.

"Now, when I tell you, I want you to help Amanda sit forward," Poppy instructed. "Count out loud to ten and then pause and let her relax back against the pillows for ten and then sit forward for another ten. Keep going unless I stop you. Understand?"

Tony felt excited, but at the same time anxious and frightened.

"Amanda?" Madam Pomfrey said, taking the young girl's hand. "Are you ready?"

"No! Let's wait another three or four fucking hours!" Amanda said scathingly. "Of course, I'm ready!"

"Then let's have a baby."

It seemed like Tony had just gotten the act of counting down pat when Amanda whimpered one last time, collapsed on the bed... and the hearty cry of a newborn baby filled the air. That wasn't the only sound. Emily had shrieked as Professor Weasley brushed her body while collapsing yet again to the floor.

"It's a boy!" Caitlin shouted excitedly.

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Just as she had when Amanda reached the final stages of labor, Poppy asked Hermione if she'd like privacy screens placed around her.

"No," Hermione panted. "Giving birth is the most wonderful event in a woman's life. It's nothing to be ashamed of, but rather something special to be shared with family and friends."

Harry hadn't taken his eyes off her for the last hour. He was struggling with mixed feelings. He was about to be a father, but his beloved Hermione was suffering in pain.

"I'm okay, you know," Hermione managed to burble during a brief respite from back to back contractions.

"No you're not. You're in pain," Harry argued.

Hermione felt the signs of another contraction approaching, but something was different. There was something urgent about this pain.

"Poppy!"

Someone yelling, startled Ron awake. He looked around the room. Everyone was still gathered around the bed. He hadn't missed the birth.

Poppy placed her hand on Hermione's bulging stomach and smiled. "Have the pains moved?"

"Yes," she hissed through gritted teeth.

"Then let's meet your baby," Poppy smiled as she positioned herself to help the child into the world.

Hermione sat forward with Harry's help and strained with all the energy she could muster. A small part of her was afraid she didn't have the strength left to help her baby be born. She'd never guessed that labor could be so exhausting. How was she supposed to do this? There was nothing left...

"You can do it, Mione. I know you can."

Harry's voice, whispered in her ear, slid through her entire body like a phoenix tear. Where she had been empty, she felt full. Her exhaustion turned to pure energy. Her doubt turned to resolve. And with one final effort, the newest Potter arrived at Hogwarts.

"It's a boy!" Emily exclaimed. "We have a baby brother."

"Look at his little penis," Emily cried. "Isn't it adorable."

Alex looked at Emily harshly, but didn't say anything.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "It is cute."

"It's a male thing," Jamie said, placing her arm on Emily's shoulder. "You just broke two rules of the male code. A penis is never referred to as either small or cute."

"But it is," Emily sighed.

Poppy performed a cleansing charm on the baby and then wrapped it in a blue blanket before handing it to Hermione. "Please, everyone, be careful to not trip over Professor Weasley," she said before performing a charm to dispose of the afterbirth.

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With gentleness just shy of reverence, Harry helped Hermione unwrap the baby. They counted fingers and toes, examined every inch of their baby and smiled.

"Hello, Benjamin," Harry said quietly, pressing a kiss to the top of the baby's head. Then he pressed another to the top of Hermione's.

"Can I hold Ben just a minute," Caitlin asked.

"Sure Honey," Hermione said. "Just be very gentle."

"He smiled!" Caitlin said excitedly, as she took the baby in her arms. "He likes me."

"That's just because he hasn't met me yet," Emily stated. "Can I hold him, too?"

Hermione nodded her head, and Caitlin carefully passed Ben to her sister.

Emily reached out and grasped Benjamin under his arms and held him level with her face. "Hi Ben. I'm Emily. I'm going to be your favorite sister."

Ben actually seemed to respond to this comment, but not necessarily in a way appreciated by Emily, as she was squirted right between the eyes. "Well that part seems to be functional," Emily said as she passed her brother to Jamie.

When the laughing subsided, Harry performed a cleansing charm on Emily, who had taken the situation quite well.

"Ouch! That hurts!" Jamie cried.

"Isn't that sweet," Samantha said. "He thinks you're his mother and wants to nurse."

"Sorry little guy," Jamie said, as she placed Ben on Hermione's chest, "mine are ornamental only. You're Mum is the one with the functioning mammary glands."

"That does hurt a little," Hermione commented, as Ben started feeding.

"Your nipples will adjust and become less sensitive," Madam Pomfrey said. "Now I believe it is time that everyone other than the fathers leave. These ladies have had a strenuous experience and need to get some much-deserved rest. Oh! Sam! Please do remember to take your husband with you when you go."

"Did I miss anything?" Ron asked woozily as he was woken and helped to his feet.

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"How do you feel?" Harry asked, as he watched Hermione nurse their son.

"Tired, very tired, Hermione said, "but extremely happy and fulfilled. Harry, I love the girls with all my heart, but this.... This was an experience I'll never forget."

"Nor I," Harry said, looking blissfully at the marvel Hermione held in her arms. "Even though I witnessed it with my own eyes, it still seems impossible that he actually came out of you and that he was formed by us simply making love."

"That's why it's called the miracle of birth," Hermione replied. "Harry, did I say anything cruel or spiteful during the birthing? If I did, I'm sorry. I love you with all my heart, and I've never been happier."

"And I love you Mione. And I love you."

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Sunday, May 29, 2005

"Great One, have you seen the Daily Prophet?" Damien asked, rubbing his hands excitedly.

"Yes, I have," she replied with satisfaction. "It seems our final cast member has at last arrived. Soon we can begin preparation to restore to life Salazar Slytherin."

"Soon? I assumed that you would be keen to start immediately," Damien questioned.

