

THE AUCTION

She let it wash over her, like a cool bath.

Only one masked Death Eater sat perfectly still throughout. Four rows back on the left aisle.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," Bagman crooned. He raised his hands to call for peace. "I've not yet begun the bidding."

Laughter. A howl from the top balcony. Hermione looked up and found the shadows in the top tier pacing, prowling out of their chairs. The werewolves were invited. Separate and not-so-equal.

"Don't you want to know more about Miss Granger's medical exam?" Bagman sang. And the theatre exploded again.

She could hear them like a whisper. Talking about her virginity. Hypothesizing about if she'd used her mouth before.

The lights were hot.

She focused on the lone Death Eater, still not socializing. Maybe he'd already bid on his lot, and now was just enjoying a night at the theatre.

Ludo read out her measurements. They cackled when he suggested that she'd do fine in the kitchen, and whooped when he mentioned her muscle mass would be handy in the gardens. They crowded at the thought of her dusting their manors.

Ludo danced around the truth of the matter, teasing them, until finally:

"And gentlemen..." His voice dropped low. "In case you were curious... It will be an extra five thousand for this one."

Thunder. The acoustics shivering with the applause and screaming. The lonely Death Eater did nothing but cross his leg.

"So, gentlemen... we start the bidding at fifteen thousand Galleons." Fifty wands shot into the air, orange sparks calling Ludo's attention. She swallowed and looked down to find Dolohov raising a lazy hand. Wands were only raised on the ground floor, she realized. Perhaps they'd sold spectator tickets for the balconies.

"Let's weed you out a bit, shall we?" Ludo quipped. "Sixteen thousand."

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A chuckle from the corner of the room, and Hermione turned to see Dolohov grinning at her.

"You better make this worth my money, Mudblood."

She scowled at him, and turned to see the plump mediwitch frown and then turn away to scribble something on a chart. The younger one scratched her face, hiding the way she wiped away a tear.

Hermione's throat closed. She wasn't sure what the spell meant, but she could take a guess.

An extra 5,000. Isn't that what Pansy said?

"Suppressants for this one, too."

The ball of light faded and vanished. The young witch sighed.

"Do you have a problem with that?" Dolohov sneered at her.

"No, sir."

"Give her two doses."

The plump one turned over her shoulder, but said nothing.

"Two? Sir, that's unnecessary—"

"Two," he hissed.

Hermione sat up, watching the plump witch pour one vial into another, filling to the brim. She handed the younger one the potion. Hermione shook her head no.

"It's a temporary suppressant," the girl whispered. "Should only last three days—"

"Don't talk to her. If there's a question or direction, talk to me," Dolohov said darkly.

The girl pressed her lips together and nodded.

Suppressant. Some kind of inhibitor for her magic? When had that been developed?

"You gonna take it, or do I need to pry your jaw open?" he asked her.

The young witch squeezed her arm when she handed it to her. Hermione looked at her with wide eyes.

"Three days," the girl said.

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“What did I just tell you,” Dolohov snarled.

Hermione looked to Dolohov, large and in the only doorway, wand drawn. The young witch bit her lip. The older witch kept her back to the room.

Three days. And then what?

Hermione swallowed it. Two large gulps. Minny.

As the girl took the bottle back from her, Dolohov said, “And the other. The spell.” The girl’s fingers shook.

“For her?” The young witch turned over her shoulder to stare wide-eyed at Dolohov.

He raised a brow. “She’s a Mudblood, isn’t she?”

“But...” The girl looked at her.

Hermione watched her struggle, unable to ask what was happening as they talked about her.

“Is there a problem?”

“Wouldn’t that be... a huge waste, sir?”

The older witch didn’t turn around but continued to write on her chart.

“Under what circumstances could you see us needing her to be fertile?” A heavy rock dropped in her stomach. She looked down at her hands.

They were sterilizing all the Muggleborns.

“She’s supposed to be quite bright. Very talented. Those genes would—”

“She’s dirty. Perform the spell,” Dolohov said with finality.

A churning in her stomach. She didn’t want children. Not like this. Not with one of them.

“I’d like to speak to Mr. Yaxley about this. He is her Holder and I think he—”

“Are you disobeying direct orders?” Dolohov advanced.

Hermione closed her eyes. She didn’t want to bear Dolohov’s children. She should be glad he was on the same page. But to be sterilized was so permanent. Like the future was set. Like there was no way to reverse

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She looked up, remembering Ginny’s lifted chin. The theatre was full. Balcony after balcony. Must have been over a thousand people, and Hermione despaired at the thought that Voldemort had this many followers already. How many of these people had been lying in wait, biding their time until the end of the war? And now here they were.

The noise continued for ages. Her eyes landed on the masked Death Eaters on the ground level, filling up the majority of the front rows. Some of them on their feet, screaming and taunting and punching their fists in the air. Some of them seated, whispering to each other and pointing to the stage.

She scanned the crowd, looking for Bellatrix, for Greyback, for the Dark Lord himself. She recognized Yaxley in the front, Dolohov by his side. Mulciber and Nott Sr. She couldn’t find the blond locks of Lucius Malfoy, or the raven curls of Bellatrix.

“Alright! Alright!” Bagman laughed, sounding like his old self again. “I know we’re excited. Some of us have special toys to go home to...”

Hermione slid her eyes to Ludo as the men cackled. He’d been seduced by it all. Infected. He met her eyes and quickly looked away.

“Our final Lot of the evening,” he announced theatrically. He read off her appraisal notes. “Hermione Granger.” Hissing. “Mudblood.” Booming. “Golden Girl.” Jeering. “Friend to Harry Potter, Gryffindor, and enemy of the Dark Lord.”

They were on their feet again, screaming. She heard the words *Mudblood* and *Bitch* and *Kill the slut*.

String her up!

—deserves this, the dirty—

Show us her quim!

Have a bit of fun with her, you will!

Make an example out of her.

Bend over, sweetheart! Let’s take a look at ya!

Mudblood whore. I’d love to break her in.

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debts. As the guards turned Ginny and forced her offstage, Hermione wondered if there was something she'd missed. If there was something she could have done differently.

Maybe they shouldn't have ceased fighting in the courtyard once Hagrid appeared with Harry's body. Shouldn't have given Voldemort an audience. Shouldn't have put all their faith in Harry.

Maybe she shouldn't have followed Narcissa Malfoy around the castle. She should have stayed and taken cues from McGonagall. Maybe they would have been able to attack again.

They escorted Ginny toward her, and as her bottom lip trembled beneath somebody's dried blood, Hermione decided her only true mistake had been not killing Dolohov in the Ministry corridors.

She should have killed Dolohov, and then Yaxley, and then taken whoever was still alive and escaped. She should have let Luna die. It was probably for the best.

