

"Harry," Hermione said warmly as she hugged him right at the front door of the burrow.

He returned the hug, and she held there for a moment, enjoying the comforting feeling of his touch. As she pulled back and looked into his vibrant green eyes, she thought that he looked better than he had when she last saw him, yet the strain of their terrible reality and the grief he felt over Sirius were still there.

"How are you?" she asked softly.

"Still alive," Harry replied, clearly trying to sound cavalier. When Hermione narrowed her eyes at him, he added, "I'm fine, really."

She was about to say more when Ron piped up, saying, "You're never going to guess who's here, mate."

"Who?" Harry asked.

"Arry?" Fleur asked, answering his question for Ron.

"Fleur?" Harry asked in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"As I said when we last spoke, I 'oped to work for Gringotts 'ere and I am now," Fleur replied, "and as for why I am at ze burrow..."

"Hello, Harry," Bill said, wrapping an arm around Fleur.

Using a level of attentiveness he usually reserved for Quidditch, Harry's eyes locked onto the ring on Fleur's left ring finger and then promptly widened.

"Oh, wow, congratulations, you two," he said, smiling warmly.

Hermione saw Ginny scowl at the scene and couldn't blame her fiery friend. She might not have disliked the beautiful blonde as much as Ginny and her mother both seemed to, but having her around hadn't exactly been fun for her either. The last thing her self-esteem needed in a time when she still felt useless months after the battle at the ministry was a woman who was that hypnotizingly beautiful around. Her issues were her own, however, and so she decided to go upstairs to Ginny's room, where her books and other things were.

She winced as she bent down to open up her trunk, the still-tight skin from her battle wound tugging uncomfortably. She had been lucky to survive the spell that Dolohov hit her with, and the scarring turned out to be minimal, but there was some, and it still irritated her if she moved the wrong way. It was just one more example of her own failure.

"Fleeing from Phlegm?" Ginny asked as she joined her.

"Yes and no," Hermione replied as she found the ancient tome she was looking for and dug it out.

"I have never understood a couple less in my life," Ginny muttered. "All my life, Bill's been the most dependable, solid, and caring guy I've ever known. Looks aside, what does he even see in that flighty, haughty, arrogant cow?"

"I imagine looks have a lot to do with it," Hermione replied, sitting down on the bed and opening the book to the page she'd left off on. "Beyond that, though, while I don't care for Fleur any more than you do and still recall how she spent the entire year at Hogwarts badmouthing just about everything she could, there must be something else. Bill's not that shallow, surely."

"Hell, if I know," Ginny scowled. She finally noticed that book that Hermione was looking down at and asked, "Is that one of the ones that..."

"Sirius left me, yes," Hermione replied before she could finish.

"Why did it have to be him?" Ginny asked darkly. "Poor Harry's lost so much already."

Hermione swallowed thickly, the memory of seeing Harry so broken in the aftermath of the death of the closest thing he had to family feeling like a lance to her heart.

"We spoke during the summer before last year," Ginny said. "I was upset over some nonsense that didn't even really matter in hindsight, and even though I'd never said two words to the guy, he asked what was wrong and talked me through it. He was really sweet, despite what an unending shitstorm his life was."

"We shouldn't have gone to the Department of Mysteries," Hermione said, feeling guilty.

"No, we shouldn't have," Ginny muttered. "What's that book about anyway?"

"It's an account of the formation of the British Ministry under the long premiership of Minister Ulick Gamp," Hermione replied.

"Sounds riveting," Ginny said dryly. "It's also not the kind of book I would have expected to find in the Black Library."

"Minister Gamp was heavily supported by Pelagius Black, the head of the family at the time," Hermione explained. "This account was written by his daughter, Pelagia, and speaks of him in quite glowing terms. It is admittedly rather dry, of course."

"It certainly sounds dry," Ginny commented.

"I thought it might be interesting, though, given all that Minister Gamp accomplished," Hermione said. "I was nearing the end of the first chapter of it when Harry arrived, and I figured that finishing it could be a good use of my time while I try to stop looking like I'm feeling sorry for myself."

"Well, I'll leave you to it," Ginny sighed. "Mum probably needs help with something or other anyway."

The redhead left, and Hermione looked back down at the book in her lap. She had to admit that rather dry was putting it mildly so far.

