Constant Vigilance

by Violetpines

Summary

It's been almost a year and a half since Voldemort was killed. It's been almost a year since Fred Weasley came out of his coma. It's been almost 6 months since Hermione Granger finished Hogwarts, and began her career in the Ministry.

Things seemed to have quieted down in the magical world, but with the loss of so many legendary wizards, a huge power vacuum now exists. Death Eaters may still be at large, but they aren't the only ones who threaten progress. With the Order still active, training Aurors Harry & Ron aren't the only ones about to have their hands full. Personal drama abounds, and wounds from the old war are still very much in their healing process. Life is a series of complex, and often difficult, situations. Follow our heroes as they learn "Constant Vigilance" was more than just a phrase Mad Eye liked to bark at people.

(Note: M for smut in later chapters. "Graphic Violence" is more just me being precautious bc I do a few detailed injuries from the battle.)

Notes

Hey guys,

So it's been a very long time since I've written fanfiction. Or anything really. But I've been
rereading the books, and I couldn't help myself. So, please, go easy, and I'm happy to consider suggestions if you've got them! Thanks <3

TW: Some detailing on Fred's Battle of Hogwarts wounds.
The shop was full, and maneuvering through a crowd like this would have been difficult regardless. But the bushy haired girl, carrying 4 coffees and a particularly thick iron wrought, no. 8 cauldron full of books, found this a greater challenge. She cursed herself for not having put the items in her little handbag, but muggle habits die hard.

As she made to turn the corner, she misstepped, and a shelf of Peruvian Instant Darkness powder hit the ground, in what she considered later to be a rather dramatic crash.

Crouching quickly, attempting to crawl her way out of the cloud of dust, coughing, eyes watering, Hermione was suddenly hit with a not-so-distant-enough memory. As if punched square in the chest, her eyes swelled with even more tears, but she pushed herself forward. Doing her best to focus on the clear space a few feet ahead of her, the shadow of an old terror continued to impress itself, as if the danger was immediate and present.

Finally making it out, the witch tried forcing herself to breathe in clean air while her heart was busy beating its way out of her throat. She could feel her thoughts bearing down on her like a heavy weight, and accepting the futility of her effort, quickly made her way behind the front desk and through a door to the back room.

The room was as messy as its owners, with a few touches of attempted organization thanks to the sole Weasley daughter. She had left her mark in the form of a large silver card magicked to a shelf that said 'I fucking tried' in bold blue letters, that no one seemed able to remove.

Making her way behind a particularly large pile of boxes, Hermione found solace in a hidden corner. Falling to the floor, back against the wall, she shoved the cauldron into her little beaded bag.

‘Don’t,’ she thought to herself. ‘Don’t.’

Closing her eyes, she tried her best to breathe in. Out. In. Out. But the weight of the memory was stronger, and giving up, she curled herself around her knees and buried her face.

Hermione and Ron turned the corner, just as they heard a voice scream.

“HELP!” Percy cried. “HELP PLEASE!”

The pair ran over, and, without hesitation, Ron was down on his knees with the estranged brother, attempting to pull off a huge wall of bricks lying on top of the left half of Fred Weasley.

Hermione stared for a second before remembering herself and, using her wand to pull the wall off Fred, she knelt down to feel for his pulse. It was the faintest beat, but it was enough. Doing her best not to be distracted by the fractured bone sticking out of his shoulder, or the gaping hole where his cheek had been, now hanging from his jaw, she set to work.

“Accio dittany. Accio frog skin. Accio goldenrod. Accio stinksap. Here,” she said shoving the dittany at Ron, and the frog skin at Percy. “Ron apply the dittany to his face, USE A CLEANING SPELL FIRST. The one I taught you after Gring— yes that’s
the one. Make sure you get in deep. Percy, as soon as he does that, you need to place the dry skin over the hole. The essence will help it stick down, like a bandage of sorts. Liberally apply the stinksap on top.”

She then turned her attention to his shoulder. The bone that was sticking out was clearly splintered and she wondered if it wasn’t missing more than was obvious to her amateur eye. She thought of 12 year old Harry and made the split decision to simply remove the bones from his arm, doing her best to not accidentally magic away his ribs.

“HERMIONE WHAT—“ Ron started, but Percy shushed him, realizing what she was trying to do.

“I know a few stitching spells from mum but they’re for clothes, not skin,” Percy offered.

“It’ll have to do,” she said, moving to place a few spells over his lungs, hoping they weren’t too damaged.

She turned to the now very pale faced Ron, who she found was much better at defensive dueling than he was at healing.

“Can you shield us while we lift him to where Madam Pomfrey is stationed?”

He nodded.

Hermione remembered the look on Madam Pomfrey’s face when they brought Fred in. She had been busy working with the other healers, expanding the space, conjuring more beds, brewing potions. She told them she could use quick thinking magic like that, but Hermione had to decline, she had other priorities that day. Percy, however, stayed behind, which he would later mark as the beginning of his career in healing. It was a story he liked to tell and one to which Ron or Ginny always replied with, “who knew such an anal git, could find such a calling?” Which always sent the twins off on some long winded discourse full of butt jokes.

Hermione chuckled, recalling one particularly funny line involving a pixie on Uranus, when a redhead popped her head around the wall of boxes.

“Hey,” she said quietly, sitting down and filling the space with a light scent of gunpowder and honey.

“Hey,” the brunette whispered back.

“You left your coffee on the counter,” she said, and Hermione noticed Ginny was holding two cups in her hands. “You good?”

“Of course.”

“Your face is covered in powder.” Ginny transfigured a sign on the wall beside them into a mirror.

Hermione looked at herself. Gray soot covered her, the creases of her face, and her hair, which also seemed to be bigger than usual.

Ginny muttered a quick incantation and twirled her wand, tapping her friend on the nose.
“One of the girls on the team taught me that,” she added, while Hermione stared amazed at the mirror.

“There’s not a single... wow. I think my face actually feels cleaner than it did before. How are THE Harpies by the way,” she teased, wiggling her shoulders and exaggerating the name.

“Oh, shut up,” Ginny rolled her eyes, but let a smile slip. “I’m too new to be anywhere but the bench for now. But the practices are amazing. Do kinda wish they’d stop trying to make me seeker during practice, though.”

“Well, the way I hear it, you’re pretty fair at catching the snitch.”

“So, I beat Harry a few times,” she shrugged. “Between you and me, I think he lets me win.”

“Between you and me,” Hermione shot back laughing, “I’ve seen Harry after those wins you pull, and he is not letting you win.”

As the laughter settled, the two girls sat in silence, sipping their drinks. Hermione enjoyed the company, and the distraction from what would have been an otherwise unending panic attack.

She and Ginny had always been close. But after the battle, when they both returned to Hogwarts to finish up their N.E.W.T year, they became closer.

The Ministry, now headed by Kingsley Shacklebolt, had offered students a variety of options to mitigate the damage done to their education during the Carrow takeover of Hogwarts. Kingsley brought in the Golden Trio to his office, wishing to speak with them personally. He ended up offering them a sort of fast track to Aurorship, should they want it.

“Of course,” he had said, “you would still need to undergo several additional tests, in lieu of providing us with N.E.W.T scores. But if you wanted it, we would certainly work to make it possible.”

Hermione declined, knowing should she later choose to go that route, it would still be within her options. The boys unsurprisingly leapt at the chance to move beyond academia, to which she was obligated to reprimand them.

It would be a much different year at Hogwarts without them, though they came by often to train on the grounds or in the forest with certain professors.

She found herself often sitting in study groups with Neville, Luna, Ginny, Dean, and Seamus. And as time moved away from the battle, life began to feel more regular.

There were little dramas here and there, like Pavarti dating Dean and then breaking up and dating Ernie Macmillan. A few common room nights involving fire whiskey.

One drunken night in particular, the D.A. members still in attendance at the school snuck into the room Firenze briefly taught Divination, for a reunion. Seamus, looking for the fireworks stash, happened to stumble over a couple that turned out to be none other than Dean Thomas and Luna Lovegood.

“She’s absolutely mad,” Dean said about her the next day. “It’s a bit frightening, yeah. But if you listen long enough, it begins to make sense. Must be the Ravenclaw in
Ginny and Hermione also found their friendship growing, spending a lot of late nights discussing what the other did during that long year leading up to the battle.