She looked over Ginny's face for the last time, and watched her lips mouth, *I will find you*.

Hermione whispered back, *Not alone*.

Ginny disappeared through the backstage door.

"And now... our grand finale."

It sounded like Ludo Bagman was announcing the Seeker entering the stadium. Perhaps he had? It could be if she just closed her eyes. The theatre thundered.

She blinked, trying to focus. She needed to be present. Maybe once this day was over, she would fall asleep with her concussion and never wake up.

They pushed her forward, escorting her onstage. Bagman was yelling something over the crowd, but she just squinted against the lights. Someone was operating the theatre spotlight, and Hermione almost laughed at that image.

She looked down at her feet as they placed her on a red "X" next to Bagman. Her gold dress shimmered.

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anything about to happen to them.

"Yes, sir. I am."

Her eyes snapped open to see the young mediwitch standing between herself and Dolohov. The older woman turned, pressing her lips together. Dolohov laughed. And then quickly, "*Crucio*."

Hermione flinched when the girl dropped. The room was too small for her screams.

"I'll do it." The other woman stepped forward, pulling her wand. Dolohov released the other girl, and she panted below Hermione's feet.

The older witch stepped over her partner, standing in front of Hermione with a firm expression. "Lie back."

Hermione didn't fight her. She needed to save her energy for battles that mattered. She couldn't use wandless magic for three days. She couldn't physically best anyone. And without either of those options, she couldn't outthink them either.

She leaned back, and watched as the mediwitch hovered her wand over Hermione's stomach, placing a hand on her waist to hold her to the table. Hermione swallowed. The wand twisted over her left side, and a spell was muttered.

She thought of small fingers and toes. A boy with shaggy brown hair in her lap, pouting over a book.

Something wrenched inside of her. Severing her. Her legs jerked, throat clicking on a silent gasp of pain. She stared at the ceiling as the older witch moved to her right side.

Her fallopian tubes were being severed.

The wand tapped at her right hip as the older witch leaned over her, obstructing Dolohov from view. And she thought she could see a bright bow balanced on twisting curls.

The wand twisted again. A tear dripped out of her lashes.

And then the hand on Hermione's stomach pinched the flesh on her hip between two nails.

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She jumped, legs spasming. If she had her voice she would have yelped. Hermione looked to the older witch, confused. What was that for?

The woman pulled away, smoothing her hand down Hermione's stomach and turned to Dolohov. "It's done."

But there was no internal cut. Not on the right side.

Dolohov grinned, and the older woman pulled the young girl off the floor. Dolohov held Hermione's clean clothes out to her, barking at her to dress quickly. The mediwitches made notes on their papers, keeping their eyes down.

Hermione didn't even worry about Dolohov's eyes as she redressed. She watched the women.

Stepping in front of a Death Eater to give Hermione Granger a chance at a future. The older woman met her eyes as Dolohov hauled her out the door. He whispered something into her ear about mourning the mutts they would have had.

He returned her to the holding room, and Hermione didn't even flinch as his hand passed over her backside. Her mind was spinning. The only weapon she had left.

"Hermione?"

The door clanged closed. And fifty girls came to their feet. Even Pansy looked on with curiosity.

Ginny pushed her way forward, holding her, touching her, asking her questions she couldn't answer.

"Hermione?" Ginny prompted when she hadn't spoken.

She raised her fingers to her throat and shook her head. She watched Ginny's eyes flatten. Watched Cho frown at the ground. Watched a room full of girls realize Hermione Granger's swotty voice had been taken away.

Luna stepped forward. "Are you hurt, Hermione?"

She looked at the small smile on Luna's lips. She shook her head no.

She didn't need them to know any more than that.

Had half of these girls been sterilized? Did the mediwitches spare

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face to look at Hermione, and dried blood trailed down from her temple. Her hair wild. Her eyes dead. They'd left her bloody. Like a gladiator. Forced to entertain.

Had she killed that guard?

Hermione watched as Ginny turned back to the howling crowd, setting her face against the harsh lights.

"Mulciber, we *all* know you don't have that kind of gold!" Bagman's voice cut through the pounding in her ears. The Death Eaters laughed. "Only serious bets here, gentlemen!"

Ginny was being auctioned. Then her.

She'd missed it. She'd missed the entire Auction. She wouldn't know where everyone ended up. Where Luna was sent, or Ron and Neville. She'd have to gather the information as best she could, and hope for a rebellion. She turned back to the stage as the gavel banged.

"Sold!" The audience erupted. "Ginevra Weasley, love of the late Harry Potter, sold to Aron Avery for 28,550 Galleons!"

Her stomach heaved, and the guard at her right propped her up.

Such a lot of money. An insane amount. She wondered if she'd really fetch her appraised price—33,000 Galleons.

The noise from the crowd deafened her momentarily, and then she *knew* her concussion wasn't healed. She watched with a spinning head as several guards marched onstage – none of them her guard – and secured Ginny's wrists. Ginny kept her head up, eyes high on the balcony as Macnair and Avery came forward.

Avery's smug thin lips smirked at the crowd. Macnair produced a scroll from his robes, and the yelling intensified as Avery took the offered quill. Ginny jerked her arm, wincing as Avery signed his name on the scroll. The brand on their forearms must change to reflect ownership.

Avery turned to the crowd, grinning wide with crooked teeth. He slapped Ginny's backside, and Hermione watched her teeth clench.

Her head pounded as Macnair escorted Avery back offstage to settle his

in front of him.

“Good work, Malfoy.”

She had just enough time to wonder if it was Draco or Lucius before Yaxley stunned her.



Her head burst apart, and she gasped noiselessly against the pain.

Thunder rolling through her, rattling her head. She blinked her eyes open, and found herself backstage of the Palace Theatre again, the stage lights burning into her irises.

The sound of a gavel, and she knew where she was.

Raucous yelling. Cheering and jeering. She blinked against the lights, feeling the pounding in her forehead, and focused on the figure in white onstage standing next to Ludo Bagman.

Red hair and freckled skin. Ginny struck her nose in the air, ignoring the taunting.

There were two guards on either side of Hermione, holding her up until she stood on her own. She'd been *Remnervated* by one of them. She turned to look at the girls, but all she found was broken chair legs and drying blood.

And a blonde wig and locket. A blue dress.

Twisting to look around pulled at her shoulder, recently reset. She found a backstage mirror, cracked down the middle, and saw that they had banished the blood from her face. She couldn't tell if the concussion had been healed. She was nauseous and spinning, but it might have been the symptom of a handful of other things.

Neither of the guards holding her was the one she'd seduced. She faintly remembered Ginny pressing a chair leg into his windpipe.

Had Ginny...