As it became clear that the Wizard's Council was no longer up to the task of governing magical Britain, plans were put into place to create a more structured governmental body. Two lords from the council stepped up to form what would become the Ministry of Magic: its first minister, Ulick Gamp, and his chief supporter through his long time in the office, Pelagius Black.

"God, would it have killed her to be more concise?" Hermione muttered to herself as she finally reached the end of the introductory chapter.

That was the third time in the first thirty pages of the book that she made that point, and it was hardly the only point repeated multiple times. It was lazy writing and the sort of thing that she'd have been marked down on if she had done it in an essay. The subject of Minister Gamp, the first minister for magic, and the man responsible for making the unforgivable curses unforgivable was interesting, though, and as she had the book, she figured that she might as well try to get through it. She just hoped that the rest of it wasn't this much of a slog.

"Sirius must have left me all of the most innocuous books in his library, knowing that Harry would never read them," Hermione thought to herself.

Professor Dumbledore, as the executor of Sirius' estate, had dropped off the half-dozen books that the man had left to her in his will a few days earlier. She had looked them over and selected this one as the most interesting of them, though she was beginning to think that she was wrong on that front. As she turned the page, she felt a slight shock go up her arm and froze. Confident that her headmaster would have looked over books that belonged to the Blacks of all families before handing them to a student, she continued moving the page, and her eyes widened as she saw the text begin to move around.

"What in the world?" she asked as what looked like the first page of the second chapter of the book continued to change. The letters zoomed around the aged-looking parchment for several seconds before settling into their new spaces. Hermione looked down at the page in muted shock as she began to read.

So, you actually bothered to read through that dreck?

Hermione's heart hammered in her chest, her mind going right to Riddle's diary, and she was about to slam it shut and try to contact her headmaster about it when something in the following paragraph caught her eye.

Whoever has reached this far, I know it won't be my shortsighted father. Even praising the man won't be enough to make him read an entire chapter of a book, much less the whole book. I made it as droning and repetitive as possible, knowing that no Black would ever throw out a book written by one of our own, and yet most wouldn't bother getting through it. You've reached the book I actually wrote, my grimoire, full of all the magic I could scrounge together, lest that fool allow this new government to ban anything else.

"Ah," Hermione muttered, understanding what she was really looking at.

What appeared to be a book on the history of the ministry's founding was just enchanted to look that way. In reality, it was a spellbook, likely the sort that she normally wouldn't have looked through. It had struck her as odd that the head of the Black family during the founding of the ministry had so strongly supported a government that ultimately banned the unforgivables, given how evil the members of that family she'd met aside from Sirius were. Apparently, his decisions hadn't been universally popular among his family.

"I hope her text-enchanted spell is in here," Hermione mumbled to herself as she flipped through the book.

She had done this when she first opened it, wanting to see how much of the history of Gamp's premiership it covered, and it had appeared to be a simple history book from cover to cover. Enchanting a book in a way where one specifically had to read an entire section of the fake book to get the real one was so clever and so potentially useful that she wanted to know how it was done.

On the whole, given how Pelagia seemed, Hermione was sure that this was going to be filled with vile magic that she'd never even think of using, but if it had a couple interesting ideas like the text-masking enchantment, then it would be worth looking at. Her poor mood improved; she stuffed the book back in her trunk and returned downstairs.

"I just don't think it's safe to be using notes in a book by a completely unknown author, Harry," Hermione said, trying not to let her own feelings of hypocrisy show on her face. "It's worked out so far, but there's no way of knowing if everything written by this half-blood prince is safe or accurate."

"Are you saying that you think the guy booby-trapped his own textbook?" Ron asked incredulously.

"I'm saying that potions can be dangerous, and just using some student's notes, which often contradict the given instructions in the book, could end poorly," Hermione argued heatedly.

"It's not like his ideas are completely opposite to the instructions from the book," Harry pointed out. "Up to now, they've been minor alterations that have worked out better in one way or another. The guy was probably a potions nut who brewed these things over and over again and eventually tried adjusting the recipes to see what happened and wrote down the ones that worked. Some of the spells in here look pretty interesting too."

"Spells!?" Hermione exclaimed. "Harry, there's a reason why we stick to well-reviewed texts on magic. Playing around with experimental magic can be highly..."

"I'm not going to try any of them willy-nilly," Harry said, rolling his eyes, "but maybe they'll prove useful. It's not like I'm learning much from...never mind."