“You really didn’t want to be an Auror, then?” Ginny asked. “Even I consider it some days.”

“Well, why don’t you?” Hermione questioned back.

“The Order still needs people,” she replied simply. “Voldemort may be gone, but he wasn’t the only dark wizard out there. It’s always helpful to have its members in different fields, keep an eye on things more thoroughly.”

“That’s how I feel, too. And let’s not kid ourselves, Kingsley may be Minister, and sure there’s marked improvement in the Ministry, but it sometimes feels like they’re discovering more and more internal threats every day.”
George sighed. They really did need to implement some sort of a shield charm over the shelves, but since they were in the process of rearranging the store, it just seemed like more hassle than it was worth. But this was the third time this week that product had been broken. He couldn’t bring himself to be mad, accidents happened after all, but it was more than a bit irritating and he hadn’t had any caffeine that morning yet. He waved the last of the cloud away with his wand, and moved back behind the counter to finish the biweekly inventory. Settling back into his stool, he noticed two cups on the edge of the counter, with his and Fred’s name. He hadn’t seen Hermione come in, but he supposed she must have slipped to the back during all the ruckus. Eyeing Fred and their two summer employees, he decided they’d be alright while he stepped back for a minute.

“Oh Hermione?” he called into the back room. “Hermione?”

“I have a question,” he was met by his sister’s annoyed voice. “Why the hell did you put the Darkness Powder on those shelves? I told you they would fall!”

“Merlin’s BEARD Ginerva. You move it then! And good luck getting around that crowd.”

“You SHOULD have moved it last night after close.”

“We had to rework the Amortentia Bubbles. They were making people burst out into depressing ballads, not love songs.”

“It would have taken two seconds.”

“Okay, Molly.”

“Oh, screw you George, you know I—“

“Hey, George,” Hermione chuckled, appearing from behind some boxes, dusting off the back of her pants. “I see you found your coffee. I had them add in a shot of rejuvenation potion. Figured you could use it when I saw the line out the door already.”

“Aw, my dearest queen of a woman. You piece of art. Absolute and total perfection. An Angel.”

George was on his knees now, holding out a chocolate frog he grabbed off a nearby shelf. “Marry me?”

“Well, that depends,” she opened the wrapper and checked the card, “Nicolas Flamel? Why I daresay, I have no choice but to say yes.”

“OH HAPPY DAYS!” he exclaimed, picking up Hermione and twirling her about.

“Imagine the hair on those kids,” Ginny snorted.

“What’s all this then?” asked Fred, who entered the room just as George was showering a giggling
Hermione with flower petals that exploded from his wand tip, making a great loud *bang* before each appearance.

“You haven’t heard Fredrick, dear? These two are getting hitched,” Ginny rolled her eyes, making her way back to the front of the store.

“Merlin, save us.” Fred shook his head, levitating a box behind him, and left again.

Alone, George stared down at Hermione, his face softening.

“What?” she looked back at him, eyes narrowing as a few more petals found her face.

“You okay, Mione?” He pulled a few stray flowers from her curly hair.

“I’m okay. Are you okay?” she shot back.

“Better now I have this,” he wiggled the coffee cup at her. “You know if you ever need to talk…”

“I’m fine, really.” She tried a reassuring squeeze to the arm.

“You look as though you’ve been crying, and not from the happiness of my proposal.”

“I’m fine, really, George.”

“If you’re sure. Can’t have my bride unhappy now can we? Or,” and his voice was suddenly very quiet and sweet, almost like he was begging, “my brand new Head of Potion Quality Control…?”

“No, George,” she laughed, pushing the door to the front, rejoining the commotion.

“Oh, come ON Mione. You’d be excellent at it, and you can’t tell me you wouldn’t love judging our work anyways. Why not just get paid to judge us?”

“George, I really can’t. Not in the capacity you want. I start work with the Wizengamot next month, and the International Confederation of Wizards next week.”

“Do you HAVE to be Ms. Dumbledore? Really? Wouldn’t you rather be fun?”

She rolled her eyes at him, “It’s quite a lot of fun to be better at magic than you.”

“Is that a challenge?”

“I daresay it is George Weasley.”

“GINERVA,” he yelled across the crowd. “PREPARE MY HORSE.”

“Not again,” she muttered, but obliged.

Waving her wand across the ceramic carousel above her, one of the horses leapt into the crowd to join George. As he mounted it, Hermione laughed.

“Hear ye, hear ye!” he announced to the crowd. “This woman here believes she’s a better witch than I!”

He was met with cheers and boos from the already attentive crowd.

“Do you deny this blasphemy, Granger?” He was speaking in his deep “knight” voice (as he referred to it) as he did whenever he started this nonsense.
Hermione sighed, giving into his dramatics. She flourished her wand, perhaps a bit more than necessary, and a great swirl of glitter encompassed the horse and its rider. For a second they were gone, replaced by a giant rolling ball of pink glitter, set in midair. When suddenly it burst, George reappeared with blue hair and green freckles, and instead of his horse, he was now straddling a very orange frog.

The crowd roared with laughter, and even Fred had to stop what he was doing to look over at her.

“Haven’t seen that one before granger,” he shouted from the register, clapping obnoxiously, his hands above his head.

“Don’t look at me, I’m hideous!” George’s voice rang from his frog, in his best imitation of Fleur. “Defend my honor, Fred!”

“Go on then, Freddy,” she winked, taking an offensive stance. “Defend him.”

Fred’s face took on a look of mischievous evil. Whipping his wand so quickly you would have missed it if you blinked, the floor beneath Hermione turned to quick sand. In her surprise she began to struggle, forcing herself deeper into the pit. She looked up at Fred, and whipped her wand back in silence. He cocked an eyebrow. Nothing had happened. The whole shop fell silent in anticipation.

A minute passed and Fred was getting nervous, when boxes flapped out of the back room, flying, and oinking their way towards him. He found himself surrounded by six of them, attempting to fend them off, when Hermione struck another blow. Bat bogeys flew from his nose, covering his face. Sending ribbons out from a box beneath the counter, she levitated him high above the crowd, and bound him head to toe in pink lace, complete with a nice big shining bow atop his head. Finally, she let him down, sitting him on the counter, clearly pleased with herself.

“So, who was it that was better with magic?” Ginny chimed in, as the crowd laughed hysterically.

Hermione, looked back at the sea of wizards, and in a now booming voice, announced, “Don’t forget! We offer gift wrapping!”

As the crowd died down, and went back to shopping, she made her way over to Fred, who was already untangling himself.

“A bit of advice, if I may?”

“You may,” she countered.

“Bit tighter around the wrists next time. Makes for more fun.” He winked, then added, “Plus, I definitely could have gotten out if I wanted.”

“Oh, could you have?” she asked sardonically.

“I could.”

“Why didn’t you?”

“The better to be tied up by you, love,” he whispered in her ear, finally having gotten off the counter.

She felt her cheeks burn, and quickly turned to hide it with her hair, only to bump into yet another red head.
“Wicked bat bogey. You’ve made me so proud,” Ginny sniffed, wiping fake tears from her eyes.
As the summer holiday ended, and fall term began, the shop slowed down. That meant the twins had more down time to work on products, which meant their friends and family would make more frequent drop ins to distract them from working on products. On one particularly overcast and windy Wednesday, the shop bell rang and a bushel of brown hair peaked over the shelves making its way to the front desk.

“Hey Fred, Ginny hasn’t been up here has she?” Hermione asked.

“First of all, I’m George. Second of all, what have you to offer me in return for her,” he teased dramatically.

“No, you’re Fred,” she stated plainly. “You really haven’t seen her?”

Fred stared, his eyes narrowing for a half a second, going unnoticed by the witch in front of him.

“She’s in the back,” he gestured behind him.

She hurried through the door, not saying another word.

It wasn’t lost on Fred that Hermione had known, with unwavering confidence, that he was in fact him. Nor did he miss that she was incredibly flustered. Which led him to do the only sensible thing. He crouched by the door and slipped the end of an extendable ear beneath the crack.

“This is not the place,” Ginny’s voice chimed in, concerned.

“I know that, but I’ve been looking for you everywhere. I thought about sending an owl but... This is urgent.”

“It’s their choice, love, I can’t really expect to hold them back,” Ginny stated, clearly resigned to whatever it was.

“So, you aren’t bothered then?” the girl accused.

“Come off it, Hermione,” she spat back.