She turned back to look at the dried blood on the black floors. Ginny stood onstage in her white dress, splattered with red. She turned her spotlight

others?

And what purpose did that serve if she was just going to be sold and raped? Why would the older witch save fifty percent of her chances?

A gasping from the corner. Several of them turned to see a young girl no more than fourteen starting to cry. Starting to hyperventilate. Penelope Clearwater came to her side, and wrapped her arms around her, demanding that she breathe.

“What... what are we— are we going to do?” the girl cried. “She couldn't— She didn't get out.”

Hermione took a slow inhale, looking away. She found Sally Fawcett in the crowd, silent tears streaming down her face.

Pansy closed her eyes, leaned her head back on the wall, and took a deep breath in.

Ginny spun around the room. “Hey. It's— this isn't the end. We have time.”

Someone else began to snifle. A wail from the young girl in Penelope's arms.

And Hermione realized they needed to know. She needed to tell them. She looked around for something she could write with. Nothing sharp to carve. Nothing like chalk.

The only thing they had was fruit.

She moved to the basket. A huge bowl of grapes. It would take time, but it would do.

She pulled the bowl to the center of the room, and started plucking them off the vine.

She thought of the small mediwitch's screams. The way she'd stepped in front of her before she'd dropped to the floor.

Hermione spelled it as best as she could.

The plump woman's eyes — cold and distant even as she helped her. Not betraying anything. Her calculating gaze when she and Dolohov left the room.

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Luna came to her side, standing next to her and watching.

She saw more feet come close to the grapes, waiting for her to be finished.

The vine was almost bare, and Hermione thought of Lydia Baxter, who she'd never met before today. She thought of Parvati and the way the dark-haired girl would copy her notes in Charms class.

She finished spelling. One grape left and she gave it a final period at the end. Like it was fact.

She stood, staring down, letting fifty girls swarm her to read what the Golden Girl had to say to them.

Not alone.

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top of him, slamming the wood against him.

“Some kind of... commotion. Nothing to worry about—”

All fifty girls had just figured out how to get out of their chairs. And there were only seven guards. The sound of breaking wood and splintering chair legs was everywhere.

“Stay in your seats, gentlemen.”

Curses started flying. Hermione stood hunching, the back of her chair stuck to her palms. She twisted and threw herself onto the floor, feeling the chair break under her. A pop as her shoulder dislocated, and she yelped with no sound. She sat up, looking for an exit, but blood dripped into her eyes from where she'd head-butted the guard.

Running footsteps, thundering from the stage, and the Death Eaters were there, casting stunning spells and kicking girls aside to beat through the crowd. She recognized Dolohov's boots.

She wobbled to her knees and crawled back, hugging the walls. She found a few scared girls there, but she pushed through, moving around the scrambling bodies.

She heard Macnair screaming orders, and Yaxley organizing the stunned bodies, yelling for them to get to her.

A pair of arms from behind her, wrapping around her waist, tugging her back. She kicked, and he dropped her, her elbow slamming into the ground. Arms around her again, and she wasn't sure if they were the same.

She was pulled up, held against a man's chest with his arms wrapped around her shoulders and wound against her hips. She screamed silently, kicking the air. He moved with her, dragging her away.

Was he stealing her or bringing her back?

The air smelled of blood and pine. And she wondered where the revolutionaries were.

She was concussed, she could tell.

She heard Yaxley's voice close by, and the man turned with her.

Yaxley was blurry with the blood in her eyes, but he held his wand out

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guards on them and one was focused on her, one focused on Pansy.

Hermione straightened her spine like Pansy had, watching as his eyes darkened. Ludo read George Weasley's catalog.

"Twenty-years-old. Pure-blood. So, if anyone is looking for a blood traitor to play with..."

Ludo chuckled and the crowd hissed.

Her guard knelt down, pretending to tie his shoe. She checked with Pansy, seeing her pale-faced guard trailing fingers across her collarbone while she licked her lips. He started peeling down her shoulder strap.

"Fine muscle mass, as you can see on your parchments. If you need another house elf, this might be your lucky day."

Fingers on her ankle, and she was reminded of Dolohov. The guard slid his hand up her calf, pushing her knees further apart. She bit her lip like Pansy, and heard Ginny struggling next to her, realizing what was happening to her.

"Let's start the bidding at 2,000 Galleons."

She leaned her face down towards him, and he had his eyes on her lips when she reeled her head back and slammed her forehead into his.

He yelled and her head spun. She heard a crash from Pansy's direction, and a splintering from her right where Ginny sat.

She tried to open her eyes but her skull ached. A splintering from somewhere else, a scrambling. Grunting and yelling.

The distracted guards cursing and running away from the curtains.

She opened her eyes and made out several bodies, thrashing on the ground. Ginny had thrown herself, breaking her chair. The pieces of wood her hands struck to were firm in her fists, beating against the dark-featured guard.

She blinked slowly and looked over to find Pansy raising a splintered chair back, and impaling her guard in the stomach with a silent scream. Penelope Clearwater had most of her chair still put together, and swung it at the head of a running guard, knocking him back and climbing on



On a day she assumed was Thursday, they showered them again. She was taken first, alone. Dolohov watched her undress again, watched her under the spray. He scourgified her clothing and handed each item back to her, one at a time.

Starting with her knickers.

He smiled and ran his fingers across the cotton as she stood in front of him, dripping in her towel.

"Cherish these moments, Mudblood," he said. "You won't need little knickers any longer after tomorrow."

She gave him no reaction. Unable to speak, she concentrated on becoming expressionless. She tugged the knickers on under the towel, and struggled the rest of the clothing on her still wet body.

When they returned her and took five girls, then five more, none of them complained about the lack of privacy in the showers. So, she assumed it was a special circumstance for her.

Word got around among the girls that the Auction would take place that Friday night. Enough whispers had been overheard to take a solid guess. Ginny began to pace around the room, trying to figure out as many details as she could. Hermione sat in the corner with Luna while the blonde played with her hair, braiding it and unbraiding it absentmindedly.

"Should we try again to attack?" Ginny asked the room. "We don't have magic, but we have numbers. Instead of five against two, we could be fifty against a handful."

There was a thick silence, and someone said, "After what happened..."

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with Parvati and Lydia... I just—”

“I’d be more afraid of living than dying, if I were you,” Pansy said, staring at her nails.

“Are you volunteering with me, Parkinson?” Ginny asked.

Pansy smirked. “I don’t volunteer.”

Ginny looked over at her. “Hermione! What do you think? They haven’t upped the number of guards. It’s still just Dolohov and at least one more. The next time they come into the room, we could... I don’t know.” Ginny let her arms drop to her side.

Ginny stared at her, hopeful, excited. Hermione stared back.