Hermione just glared at both of her oldest friends, knowing full well that they weren't going to listen to reason. Without another word, she stalked up the steps towards her dorm,

stewing over her failure to make them see sense. It didn't help that she felt like a hypocrite telling Harry not to play around with magic from a random person they knew nothing about when she herself was actively doing just that. It was easy enough to justify within her mind, as she knew that she was studiously researching everything she found in Pelagia Black's grimoire and cross-referencing with more trustworthy sources, while Harry definitely wouldn't be doing anything like that, but she still felt bad.

She had felt bad for months in one way or another, actually, and it was really starting to get her. From her failure to contribute more meaningfully in the Department of Mysteries and her admittedly irrational belief that if she'd been better, perhaps Harry wouldn't have lost Sirius, to everything souring between her and Ron over the past month, to her failure to make Harry see sense. She just couldn't shake the feeling that she wasn't good enough, and it was starting to make things that she'd never have imagined doing before seem entirely too tempting. Opening the grimoire to the page she'd bookmarked, she reread the section that had drawn her eye more than once over the last few weeks.

Ritual magic will undoubtedly be next on this wretched ministry's chopping block, for Gamp and his allies seem to be willing to ban anything they find frightening under the guise of complying with this ludicrous statute. They are not without reason to fear it, for they are small, weak men, barely a step above muggles in their approach to magic.

When one performs rituals, it is not as simple as memorizing the wand motions and visualizations required for a spell. Wands make magic safe, and without that barrier between you and the aether, both the kind of results you can produce and the dangers involved increase dramatically.

It was a warning she'd read more than once and corroborated as best she could in the very limited selection of books in the Hogwarts library on ritual magic. In truth, she knew that this was a bad idea, but as she'd gone through the first section on rituals, containing what, according to Pelagia, were the simplest of them, she'd found herself returning to the idea again and again.

Self-improvement rituals were the most numerous type that there were, and they were generally the easiest as well, with the difficulty and danger seeming to scale with what exactly you wanted to improve. Improving one's looks was markedly easier than improving one's intelligence or power, for instance. Turning the page to the ritual she'd found that looked, in her estimation, to be the safest, she looked over the requirements again.

"A small ritual circle with three specific runes carved seven times around the perimeter of it," Hermione murmured, grabbing one of her texts on ancient runes.

Which runes you used depended on what you wanted to improve specifically, and the only one that Pelagia said was necessary was either Uruz if the ritual was being done by a man or Berkano if it was being done by a woman. What she wanted to focus on was something that she'd been contemplating for days now. She realized that there was quite a list the more she thought about it. She wasn't attractive enough to keep the boy, who seemed to finally realize that she was a girl, from running off to a buxom bimbo at their first disagreement. She wasn't powerful enough to keep the people she cared about safe, either.

"Hell," Hermione muttered to herself, "for all my vaunted intellect, I'm not even smart enough to be able to convince them not to take unnecessary risks."

Scowling, she looked over the ritual again, and she found nothing that suggested that she needed to focus on only one thing to change. The only real warning in the entire passage lay at the end, where Pelagia said as plainly as possible that she needed to "focus on all that she wished to improve."

"Hmm, Gebo for power, definitely," she murmured, "and Mannaz for intelligence."

Taking a deep breath, she released it slowly and smiled slightly to herself. This could work, for it looked exceedingly simple, and what she had managed to cross-reference suggested that it would be harmless. The core of any ritual was sacrifice, hence the legally murky area that ritual magic generally was, but the only sacrifice required for this one was for her own blood to be spilled in the runes. No one else needed to be harmed or even involved, and she even had the perfect place for it.

With her mind made up, Hermione stuffed the book and her runes textbook into her bag and practically ran downstairs.

"Hermione, I..." Harry went to say, still in the common room where she'd left him.

"I've no time, Harry," Hermione said curtly. "I'll speak with you later."

Without sparing him another glance, she took off into the halls and made her way towards the seventh floor. She had spent months feeling inadequate in one way or another, and she was sick of it. If this minor ritual worked without causing any harm, then perhaps she'd try another, but she had spent long enough researching it to conclude that it was safe and desperately wanted to see if it could help.

"Oh!" Hermione exclaimed as she just barely managed to avoid crashing into Malfoy, who stared down at her in shock and irritation.

"Watch where you're bloody going," the blonde hissed before continuing on away from her.

