

Stress Relief

Part 1

Hermione Granger pressed her lips together and tried to ignore the way the Gryffindor common room roared around her. It was after dinner, so the air pulsated with voices, laughter, and the faint char of toasted marshmallows from the fire. She bent her head over the battered Potions textbook, tracing her quill along the margins, but the words just wouldn't stick in her brain. She cursed under her breath and pushed her hair behind her ear for the fifth time.

On the other side of the room, Harry lounged in a wingback chair, flanked by half a dozen third and fourth-year girls. They had all angled their bodies to face him, laughing whenever he so much as glanced their way. Hermione frowned at the display. He hadn't even tried to finish his Charms essay, and now he was laughing at something Parvati had said. Parvati was twirling her hair, and Lavender Brown's skirt had "accidentally" ridden up far enough to show the top of her thigh-highs. Hermione supposed it was none of her business if Harry wanted to be distracted by ... well, whatever that was.

She wiggled her toes inside her penny loafers and forced herself to re-read the paragraph on corrosive reagents. She could do this, she told herself. She could ignore the chaos and ignore her brain's tendency to short-circuit whenever Harry smiled in her direction. She had already mapped out a study schedule for the rest of the year. If she stuck to it, she'd ace her OWLs and show up everyone else in their year.

A shriek of laughter from Ginny made her drop her quill. It fluttered off the table and under the couch. She groaned and ducked down to retrieve it, banging her forehead on the way back up. She squeezed her eyes shut and willed away the pain away. When she opened them, Harry was watching her from across the room, his chin balanced on his hand. His emerald eyes looked amused.

She glared and tried to focus, but her mind kept offering up scenes in which Harry noticed her, not as a friend but as something else. She'd seen him without a shirt before. When it was warm, he and his friends would practice Quidditch shirtless, or sometimes go swimming in the lake. He was tall and lean, with swimmer's shoulders wide enough to stretch the Hogwarts crest on his jumper. His hair always stuck up at impossible angles, and sometimes he'd catch her looking at him and smirk, like he knew exactly what she was thinking.

She gripped her quill so hard it snapped. She muttered an apology to the poor quill and ducked her head again, yanking a spare from her bag. A soft voice that was very close said, "You'll give yourself a headache."

Hermione jumped, and her heart nearly went into her throat. She hadn't heard him approach. Harry's hand was on her shoulder, warm even through the fabric of her blouse.

She tried to glare but couldn't quite manage it. "You nearly gave me a heart attack," she whispered, hoping none of the others were watching. They were, of course. Ron had looked up from his chess match, Ginny was smirking, and the entire harem of slutty girls watched with undisguised jealousy.

Harry leaned in, close enough that she could smell his shampoo. "You're wound tighter than a clock, Hermione. You know that?"

She felt her cheeks go red. "I'm just trying to study. Some of us actually want to pass our OWLs."

"I study," Harry said. "But you could learn to relax a little."

"I relax plenty," she lied.

He gave her shoulder a gentle squeeze. "Don't you know that stress makes your hair bushier?"

She bit back a smile. "That's not even a thing."

He grinned, and his cheeks dimpled. "Let's get out of here. You're not going to get anything done with the entire Gryffindor house screeching in the background."

"I ..." Hermione hesitated. The prospect of time alone with Harry made her stomach do a backflip. "Where would we even go?"

Harry smiled, looking very self-confident. "I know a place. C'mon and pack up. I'll even help you carry your fifty-pound bag of books."

She almost said no. She should say no. But she was tired of the noise, tired of Ron's passive-aggressive commentary about her study habits, and tired of Harry pretending to flirt with girls he didn't even remember the names of. She snapped her book shut and gathered her parchment.

"Fine. But if I get behind because of you, you're going to get an earful."

Harry laughed and scooped up her backpack with one hand. "Deal."

They threaded through the crowd of Gryffindors. Some of the girls gave Hermione death stares, but she ignored them. She kept her head up, nose wrinkled in determination, and followed Harry out the portrait hole.

