"All Because of Hermione Granger"
"Angst - Destruction"

Life was absolute shit, Harry decided. He'd lost the last link to his parents, his godfather, and Remus had treated him like he'd just dropped out of Moony's butt during a full moon. The last day of term. Tomorrow, Harry would be setting off to the Dursleys, for another summer of chaos and misery.

It had been exactly eight days since the damned fight at the Ministry of Magic. Eight days since Sirius had been knocked through the Veil of Death in the Department of Mysteries by his own cousin.

Eight days since Dumbledore had told him that the fate of the world, literally, rested on his shoulders. His friends had been a little distant, probably on Dumbledore's orders.

Let him rest. Let him grieve in peace. It is what he needs right now. He could almost picture the meeting. Brave Ron, nodding in agreement because it was Dumbledore who told them. Beautiful Hermione, wanting the best for Harry. If Dumbledore, the greatest wizard in the world, didn't know what was best for Harry, at least in her eyes, who would?

Since then, he'd been moping around the castle. He'd turned up for lessons, let them go over his head so high they hadn't even ruffled his hair. It didn't matter. None of it really mattered.

Hermione.

She was part of the reason he was in such pain. When Dolohov's curse had hit her, Harry's brain locked. A single thought ran through it, *Don't be dead! Don't be dead!* When Neville had checked her, and found a pulse, Harry could have cried. Did cry, in fact. As long as she was alive, he'd survive. Bollocks to the prophecy. As long as Hermione lived, he would endure. She was his greatest strength. And also, he knew, his greatest weakness. If Voldemort ever found out how much he cared...

Cho Chang had been a distraction. He knew that. He'd thought to himself, if he went out with Cho, maybe he could banish the thoughts of Hermione that ran through his head. It had failed. While on the date with Cho, he'd mentioned needing to meet Hermione, and Cho had flown off the handle. For some reason, he hadn't really cared.

The train ride home. That's where it happened. Historians, looking back for that pivotal moment, would have only needed to look to the train ride, and all would have become clear.

The Ministry Six, as the *Prophet* was already calling them, had decided to share the journey home. It made sense to them, distracting stragglers, who would come up and ask them to explain what had happened. The last person to do that had received a nasty *Furnunculous* hex. When Malfoy had made his appearance, and been beaten soundly, it had sent a subtle message to the rest of the train to *not* disturb the people.

Harry waited until the train pulled up and Kings Cross, remaining sat while Ron, Ginny, Luna and Neville had grabbed their trunks and dashed away. Hermione waited with him, reading the signs that Harry needed to talk about something, but didn't want to speak in front of an audience.

"Is everything all right, Harry?" Hermione asked softly. "You've been very quiet."

Harry looked at her, relief on his face. "You know me so well, Hermione." She just nodded at him. "There was something I wanted to speak to you about. I'm not sure where to begin, though..."

Hermione smiled her beautiful smile at him, and he felt his heart melt. "You can tell me anything, Harry. You know that."

He just nodded. "Yes... Well... the thing is... Ihavefeelingsforyou." He blurted.

Hermione just cocked her head. "Sorry... didn't quite catch that, Harry."

Harry cleared his throat. "I... uh... I have feelings for you, Hermione." He whispered. "As in... I'm attracted to you."

"Oh." Hermione's face remained expressionless. "Uh... Harry..." She looked away. "I'm... uh... I'm not sure how to respond."

There was a 'crack' in his chest. He knew what it was. His heart had broken.

"I'm sorry, Harry." Hermione said softly, looking at her hands. "I... uh... I'm flattered, honestly. But... I'm not really looking for a relationship at the moment."

Harry just nodded, standing up abruptly. "Okay, Hermione. It's not a problem." He hefted his trunk, employing his meagre Occlumency skills to keep his face straight and his eyes dry. "I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable."

Hermione stood, placing a hand on his shoulder. "I'm still your best friend, Harry." She said softly. "I'll always be your best friends. I'm just not ready for a relationship."

He just nodded, before heading out of the door.

When Hermione reached her parents, her grin was enormous. "He told me, Mum!" were her first words to her parents.

Emma Granger knew immediately what that meant. "Really? That's excellent, sweetheart! What did you tell him?"