Hermione glanced over at his retreating form and furrowed her brow. Harry was convinced that Malfoy was behaving oddly, and while Hermione hadn't thought much of it up until now, she had to admit that was weird. If she'd come close to bumping into him just a year ago, he'd have called her a mudblood and threatened to get her in trouble. While he couldn't do much with Umbridge gone, she'd have still expected the usual venom and insults.

Shaking her head, she put the walking argument against inbreeding out of her mind and continued on towards the Room of Requirement. After walking back and forth three times in front of the wall that hid the room, she opened the door that appeared to find a perfect ritual room. Dark stone floors and walls encompassed the small, square, windowless room, and as she walked inside, she took a calming breath and drew her wand.

Carving the circle and runes in the smooth stone floor took a while, not because of the carving itself, which was made easy by the modified cutting charm she'd found in a book on magical sculptures years ago. At the time, she had wondered why one wouldn't just transfigure the stone into the shape that you wanted, but magical carvings lasted longer, for one thing, and given what else you could use it for, teaching it for ostensibly artistic purposes was probably seen as a way to do so without ruffling any feathers. Rituals of this nature weren't exactly illegal, but they were largely frowned upon.

"There," she muttered as she finally finished the intricate work.

Vanishing the dust that her carving had left all over the circle, Hermione swallowed thickly and had the room produce a clean, simple knife for the next part. She hissed as she sliced a shallow cut into her left palm and allowed the blood to drip into the first rune. Just as the book described, it absorbed the crimson liquid immediately and began to glow.

With a pleased smile on her face, she continued moving slowly around the circle, empowering each repeated rune with her magical blood. The pain in her hand grew from slight to throbbing as she went, and she knew that it couldn't be natural, but she persevered. The point of ritual magic was sacrifice, after all, and her blood and pain would be a small price to pay if the ritual actually worked. It continued to get worse, though, and by the time the twenty-first rune glowed with power, her hand was shaking enough that she had to hold it steady with the other one.

"Finally," Hermione gasped, wincing as she flexed her hand, which felt like it was burning at that point. Stepping away from the ritual circle, she grabbed her wand, pointed it at the long, bright red cut on her palm, and said, "*Episkey.*"

The simple healing charm did its job, and as Hermione watched, the skin around the cut grew less and less red, and it shrank bit by bit until it looked like nothing had happened. Healing the cut did not help with how weak the bloodletting had left her feeling, but it removed an additional distraction when she needed to be able to focus, which she appreciated. Setting her wand down, as she knew that from the moment she sat down inside that circle, she wouldn't be able to cast anything until the ritual was finished, she began removing her clothes as well. Once she was entirely naked, she stepped inside the circle and sat down, hissing at the feeling of the cool stone on her bare arse.

"*Here goes,*" she thought to herself as she crossed her legs and closed her eyes.

Breathing deeply, she vibrated the phonetic pronunciation of the first rune's name from deep within her throat and focused on what she wanted to improve in herself. The runes were carved in order from Gebo to Berkano to Mannaz and then repeated seven times around the circle. She vibrated the words in that order again and again, keeping her eyes closed and her mind focused on the purpose of the ritual, even as she began to feel raw magic swirling around her and saw flashing lights through her eyelids.

"*I need to be smarter, I need to be more powerful, I want to be more attractive,*" she thought to herself, focusing on the three things she'd chosen.

She continued to focus on those three things while continuing her mantra, and she felt the energy of the runic circle grow stronger and stronger. It all seemed to be working as

described, which was good, but the strain of maintaining her focus started to get to her after a while. When she had planned this out, she figured it would be simple to keep her mind centered on her desires during the process, as she had been doing focusing exercises for years to help make her spellcasting easier. What she hadn't anticipated was just how much blood it would take to empower twenty-one carved runes, and while she wasn't in danger from the blood loss, she had started to feel lightheaded by the end, something that sitting in the middle of that much magical energy wasn't helping with.

"I need to be smarter," Hermione thought to herself. *"I need to be better able to help Harry."*

In that single moment of lost focus, the energy inside the circle seemed to change. A loud buzzing sound began to echo all around her, and Hermione became hot. Sweating profusely, she scrunched her eyes shut and focused harder on what she'd initially wanted, but it was too late. Intense pain gripped her, beginning at the base of her skull and arcing around to her forehead. As she began to panic, she opened her eyes, seeing nothing at all, and promptly passed out.

The lack of pain was the first thing that occurred to Hermione as she woke up. Opening her eyes, she was relieved to see that she could see at all and slowly sat up. In response to her wishes, the room around her changed to the familiar setting of her bedroom, and she grabbed onto her bed to help pull herself up.