Fred couldn’t remember ever hearing the two speak to each other so roughly, so on edge.

Someone sighed, Fred suspected it to be Hermione.

“Look,” Ginny was speaking with an assertive air, “lets get some lunch, and talk about it, ok?”

“Yeah, okay, I—“

“Oh shit,” Fred exclaimed as the door slammed into his face.
“Oh, Fred! Fred, are you alright?! Fred, I am so sorry!” Hermione forced him to sit on the ground while closely examining his face, doing her best to ignore the thick white scar running the length of his jaw.

“Serves him right, nosey ass,” Ginny muttered irritably, walking past the pair.

“Oh! If you’re gonna call me nosey, you might as well explain what all that was about then,” he said from in between Hermione’s hands, who was still looking closely at the new bruise forming. “Hermione, it’ll be fine really.”

He pulled at her wrists gently, noticing how very close their two faces had become; noticing how very watery her eyes were; noticing how very nice her hair smelled.

He cleared his throat and made to get up, while Hermione made very little effort to move away from him, clearly straining to desist attending to his face.

“So, what’s going on?” he asked.

Ginny sighed angrily and began pacing in front of the counter. “Where’s George?”

“It’s his day off.”

“If I tell you, you can’t tell him.”

Fred knew what not telling George would entail. The twins didn’t normally keep secrets from each other, but Ginny was the exception. Mainly because she’s been known to secretly charm them, so that she would know if one of them let anything slip. It was a little known fact that Hermione’s accomplished bit of spell work on Marietta “The Sneak” Edgecombe back in the D.A. days, was actually a modified version of a signature Ginny Weasley move. One that the twins were all too familiar with.

“Go on, then,” he said, eyeing his sister warily.

“Hermione was doing paperwork for one of the Wizengamot members. I guess she came across some Auror assignment. Shockingly,” she stressed sarcastically, “some blood purists are at large.”

“Well, we knew the Death Eaters weren’t exactly going to go away,” Fred offered, looking over at the girl beside him, noticing how quiet Hermione had gotten.

“Apparently, Ron and Harry are on the shortlist of training Aurors they’re considering sending on this mission.”

“Oh,” he let out, surprised and turning again to look at Hermione. Worry clearly etched across her face. “Well they’ll be okay, Mione. They’re 2/3 of the great Golden Trio. You know better than anyone how capable they are.”

Ginny raised her eyebrows, staring at Hermione, as her friend considered this notion.

When Hermione opened her mouth, a minute later, she spoke carefully,

“That’s it though, isn’t it?”

She was met with only confused silence.

“They’re 2/3 of the ‘Great Golden Trio.’ They’ve never done this without me. I’ve never let them do it without me, at least not without being unconscious, at any rate.” Hermione was now wringing
her hands together, staring at the ground. “How can I possibly sit idly by while they’re sent to who-
knows-where, fighting who-knows-what kind of dark magic?”

“The Hermione, you didn’t want to be an Auror. This is part of it. Do you have any idea how agonizing
it was to let you lot run off across the country, without so much as goodbye?” Ginny’s face was
turning pink.

“I can’t just stand idly by.”

“They may not even be picked.”

“Oh, please, you know how ready the heads of the department are to have Ron and Harry official.
Of course, they’ll be sent out.”

Fred watched as the two girls exchanged looks silently. He wanted to reach out, offer advice, hold
them. But he had never seen either of them like this before. He couldn’t decide which reaction was
the right one.

“What would you have me do?” Ginny was the first to break the silence.

“Talk to him,” Hermione pleaded.

“I can’t... we haven’t... I can’t.” She was practically whispering now.

“Still?”

“You know how he is. And it’s certainly not my job to fix him. So, he can talk to me when he’s got
it all sorted out,” she finished, becoming more annoyed as this went on.

“And I certainly can’t talk to Ron,” Hermione sighed.

“Fred, I need to go. Clear my head. I’ll finish up organizing the stock room after practice
tomorrow, yeah?”

“Whatever you need,” he cracked. His throat had become incredibly dry.

“Accio broom. And don’t,” she caught her broom as it flew at her from behind the desk, “tell
George,” she finished menacingly.

The door jingled behind her, leaving Fred and Hermione in silence.

They stood like that for several minutes, before Fred shifted back to his stool by the register.

“You’re sure your face is alright?” Hermione asked quietly.

“It is.” He added, “of course, I couldn’t think of anyone else I’d want patching it up.” He winked at
her.

Her eyes teared up, while the thought of frog skin crossed her mind.

“Oh, Hermione, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean—“

“No, it’s fine, Fred. It’s not you, really.”

Again they stood in silence.
“Hey, do you want to get lunch?” Fred offered.

“Um, sure we can... I could eat, yeah.”
While Fred took off to grab takeout, Hermione rearranged the back so that a small table and two chairs were situated in front of the door leading out from the stock room. She magicked the door, so that it worked as a one way window, should any customers come in while they ate.

When he returned, Fred had decided he’d like to keep the improvement saying something under his breath about a better pranking environment.

“Hey, shouldn’t you be getting back to work?” Fred asked, as it dawned on him Hermione was playing hooky.

“They split my time between the ICW and the Wizengamot, as I’m needed. Things are still crazy since the war ended, I’ve been working pretty nonstop. I hadn’t planned on making this a half day, but after seeing that assignment, and since I have the next 4 days off...” she shrugged.

“You’re telling me THE Hermione Granger, Ms. Prefect, is taking time off to.... breathe?!”

She laughed him off, pulling a piece off the roast chicken in front of her. Fred watched her place it aside and repeat.

“You’re not hungry?” he inquired, realizing she had only been pushing the food around.

She shoved a scoop of mashed potatoes into her mouth and smiled.

“Very convincing,” he said in an exaggerated seriousness.

“Well, it’s certainly no Molly Weasley’s cooking.”

“Speaking of which, you’ve missed the last several dinners.”

“Have I?” she asked, in mock surprise.

“Wouldn’t have anything to do with a certain red head...”

“It’s true,” she sniffed. “George and I split, and it was NOT amicable!” She pulled her napkin to her face, fake crying.

“You know, I never did approve of this partnership between you two,” he shook his head. “Reckon, you and George make a better couple than you and Ron, anyways.”

“Oh yes, Angelina doesn’t mind at all,” she smiled.

“Jokes aside—“

“For you? Impossible.”
“Ha. Ha. Jokes aside,” he ignored her, “it’s nice to see you laughing again.”

Hermione’s head cocked to the side. An unexpected curiosity tugged at her.

“What do you mean?”

“Like you don’t know.” He made a face at her, as if he had caught on to some secret. “You’re always in such a great mood with George, but I haven’t seen you or Ron in the same room since after… every thing. And you’re never at family dinners anymore. An impressive feat considering you live in my old room.”

Hermione considered this a moment. Truth be told, it hadn’t been that long since the battle ended. Barely 5 months since she had completed her final Hogwarts year. It was then she realized a particularly important detail.

“It’s about to be the year mark since you came out of your coma, isn’t it?”

“It is,” he said. “Next month actually.”

She remembered after the war was all said and done, going to visit Fred at St. Mungo’s. It had been a month since the wall had fallen, and while his body was fully repaired and healed, it seemed, prior to becoming physically injured, he had been hit with a series of complex magic. Due to the nature of the battle, however, he was one of many, hit with similarly difficult magic that led to a comatose state.

“Lucky, Hermione was there,” Ron offered, while the family sat in the waiting room. Percy nodded in agreement.

Molly Weasley, who would not let go of Hermione whenever she was in her sight, beamed in agreement, pulling the girl in for yet another hug.

“Always taking care of my boys.”

“Maybe let her breathe,” Arthur chuckled, pulling his wife into his arms instead. Hermione met him with a grateful smile, mouthing a quick “thank you.”

It was then the head healer came out.

“Weasley’s family, I presume? We have a few theories on what exactly could have been dealt to Fred. Because this war has brought in such an influx of patients, however, I’m afraid I can’t give any real timeline on the matter.”

“I’ve actually got a number of ideas, if you don’t mind discussing them further?” Bill questioned from the far end of the group. “I’ve been speaking with my brother Percy, who was standing by Fred at the time of the incident. We’ve been running through a few possibilities.”

“I’m happy to discuss any concerns, but I promise you, we’ve got some of the very best curse breakers around,” the healer assured.