The corridor outside was nice and quiet. Hermione inhaled the cold air. She could still feel the heat of Harry's hand on her shoulder, and the blush on her cheeks didn't fade as they walked. He glanced back, caught her staring, and grinned again.

“Relax, Hermione. I’m not going to quiz you on the way.”

She rolled her eyes but smiled. “I’d ace it anyway.”

“I know you would,” Harry said, his tone almost gentle. “That’s why you deserve a break.”

She thought about it. Maybe he was right. Maybe, for once, she could let someone else take the lead. They walked in comfortable silence, their footsteps echoing off the stone. As they reached the first set of stairs, Harry slowed and waited for her to catch up. She liked that he didn’t rush her.

“Where are we going?” she asked, more curious now.

Harry smirked, and she could see the mischief dancing in his eyes. “You’ll see.”

Hermione shook her head but let herself be led away from the noise and annoyances and into the unknown.

Stress Relief

The classroom Harry led her to was so far from the main corridors that Hermione had never noticed it before, not even in her periodic raids for obscure study spaces. He stopped at a door with a faded brass handle and gave her a lopsided look.

“After you,” he said.

She stepped inside. The room was enormous, with vaulted windows. Pale moonlight poured through. At the far end, a stone hearth nestled a crackling fire, warming the entire room. Beside it stood an old teacher’s desk, cluttered with candle stubs and parchment rolls. Most surprising of all, there was a bed big enough for three people to sprawl on without touching.

Hermione let out a stunned laugh. “This is your secret study spot?”

Harry grinned and closed the door behind them. “No one comes here. The bed’s for naps between cramming sessions.”

She shook her head, then ran her hand over the bed’s edge. The wood was polished, and the sheets were crisp and clean. She guessed that a house elf maintained this space.

“It’s brilliant,” she said. “How did you even find it?”

He shrugged. “I wandered off after a Quidditch match, found the room, and fell asleep. I woke up to Dobby shoving a sandwich in my face. I decided to keep it.”

Hermione smiled in spite of herself. She set her bag on the desk and fished out her books. She was about to open Advanced Potion-Making when Harry cleared his throat. "You really don't know how to relax, do you?" he asked.

"I'm relaxing," she insisted, even as her hands trembled when she stacked her parchment. He walked behind her and leaned close again. She stiffened.

"You're not," Harry said teasingly. "You're wound so tight you're going to snap."

He set his hands on her shoulders. Hermione's breath caught. She almost protested, but then his thumbs pressed into the knots along her neck, and her protest turned into a whimper. She slapped a hand to her mouth, horrified at the sound she'd made.

Harry laughed softly in her ear. "See? It feels good, doesn't it?"

Hermione's cheeks felt hot enough to boil water. "You startled me. That's all."

"Sure," he said, kneading her upper back with unhurried, perfect pressure. "But it feels good, right?"

She closed her eyes, and her shame and pleasure swirled in her mind. "It's ... nice," she mumbled.

"Massages are good for studying," Harry said. "They reduce stress and increase blood flow. There's a Ravenclaw study about it."

"You read a study?"

He squeezed a knot near her spine, and she yelped. "I had it read to me," Harry said, sounding smug. "Lie down. I'll do your back properly."

She opened her eyes, scanning the room. "On the bed?"

He gestured to the mattress. "Unless you want to sprawl out on the hard desktop. Besides, the bed's better for your spine."

She hesitated for a second. She'd never been alone in a bedroom with a guy before. She knew Harry would tease her if she made a fuss, so she took a breath, slipped off her shoes, and smoothed her skirt to her knees. She slid onto the mattress and arranged herself face down with her arms folded under her head.

She felt the bed dip as Harry climbed on beside her. He straddled her thighs. He didn't sit on her. He just knelt over her and went back to work on her shoulders. His hands were huge and

surprisingly gentle. The sensation was exquisite. Each time he pressed into her muscles, something warm fluttered through her chest.