"It's almost like playing around with dangerous magic is moronic," she grumbled, shaking her head at her own stupidity.

She sat down on the perfect recreation of her bed and laid back, taking comfort in the familiar setting. Given what her last memory was from before she passed out, she expected to feel awful, but she really didn't.

"If anything, I feel good," Hermione thought to herself, genuinely surprised by that.

The room conjured a full-length mirror in front of her, and she sat up, her eyes widening slightly at what she saw. It wasn't a drastic change by any stretch of the imagination, and in truth, perhaps nothing had actually changed, but as she looked at herself in the mirror, she thought that she looked better. Walking up to it, she furrowed her brow in confusion at what she saw. Her hair was just as bushy as ever, her breasts were modest, and her arse was, in her opinion, too big, but as she took in the sight of herself, she just liked it more.

"Maybe my skin looks healthier?" she murmured to herself, wondering what had changed. She had rather clear skin to begin with, but she seemed to have a certain faint glow to herself that she thought she liked quite a bit.

The room had already done away with the ritual circle before she got a chance to really look at it, but she was okay with that. Things had not gone to plan, clearly, but she seemed to be alright for the time being. She would have to monitor herself closely in the coming days and go see Madam Pomfrey at the first sign of trouble, but other than that, she seemed to have escaped this little exercise in madness unharmed.

The room created a shower for her, and she took the time to clean off the sweat before casting a tempus charm to check the time.

"It's only half past four," she said in surprise. "Unless I've been in here for days, I didn't sleep very long, and Harry and Ron would have checked this place if I went missing."

She got dressed and exited the room, only to nearly bump into Harry.

"Oh, hello," Hermione said, smiling widely.

"Hermione, thank goodness," Harry sighed.

"Is something wrong?" Hermione asked.

"I didn't like how we left things," Harry replied. "You took off without a word, and I figured you'd just gone to the library and that we'd talk later, but when I looked at the map, you weren't on it all."

"Ah," Hermione said. "I just wanted a quiet spot to read, and the room can be even more silent than the library. I didn't mean to worry you."

"It's fine," Harry muttered. "I guess I'm just on edge, is all."

"You do look tense," Hermione commented. "Why don't you join me in here?"

Without waiting for him to reply, she started walking back and forth in front of the empty wall with a single image clear in her mind.

"Hanging out, just the two of us?" Harry asked. "That sounds lovely, actually."

"Ron's with Lav Lav, I take it?" Hermione asked as the door appeared, and she opened it.

"Do you actually want me to answer that?" Harry asked, following her inside a replica of the Gryffindor common room, albeit with a single chair by the fireplace.

In that moment, she found that she couldn't care less about Ron's relationship. The visible tension in Harry was far more important to her.

"He's so used to shouldering responsibilities that shouldn't be his," she thought to herself. "No wonder that book proved so tempting. It's made potions utterly simple for him and removed that little bit of stress in the process. What he really needs is someone to take those responsibilities away and help him manage them all, someone he trusts and that he can completely submit to."

Submit?

She shook her head at that thought as she looked over at Harry and patted the seat of the single chair.

"Where's yours?" he asked.

"I've sat enough today," Hermione replied. "Come. You're so tense that I can see it from here. You need to relax."

"I don't think I've relaxed since the graveyard," Harry muttered as he sat down.

"I know it's hard, but you do try and take a moment to let go now and then," Hermione said.

"That's easier said than done," Harry scowled. "He's out there with his horde of monsters, wreaking havoc wherever he pleases, having had a year to rebuild everything without the ministry getting involved. Dumbledore's idea of special lessons is making me watch memories of the evil prick, and even my one source of stress relief isn't as fun as it used to be because I have to run the bloody team now, and well, Ginny."

"Poor thing," Hermione said softly, resting her hands on his shoulders. "What you need is to get your mind off of it all."

"How...oh," Harry groaned as she started digging her fingers into the tight muscles of his shoulders.

"I figured if you were going to insist on carrying the weight of the world on here, that it might help to have them massaged," Hermione grinned.

"Ah, that feels good," Harry sighed, and Hermione felt heat pool in her core at the words.

"I understand the appeal of the book, you know," Hermione said softly, wincing as she felt him tense under her. "It takes your most frustrating subject and makes it easy while offering you potential magic that seems like it could be useful against Voldemort."