“And I promise you, my ‘uzband eez better,” Fleur smiled politely. “Goblins prefer
“Of course,” he nodded curtly back at her.

Bill smiled a small, sly smile, while a soft blush grew barely visible on his scarred face, something that only his wife seemed capable of eliciting.

Fleur was right, of course, in the end. It was her very skilled, curse breaker husband who was able to pull Fred from his state. Unfortunately, it took many months of effort before they had their breakthrough.

Six months after the battle ended, just before December, Bill and Percy finally deduced the correct antidote and combination of incantations.

When Fred opened his eyes, he stared back and forth between his two brothers, both of whom were sobbing on top of him.

“How are you feeling? About all that I mean?” Hermione prompted them both from their silent reveries.

“Weird. Very weird.”

He stared at the witch beside him, remembering all that his brothers had said she’d done to save him.

“Enough about me. Quit avoiding the question, Granger. Do you or do you not, love my brother,” Fred asked, saving them both from the uncomfortable topic.

“What do you care if Charlie and I run away together?” She shot back quickly.

Fred rolled his eyes and fell from his chair, sighing loudly as he went. He really did not understand this new joking Hermione. Not that he really understood the old her, but he certainly could navigate it better.
Insight

Chapter Notes

Thanx 4 reading <3

Truth be told, Hermione knew what Fred was asking. But she didn’t really want to discuss it.

After the war, she and Ron talked. They spent a long time on the run together, spent a long time fighting Voldemort together. But when all was said and done, when life was quiet, they found they did a lot of fidgeting around each other when anything resembling romance was brought up.

They kissed twice after *that* moment in the battle. And both kisses had been dry and awkward. Even hand holding felt foreign outside of survival. She loved Ron, and he loved her. But they both came to realize that they were what the other needed at the time, and they were both content to return to being just friends.

Of course, because nothing can ever be easy, this didn’t come without its complications.

During the months that Fred was at St. Mungo’s, Hermione frequented visitors’ hours. Sometimes with Ginny, or Harry, sometimes alone. More often than not, when she’d go by herself, she’d find George there by his brother’s bedside.

On nights when the pressure in her chest was especially heavy, Hermione would find herself at St. Mungs, visiting old and new loved ones still being patched up. One particularly difficult night she walked in on George crying into the bed, while Fred lay motionless. She pulled up a chair quietly, and wrapped her arms around the shaking twin. He turned around and sobbed into her shoulder.

After a time, he finally pulled away, not looking at her.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

“Of course.”

“I mean for saving him,” he looked up at her. “If it weren’t for you.... the way Ron and Percy tell it, they were utterly useless.”

“They weren’t useless, it would have overwhelmed anyone,” she said gently.

“But not you.”

“I... George... every night...” she swallowed. “Before we left that summer, and every night we were on the run.... I practiced for moments like that,” she finished, sounding unsure. “And we had plenty of incidents where I had to react quickly. But even I hesitated when I saw him. You can’t blame your brothers. They can’t blame themselves.”

“You’re right,” he said, steeling himself. “We all need to be better equipped—“
“The war’s over George.”

“Is it? Really though? The Order isn’t exactly disbanded. I mean, look at how many great, dark wizards Dumbledore faced in his lifetime. We all need to be better. I can’t lose anyone else.”

“You haven’t lost him,” she offered.

“I don’t know, Hermione. What if he never wakes up?”

After that, Hermione found herself frequenting the shop. Helping George, even on days she knew she could be studying in the library.

“Guess being part of the Golden Trio has its privileges,” George teased, when Hermione strolled into the shop one Saturday.

“Ha. Ha. I’m not exactly an average student.”

“Ohhh. We have a very big head today, I see.”

“You know what I mean,” she laughed, throwing an empty box at him. “I’m of age, I’m there by choice. The rules don’t apply to me the same way.”

“Oh, she’s a rebel.”

“Anyways,” she rolled her eyes.

She pulled a number of very old, very large books from her bag and piled them on the counter. George just stood there, looking incredulous.

“What the hell is all this?!”

“Research.”

“Resea—oh no. I’m not reading all this.”

“Oh yes, you are.”

“Oh no, I’m not.”

“Oh yes, you are.”

And Hermione made her way around the counter. Cornering George, her wand pointed at him.

“George Weasley, do you or do you not want to help your brother?”

POP.

“GEORGE!”

“Yes, love?” He announced from the opposite end of the store.

Hermione apparated after him. Then he apparated. So she apparated. And this went on for 15 minutes before they were interrupted by another Weasley, who’s entrance went unnoticed with all the commotion going on.
Finally George and Hermione appeared at the register again, accidentally running into each other and falling hard on their backs, laughing hysterically.

Suddenly, a light cough made its owner known to the pair on the ground. When they looked over they found a very red Ron standing a few feet away, his eyebrows raised rather high.

“What’s going on here?”

“Hermione was just trying to force me to read,” George said, pulling himself and the witch up off the ground.

“Oh,” Ron nodded slowly, realization crossing his face. “I see.”

“Uhhh, see what, mate?” George countered, feeling very confused by whatever conclusion his brother was coming to.

“Ron,” Hermione warned. She was not unfamiliar with her friend, and already guessed what was going through his mind. “Ron, George and I are just friends. It’s not like that.”

“Seems like it’s like that.”

“Ronald...”

George stood there, still very confused.

“You think... she and I...?” He started laughing.

“Ouch...” She glared back at the man now clutching his sides.

“Ron, you know I’ve started seeing Ange again, right?”

“It’s only been 3 months.”

“We were also engaged before the war broke out—“

“So, I’m sure she’d like to hear about what’s going on here then.”

“Nothing is going on,” George spit back, obviously angry now.

He made his way over to Ron, wand out of his pocket.

“Whatever your deal is, you need to drop it. Quick.”

“It has to be my own brother, Hermione?” he was completely ignoring George at this point, looking over, face full of hurt.

“Oi!” George shouted, but with no results.

“Ron!” Hermione yelled, as the man turned back out of the shop.”Ron!”

After a moment, she let herself sink on the floor, the familiar feeling of him leaving hitting her again.

“Hermione?” George was now kneeling beside her.
“It’s fine,” she said, wiping tears from her eyes.

“It’s not fine.”

“Just, trust me. It’s okay.”

And he did trust her. And Ron didn’t start anymore trouble, but things certainly didn’t clear up past the awkwardness now shared between the 3.

Hermione waited a few months after the defeat of Voldemort, to ensure things had settled down enough that she might safely reintroduce her parents’ to their memories. However, while they managed to survive the war unscathed, their daughter found spending any extended period of time in the Muggle world more difficult than she could have expected. A fact she would find herself often reeling with guilt over.

After her final year at Hogwarts, Ginny and Molly sat Hermione down, and offered one of the many rooms to her as long as she needed.

“You’re as good as a daughter,” Molly held her hand.

“And I could use the help degnoming,” Ginny smiled.

“Oh, no need. I’ve got a spell for that,” the mother laughed.

“But all those summers…”

“Hard work is good for children,” the older witch shrugged, getting up to return to her knitting. “Don’t tell the others.”

Ginny stared after her mother, mouth wide.

Hermione loved living at the Burrow, she really did. But since the incident in the twin’s shop, she had been careful to always disappear when Ron was around. She made sure to keep an excuse on hand at any given moment, “getting called in on some last minute paperwork” or “going for tea with her parents’ and their friends” when she knew he was coming by for a Sunday dinner.

It was not that she had no interest in speaking to Ron, it was just that she felt she had a very good idea of how he must be feeling, and rather than try and force both of them into a conversation neither wanted to have, she decided the best course of action was to simply continue avoiding each other. Ron seemed to have come to this decision as well, since he had not made any move either, not even to tell Angelina about the absolute nothing that was going on between Hermione and George.
Accidental Rendezvous

Chapter Summary

<3 thanks for reading!!

Hermione arrived at the Burrow, just after 5pm. She stood at the apparition point, taking in the solitude.

POP.

Jumping at the noise, she practically threw herself across the protective barrier, wand pointed ahead of her.

“It’s just me,” Fred walked the few feet from where he appeared to help her up.

“I see that.” She brushed the yellowing grass from her jeans. “Sometimes, I forget where I am” she tried to laugh, but lost to more of a nervous chuckle.

He looked at her carefully, giving her a small smile.