Hermione's grin dropped a little. "I... I told him I wasn't ready for a relationship at the moment. He took it quite well."

Dan sucked a breath through his teeth. "You're playing a dangerous game, pumpkin." He said. "You're playing with his emotions, here. Are you prepared for the consequences?"

Hermione scowled at her Dad. "I've been waiting for almost three years for him to wise up to the fact that I'm a girl, Dad. I'm allowed to make him feel the same that I've been feeling."

Emma and Dan glanced at each other, before looking over their shoulders at Harry. The slump in his shoulders was obvious, as an enormously fat man collected him from the station. Emma tapped on Hermione's shoulder, pointing out Harry's defeated air.

Hermione felt her heart go out to him. "I'll send him a letter in a couple of days, saying I've thought about it, and that I accept." *For three years, he's ignored me. The Yule Ball last year would have been the perfect opportunity for him to ask me, and he still didn't. No, it won't hurt for a couple of days.*

How wrong she was.

Harry's arrival at Privet Drive was unremarkable. Vernon pulled up, switched off the engine, and got out of the car as fast as his morbid obesity would allow him. Harry opened the door, grabbing his trunk and Hedwig's cage, before climbing out, and struggling into the house.

A fist in the stomach from Dudley announced the onset of summer, as Harry rocked backwards, breathless and winded. After a moment, he grabbed his trunk, heaving it up the stairs. Behind him, Petunia followed, intent on locking the freak away.

Harry slumped onto his battered little bed, hearing the six locks click, before the deadbolt was engaged and the little hasp flicked into place.

It didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him. She was his best friend, the person who knew him the best in the whole world, and she didn't love him. Nothing mattered anymore.

Days passed. Harry hadn't sent any letters to the Order, and nothing to his friends. Hedwig had been allowed free to hunt as needed, and came back with at least one letter a day. They were sitting, unopened, on the desk in front of Harry's bed. It didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

The Dursleys hadn't bothered to unlock the door, and Harry wouldn't notice if they had. They'd probably leave him in here until he died and started to decompose, before hustling his body into some dark alley in London.

But it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

The pile of letters grew. Hedwig was becoming annoyed at Harry's lack of interest in the letters she flew to collect. But it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

Since Harry hadn't eaten or drank anything since his arrival, his body stabilised. Nothing was going in, so nothing needed to come out. He hadn't moved in almost a week. His body was surviving on magic alone. Bed sores had appeared, open and weeping into the mattress. Harry had become pale and gaunt, dark circles under his eyes, due to lack of sleep.

When he did drift off, his dreams were nightmarish images of death and destruction, both real, thanks to the scar, and imagined, courtesy of his own twisted imagination. He watched everyone he'd ever cared about fall behind the Veil, each of the cursing his name as they fell.

But it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

Voldemort knew. Harry realised that he was starting to become delusional. His brain, starved of input, had decided to make its own. Instead of being worried, Harry found this wildly funny. The content of said delusions would have been terrifying to a normal mind. But Harry's wasn't normal anymore, because it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

The Dark Lord had started to add his own elements to Harry's delusions. He manipulated the images so that it showed the Department of

Mysteries. He was looking for the prophecy, Harry knew. It should have worried him, but it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

Voldemort came for him two weeks into his stay. He probably didn't have enough magic left to cast a '*Lumos*'. His body had been fighting to stay alive, burning through the core of Harry's magic, leaving his drained and vulnerable.

Thanks to the events of Harry's fourth year, the Blood Wards that had made Privet Drive so safe for Harry early in his life were utterly useless. Voldemort strolled through them with as much effort as it takes to cross a road.

Voldemort blew the door the #4 off its hinges, striding into the house like he owned the place. Three quick AK's, three flashes of green light, ended the Ancient and Noble house of Dursley. The last of the blood protection, gone forever by two little words.

But, it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

Voldemort marched up the stairs, punching through the locks on the door with no effort. As soon as he entered the room proper, even Voldemort, the man who'd raped, maimed, killed and burnt his way across the country for over twenty years, recoiled from the stench of Harry's unwashed body.

A flash of red light ended Harry's thoughts, knocking the delusions out of his head. But it didn't matter. None of it mattered. Hermione didn't love him.