"Whoever the Half-Blood Prince was, he really knew his stuff," Harry said. "I've learned more from a couple months of reading the guy's notes than I did in five years of Snape's 'teaching.'"

"My reservations about it aren't just jealousy over the top spot in that class, either, no matter what Ron thinks," Hermione grumbled. "I just don't want you hurting yourself because it turned out that not everything the guy wrote in that book was above board."

"Like I say, I'm being careful with it," Harry said, leaning forward and giving her further access to his back.

Hermione pulled him back instead and began digging her thumbs into the back of his neck, making him moan softly.

"Sorry," he muttered, blushing.

"Don't be," Hermione smiled. "Look, I'll agree that you don't necessarily need to show it to Professor Slughorn, even though he almost certainly taught the prince and would possibly know who he was, but I would appreciate the opportunity to look over it myself. I've

studied spell creation enough that I might be able to figure out what the spells are supposed to do from the descriptions and wand motions.”

“To be honest, I’ve kind of liked having the resource to myself,” Harry replied, turning to look back at her. “I rely so much on you, and it’s been nice having one class, and potions at that, that I didn’t need to bother you about.”

“You know it’s no bother,” Hermione said, raking her nails along his scalp. “I’m happy to have you rely on me.”

“Merlin’s balls, that feels amazing,” Harry groaned. “You know Ron’s going to pull his head out of his arse eventually, right?”

“I don’t know,” Hermione replied. “It does seem pretty well lodged to me.”

Harry snorted at that.

“Ginny already seems tired of Dean, while we’re on the subject,” Hermione said. “I give them another two to three months, tops.”

“Right,” Harry muttered, sounding like he didn’t quite believe her. “I’m sure she’ll just leap into my arms the second they break up too. I’m such an idiot. The girl moons over me for years, and I barely notice she exists until the moment she’s not available. What do you even call that?”

“Puberty, I suspect,” Hermione said dryly, earning a glare from him. “Harry, we’re all a touch shallow at our age, and you’re a boy. You can hardly blame yourself for only thinking of her that way after she filled out.”

Harry just grumbled something inaudible in response.

“It’s a moot point anyway,” he said darkly. “It’s not like I’d even have the time to focus on an actual relationship.”

“Poor Harry,” Hermione said, her voice suddenly breathy as a truly wicked idea occurred to her. “What you need is a distraction.”

“What do you have in mi...Hermione?” Harry asked as she trailed her hands down his chest. “Mione?!”

The way his voice squeaked when she reached his crotch made her smirk, and she cupped his length through his robes.

“As I said, you need a distraction,” Hermione purred, grinning as she felt his cock quickly harden under her touch. “You’re so tense, so...stiff.”

“Christ, Hermione,” Harry swore, moaning loudly as she rubbed him. “What are you...what are you doing?”

"I should think that's obvious," Hermione smirked, loving the look of shock and desire on his face. "You carry so much stress on those broad shoulders of yours, deal with so much more than you should have to, and get no relief at all."

"I, um, I don't exactly get no relief," Harry admitted.

"Oh, do you want me to stop then?" Hermione asked, sounding amused.

"No," Harry gasped as she wrapped her hand around him.

"Then take it out," Hermione commanded, and he shivered, standing up and quickly removing his robes.

His belt and pants soon followed, and Hermione bit her lower lip gently as she took in the sight of him. The years since they met had been kind to him, despite everything, and the scrawny little boy whose glasses she'd repaired on the train so long ago had grown up into a gorgeous man. His athleticism showed across almost every inch of his body, for while he was far from bulky, his wiry frame had some well-defined muscles to it. Most impressive of all was his cock, which stood proudly in the air, jutting from his groin. Long and very thick, it would have likely made Hermione wince even a day earlier, but as she stared at the fleshy pillar just then, all she could do was lick her lips.

"Very nice," Hermione said, looking him up and down. "Sit."

"Hermione, where on Earth did this come from?" Harry asked. "You've nev...oh Merlin!"

"For the record, I've always thought you were cute," Hermione admitted as she wrapped her hand around his cock and gave it an experimental tug. "You never seemed to look at me that way, and we're such good friends that I figured we'd leave it at that, but watching you get increasingly stressed this year has been driving me mad. Oh, this won't work."

"Erm, if you're sure about that, could you at least give me some priva..." Harry trailed off as he watched Hermione lick her hand until it was good and slick, his jaw dropping.

