

## Higher Brain

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**Pairing:** Hr/R Hr/SS Hr/SB Hr/H

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**Summary:** Hermione is not what she seems at all.

**Author's Notes:** Thanks to my sister who gave this the once over for me. Her exact comment when I double checked that she'd looked for typos and the dreaded commas of doom was "Not that I spotted. You don't seem to get so bogged down in shorter fics." - Gee, thanks sis! :). I don't usually write dark fic, but this one sort of came to me ::g::: . My first try at a challenge - hope I have the right idea.

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In her seventh year, head girl and the brightest student at Hogwarts, Hermione Granger had a glowing future. Not a single person had any idea that their Golden girl was a sociopath.

Hermione had come to a stunning conclusion when she was only eleven years old; she was incapable of real emotion. Oh she was a good actor and she had every one fooled into believing she was a perfectly normal girl, but in fact she felt very little. She had been the apple of her parents' eyes and they had chosen to ignore her strangeness, and encouraged her genius intellect. It was only when she went to Hogwarts that she had begun to realise how different she was. At first it had been quite hard trying to figure out how to react properly and she had stuck to her books, but the whole crying in the girl's loo had been a stroke of genius. It was not always an easy game, pretending to be a normal witch, but it was one she enjoyed playing.

Her mind was full of facts; it was just devoid of any emotion tying her to anyone but herself. The sorting hat had wanted to put her in Slytherin, sensing her complete self interest, but she had convinced it that she wanted to understand self sacrifice and courage and so it had put her in Gryffindor. After having spoken to several different groups on the train she had decided that was where she could have the most fun. That seemed like an age ago now.

The summons to the headmaster's office just as she was heading off to the library had been a bit of a surprise. Hermione spent her life predicting people's actions and that Dumbledore had stepped out of his routine in this manner had been a surprise. He did it with Harry all the time of course, but he rarely did it with anyone else.

It was as she walked into Dumbledore's study and found him sitting behind his desk, looking her straight in the eye without so much as a sparkle, let alone a twinkle in his gaze, that she realized she had failed to calculate one thing.

"Good afternoon, My Dear," the headmaster said evenly, "I believe it is time we had a talk."

Hermione had never before looked into someone's eyes and known without a doubt that they saw her; not her masks; not her player's face, but her; and yet she understood now that there was one person she had never fooled.

"You know," she said shortly and walked to the chair Dumbledore had placed in front of his desk for her.

The headmaster nodded at her and smiled pleasantly.

"I was surprised you did not figure it out yourself," he said and summoned a pot of tea, "you are quite a remarkable young woman. I have found watching you over the years most fascinating."

This was not something she had ever suspected or could plan around and for the first time in a long while Hermione found herself accepting a cup of tea with no idea what she would do next. Finding that she had been out played was a new experience, everyone else was completely under her thumb:

She had Harry exactly where she wanted him, right in the palm of her hand. He believed everything she said and at the first hint of tears he would do anything she asked. Poor, depressed, hero Harry knew nothing about her except what she wanted him to know. One of her prospective plans was that she would marry him some day; after all he was rich and famous and if he survived he would be the perfect platform from which to play with the wizarding world. One day soon she would have to relieve him of his virginity, which would undoubtedly tie him to her with bonds far stronger than friendship. Harry was very predictable and the girl who had him first would be the girl who had him forever.

She'd already done the same for Ron, giving him another secret to keep from Harry. She'd always made sure Ron had at least one secret he couldn't tell his best friend, ever since she had insinuated herself in their friendship. It was the only way to make sure she retained control. She'd almost lost it in the second year with the basilisk incident, but in the end being petrified had played into her hands. When they had her back, with a little play acting on her part, the boys had been more than glad to submit to her manipulations.

It appeared Albus Dumbledore was not so quick to fall in line.

"How long?" she asked bluntly.

"Since you first placed the sorting hat on your head," the headmaster replied calmly.

She sat back in the chair thinking through the ideas this revelation revealed and she could not help admiring Dumbledore as she realised something.

"You know everything the sorting hat knows," she said with confidence, "you are the sorting hat."

The headmaster smiled and nodded.

"I usurped the enchantments on the hat as soon as I became headmaster," Dumbledore admitted, which surprised Hermione since he was clearly giving away secrets now. "It is far more useful to place the children as I see fit, rather than on the random musings of an insane hat."