“You want to hear a secret, Granger?” he asked softly. “I didn’t leave the one way window up in the back room because it made for a prime pranking environment.”

“Oh?” She looked at him curiously.

“It would seem I’m a bit claustrophobic these days.”

She eyed him carefully, not having really considered the psychological effects of having a wall nearly crush you, even if you hadn’t been conscious for it.

“I suppose we’ve all found ourselves adjusting,” she added thoughtfully.

He pulled a dried up leaf from her hair. Then another. And another.

“Having fun?” she laughed.

“Do you know we could hide a great deal of things in this mane of yours.”

“Is that so?”

“You see,” he said, extracting a small vial from his pocket, “mum has gotten into the habit lately of patting George and I down.” He began placing the bottle in random spots of her hair.

“Something about not giving the infants firecrackers, blah, blah, blah.” Hermione laughed at this, to which Fred smiled. “Yes, well, would you be so kind,” he started, pulling one last leaf from her hair, “as to hide this for me?”

She took the bottle in her hand, noting that she had seen the shimmery blue potion somewhere before.

“What exactly would I be hiding?”
At this, Fred bent down, pulling Hermione close to him. The scent of the shop clung heavy to him: a slight metal, like gunpowder, mixed with pine, and sweat.

‘And rosewater?’ she thought. It must have been potions night.

He moved to tuck a bit of hair behind her ear, brought his mouth up to it, his warm breath tickling her. He held her there purposefully, building the intensity of the anticipation.

“That’s for me to know,” he said finally, quite mysteriously.

Hoping he wouldn’t notice her now very shallow breathing, she stepped back from whatever this whole performance was, hands on her hips, and rolled her eyes exaggeratedly.

“Then you’ll just have to find a different way of smuggling illegal objects past your mother.”

Hermione took off toward the burrow, only to have Fred grab her arm and pull her back. He pulled a bit more forcefully than intended, however, and found himself toppling over backwards down the small hill, with Hermione falling after.

“Smooth,” she huffed. Finding herself face down, the back of his knee rested on the back of her head.

She rolled over so she laid beside him on her back, stretching her hand out to him.

“So, who’s night are you planning to ruin exactly?” she asked, still breathless.

Instead of answering, he laughed at the sight of her. Her face had green smudged across it, and her hair was absolutely littered with dry grass. She had a bit of dirt caked spectacularly to her chin. Reaching over, he cupped her face, and with the same hand, used his thumb to brush it off. Her eyes found his, and for a split second, she could have sworn she felt her heart jump.

“Don’t tell me then,” she said, quickly looking away, suspicious he could hear her now thumping chest.

“It’s for Ron.” He busied himself with the grass stains on his own pants now.

“For Ron?” she looked back at him, surprised. “Ron’s coming?”

“Yeah, he says he has some sort of surprise. You didn’t know? I was talking to Harry about when he came by the store earlier.”

“He must have missed me.” She stood up rather abruptly, and started brushing herself off.

“Hermione?” Fred asked, concerned. But she was already at the top of the hill.
Hermione was nearly to the house when she saw them. Ginny was leaning back on her broom, completely red in the face, while Harry sat on his own, swaying back and forth a little bit too precariously while he spoke.

“ARE Y—“ she lowered her voice, though just barely. “Are you kidding me?”

Harry replied but it was much too low for Hermione to hear. Just then she felt something behind her. Fred lifted a finger to his lips, and with a hand on her shoulder pushed them behind the nearest tree.

“How are we supposed to get around them without interrupting?” Hermione whispered.

“Doubt Ginny would notice us truthfully.”

He gestured to his sister who was steadily climbing higher into the air, sparks shooting at random from her wand.

“I’m surprised she hasn’t pushed him off yet,” Fred whispered, pulling a flesh colored string from his pocket. “They really haven’t spoken since his birthday?”

Hermione shook her head. “It’s his own fault. It made sense for them to break up, after Dumbledore’s...before Bill’s wedding. But now? After all this? It’s not as if she cares about his lifestyle.”

“Well, at any rate she’s certainly known who he was since before he did.”

“Explain.” She demanded of Fred as he tapped the string with his wand, so it was now invisible.

“I just mean she understood some of the implications of being the ‘Boy Who Lived’ before he even knew that’s who he was. Though, admittedly, she herself was also a kid.”

Hermione considered this, while Fred levitated the now invisible Extendable Ear and handed her the end.

“I do love you, I just—” Harry's voice started.

“Want to keep me safe, I know. But I would think by now, your perspective on that would have changed. You aren’t running away looking for Voldemort anymore.”

“But there’s still loads of bad people out there. People that would use you to get to me.”

“You dating me, isn’t going to stop anyone from using me to get to you. Or to get to Ron for that matter.”
“That’s not the point.”

“It is, Harry! My entire family was in the Order. We’re ‘blood traitors.’ My own mum killed Bellatrix Lestrange, FOR MERLIN’S SAKE!”

“I know!” Harry yelled back. “I know! I can’t hide you in a box and I would never try! But you can’t blame me for trying to find a way to keep you safe.”

“I’m not blaming you,” her voice became gentler. “Believe me, I’ve certainly considered locking you up in the attic. But my point is: I’m no worse off for being Harry Potter’s girlfriend.”

“Ginny…” Harry trailed off.

“I’m in the Order,” she said abruptly, quietly, as if announcing it for the first time. “I’ve been in it since school ended. In an official capacity.”

“You’ve… been inducted?” Harry asked, slowly, as the new information washed over him.

“Since June.”

“Since June?”

“Yes.”

Hermione and Fred exchanged anxious looks, the latter mouthing ‘He didn’t know?’ to which Hermione could only shrug back her surprise.

“That’s almost 6 months now. How come no one told me? I’ve been by the Order every other week.”

“I asked that McGonagall withhold the information on a need to know basis, which she agreed would be best, given you and I weren’t working on the same assignments.” She was speaking softly, knowing Harry well enough to give him the space he needed to process.

“You didn’t tell me.” He looked at her, the hurt in his face evident, even from a distance.

“We were fighting,” she shrugged, looking to the ground.

“Maybe we shouldn’t be listening, Fred,” Hermione said in a barely audible whisper. But neither made to move.

“You haven’t exactly talked to me since official Auror training started.” Ginny added, when Harry had still not said anything.

“It was keeping me busy.” He wouldn’t meet her eyes.

“Was it.” It was a statement, not a question. Accusatory, more than anything.

“Ginny,” he flew forward slightly. “I never stop thinking about you.”

He still wasn’t looking at her, but she was staring hard at him. Hermione couldn’t recall a time she’d ever seen him so vulnerable.

Except once. A few days after the disaster that was Godric’s Hollow. She caught Harry staring at a shard of broken glass. When she came up behind him, he merely hugged her waist, silently, while she brushed his hair back. They spent that night sipping at some fire whiskey they found tucked
away in the tent’s little kitchenette. Talking about the loss of Harry’s parents, and Hermione’s fears she may have lost her own.

Ginny started to make her way towards him, though apprehensively.

“I haven’t stopped thinking about you either. But you can’t push me away and expect I come back every time.”

“I know.”

“What if we start slow?” she offered. “I mean, let’s not kid ourselves. We’re all still a bit shaken up.”

He smiled at her, wiping his face, and messing his hair at the back. She rolled her eyes, a smile catching her face.

“Anyways,” she said, moving her broom to sit parallel with his. “I have more pressing matters than uncontrollable snogging before you and Ron are sent off on yet another great mission,” she said dramatically, now wrapping her arms around his neck.

But as they were going in for a kiss, and as the two grounded eavesdroppers turned away in disgust, Harry spoke up.

“What great mission?” He was still holding Ginny’s waist but he was eyeing her suspiciously.

“Hermione mentioned you were on some shortlist for some left over Death Eater assignment.”

“No, the ministry.”

“That’s impossible. I have direct orders from McGonagall to stay and play nice with the bureaucrats. She and Kingsley both have spoken with the Head Aurors. Ron as well. They want to use our names to try and dissuade something, I’m not sure. I haven’t been briefed, exactly.”

“Well, is that not what Ron’s big surprise is?”

“No, I can’t say what... Hang on. How does Hermione know?”

“She was working on something for some Wizengamot official,” Ginny shrugged. “You lot just happened to be on the list of names.”

Harry stared at her. “What Death Eater?”

“Um... Rookwood, I think?”