Ginny had private showers for five days now. She hadn’t watched Lydia Baxter bleed to death in front of her. She hadn’t listened to Luna’s screaming. She hadn’t felt the heat of Dolohov’s hand between her legs, hadn’t felt his foul breath as he talked in slow whispers about what he wanted to do to her body.

Ginny had a voice.

And it was brilliant that she still wanted to use it. Truly. But Hermione was already having trouble making eye contact with people. And she knew enough about shock, and submission, and torture to know that she was not in the right state of mind to discuss this right now. That people would die, and it would live on Hermione’s soul like a fungus.

Ginny was waiting for an answer. The entire room was.

Hermione still had no voice. Instead, she shrugged.

Then, watched Ginny blink at her. Watched several of the younger girls look away, eyes wet. Watched Pansy’s eyes narrow and Penelope Clearwater’s gaze drop.

Luna took her hand, laced their fingers together and hummed a small song.

“Nothing?” Ginny scowled. “Just”—she shrugged, an imitation of her—“just nothing?” She laughed, a hollow sound. “Merlin, Hermione! Think! Give an opinion! Isn’t that what you’re good at?”

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Hermione looked up and found his pacing slowing whenever he crossed in front of her, his eyes at the hem of her dress every time.

“We have seventy-seven Lots for auction tonight,” Ludo announced magnanimously. The crowd erupted. Ginny pulled against the chair, hands stuck to it. Her teeth bared and her shoulders tight.

“Gentlemen, we’ll bring each Lot onstage, one at a time. I have here their grading, important facts, and blood status. All Lots sold as is. The winning bidders will coordinate with Walden Macnair at the end to arrange payment.”

Hermione let the words wash over her. She watched Pansy’s dress rise higher, watched her gaze drift over to one of the guards – a pale boy who Hermione recognized from Hogwarts. His eyes had landed on Pansy’s thighs. Pansy smiled at him.

Another weak link.

Hermione took a deep breath, and looked up at her guard. He met her eyes. She watched his face as she slouched in her chair, opened her knees, and let Pansy Parkinson teach her how to survive.

His eyes skimmed down her body as her dress slid up.

“Let’s start off the evening right,” Ludo crowed. “With a Weasley.”

The audience screamed, and Ginny thrashed.

“Not that Weasley!” Ludo teased. The crowd cackled. “Not that Weasley, either!” They hissed. “Let’s start off with one of those other gingers.” He gestured to the other side of the stage, and George was dragged out, hands stuck together behind his back. He had a black eye and a limp. It seemed that the Healers were only called for the girls. Or maybe the damage was done today.

Ludo Bagman laughed and beckoned George to his side, but Hermione could see he was grey. He knew the Weasley twins. Even if they had their disagreements, he knew them.

The guard who favored Hermione inched closer to her. The two who stood watching the first bidding were joined by two more. Only three

her heart thunder in time with the applause.

One of the girls a few chairs away started to hyperventilate. Or at least that's what it looked like. She dipped her head between her knees, tears tracking down her cheeks, mouth open wide. One of the guards went to check on her, wrenching her up, and Hermione noticed that all of the guards were young, eager boys. One or two might have been at Hogwarts with her, but most looked in their twenties.

She glanced at Pansy again. It was like the dark-haired girl had never taken her eyes off of her from the moment she sat down. Pansy's eyes flipped to the brooding guard again, and back.

What? What did she want?

She didn't recognize him. Didn't know how she could work this.

Ludo was beginning some kind of opening remarks. They sounded rehearsed. Some propaganda about the days to come.

Hermione looked at the guard. His gaze on her knees again.

She felt like she should have been disgusted, but Pansy wanted her to pay attention. To see something else.

Two of the young guards moved to the curtains, watching and listening to Ludo.

They weren't bidding.

Hermione looked to Pansy, mind working.

They were not initiated, and they did not have the funds to actually secure a Lot.

His eyes on her legs again.

And this one was greedy.

Pansy locked eyes with her and slouched down in her chair, opening her knees. Hermione blinked when her dress rode up with the movement. Pansy stretched her legs out, crossing them at the ankles, and straightening her spine until her chest stood out, thin slate dress pulling down.

Hermione felt like she was being seduced. Pansy lowered her lashes at her, and then looked to the dark guard.

Ginny's eyes were wide and on fire. Several girls shifted and stared with rapt attention.

"Ginny—" Cho started.

"No! She's *always* thinking. Always with the plan and always two steps ahead of everyone else, planning adventures no one else is invited on, and saving the world whenever Harry asks, but now Harry's dead and she can't be bothered to care?" Ginny sucked in air, voice quivering. Hermione felt her cheeks flush and tears spring to her eyes. "She's not fighting!"

"She *did* fight! She lost!" Mortensen yelled.

"Then she fights *again*!" Ginny snapped back. "If she doesn't—" Ginny turned to face her, addressing her again. "If you don't fight then what the fuck are the rest of us supposed to do?!" She gestured to the room of them. Hermione felt a buzzing in her ears. "Kingsley and McGonagall are gone. So, there's just *you*, Hermione! If Harry were here, he'd—"

Her voice cracked, like it had been cut in half. She moved her lips wordlessly, squeaking.

"If Harry..." she tried, breaking. Ginny clapped a hand over her mouth, eyes wide and watering.

Luna released Hermione's hand, nudging her to move, and Hermione was up, crossing to Ginny, pulling her into her arms, and holding her as she broke into pieces, voice echoing against the tiles in strange patterns.

She mouthed words against her ear, telling her how sorry she was and how much she wanted things to be different. All the clichés that sounded awful when said aloud, but when breathed into Ginny's fiery hair, they made sense. She told Ginny about Dolohov, about his hands and his eyes and how she wished she had killed him when she had the chance.

Ginny quieted, and Hermione pulled back to hold her face between her fingers looking into her eyes and breathed, *We will survive this. I will find you.*

Ginny nodded.

Hermione stepped away, feeling every eye on them. She turned in a

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circle, meeting the stare of each girl, reading the fear and the exhaustion. She ended on Pansy Parkinson, who held her eyes.

She couldn't speak for herself. Couldn't give voice to what she wanted to say to them. She looked down, maybe she could spell it again.

Grapes again. In a bowl near her feet. Hermione reached down, plucked one from the vine, and looked directly into Ginny's red eyes and extended it to her.

Not alone.

Ginny nodded, and took the grape from her fingers.

She felt the room breathe, drinking in the peace.

The door banged open.

She sprang away from Ginny, grabbing more grapes, like it was her intention for being in the center of the room.

She listened for Dolohov's heavy boots, but they didn't come. She looked to the door.

"Well, hello everyone." A tall young man sending them a dazzling grin.

Marcus Flint. He'd gotten his teeth fixed.