"Eager yes, but sometimes it is best to be patient rather than to rush haphazardly and chance a debacle. Newborns can be, at times, extremely delicate. We have waited this long; we'll allow the mother time to strengthen the child before his sacrifice."

"Whatever you feel is best, Great One." Damien hesitated slightly before continuing. "Are you at all concerned, now that we have the full prophecy and know that the reincarnated Salazar Slytherin can be eradicated?"

"Not at all," Emma Wrong answered confidently. "My advisors tell me that Sight and Health refer to the same individuals as Seer and Healer. Tell me how can two innocents that have died bringing about his return possibly be a part of his demise?"

"It would seem highly implausible," Damien agreed.

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"It hardly seems possible that you gave birth less than twenty-four hours ago," Severus commented, entranced by the vision that had just opened the door to the Potters' quarters.

"One of the many advantages of being a witch rather than a muggle," Hermione said. "Our bodies practically snap back to their original proportions after giving birth, especially when you have the aid of Poppy and your own private Hyperempath."

Hermione noted that Severus' eyes had become rather fixed on her breasts. "Well, not everything returned quite to normal," she said, slightly self-conscious. "I'm afraid I'm stuck with these until I stop breast feeding."

Before becoming pregnant, Hermione had possessed a striking 37-24-35 figure. Her waist and hips had over night returned to their former proportions and her butt and stomach were as firm and tight as ever. Her breasts, however, over the course of the past nine months had grown to a size at least half again as large as previously. Although their size alone would warrant attracting attention, the fact that they also totally defied gravity made them an awe inspiring sight.

"I'm sorry," Severus said, flustered. "I was staring."

"There is no need for you to apologize," Hermione answered. "After all it's my decision to be nude in the family's quarters. In truth, it's probably best that I grow accustomed to stares; I'm sure they will attract more than their share on the cruise.

"It's just..." Severus felt extremely uncomfortable discussing Hermione body. "I didn't think it possible for breasts so large not to droop at all."

"It's not," Hermione replied. "Their firmness is due to the Hyperempathic massages Caitlin gave me through out my pregnancy. I'm sure someone will question me on the cruise about them, and I'm not quite certain how I'll respond."

"Just tell them it's magic," Harry said as he joined them holding Benjamin. "Severus, I don't believe you've met my son." Severus gave a smile and reached out a hand to congratulate Harry. "Hermione, I believe Benjamin is ready for lunch."

"Maybe I should go," Severus said uncertainly. He wasn't sure how Hermione would feel about an audience watching her breast-feed.

"Don't be silly. If it weren't for you, I'd only have one functioning breast and possibly be unable to do this," Hermione said gratefully as she was seated and took Ben into her arms.

Once she was situated and Ben had begun to nurse, Hermione turned to Severus. "Did you get a chance to talk with her?"

"She just left my office," the Headmaster answered. "That was one of the reasons I stopped by to see you."

"And?"

"She was ecstatic," he answered. "Actually she never agreed, but I took her bouncing off the ceiling with glee as a yes."

"Anyone care to fill me in on what you two are talking about?" Harry asked.

"Severus has asked Jamie to teach classes for the remainder of the semester, similar to what she did when you and I had to attend the hearing concerning Timmy's custody. It will allow Benjamin and me time to be together and get to know each other."

Harry watched with satisfaction as Ben enjoyed his lunch.

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The next few weeks passed in a haze, bringing to an end the final term of the year.

Thursday, June 30, 2005

The end of the year feast took place amid decorations of scarlet and gold. Gryffindor House had managed to win the House championship despite losing the Quidditch Cup to Slytherin.

Kim and Emily both had tears in their eyes as the packing took place that night. A year ago they hadn't even known of each other's existence and now they dreaded being apart.

"The ship departs from Miami on August 8, but Mum and Dad suggest you arrive here by the sixth, since we have to get prepared and then Portkey across the ocean. Maybe you could talk your Mum into letting you spend all August with us," Emily suggested.

"I'm sure she'd be agreeable with me arriving a few days early," Kim said, "but she'll probably want to see me once more before the start of school."

Emily nodded her head in understanding. "Whatever you can manage will be great. We're going to have a fabulous time."

Kim nodded her head, but inside she was nervous - actually scared. She was looking forward to the cruise, but being starkers in front of strangers for ten days was entirely another matter.

It was late before they fell asleep, neither wanting the day or the school year to end. It seemed they had no sooner fallen asleep, than morning arrived. Too soon, it was time to depart for Hogsmeade and the waiting Hogwarts Express.

Jamie, Caitlin and Emily had all ridden down to Hogsmeade to see their friends off. By the time they arrived at the station, Jamie's face was tear stained as she frantically held onto Alex.

"I'm going to miss you too," he said, putting his arm around Jamie and trying to calm her. "More than words can say. You'll never be out of my thoughts. I'll owl you every day."

Emily raised her eyebrows, as she turned to Kim. "If I ever become as sickening as those two, please put me out of my misery. I mean... I want to experience love, but they're almost nauseating."

"Almost as bad as them," Kim said indicating Caitlin and Matt. "I intent to give Randy a kiss on the cheek and send him on his way when we reach London, but it seems they have something more personal in mind."

Emily watched as Matt and Caitlin drew closer to each other, finally exchanging a kiss that was most certainly not platonic. "Wow!" Emily said, staggered. "They've evidently been practicing. You don't kiss like that on your first try."

"I imagine not," Kim said in agreement as the warning whistle blew.

"See you in August," Kim shouted as she ran toward the train and an anxiously waiting Randy.

As they had the previous year, the girls waved, and then just stood watching until the train finally disappeared out of sight. Then they turned and headed home to Hogwarts, with Emily and Caitlin each holding one of Jamie's hands.

The End