“They were supposed to kill that mission,” Harry said, quickly untangling himself from his girlfriend and landing on the ground. Before his feet found the grass he had conjured up the silver stag and was talking to it.

Fred pulled back the ear at this point, not breaking eye contact with Hermione.

“When’s the last time you went to the Order?” He asked her.

“A month ago? I’m supposed to report in on Monday, with any internal information.”
Fred poked his head around the tree to check the coast was clear.

“Merlin’s fuck,” he snapped, making retching motions at Hermione.

She peaked her own head around, only to find Ginny leaned up against the back of the broom shed, her hands tangled up in black hair, the owner of which had just lost his hand up the witch’s shirt.

Fred continued his vomiting mime routine, to which Hermione responded by tapping both their heads with her wand. A chill trickled down her body, which was very much not there anymore.

“Clever thinking,” the invisible Fred complimented the air in front of him. He felt for her hand and apparated them to the front of the house.

*POP.*

“Why do i bother?” she said exasperated. “What was the point? They would have heard the crack?”

“‘Cause it was funny,” Fred smiled, tapping his head.

Hermione gave him a quick once over, before he made to tap her head, too.
George walked into the living room shortly after Fred and Hermione had settled in on the last free couch. The burrow was loud and busy, with Molly hurrying about shouting orders from the kitchen, and Bill and Charlie shooting snowballs at each other from their wands.

“What’s all this then?” George asked as he squeezed in on the other side of Hermione.

“Charlie said he thinks Teddy here,” he gestured to the blue haired boy in Hermione’s lap, “could beat Victoire in a flying race.”

“Flying already are we, V?” George asked the little girl sitting on the floor in front of Fred. She seemed much too busy quite literally screaming with laughter every time Charlie hit her dad in the face.

One of the balls hit the rug, prompting Teddy to leave Hermione’s lap to investigate. George turned to the now hands free Hermione and handed her an envelope. It was made of a delicate, almost see through paper. She looked at George, confused.

“Open it later,” he winked. “But put it away, before mum sees.”

Fred looked at him suspiciously, but George just grinned.

“Where’s Angelina, Feorge?”

“Caught up at work, should be here pretty soon, actually, Gred,” he replied, checking his wrist, only to make a shocked face at a giggling Victoire when they found he was not, in fact, wearing a watch.

George knew Fred must have an idea of what was coming. It’s not as if Angelina wasn’t in their flat every night now. And Fred had unwittingly walked in on more than one serious conversation. Not to mention, the previous engagement between the two.

Just then Angelina arrived, announced by Mrs. Weasley, who forgot she had a booming spell on her voice, causing an excited echo to ring across the house. “WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?”

“George?” Fred looked over at his twin.

Wide eyed, he got up, leaving the room bewildered at what would come next.

Entering the kitchen, he found his sobbing mother and his laughing girlfriend holding hands.

“Hey,” he said when he locked eyes with Angelina.

“Oh, George! Work was so busy, I forgot to take the ring off before I walked in,” she said apologetically. “I know we meant it to be announced later.”

But his mother had already pulled him into a tight, suffocating hug. He blew a kiss at his fiancé, and she winked back. Truth be told, Molly knew already. Arthur let it slip one night, or rather, was caught by Molly as he rummaged through an old chest of family heirlooms.

“That,” she pointed to the gem on Angelina’s finger, “belonged to my great, great, great Aunt Roselyn. She had it imbued with an old type of moon magic. Should be very good luck for a very long, happy marriage.”
She sighed happily, squeezed both their faces, and gave a quick, “wonderful to see he got you back,” and set to work on some pies, sniffling.

Back in the living room, George and his fiancé sat on the couch, this time, causing Hermione to adjust her seating. Without meaning to, she found herself half sitting in Fred’s lap, whose arm was now draped along the back, as if that helped to alleviate anything at all.

“Why, Hermione,” he acted shocked and embarrassed. “Buy a boy a drink first.”

“Shut it,” she slapped him lightly in the chest, settling in to make herself more comfortable, and him, well, less.

This little exchange didn't go unnoticed by George. Nor did he miss Fred and Hermione subconsciously scooting closer before they both began dozing off. Which, George thought, was odd behavior for Fred, who he knew hadn’t been sleeping much at all lately.

Just as he was nudging at Angelina to look, two more people walked into the room.

“Is that THE Harry Potter?!” George shouted. “You’re telling me THE Harry Potter is in MY living room, right now?! Quick Ginny! Get the camera! You know,” he leaned over, whispering in a very loud, not so quiet voice, “Mr. Potter, my sister has the biggest crus—“ but Ginny caught him with a silencing charm.

“Much better.” And she blew a raspberry at him.

“Hate to say it, love,” Angelina shrugged in agreement.

George looked down at his niece and nephew, looking quite appalled and mouthing ‘Can you believe this?’

Harry took pity though, and reversed the spell.

“Freedooooooom,” he exclaimed.

“Shhh, you’ll wake her up,” Ginny nodded at Hermione. “She hasn’t been sleeping great. Or at all, really. I hear her down in the kitchen every other night.”

“Yeah, Freddy has been sleep walking again,” George nodded. “It’s more of a crawl, actually. Sort of like a very sleepy Niffler, I—”

“Quite content looking, aren’t they?” Harry asked. “Be a shame for someone to,” he threw what looked like a matchbox at George, “ruin it.”

“Did I ever tell you, you’re my hero?” He gaped down at the box of mini fireworks in his lap.

“Figured Mrs. Weasley would’ve confiscated whatever you brought. She emptied my pockets too, but I put them inside a muggle matchbox, so she wouldn’t notice.”

“Absolutely brilliant... mind if I steal the idea for the shop?”

“All yours.”

“Oh ho, look who finally showed up,” Charlie yelled at someone behind them. “And he’s brought a friend?”

George turned back to see his little brother standing there, accompanied by a witch.
Fred jerked awake. The second he felt the warm weight on his chest, he opened his eyes, and it took him several minutes to make sense of where he was. ‘This is not St. Mungo’s,’ he told himself. ‘You are not in a ward.’ He stared at the ceiling, a ceiling he was quite familiar with. He could smell his mother’s cooking, french onion soup and garlic roasted potatoes, a baking apple pie. His mouth watered, at the thought of the hot cinnamon crust. He could hear the shouts from outside, where his family was likely playing a quick game of quidditch. He could feel the overstuffed couch beneath him, worn in just the right places.

He could also feel that weight still on his chest. Looking down, he got a face full of curly brown hair. She was sweet smelling, like a vanilla and citrus shampoo, and the inescapable, familiar scent of pine and cooking spices that accompanied all the Burrow’s residents. He felt her even breathing against his ribs, and found that she had made herself quite comfortable on him. One arm beneath his neck, the other draped across his chest. His own arm wrapped around her, his hand laying slack over her hip. Her legs pretzeled around one of his. Well, he certainly couldn’t move her, he thought. And as he made to snuggle himself back into the couch, turning his head into the cushioned back, Ginny’s head popped up near their feet.

“Psssst,” she whispered softly. “Pssssst. PSSSST.”

“I’m awake!” Fred whisper-shouted at his sister. “But Miss Granger here is quite asleep, so if you don’t mind.”

“Mum sent me in here to wake you. Dinner’s almost ready, and I suggest you two get up before George and Harry have it their way.” She stuck her tongue out at him, but made no other efforts to get them up before leaving.

“Granger,” he whispered, shaking the sleeping girl on top of him. “Hey, lady…”

“Hmmm,” she groaned, squeezing tighter to her companion.

“Dinner’s ready, love.” But he was met with Hermione burying her face deeper into his chest. “Mione,” he laughed.

At this she rolled entirely on top of him, and over to his other side, so she was now sandwiched between him and the cushions. Fred raised his eyebrows. She buried her face in his neck. Her breath was warm, and it tickled him. He reached up to scratch it, but she caught his hand, and laid it over her face.

Now, normally Fred would not turn away a beautiful woman so intent on cuddling with him, but he was too shocked to do anything but laugh at his very stubbornly asleep friend.

Ginny walked back in, shaking her head, followed by a grinning Harry and George, holding what looked like a matchbox. All three stopped in their tracks, when they caught Fred and Hermione.
“Um?” George looked at his twin.

Fred became suddenly very aware of the fact that his hand was planted firmly on Hermione’s ass. Which he immediately removed, though his arm was very much still beneath the witch.