"Granger," he nodded at her. "Lovely to see you again." He let his eyes trail down her torso, tilting his head as he took in her hips and legs. He looked down at a piece of paper in his hand, eyes running down the page. He frowned. "Ah. Of course not." He looked up at her again, sighing dramatically. "It would have been too good to be true." A smile.

Hermione stared at him, moving slowly back to her side of the room.

Raising his voice, he announced, "Let me see Mortensen, Fawcett, Jimenez, and..." His brow lifted. "Parkinson."

Two girls slowly stepped forward. Hermione eyed the open door, just making out Yaxley's boots beyond the frame.

"For what?" Pansy snapped.

Flint searched the room for her, finding her in her normal corner. He smirked. "Oh, how the mighty have fallen..." he murmured. "I have a new

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These guards were not Death Eaters. They weren't wearing the robes and masks, and the forearms she could see did not bear the Dark Mark. Aspiring Death Eaters, maybe? She wondered what were the politics of Voldemort's inner circle now that the war was won. Those who did not fight were probably not granted status.

She made a mental list of Death Eaters she last knew to be alive. She'd seen most of them in the last week.

Hermione frowned. Lucius Malfoy had not come to collect his Lots. Was it possible he hadn't captured any? Or that he'd only taken males?

There was little doubt in her mind that he was out in the crowd tonight. Voldemort too, probably.

Was Draco?

She looked to Pansy, still staring back at her. He probably was. He needed to come claim her.

Ludo Bagman cleared his throat, checked his timepiece, and moved to the edge of the curtain. He seemed focused on ignoring the presence of the fifty of them. The hum of the crowd swelled.

Hermione turned to Ginny, silenced and tied. She had her knees pressed together tightly, her eyes on the floor. It was like she was experiencing the full range of Hermione's shame, only a few days after. The shame that had killed the fire in her.

Ludo Bagman stepped on stage and a light hit him, igniting his smile and jaunty step. The theatre roared, and Hermione jumped with the pressure of it. Hundreds.

Ginny flinched next to her.

Hermione's eyes found several props and costumes tossed in the corner behind them. A long blonde wig and locker. A blue scullery factory dress. They should have been gathered and hung at the end of the performance.

What happened to the actors?

"Welcome!" Ludo's amplified voice spun over the crowd. "Welcome. Find your seats, gentlemen." He stepped up to a podium. Hermione felt

Hermione recognized them as the notes the appraiser had taken.

She wanted to scream. He could stop this. He could try. He wasn't like the rest of them.

But people like the appraiser, Bagman, even the mediwitches and French girls... they were doing their best, Hermione concluded. Too powerless to fight, but against joining. When contracted, they obeyed.

Bagman looked down at one of the pages and turned to Macnair. "Is this an error? This number?"

Macnair looked and smiled. "No error. Potter's Princess. If you think that's good, take a look at the Golden Girl."

Bagman flipped to the next page and she watched his face pale. He met her eyes instantly, like he already knew her place in the room.

"We need to take our seats, Mr. Bagman," Macnair announced, earning the attention of the other Death Eaters. He offered his hand and Ludo took it. "The Palace is yours."

The Palace Theatre in London. Her parents had taken her here three summers ago. She'd sat in the front row of the first balcony, entranced by the 19th century French story she'd read in Hugo's book years before, gasping as the barricade rose, and sobbing as each life was ended.

Hermione looked onstage again. She recognized the set pieces now. It was eight o'clock on a Friday night. There should have been a show. She shivered to think that in one week, the Death Eaters had infiltrated Muggle London.

She met Ron's eyes across a stage set for revolution, memorizing the features she could just make out. Perhaps this was the last time she would see him.

Yaxley and the others followed Macnair out, slipping their masks on. Dolohov made sure to sweep by her, trailing his fingertips across one shoulder, dipping below her collarbone and across.

When she could bring her eyes off the floor she looked up to see the heavy-browed guard looking at her chest.

potion to test out," he announced. He gazed around the room, eyes landing on Hermione again. "Something that could be quite lucrative in this current... market. I needed some test subjects. And here you all are." He grinned.

Hermione shuddered from her shoulders down to her fingertips.

"So those four girls please line up—"

"What kind of potion?" Pansy pried. She had the most history with Marcus Flint and it showed in the way he glared back at her.

Yaxley turned the corner, standing in the doorway and hissed, "Do it." Mortensen joined the other two, Pansy drifting in line last. Flint looked Mortensen up and down, and told her to leave the line. He looked at the list and called out for a Nelson, and when a pale, thin-faced girl wobbled forward, he dismissed her before she even got in line.

"Jimenez step back. Let's see Sandhu?" A tall raven-haired girl with a thin waist and long legs stepped forward. Flint appraised her and smirked. He looked down at the list again, "Let's see, let's see."

"What's the list for?" Pansy repeated.

Flint grinned at her. "I'm allowed to take my pick of any of the Lots on this list. The rest of them would cost me 5,000 galleons up front."

Hermione paled. He had a list of the non-virgins. So, whatever this was, it was sexual.

"Lots?" Ginny spoke up. Flint's eyes swiveled to her.

"Lots for sale. That's what you are now."

A wave of silence, crashing like water in the bottom of a deep well.

The first time anyone had mentioned the Auction to them. Confirmed it.

Flint looked Ginny up and down, checked his list, and frowned. "Really Weasley? Don't tell me poor Potter had to die a virgin." He looked up at her. "Couldn't take one for the team?"

Even without magic, Hermione felt the air around Ginny crack. Ginny launched herself forward with a holler, latching on to Flint and

scratching at his face, reaching for his throat.

BANG!

Ginny flew back, body smacking into the dark tile wall opposite the door, held up by Yaxley's wand.

Flint righted himself, grinning.

Girls scurried away from Ginny's dangling body like roaches in the light. Her legs kicked.

"Oh, I like *her*." Flint cooed. "She's Dolohov's? I'm sure he wouldn't mind if we played with her for a bit—"

"The Dark Lord wants her intact," Yaxley commanded.

Hermione braced herself against the wall, next to Luna again. The first time anyone had mentioned Voldemort to them.

Ginny chuckled, a manic sound. "Tom misses me?"

Yaxley rolled his eyes and held her there while Marcus Flint returned to his floor show.

"Alright, who else." Flint looked over the list again, pacing the room.

He stopped. "Penelope Clearwater."

A shuffling from a corner, and Penelope stepped forward with her chin up.

"Huh." Flint smirked. "I thought you'd never give it up." He walked around her in a circle, and to her credit, Penelope didn't flinch. "Oi, remember when I invited you to the Yule Ball, and you choose that Poncey Weasley instead?"

Her jaw ticked.