It was at that moment she finally caught up and she almost dropped her tea. Looking into the calculating blue eyes of Albus Dumbledore she recognised herself. One of the greatest men in the Wizarding world was just like her.

"I see you realise we are alike," the headmaster said as if pleased by her revelation. "I have been waiting for the time when you would be ready to join me. It was almost time back in your fifth year; your removal of Sirius Black was a master stroke and beautifully managed, but I felt there was still time."

Sirius had been a threat to her plans when he had taken up residence in 12 Grimauld Place; with the man no longer at random places on the run he had become an influence in Harry's life. It had taken a lot of work to put in place the seeds of his downfall, sending Harry straight back to her. When outright seduction had resulted in a few nights of fantastic sex, but no real leverage she had started the plan which would result in Sirius' doom. Teaching the house elf how to circumvent its conditioning to serve the Black family had been easy and anyone who had seen her talking to Kreacher had assumed it was to do with S.P.E.W. and left her alone.

The original plan had been to betray Sirius to the Ministry, but feeding ideas to Draco Malfoy and hence to his father and on to Voldemort has been far more devastating. Slytherins were easier to manipulate than Gryffindors; Gryffindors could react unpredictably, but calculating Slytherins had far easier patterns. Pushing logical buttons was nowhere near the challenge pushing emotional ones was, which was one of the reasons she had chosen her house at Hogwarts. There was no fun in the game if it wasn't a challenge.

"Now I find that we have need of each other," Dumbledore continued. "Combining our resources will give us both what we require."

She remembered having a similar conversation with another during her fifth year, but he had not been her equal, not like the man in front of her. Her downfall had almost come in the shape of Severus Snape. The head of Slytherin was almost as manipulative as she was, only he had one weakness; he really did have emotions under that cold exterior.

He had watched her more closely than she had imagined and he had worked out some of her plans. Confronting her one evening he had forced a partial confession out of her and rather than playing the poor Gryffindor heroine she had admitted to part of what she really was. Snape's thirst for revenge against Sirius Black and James Potter had been her way in to his psyche and incorporating him into her plots was not difficult. Making sure Harry failed in his Occlumency quest had been easy after that. The sex was good too; contrary to popular school opinion Snape was neither greasy nor celibate, and it was a pleasurable diversion as well as giving her yet another hold over him.

She had nothing to hold over Albus Dumbledore and she regarded him carefully as he continued to speak: "There are certain changes to be made in our world and they must be made soon."

For a while after Voldemort's return Hermione had toyed with the idea of playing both sides against the middle and offering herself as a spy for the Dark; it would have made the game more fun, but dear old Voldie was a psychotic idiot and she had decided it wasn't worth the risk. The lunatic would probably have insisted on something as stupid as her taking the Dark Mark and that never would have done. Mark all your followers to make it easier for the Aurors: what a great idea that was!

So she had stuck with the side of the Light, and her plots were all brewing nicely, she knew exactly what Dumbledore was talking about.

"The removal of Voldemort and Fudge," Hermione did not need to think to know how to reply.

The old man smiled again and if she had not seen herself in that smile the complete lack of emotion in the headmaster's eyes might have been unsettling.

"Harry is ready to face Voldemort," Dumbledore said calmly, "and he may even survive. The Dark Lord was useful for a time, but his insanity makes him unpredictable and it will be safer to remove him. However, Fudge will claim credit for any victory, and that bumbling fool can no longer be manipulated so easily. Therefore he must be dealt with first."

"And of course when Harry defeats the Dark Lord who will the wizarding world turn to in their time of need, but the hero's mentor?" Hermione agreed with a smile. "Is it time to go into politics, Albus?"

She used Dumbledore's first name quite deliberately; after all they were not student and professor in this situation; they were equals. For the first time she was seeing the mind of the headmaster and she found it both intriguing and exciting which happened so rarely these days that it made her happy.

"I find I tire of being a headmaster," Albus said in a whimsical tone, "and our world needs a strong leader. However, I could not leave Hogwarts without knowing there would be someone to fill my shoes. You are a little young for the position of Headmistress as of yet, but I am sure it would not take you long to attain the necessary support to take over; a few years maybe."