“She won’t wake up,” Fred said, more to Ginny than anyone, who he hoped had experience with Hermione’s sleeping habits.

“Oh, you know, she did ask me for a calming draught,” his sister turned pink. “She got nervous, with Ron… I might have miscalculated the amount.”

The three boys looked at her.

“She’ll be fine! She just is going to have a harder time getting up.” The red head made her way over to the sleeping girl. “Hermione, come on, love. Harry, grab us a cup of tea or something, please?”

Hermione groaned, and pressed herself closer to Fred.

Ginny smirked at her brother, who was gathering a bit of pink around his cheeks.

“Are you seeing this, George? I think Freddy here is in looove.”

“Oh, my dearest, Hermione. How could you betray me this way?!” George fell to the floor in feigned agony.

“You win some, you lose some,” Fred shrugged. “It’s a curse being the much more handsome twin, if it’s any consolation.”

“I beg your pardon?” George, still on the floor, looked positively appalled.

“You know, you could at least try sitting up?” Ginny snapped at Fred.

He did as he was told, though Hermione was still refusing to move. When Harry reentered, tea in hand, he found her wrapped entirely around Fred’s leg, while the rest of Fred was lying with his upper half on the floor.

“Well now this is just ridiculous. Are you sure it was a calming draught?” Harry was laughing.

“I think we all knew potions was never Gin’s strong suit,” George said darkly.

“Oh, very funny.” She rolled her eyes. “But what are we going to do about this?”

“Hand me my jacket,” Fred asked. “I was working on the counter potion for our new DayDream line. Was gonna ask you to test it out Ginny, but this should work just as well.”

Harry handed him the jacket, and Fred pulled a glass vial from it, handing it to Ginny to feed the gremlin Hermione.

They watched, and after a few minutes, Hermione began to loosen her grip on Fred, her eyes opening. She sat up, accepting the tea from Harry, pushing her hair from her face. She was just about to ask what happened, when a very familiar voice entered the room.

“What’s going on in here?” the voice asked sweetly, politely.

The group turned to look at the newcomer.
Harry hadn’t seen his former classmate since before the battle, so when Ron brought her over to Grimmauld Place the night before dinner at the Burrow, he was surprised to find out the two had been seeing each other for over a month now.

“Hey.” Ron sheepishly walked into the Grimmauld kitchen.

Harry was sitting at the table with his nose very close to a big pile of parchment, and an open pizza box.

“Hey,” he didn’t look up from his work. “Left you some pizza.”

The redhead sat down, helping himself to a piece, prompting Harry to finally look up.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong, why would you think anything’s wrong?”

Harry gestured at the single slice of pizza. “Normal” Ron would have taken half the box as a first helping.

“What did you say to me before we went into the forest when we were 12?” he asked, directing the tip of his wand at his friend’s chest.

“Harry…”

“Go on. Answer the question.”

Ron rolled his eyes, but muttered, “why couldn’t it be ‘follow the butterflies’…”

“Alright then,” Harry said, putting his wand away, satisfied. “What’s all this about?”

“I…” Ron thought for a second. “Well... what if...would it be weird…”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“Do you remember Lavender Brown?” Ron finally blurted out.

“Sure…” he answered, a bit uncertain.

“Well...what if, I don’t know, she came to dinner at mum and dad’s tomorrow?”

“Now why,” Harry stifled a laugh, “would she ever do that?”

“Well, I haven’t really been spending much time here, not sure you’ve noticed,” Ron stated matter of factly.

“No, I hadn’t noticed,” he gasped sarcastically.

“Well, I ran into her back when Fred was at St. Mungo’s. She spent some time there after the war…and I guess, well, she’s not like she was at school.”
“Get to the point, Won Won,” Harry teased.

“She’s really quite something.” Ron helped himself to seconds, clearly relieved that his friend wasn’t totally against the idea. “In fact, I thought she might come over when she gets away from this party she’s at.”

“What?” Harry stared at his friend, jaw dropping to the table.

“She’s just coming round for dinner. She makes the best roast beef. A bit on the rare side, but you know, it actually tastes better that way. What?” Ron finally looked up from his food to see Harry’s face. Eyes wide, mouth open.

“Little warning would have been nice.”

“Didn’t think it would matter too much, not like we’ve got anything happening. And she’s a bit nervous about coming by tomorrow. Thought you might ease the tension.”

“Fine,” he huffed. “You really want to bring her to dinner tomorrow?”

“It’s different this time, mate. You’ll see.”

And Harry saw. Though it was not all that different than he remembered.

She came bursting into the kitchen giggling into Ron’s ear, holding on to his free arm while the other held her roast. At the sight of Harry she beamed.

“How ARE you?” She exclaimed, pulling him into a hug.

“Alright,” he choked out. “You?”

“I’m great! Truth be told,” she was whispering now, “I’m a bit sloshed.”

Harry did his best to keep a straight face, but suspected his eyebrows had probably flown off at this point.

“Pavarti’s wedding shower was this morning,” she informed him. “Cutest story, she works at a potions shop now. And James, her fiance, James, comes in looking for wormwood. Well, she talks him into a quick card reading. Next thing you know, she’s predicting their entire marriage!”

She was messily serving the two boys now, much to Ron’s excitement, who could only shake his smiling face and comment, “bloody brilliant!”

When she finally settled into her seat, Harry noticed her fidgeting with her cardigan, keeping it pulled up to her neck with her free hand. At one point, she decided Ron needed help wiping his own face clean, and forgot the fabric she was clutching. As it fell, Harry noticed two white, jagged, shallow indents in her chest peaking out just above the top of her dress, and a third longer, thinner scar running the length to her collar bone. In that moment, something else had occurred to him. The roast they were eating was quite bloody. It was good, sure, but he couldn’t remember having ever had anything this rare, except maybe when he had dinner at Bill and Fleur’s.

“So,” he interrupted the now kissing couple. “How long has this been going on?”

“Officially, a month and a half,” Lavender booped Ron’s nose as she pulled away
from him. “But,” she blushed, “it’s been a long time coming. Don’t you agree?”

Ron was bright red, but he nodded his agreement. “She’s been a really great friend. Not that you aren’t, mate,” he turned to Harry nervously.

“Wasn’t worried,” he chuckled.

“It’s just...well you’ve been a great surprise this past year,” Ron shifted back to Lavender, who was now tearing up and giggling. Again.

Sniffling, she said, “it’s an odd thing, to find that sort of comfort in a place so completely clinical, but here we are.”

Harry sighed. He was happy for his friend, glad to see he was finally moving on from a particular curly haired witch. But he desperately hoped the couple would tone it down, now they were going public.

He finished his dinner quickly, needing to get away from all the snogging. When he was almost at the door, Lavender called him back.

“Hey, Harry,” her voice was quiet and timid. “Do you think...maybe I shouldn’t go tomorrow?”

She was not looking at him, busying herself with the corner of her boyfriend’s shirt. If he was being honest, he did not think Ron showing up with a girl, unannounced, to a house full of unsuspecting Weasleys, was a great plan. But to bring around one they all knew from fairly annoying circumstances? He could practically see the catalog of curses running through Ginny’s mind. Whatever inevitable prank Fred and George had planned would most likely be modified to target Ron, if it wasn’t already. And this was all assuming, Hermione reacted positively. He couldn’t see any reason she would not, but he also knew she and Ron were not exactly on speaking terms. If tomorrow went sour, the entire family would be there to defend Hermione. Which Ron, of course, would then take personally, even though it had to do more with the girls than him. ‘At least,’ he thought, ‘that’s what Ginny would say.’

Ron coughed lightly, causing Harry to realize he had paused maybe a little too long.

“Listen. The thing about the Weasleys,” he tried, thoughtfully. “Well...just don’t take it too seriously. Or personally. Roll with it, ya know? Especially the twins. They love to joke.”

She looked up at him, and smiled, wishing him a good night when he finally walked out of the room.

She stood in the doorway, hands folded casually in front of her. She had opted for a pale pink turtleneck, and dark jeans, an impressive attempt at casual for Lavender. Ron came up behind her, placing his hand on her back. Harry watched as understanding fell over the room.

Ginny was the first to react. Getting up off the floor, she positioned herself next to Hermione on the couch. Leaning over, she let her arms hang over the back. “So, Won Won,” she started.
“Ginny,” Harry warned, earning him a surprised look from Ron.