"Are you done yet?" Yaxley asked. Flint's eyes never left Penelope's.

"Yes. I'll take Clearwater, and bring Parkinson for Macnair. He'll probably prefer a pure-blood whore."

Penelope and Pansy were marched out. The door slammed and Ginny's body dropped from the wall.

Two hours later, they returned Penelope. She kept her eyes down, not speaking, and laid in the corner facing the wall.

Ron was screaming in silence, and she saw his lips form her name.

She could just make out twenty other chairs, lined up just like theirs. Neville sat slumped over in one. She thought she could make out Oliver Wood in another.

Hermione turned to Ginny, wiggling to get her attention, but Ginny was already staring across the stage, smiling softly, cheeks wet with slow tears.

The buzzing she'd associated with portkey travel ebbed and grew, and Hermione realized she was hearing an audience, just beyond the curtains. Hermione whipped her head around, trying to take in as much as she could. Exits, hiding places, weapons.

There were about seventy prisoners according to Yaxley's count yesterday. There were fourteen Death Eaters on this side of the stage, and half of them were planning to bid. They couldn't do that from back here.

Seven guards for fifty girls. Possibly similar ratios on the other side.

She looked up and found Pansy staring directly at her, twenty feet away. Her eyes abruptly flicked to one of the guards and then back to Hermione.

Hermione looked and found a dark-featured twenty-something bloke. He was thin with dark brows that made him look more menacing than his size suggested. As she looked at him, his eyes drifted to her thighs.

A chill raced along her skin, and she watched as he blinked away. She looked back at Pansy, not knowing what she wanted. Was she warning her?

Before she could think on it, a man swept in through a door, Macnair trailing behind him. Ludo Bagman. His eyes traveled over the chairs, stopping briefly over the faces he knew. He looked down at his shoes and fiddled with the papers in his hands.

"The Death Eaters thank you for your services, Mr. Bagman," Macnair hissed, clapping him on the shoulder.

"Yes, Macnair. I am... glad to be of service." He shuffled the papers, and



CHAPTER 4

Several girls tried to feed her, make her drink water, get her to talk about it. She didn't move. They left a pile of grapes for her in hopes she would eat when she was ready.

As Hermione added a grape to Penelope's pile, she looked toward the door, wondering why Pansy hadn't been returned.



When she woke on Friday morning, Pansy Parkinson was sitting next to her, staring down at her face with an open expression, like she'd fallen asleep with her eyelids open, watching her. Her deep eyes blinked at seeing Hermione awake, and the familiar sneer and pout returned to her lips. Hermione sat up slowly, heart beating fast like it did while they were on the run, always looking for enemies.

No one else was awake except a few girls in the far corner who were known to stay awake in misery.

Hermione looked back to Pansy, and the girl flicked her limp hair over her shoulder in a way that reminded Hermione of Charms class. She'd never been this close to her. If she concentrated, she could still smell her perfume. Something floral that used to stick to Draco's robes.

Pansy lifted a still-perfect brow and looked out over the room of sleeping girls.

"I used to envy you."

Hermione waited. Waited for the proof that someone else had spoken. Waited for her mind to conjure the meaning behind the words.

"On the day I left for Hogwarts, my father told me to concentrate on my studies because I wasn't pretty enough to catch a husband. I thought it was a strange thing to say to an eleven-year-old, but..." Pansy swallowed. Hermione held her breath, watching Pansy's perfect bow lips and dark lashes. "When he saw my marks at the end of third year, he told me he expected me to be the top girl in my class by the end of fourth, and I said, 'That's impossible. There's a Mudblood girl who can't be beat. But don't

When they spun into their destination, Hermione had two seconds to let her eyes adjust to the dark before she was forced onto a chair, arms behind her. They affixed her hands to the back of the chair with a Sticking Charm. Because he'd tightened and shortened her dress, she struggled to press her knees together, the wooden seat pressed against her bare backside.

Yaxley moved away from her, speaking with the guards in low voices, and Hermione looked around her to find chairs with restrained Lots lining the entire room.

Not a room. She looked up to a tall ceiling, maybe three stories high, dizzying her. Catwalks and ropes, but also strange things hanging from pulleys. Velvet curtains dropping down from above.

Backstage, Macnair had said. They rented out a theatre for this.

No, of course not. Hermione shook her head. No one *rented* anything. She looked to her right and found Ginny sitting next to her, staring down at her knees. It looked as if Dolohov had the same idea as Yaxley and had shortened and tightened Ginny's white dress. Ginny looked up at her, eyes wet, and mouthed, *Hi*.

She looked around. One of the Snatchers was still restraining and silencing his many charges. Her eyes drifted toward the source of light. The stage. They'd decorated it. She squinted at the tall pieces, trying to figure out what they were.

Movement across the stage, and Hermione found herself staring into the other wing, directly at Ron Weasley, struggling against his chair.

She gasped, soundlessly.

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worry, Daddy. I can catch a husband just fine. I have the Malfoy boy wrapped around my little finger.”

She broke into a laugh. Something low and self-deprecating. She tilted her head back against the wall and stared at the ceiling, shaking her head as if a toddler had just said something incredibly sweet and incredibly foolish.

Hermione stared, unable to speak, unable to move.

“And here we are,” Pansy continued, “at the end of days, waiting in a line to be sold and raped and used. And still, I can’t sleep with envy of you. Of what your life will be.”

Pansy’s head rolled against the wall to look at her again. Hermione stared with wide eyes, wishing more than anything that she could speak, could ask her what she meant.

Hermione watched as Pansy’s eyes dripped over her face, slanting across Hermione’s lips and cheeks, rounding at her temples and taking in her wild hair. Pansy’s lips parted, took a breath in to speak again—

“What are you doing? Get away from her!”

Ginny was awake, tugging at Hermione’s shoulders to put herself between her and Pansy.

Pansy rolled her eyes. “Calm your tits, Weasley. We were just having some girl talk.” Her sneer was back in place.

She drew herself up and paced back to the other side of the room, facing the wall.

Hermione watched her until the door opened.

A frail old man entered the room. He reminded her of Ollivander. Especially his eyes. His brows twitched as he took in the room of girls.

He cleared his throat and looked at his shoes, and then turned back to Yaxley in the doorway. “Is this all of them, Mr. Yaxley?”

“There’s about twenty males down the hall,” Yaxley replied.

Ginny shifted next to her, probably wondering how many of her brothers were footsteps away.

CHAPTER 4

Pansy stepped out from her spot behind a tall girl and pasted on a smirk. “Long time, no see, Walden.” She strutted to the group. “You gonna drop a few Galleons on me tonight?”

He looked her up and down and said, “Why would I pay for something I already got for free?”

Pansy’s smile fractured, still on her face, but broken now.