Dumbledore felt the wards at Privet Drive breach. Something had gone very wrong. As quickly as he could, he assembled as many members of the Order as he could, and apparated to the edge of the wards. He marched forward, a relentless foe, intent on discovering what had gone wrong.

He approached Number 4, realising something dreadful had happened. There was no Dark Mark in the air, but the stench of death permeated the air.

In the living room, the three Dursleys lay, their last expressions permanently etched onto their faces. Usually, when faced with a Wizard trying to kill you, the last expression was fear. But for the Dursleys, death had come much quicker. Their last expressions appeared to be confusion.

Dumbledore made his way up the stairs, absently noting the kindling that used to be a door laying on the landing. When he entered the room, he fought the urge to retch. The stench in the room, unwashed body, was almost overpowered by the scent of desperation and pain that seemed etched into the walls. Something terrible had happened here. Worse that the death of a body. Something here had destroyed hope.

For the first time in fifteen years, Dumbledore felt genuine fear. Behind him, he heard several people gasp, and one person, he suspected young Nymphadora, had burst into tears.

"We have to find Harry Potter." Dumbledore said firmly, spinning on his heel. "It is imperative that he is found immediately."

The following day was when everything changed. Dumbledore had gathered as many of the Order as he could, and sent them all over the country. He'd stationed half a dozen members in Knockturn Alley, looking for Death Eaters who could give them the information they needed.

He'd had the rest of the Ministry Six patrolling Diagon Alley itself, looking for anything out of the ordinary. He didn't really expect Voldemort to just turn up in the Alley, but it gave them a sense of purpose.

However, Dumbledore was wrong. It was rare of him to be wrong, but it did happen occasionally. Voldemort did indeed make his way to Diagon Alley, where he cast a number of wards. Anti-apparition. Anti-Portkey. Anti-Animagus. Anti-Broom. Whoever was is Diagon Alley would be staying in Diagon Alley.

Hermione had been the first to react, pulling out her Order pendant, setting it to alert. The members of the Order would have to Apparate to the Muggle side of the Leaky Cauldron and make their way on foot, or Floo into the Alley.

Voldemort, ever the showman, had quickly conjured a stage in front of Gringotts. His Death Eaters had rounded up everybody that they could find, and hauled them in front of the stage. A good showman needs a good audience, after all.

A chair appeared in the centre of the stage, followed by the dying form of Harry Potter.

Hermione saw him appear, and gasped in shock. He looked nothing like the depressed, but still lively boy she'd seen on the train fifteen days ago. Whatever had happened had crushed him. There was no life in his eyes, now.

Realisation struck her with the force of an express train. It was *her* . She'd crushed him when she told him she wasn't after a relationship. The letters she'd sent to him had coyly hinted at her interest, but if he hadn't been reading them...

Voldemort saw her then, and smiled warmly at her. He gestured to two of his Death Eaters, who pulled her up to just in front of the stage.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you for joining me here at this auspicious moment." Voldemort said. It was strange... he was the epitome of evil, yet

his voice was silky and smooth. "The moment when all shall be revealed.

"Harry Potter will die shortly." His statement generated gasps of shock through the crowd. "Sixteen years ago, a prophecy was made about myself and my young friend here. I recently discovered the contents of that prophecy, thanks to Mr. Potter's broken little mind." He smiled at Hermione. "It states that he is the only one who can defeat me. If he dies, I will be truly invincible."

"But, what could make our young hero's mind break? What could possibly drag him to the pit of despair?" He pointed at Hermione. "Hermione Granger. I must thank you."

Around her, people started to edge away.

"You have done what an army of Death Eaters could not do. You broke him."

Hermione's hands raced up to her mouth. "No..." She managed to gasp.

"Yes!" Voldemort crowed, enjoying himself immensely. "If is wasn't for your rejection, our young hero here would have fought. Instead, he gave up. I win. All because of a little Muggleborn witch named Hermione Granger."

Voldemort turned back to Harry, raising his wand. "*Avada Kedavra!*" The spell hit Harry, causing him to simply go limp. It was oddly anti-climatic. Two little words, and the future of the Wizarding world was gone.

Her mind raced. *No!* It screamed at her. *It can't be! Don't let him be dead! I love him! He can't be gone! It isn't fair!*

But he was. The future of the Wizarding world was gone. All because of Hermione Granger.