He moaned a moment later as she wrapped her wet hand around his cock and started stroking him gently. It was so much better than his own hand had ever been, and, to his embarrassment, he started feeling himself soaring towards his peak almost immediately.

"He...Hermione I'm going to..." he tried to say, his voice strained.

"Oh, don't worry about that," Hermione grinned, moving her hand right under the glans and tightening her grip.

Harry groaned as he felt his impending orgasm subside. After waiting a few seconds, she started stroking him again, more slowly, and he closed his eyes, almost unable to believe what was happening. When he felt again like he was about to cum, she repeated what she had done before, and he whimpered as he felt the pleasure wane. She then started stroking him yet again.

"Do you want to cum?" Hermione asked, perhaps the last words he ever expected to hear from her.

"Yes," Harry hissed, and she grinned.

"I want to look through that book," Hermione said, and his eyes widened.

"Are you serious?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Very," Hermione replied. "I want to make sure that nothing in it is that dangerous and will be more than up to the task of figuring out the spells contained within it."

"Damn it, Hermione!" Harry groaned as she prevented him from cumming again.

"Oh, don't be like that," Hermione purred, grinning devilishly at him. "It's a fair trade. I get the peace of mind of knowing that it isn't as dangerous as I fear, and you get to cum harder than you ever have in your life. Now be a good boy and say yes."

"Yes," Harry hissed, deciding in that moment to just go along with whatever she wanted.

He had been enough of a horny idiot to think that she had just become attracted to him when she first felt him up, but something was clearly deeply wrong with Hermione, and the sooner he gave in here, the sooner he'd be able to convince her to go see Madam Pomfrey.

"It's in here, yes?" Hermione asked, drawing a little circle around his moleskin pouch with her finger.

Harry just nodded, and she reached inside, pulling out the used potions textbook.

"Excellent," Hermione crowed, sounding deeply pleased with herself. "I won't be that long, I promise, though if you need it for our next class, you can borrow my copy. Now that you've been good, cum for me."

"Fuck!" Harry cried, his hips thrusting forward as he came hard.

Rope after thick rope of cum shot from his cock across the room, covering the hardwood floor. Hermione watched it happen with fervent interest, rubbing her thighs together to try and relieve some of the tension in her burning core. She had grown increasingly wet ever since she felt Harry get hard under her touch, and she knew in that moment that her cotton panties were ruined, but she could hardly do anything about that now. Seeking to take the opportunity to check out this damn book while Harry was still panting in his chair as though he'd just run for his life, she stuffed the book in her bag and turned to leave, only for a sudden migraine to stop her in her tracks.

"Ahh!" she cried, grabbing her head and leaning on the chair for support.

"Hermione?" Harry asked, rushing to his feet to check on her. "Are you alright?"

"I...oh God, what did I..." Hermione babbled, confused by her own actions.

“Hermione, you’re not yourself right now,” Harry said gently. “I think you should see...”

“Oh, Harry, I’m so sorry!” Hermione exclaimed, grabbing the book and handing it to him. “I shouldn’t have toyed with you like that.”

“That doesn’t matter right now,” Harry said, setting the book aside. “What matters is making sure that you’re alright...”

“Of course it matters,” Hermione argued. “I’ve been awful to you this year, about that bloody book and just in general. In a time when you’re dealing with so much, I’ve only added to your problems.”

“I...again, we can address this later,” Harry said.

“Hmm, you’re always so selfless,” Hermione sighed, smiling up at him, “and you’re sweet, but I’ve been a bad girl, and I should be punished.”

“Wha...what?” Harry asked, blinking owlishly at his oldest female friend.

“I think a spanking will do,” Hermione replied, and Harry’s cock twitched, reminding him that he was still naked.

“Hermione, something’s clearly wrong with you,” Harry said as she had the room create a table for her. “We need to get you to Madam Pom...”

He trailed off as she started hiking her robes up, revealing her long and very shapely legs, and he gasped when she pulled them over her incredibly round, tight arse, clad only in white cotton panties.

“Oof,” Hermione giggled. “I’m going to have to peel these off; they’re so wet.”

Harry’s cock grew hard as a rock in seconds as her panties, which were so wet they were see-through, fell to the floor. He had known Hermione for years and had seen her in a variety of different outfits through them. Nothing he had ever seen suggested that she had an arse that incredible, and he cursed himself when he realized just how long he’d been staring.