Pansy and the four other Lots followed Macnair’s instructions and gripped his arm. He produced the portkey and they disappeared.

Mulciber entered the room next. He called for his Lots and they disappeared. She recognized a few Snatchers come in gleefully, grabbing up eight or so girls before swirling away.

Dolohov and Yaxley came in last. Dolohov called for his Lots, and Luna and Ginny left her side.

When it was just her and Yaxley left in the room, she wandered over to him without being summoned. It was clearly a type of Stockholm Syndrome, but she was certain Yaxley wouldn’t hurt her. He hadn’t shown the slightest bit of sexual interest in her, going so far as to keep Dolohov from molesting her further.

He grinned at her and pulled his wand. Hermione blinked, feeling like she’d just walked into a trap.

“Bit of a costume change, love,” he said, smirking. “Turns out, you’ll be top prize tonight. Best for last.”

His wand tapped her shoulder strap, and she watched as the dress pulled closer to her skin, curving at her hips and rounding her breasts. No undergarments in the way.

He smiled and flicked his wand again, and she watched as the fabric shimmered gold.

“Golden Girl, indeed,” he said.

And then grabbed her arm and whisked her off.

followed her, voicing aloud the things they wanted to do. Like they had choices still.

There were no windows, so it was hard to tell when the day began to inch toward evening, but hours later, Walden Macnair walked into the room, several other Death Eaters waiting in the doorway behind him.

Hermione watched Pansy tuck herself behind another girl, spine curving to become smaller.

Macnair looked around the room with a careful intensity. His eyes stopped on Hermione and Ginny, smiling.

“Ladies,” he announced, and Hermione wondered if it was to be the last time she would be addressed with such formality. “We’ll begin transporting you now. Your Holder will be in charge of you while you travel by portkey. Anyone who tries to fight or run or disobey orders during this process will be killed promptly.”

He said this last part directly to her.

“Once you are secured backstage, you will follow instructions from the handlers. Disobedience will result in punishment. For example—”

Quick as lightning, his wand turned on her. A screaming pain rocked through her blood, boiling and coursing through her muscles, shaking her nerves and pulling her ligaments apart one by one.

And then it was gone. And Ginny’s hands were on her shoulders, holding her, screaming for her.

She stared up at the black tile ceiling, breathing hard. She’d been *Cruio’d* before, but this was strong. Like a concentrated force of lightning sizzling her. It took her a few minutes to sit up.

By the time she focused her eyes again, Macnair was finishing his speech, and asking for his Lots to join him. He searched the room as four girls stepped forward. The two in white were scared, but the two in grey were shaking.

He’d already raped them. Before bringing them here. Like Parvati. “Parkinson,” he hissed. “Come with me, too.”

“Well,” the man replied, taking his glasses off to clean them, brows narrowing at his fingers. “The best way is individually, but I fear we’ll run out of time. Proceedings start at eight?” He pushed his glasses back on his nose, and Hermione realized he refused to make eye contact with any of them. Refused to acknowledge them.

“Eight sharp.”

He nodded. “Then let’s get the women cleaned up while I start appraisals on the men. We might need to do groups.” He stared at his shoes and swept out.

Yaxley turned to her. “Mudblood. You’re up.”

There were probably twenty Muggle-born girls in the room, but still everyone understood he was addressing Hermione. She stood, wobbling to the door, and followed him to the showers. He didn’t stay in the room like Dolohov did. Didn’t watch her undress. She supposed if he wanted her, he wouldn’t be selling her.

She stood under the water, enjoying what was probably to be her last moments of privacy and relative safety in her life.

She wondered if Ron was down the hall somewhere. Or if he’d fought them. If he’d thrown himself into the fire like a true Gryffindor and attempted to smother the flames from within.

What *would* Harry say, if he could see her now?

Yaxley banged on the door after two minutes, and she quickly ran the shampoo through her hair, washed between her legs, and toweled off. The door opened as soon as she covered herself, and Yaxley and a second Death Eater lead in five girls for their showers. She reached for her clothes on the floor, and Yaxley stopped her.

“Ah,” he chided. He vanished her garments and held a robe out to her. She took it carefully, draped it over herself, and let the towel drop once she was covered. The five girls stood against the wall, waiting patiently. As if this was routine now.

He vanished the towel and grabbed her elbow, leading her out of the

room. Dolohov was standing guard outside the showers and sent her a wink.

“Make sure they take all of it, Corban. I like ‘em bare.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Yaxley griped.

He turned her away from the usual path back to the holding room, and brought her down a new hallway. One Death Eater stood guarding the door. A young one Hermione recognized from Hogwarts. Maybe he’d been Slytherin’s Seeker before Draco.

He opened the door for Yaxley, and Hermione found three witches in bright blue robes hovering around three padded tables and three chairs. One of them with bright orange hair gasped when she saw Hermione, bringing her fingers to her lips. Hermione didn’t recognize her.

“Is there a problem?” Yaxley hissed.

The girl responded in a French accent, “No, monsieur.” The other two looked down, one of them wringing her hands.

“Do not communicate with her.” He yanked a curtain around the table and chair, standing on the outside of it.

The girls started speaking lowly in French, eyes wide and jumping to her. Hermione just stared back.

“You better be discussing curling irons,” Yaxley bellowed.

The girls quieted and indicated that Hermione should sit on the first table. The orange-haired girl touched Hermione’s shoulder and gestured for her to remove the robe.

Hermione frowned and shrugged. *Why the hell not.* They peeled the robe from her, and immediately started pressing lotion into her skin. She tensed under their hands. One of them lifted her arm above her head and pressed their wand to her armpit. Hermione twitched as the skin went numb, looking down anxiously. The witch muttered another spell and Hermione watched the hair burn away, sizzling down to the roots under the skin.

Inventive. She’d heard Lavender talking about this process, but she

The old man pulled her medical form. He shook his head slightly, clenching his jaw, and Hermione saw him make a mark in the top right corner of his notes page: *V*

He copied down her measurements, did some calculations, and said in a hollow voice, “Starting bid for Miss Granger should be no lower than 7,500 Galleons based on your grading system.” He pulled his glasses from his face. “But I’ve heard she and Miss Weasley will be starting at 10,000 regardless.”

Hermione blinked. More Galleons than she’d seen in her life.

“Apologies,” he continued, squinting at his numbers again. “With the virginity, they will be starting at 15,000.”

Pansy chuckled and crossed her arms over her grey dress.

“And what’s your estimation?” Yaxley asked, Sickles in his eyes.

“Estimating 33,000 Galleons.”

Hermione felt like she was swallowing sand. Even Pansy, who was used to that kind of money, went still.

That was the yearly salary for the Undersecretary to the Minister.