He kneaded from her neck to her shoulder blades, following the line of her blouse. Sometimes his fingers grazed her bra strap, and she imagined him unclasping it. She imagined him seeing her bare back. The thought made her thighs clench together.

“Better?” he said after a minute.

She meant to say yes, but what came out was a tiny, involuntary moan. Hermione bit down on her arm to muffle it. Harry chuckled, clearly pleased with her reaction. “I didn’t know you were so sensitive.”

“It’s just ... no one’s ever...” She trailed off.

“Yeah?” His voice dropped lower now. “I can stop if you want.”

She shook her head, unable to form words. He dug in deeper, and his thumbs slid under the edge of her collar and skin. She shivered. She couldn’t stop picturing his hands roaming further, and she couldn’t stop the rush of heat pooling between her legs.

“You want me to go lower?” Harry asked in a teasing voice. Hermione’s heart hammered. She was barely able to make herself nod.

His palms swept down her back, pressing into her ribs and the base of her spine. His thumbs found the waistband of her skirt and pressed tiny circles just above it, never crossing the line but coming close enough to tease. She wanted him to go further. She wanted to see what he’d do if she rolled over and looked him in the eyes.

She didn’t, though. She stayed still and let his hands do whatever they wanted. Harry pulled her blouse out from inside her skirt and started working her bare skin. “Your back is so soft,” Harry said. “You smell good, too,” he added in a teasing manner.

Hermione’s face was so hot she thought she might faint. But the massage was incredible, and the line between relaxation and arousal blurred more with every second. Harry’s hands paused on her hips, and his thumbs rested just above the curve of her ass. The bed dipped again as Harry moved, and his hands slid up her back and then off entirely. She missed them instantly.

She felt him shift beside her, and she heard the rustle of his clothes. She almost turned to look, but she couldn’t muster the courage. “You’re beautiful, you know that?” he said, his voice right next to her ear.

She blushed really hard. “Stop it.”

"I mean it," Harry said. "You are."

She wanted to argue, but then his hand was on her neck again. His palm was warm and reassuring. She melted against the sheets, too tired to keep her guard up. "Flip onto your back so I can do your front," he said, and before she could even think about it, she was already moving.

Hermione landed flat on her back with her arms crossed over her chest. Her heart thudded loudly in her chest. The sheets were warm and soft beneath her, and she suddenly realized her skirt had slid up high on her thighs. Her knees had fallen apart without her permission. Harry's eyes roamed over her body and lingered on the exposed flesh between the hem of her skirt and the tops of her black, knee-high socks.

He knelt at her side, bracing himself with one arm while the other reached out. He didn't touch her right away. He traced slow circles over her stomach, barely making contact, but it made every nerve in her body wake up. He was so close.

Harry looked down at her, and his face was smug and teasing. "Relax, Hermione," he said as his hand moved lower. "Let me help you."

All she could manage was a squeak. His palm pressed gently on her belly, then drifted lower. His fingers followed the creased fabric of her blouse where it bunched up near her waistband. He inched higher on the bed until his torso was hovering above hers. She could see the line of his jaw, the determined set of his mouth, and the way his hair flopped over his brow.

She tried to distract herself by counting the stones in the ceiling, but every time Harry's hand moved, she lost count. Then his fingers trailed from her hip to the inside of her thigh, and Hermione forgot her own name.

Her entire body flinched. The touch was light, almost like he was testing how she would react. But every brush sent sparks up her legs. Harry's hand slid under the skirt, and his fingertips grazed the bare skin of her upper inner thigh. She felt the blood rush to her cheeks, then straight between her legs. The mind spun, and she couldn't move or speak. She could only breathe in shaky little gasps. Harry's thumb worked at the knot in her thigh, massaging it gently. Hermione whimpered, then clapped a hand over her own mouth.

Harry grinned. "Sensitive?" he teased.

She tried to glare, but she knew her eyes were glassy and wet. She tried to close her legs, but her body betrayed her and refused to respond. His hand slipped farther up, and the inside of her thigh twitched. She realized, with great mortification, that her crotch was completely soaked.