Running Hogwarts had only ever occurred to Hermione as a side thought before, but she could not deny that having hundreds of lives under her control appealed to her. It would be a good stepping stone for other things as well and she was a patient woman, after all eventually Dumbledore would die and there would be a hole for her to walk into. Glancing back up at Albus she had no doubt that he knew exactly what she was thinking and she nodded in acknowledgement.

"How do you suggest we proceed?" she asked evenly.

"I think that it will fuel our cause should the Minister of Magic be assassinated, don't you?" Albus said as if they were discussing the weather. "There's nothing like a good death to rouse the public."

Hermione smiled, she couldn't agree more.

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It was two weeks later that Hermione walked into the Ministry and was ushered straight into Fudge's office. The letter she had composed claiming that she thought Dumbledore was going a little senile and that Harry needed the guidance of more grounded, politically wise man had been a work of art. Begging him to destroy the letter and keep it a secret in case the news found its way to Dumbledore and asking for a meeting had worked to a tee, as her presence illustrated. It was almost too easy.

"Thank you for seeing me, Minister," she said as soon as the man closed the door. "I've been so worried; I didn't know what to do."

Then she burst into tears, which as expected brought Fudge around from the other side of his desk.

"There, there, Miss Granger," the man comforted in a most patronising manner, "I am sure we can find some solution. Please tell me what you have found out that has made you so upset."

"It's Headmaster Dumbledore," Hermione said between sobs and leant into Fudge as he placed his arm around her, "he's talking about sending Harry out to face Voldemort alone. You know Harry, Minister, he's always lacked proper guidance and I'm sure he'd do it if Professor Dumbledore told him to."

As the Minister moved to help her to a chair she took hold of his wrist and pushed her thumb against it, bursting the small bubble of fake skin she had placed there earlier. It had been ridiculously easy to convince Severus to brew the poison for her and she had taken the antidote earlier. The potion spread into Fudge's skin without him even noticing it and Hermione let herself be sat down meekly.

It was not difficult to spin her tale to the Minister and have him believe every word: after all she was a good girl and thinking bad things about Albus Dumbledore was something Fudge liked to do. It was also easy to have him agree to her whole time frame by making him believe it was of his own making. He would take no action for three days, by which time it would of course be too late, because he would be dead. The poison in his system would be fatally incorporated into his body in two hours and Fudge would cease to be an annoyance in forty eight.

Just before she left, tearfully thanking the Minister for all his help, she placed a small device on the underside of his desk. The moment Fudge took his final breath the dark mark would appear in the Ministry. No one would stop to question who had done it when all the clues would lead to Lucius Malfoy, lately released from Azkaban after buying his way out. With any luck the man would be dead before he could so much as deny the charges.

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Hermione looked out over the Great Hall as the new first years were ushered in by Ginny Weasley and congratulated herself. It had been a shock to everyone but her when Minerva McGonagall's heart had failed over the Summer holidays, and Hermione had tearfully accepted the post of Headmistress at the tender age of thirty one. Everyone had agreed that she was the only person for the job, after all she had made herself completely indispensable to Minerva over the last few years and she knew how everything ran. Of course with all the information she had on most of the board of governors no one saw fit to object either.

She glanced to the side and smiled at her husband and Harry smiled back. After the final battle she had been there for him through his entire recovery, and they had come together in their grief when Ron had succumbed to the injuries he sustained on the battle field. She would never forget the look of amazement on Ron's face when she had cursed him; it had been most gratifying. Hers and Harry's had been the wedding of the year, and twelve months after the fall of Voldemort the wizarding world had been celebrating the union of two of its heroes, overseen by the newly elected Minister of Magic, Albus Dumbledore.

Everything had worked out without a hitch and her plans had gone on smoothly from there, as had Albus'.

Harry was undoubtedly the finest dueller in the country and he made the perfect DADA professor, even if he walked with a limp these days. The illusion of love kept him as close to her now as it had when they had first been married and Hermione had no doubt that her besotted husband would die for her if she asked him to. At the moment he was far too useful, but maybe one day she would require it of him.

Albus had taken her aside after her appointment as Headmistress and congratulated her on her cunning. They were not exactly friends; people like them did not have friends, but Hermione knew that there was another out there just like her. She would never turn her back on him or him on her; but it made the game far more interesting.

She had her domain now; everything she viewed was hers to do with as she saw fit, and for now it would do. As the sorting hat was placed on the first head she felt the inrush of impression about the child and she could not help the smile that graced her features.

**The End**