“Hermione, you need to see Madam Pomfrey,” Harry said, reluctantly tearing his eyes away from her plump yet firm, round cheeks.

“Are you saying you don’t want to spank me?” Hermione asked, looking around and pouting at him. “Because I suspect you’ve wanted to put me over your lap when I’ve been annoying to you for years.”

“I’ve never thought you were annoying,” Harry said, pointedly not tackling the issue of whether or not he wanted to spank her. “You can be abrasive at times, and you’re about as stubborn as I am when you think you’re right, which you usually are anyway, but you’re not annoying.”

"Still, I have a surprisingly large clue that says you really want to do it," Hermione said, looking right at his turgid cock, which he promptly covered with both hands, making her pout. "Spank me ten times, and I'll go with you to the hospital wing."

"You're being ridiculous," Harry muttered.

"No, I'm being a brat; a brat you need to be put in her place by a big, strong man," Hermione countered, grinning lasciviously at him.

"Okay, now I know you're not yourself," Harry muttered. "If Ron or I had said those words to you just six hours ago, we'd have been the ones sent to the hospital wing."

"I can fantasize about things like this without wanting to live my life under the thumb of a man, Harry," Hermione chuckled. "Your cock is so hard it's nearly purple, so I know at least one part of you wants this, despite the fact that you'd never seek to control me otherwise. It can be fun, or so I've read, so what do you say, sir? Will you spank my ass for being such a brat?"

"Fuck," Harry shuddered, so turned on that he could barely think straight.

With his self-control hanging by a thread, he found himself walking towards her, his eyes clued to her wide hips and plump arse. Between her thick thighs, he could see a thatch of very wet-looking brown hair. He brought his hands to her cheeks, gripping and kneading the supple flesh, making her gasp and sigh.

"Mmm, that's it, Sir," Hermione purred. "Now spank me."

"Ten spanks, and then you come with me to see Madam Pomfrey?" Harry asked, trying to stay focused on helping his friend despite the fact that it seemed like all the blood in his body had migrated to his cock.

"If that's what you want," Hermione replied, looking back at him with such lust-darkened eyes that Harry felt his cock throb at the sight of them. "I'll be your good girl."

"Merlin's balls," Harry shuddered, swallowing thickly.

He raised his hand up and brought it down on her right arsecheek, making it ripple and jiggle hypnotically.

"Oh, come on, do it harder than that," Hermione complained.

"What?" Harry asked.

"It's spanking, not tapping," Hermione said. "You could do that a hundred times, and I doubt they'd go pink."

"I don't want to hurt you," Harry objected.

"If you do, I'll let you know," Hermione said. "With that in mind, think of this as a way to work through all that stress that you've been bottling up."

Harry took a deep breath, recalling that Madam Pomfrey had bruise paste too, and raised his hand.

“YES!” Hermione screamed as he slapped her other cheek hard. “One!”

Harry watched as her arse jiggled far more that time, and a pink handprint started to form almost immediately. Given her emphatic response, he knew that he hadn’t done anything she didn’t want him to and quickly spanked her right cheek just as hard.

“Two!” Hermione shrieked, gripping the table so hard that her knuckles turned white.

Her whole body was shaking by that point, and a smell had begun to permeate the air that Harry didn’t recognize, but instinctively liked. A sort of calm overtook him as he found himself enjoying this far more than he could have ever imagined. Twice more, he brought his hand down on her perfect arse, and twice more, she squealed the numbers, sounding like she was having the time of her life. Raising his hand again, he swung down, slapping her right arsecheek hard.

“FIVE!” Hermione screamed at the top of her lungs as she began writhing and thrashing atop the table. “YES!”

Harry took a step back, his eyes going wide as it dawned on him what he was seeing. Hermione Granger, his prim and proper friend, was cumming from just getting her arse spanked. Unable to breathe for a solid moment, he feared that if his cock got any harder, it might explode.

“Fu...fuck me,” Hermione panted, still clinging to the table she was bent over like a liferaft.

“What?” Harry asked dumbly, his mouth going dry as the desert as his ability to reason warred with a primal need he’d never felt nearly as strongly as he did in that moment.

Hermione turned her head and grinned at him as she said, “Fuck me, Harry.”

She wiggled her round arse at him, and he watched as a drop of her arousal fell from her drooling slit onto the floor below.

“*Fuck,*” was the only thought that crossed his overtaxed mind.