There was no way he couldn't tell. The scent of her arousal was obvious and heavy in the warm air. Hermione's heart hammered so hard she was sure he could hear it over her heavy breathing.

"Harry," she tried to gasp, but it came out as a whimper.

Harry ignored her, or maybe he knew better than to stop. He massaged the tender skin at the top of her thigh, and his fingers worked in careful, slow circles, never quite brushing the fabric of her panties. Every time his hand neared her covered pussy, her hips jumped, and she dug her nails into her palms.

"You're really tense," Harry said in a velvety voice. "Here, let me ..." His thumb pressed into the muscle, and the heel of his hand brushed against the soft cotton of her panties.

Hermione gasped so loud the sound echoed off the windows. She clamped her thighs together, trapping his hand, but that only made things worse. His fingers were caught between her legs, and her skirt was bunched up around her waist now. She could feel the pressure of his hand against the wet fabric at her crotch.

Harry looked at her, waiting, and his eyes locked on hers. He wasn't going to move unless she told him to. Hermione bit down on her lower lip. She wanted to say something, but nothing came out. She knew she should be embarrassed, but her body didn't care about that anymore. Her hips twitched, grinding her crotch against his hand, and her cheeks burned. She looked up at him, silently begging for him to take control of the situation before it got out of hand.

Harry smiled cheekily. "Just lie back and relax," he said, and he started massaging her again, this time letting his fingers press against her panties. The touch was firmer now. He rubbed slowly into the soaked cotton. Hermione moaned and barely recognized the sound of her own voice. It felt so good she could hardly breathe.

The friction was perfect, and the pressure was constant but never rough. Harry worked her gently, like he was tuning a delicate instrument. He adjusted every touch by the way she squirmed. His fingers dug between her panty-covered lips, teasing her entrance. Each movement sent shocks of pleasure racing up her spine. Hermione arched her back, dug her heels into the mattress, and desperately tried not to cry out in pleasure.

Every time she thought it couldn't get more intense, Harry would find a new angle, or slide his thumb over a very sensitive spot, and she'd whimper and buck. The slick sound of wet fabric got louder, and the heat building between her legs felt almost unbearable.

Harry leaned down so his mouth was next to her ear. "Do you like that?" he whispered, and the words made her blood boil.

Hermione couldn't answer. All she could do was nod and bite down on the back of her hand. Harry's palm cupped her pussy and ground firmly against her clit through the panties. The pressure was perfect, and everything started to blur at the edges. The feeling grew until she was sure she'd snap.

She didn't mean to do it, but her hips jerked up, and she moaned Harry's name. He kissed her cheek, then pressed hard with his thumb right where she needed it. The orgasm hit so hard and fast that she nearly screamed.

Her vision went white. She bucked against him, and her thighs trembled. Her fists clenched the sheets as pussy juice absolutely soaked the crotch of her white cotton panties. Every nerve in her body fired at once. She thrashed and shook, moaning until her voice went hoarse. She couldn't think or speak. There was only the pleasure and the sensation of Harry sexily nipping at her graceful neck.

When she finally came down, she was panting, sweaty, and the crotch of her panties was stuck to the shape of her puffy, aroused pussy. Her skirt was bunched up to her waist, and Harry's hand was still resting gently on her thigh. She stared at the ceiling, waiting for her brain to reboot.

Harry stroked her thigh soothingly. "Are you okay?" he asked. She nodded, unable to trust her voice. He grinned and brushed the hair from her eyes. "I told you I'd help you relax."

Hermione huffed, but her face was so soft she probably just looked grateful. "You're an insufferable git," she said, though her voice definitely sounded much more relaxed.

Harry chuckled and brushed his fingers over her covered clit again. Hermione squealed and bucked. "I've been called worse."

Hermione let out a shaky, unsteady laugh and let herself sink into the bed. Her body felt warm, and her muscles were nice and loose. Hermione looked at Harry one more time and blushed. She was never going to look at Harry Potter the same way again.