The four-year tuition for one of the prestigious universities that she considered applying to after the war ended.

She realized she would not be killed. No one would be idiotic enough to buy her and then kill her off. No, it would be a slow death for her. Maybe years.

She wondered how Dolohov thought he could afford this.

The old man duplicated his notes with a tap of his wand and handed the copies to Yaxley. Yaxley grinned, eyes sparkling, and escorted the two of them out and back to the holding room.

She spent the rest of the day sitting near Ginny and Luna. The energy of the room was like a cold breeze, starting at one end and rolling over them individually, forcing them to tuck into each other. At some point, one of the girls started dreaming aloud about what she wanted to do after Hogwarts. Hermione thought she was maybe a fifth year. Several others

the scale you've provided me with, starting bid should be 4,000 Gallions"—he marked this on his page—"and you can expect bidding to escalate to 12,000, based on her physical appearance and blood status. She was not sterilized, so she might be seen as valuable for certain families."

Hermione pressed her lips together, breathing slow. Pansy, on the other hand, turned to Yaxley and said, "Not bad, Yax," with a sly smile. "We can bump that starting bid up, though, can't we? Trust me," she said, leaning toward him conspiratorially. "I'm worth at least as much as one of the virgins. Much more useful." She winked.

Yaxley glared at her and threatened to silence her as well.

Hermione frowned, watching Pansy smile and flirt. Defense mechanism.

She'd probably been raped last night. Or tortured, or both. And now, instead of sitting quietly in a corner like Penelope Clearwater, Pansy Parkinson was weaponizing herself. Her body. Her wit. Her charm. All so she wouldn't break down.

Hermione didn't know how to do that. And she wasn't sure she wanted to learn.

"Next," the old man said.

Hermione stepped forward, and the measuring tape wound around her.

"Name."

"Hermione Granger," Yaxley replied for her.

The older man snapped his eyes up to her, taking her in. He blinked several times before returning to his paper.

"Blood status: Muggle-born," he said.

"Mudblood is the term now," Yaxley corrected, and the older man nodded.

"Age?"

"Seventeen," Yaxley replied, and she turned to correct him.

"Eighteen. She's eighteen," Pansy said.

Hermione blinked down at the tape circling her chest.

herself had never needed it. She would have liked it on the road with Harry and Ron though.

The memory pulled at something in her, and she looked straight ahead at the closed curtain, watching as the colors blurred.

The repeated the process under her other arm. Then removed hair from the tops of her forearms. Hermione frowned, her remaining vanity spiking. She didn't consider herself hairy.

When one girl started on her legs, the door opened behind the curtain. Yaxley led in one of the captured girls, fresh from her shower. One of the Lots.

Hermione snorted soundlessly. *The Lots. Well done, gentlemen.*

The sensation of her entire leg being numbed for the hair removal had her feeling a bit weightless, like her limbs did belong to her. She swung her legs, not feeling the air swish by. The girl rubbed lotion onto her hairless skin, and Hermione couldn't help but feel like she was being prepared for slaughter.

The skin of her underarm started pricking back to life. One of the French girls started in on the new Lot while the other one cast a hair-drying charm on Hermione's wet hair. The girl's eyes bugged out of her head at the sheer volume of Hermione's dried, frizzy hair, and Hermione couldn't help but laugh.

The hair girl charmed her wand to blow hot air, trying to tame down Hermione's curls, fixing her mistake.

A third Lot was brought in, and then only the French girl messing with her hair stayed with her. She kept frowning and huffing, and Hermione smiled at her knees. Her hairless knees.

I like 'em bare.

They'd be taking the hair from between her legs next.

Hermione picked at her chipped nails while the girl fought her hair, trying to remember the way she'd gotten ready for the Yule Ball. She'd bought that sweet-smelling potion and spent hours on her hair. She'd

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been about to jump in the shower to wash it all away when Lavender and Parvati had come back to the dormitory and squealed at the sight of her, telling her she looked stunning.

They were both dead now.

The French girl had her lay back, open her legs, and remain still while she removed the hair from her sex.



They were returned in small dresses and Mary Jane shoes. Half of them in white, half in grey. She could guess what the white meant.

The girls who could still speak started informing the rest of the room what was happening. About an hour later, Dolohov and the young Death Eater started taking a few at a time to a separate room. The Appraisal, one of the returning girls said.

"It's 5,000 galleons more if you're a virgin," Mortensen murmured from the corner, in a grey dress. "Parkinson was right."

Pansy looked stunning in her slate grey dress when they returned her. Hair thick and sharp. She might have even conned them into swiping mascara on her eyes. She stood in her corner, arms crossed, lips pressed together. As cool and collected as ever—and it made Hermione wonder what it was they did to her. What they kept her for. She wished she could ask her, but even if she had a voice she didn't think she'd have the courage to.

They took Ginny and Luna together, which she thought was a mistake, but she wasn't about to protest. Dolohov led them away with two other girls, and returned them fifteen minutes later. Ginny looked a little green.

Luna plopped down beside her and said, "We saw Neville." Hermione snapped her head to her, waiting for more. Luna just smiled and said, "They aren't feeding or bathing them much."

"Granger and Parkinson," Yaxley called from the doorway. "Let's go."

CHAPTER 4

She stood. These pairings... Not ideal for them. When Pansy met her at the door, Hermione finally caught a glance at the tattoo on her arm, now without her school clothes in the way.

C. Yaxley

Just like hers.

Yaxley was taking his Lots to be appraised. She wondered again how Pansy had gotten here. Was she held in the same location Hermione was before being dropped off at the Ministry? Had she been captured at the Battle of Hogwarts? Or later?

Yaxley took them down the corridor and into a completely new room where the older man with kind eyes sat at a desk, piles of paperwork around him.

"Who's next," he hummed, voice tired and thin.

Yaxley pushed Pansy forward. She stood tall. A measuring tape floated up and began taking her height while an enchanted quill worked beside it. It nudged her to raise her arms, measuring her waist, hips, chest.

"Name," he said.

"Pansy Parkinson," she stated proudly.

He looked up quickly, then looked away, pressing his lips together.

"Blood status: pure-blood," he muttered. "Age?"

"Seventeen."

He wrote that down, and took the measurement page from the air, copying down that information as well. He shuffled through a pile and found another parchment, frowning down at it. "Anything in your medical history we should know about?"

Pansy scoffed. "Will it really matter if I broke my leg when I was nine?"

He grimaced down at the page. "No, I guess not." He reviewed what seemed to be the medical page the mediwitches had scribbled up for each of them a few days before. He dragged his eyes back to Pansy, and peered at her over his spectacles, making note of her eye, hair, and skin color.

He sighed, rubbed the bridge of his nose, and said, "Alright, based on