“What?” she challenged, looking back innocently.

But it was Hermione who responded. Squeezing Ginny’s arm, she got up and walked over to the girl standing nervous in the entryway.

“How are you?” Hermione smiled, taking the girl’s hand in her own to squeeze it.

Grateful, Lavender pulled her into a full on, suffocating hug.

“Lavender,” she strained. “Lavender!”

“Oh! I’m so sorry! It’s just been so long,” she laughed it off.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys, stay healthy & safe out there <3
As a teen, Lavender often found her summers consumed by her muggle aunt’s bookshelf. She loved everything and anything she could get her hands on, with a particular persuasion towards the shelf with a long haired, broad chested man on its cover.

Now, as a lover of romance novels, Lavender often found herself narrating certain moments of her life, a habit which she once confided to her favorite teacher, Professor Trelawney. To which, the professor admitted, she too was guilty of, and that this was actually a divine gift; her narrations were the early manifestations of the acute ability to read auras.

With that in mind, Lavender’s internal narrations developed with verve, and, if you asked her, a little je ne sais quoi.

So as she gazed down at the boy snoring loudly, his back exposed, she found she couldn’t stop smiling. She could see the myriad of scratches left on him, some deeper than others. Her head tilted as she recalled just how low her hands had travelled, and found that it would be very compelling to simply pull the sheet from the body in front of her. ‘I should certainly assess the damage,’ she considered. ‘It would be rude not to...’ She bit her lip, and looked at the watch around her wrist.

She gave a surprised little jump, realizing it was nearly noon. She grabbed at the top of her dress, only to find that it was trapped under Ron. She smiled, thinking he might like the scent of her when he woke up, and instead took her cardigan and ran down the stairs.

“Harry!” She bumped into him at the bottom.

“Lavender!” He said back, mimicking her voice, coffee in hand.

She wasn’t sure if he was mocking her, but she was also sure she’d heard Fred and Weasley make this voice at Hermione and Ginny often in school, and decided it probably didn’t matter much either way.

“Coffee?” He offered, shaking the mug in his hand.

“Oh, I’d absolutely love to Harry but I really have to go.”

“Uh...did you have plans?” He looked positively confused.
“Just gotta get ready to go to the Burrow!” she giggled, gesturing to her outfit of Ron’s worn Chudley Cannon shirt and briefs.

“Right...” he said, grabbing the Prophet and Quibbler that had just appeared on the table next to them. “It’s only 10:30, though.”

“Practically noon,” she chuckled, a bit nervous. Spending time alone with any of Ron’s family or friends was definitely not something she was prepared for yet.

“I suppose....” Harry eyed her. “If you decide you want coffee...” he started, making his way back to the kitchen.

Lavender stopped to think. She knew how long it would take her to get ready, and could use all the time she could to calm herself and pick an appropriate outfit. She also knew how important it was she reestablished some sort of base with Ron’s best friend.

With a huff, she followed him.

“So...” she poured herself a cup.

“There’s cream,” he handed her a small pitcher. “And sugar, if you like.”

“I actually take it black, but thank you.”

“Wouldn’t have expected that.”

“Mum always said, the first cup is purposeful; to wake up. Then dad would add a little sugar and cream to her second cup.”

“Why’s that?” Harry asked. With interest, she noted.

“Mum’s always been rather practical. Dad’s the romantic. It’s a ritual of theirs, I suppose? I started doing it when I missed them at Hogwarts. Kinda stuck,” she finished, smiling into the hot liquid.

“Your dad’s a muggle, right?” Harry was folding up the paper now.

“Yeah, suspect that’s why mum liked him.” She could feel her eyes tearing up and desperately tried to push it back.

“They still in London?” Harry was staring intently now and she could feel her cheeks burning.

“No, they actually escaped to Canada during the war...” she trailed off.

“Oh, Lavender I didn’t mean... we don’t have to...”

“No, it’s alright. They’re alright. They got out early enough. Mum would have fought but she couldn’t risk dad...anyways, they loved it so much they stayed.” She smiled, a bit more forcefully then she meant to.

“You stayed here, though,” he said quietly. “That was really brave.”

She looked at the man in front of her. He was bent over his coffee, his hands together, his brows furrowed.

“I had to,” she stated. “What other choice did I have?”
“You could have run,” he countered.

“Harry...” she felt herself smiling when he looked up at her. “You had as much a choice as any of us.”

“I didn’t—“

“Then neither did I. None of us really did.”

Harry just looked at her.

“Mum, always believed you. Before the Quibbler interview.”

They sat in silence for a while, sipping their coffees, avoiding eye contact.

“So...” she said finally.

“So...”

“So...” she laughed. “What’s new?”

“Nothing,” he shrugged. “Besides Auror training.”


But he just shrugged. “There was one girl, but I don’t think it’ll work out.”

She assumed he was talking about Ginny. Ron had confided in her both his relief and dismay that his best friend and sister couldn’t seem to work things out.

“I’m very sorry to hear it.”

“It’s for the best probably,” he was busying himself with the paper again.

“That bad a kisser, huh?”

She knew she was prying, but frankly she didn’t care.

“Not that at all,” he laughed. “It’s like you said. I’m the ‘Great Harry Potter.’ Comes with a price to be my girlfriend.”

“Well, I guess having the press in your face can be uncomfortable for any relationship.”

“Not the bloody prophet,” he rolled his eyes. “It’s not nearly as bad since Rita left. No, it’s just... you’re not worried dating Ron? The safety risks, I mean.”

She saw his free hand and took a chance. Holding it in her own, she made an attempt at comforting him.

“Oh, Harry,” she smiled. “Plenty of Aurors marry. They may not be as publicly famous as you, but believe me when I say, their spouses aren’t in any less danger because of it.”

Harry watched her as she spoke and she had no idea what to make of it.

She looked at her watch again.
“You know, I really do need to get ready.”

She stood up, suddenly very aware of the fact she was in Ron’s knickers, and made her way to the fireplace.

Lavender left the steamy warmth of the bathroom, and made her way to the closet. She wanted to look nice to impress Mrs. Weasley, but she knew there could be a chance of quidditch and wouldn’t want to decline the opportunity.

She dressed, and as she sat in front of the mirror, drying her hair with her wand, she caught sight of the scars along her chest. Reaching a hand up to them, she stopped what she was doing, becoming increasingly aware of the marks.

It was all she could see. These ugly white lines marred on her skin.

She ripped off her shirt, and looked at herself. She looked at her bra. A deep blue, lacy number. It was new, she’d worn it last night for Ron. She thought it would be a nice secret to wear it again for him today. She thought she could whisper in his ear before they headed off together. She thought she could remind him of the way his thumbs circled her nipple over the fabric, the way he kissed her chest, her neck...

But now, seeing herself...she hated it.

She turned over and cried into her bed sheets. She knew this was unreasonable, knew the feeling would pass. She willed herself to stand, but couldn’t.

She fell to the floor, and held her body in the fetal position.

This slowly turned into lying straight on her side.

Then her back, staring at the ceiling.

After what felt like an hour, but was really just 15 minutes, she wiped her eyes, pulling in shaking breaths.

She got up, and went to the bathroom to wash her face, avoiding the mirror.

Going back to the closet, she settled on jeans and a nicer turtleneck she had treated with a stain resistant charm.

She went to her living room and turned on the television, making sure to choose something she could focus on. Taking a seat on the floor, she reapplied her makeup with a small mirror on her coffee table.

Ron apparated into her flat just then.

“Hello, beautiful,” he said, kissing her forehead.

“Hey,” she replied quietly.

He arched an eyebrow at her.
“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

He went over to her cabinet and returned with a glass, setting it in front of her. He tapped it twice, muttering something so she couldn’t hear.

The glass transfigured into a lavender sprig.

She looked at her boyfriend, who was now on all fours, shaking her head, and smiling.

Pushing her back so she laid underneath him, he tucked her hair back.

“Course I’d rather look at you,” he said into her neck, trailing his mouth to her ear.

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When Ron and Lavender arrived at the Burrow, he made sure to squeeze her hand tightly, before leading her around all the old cauldrons and boots.

Mr. Weasley greeted them first, leading them to his wife in the kitchen.

“Oh, aren’t you looking lovely?” Mrs. Weasley smiled.

“Ron tells us you're working under Ollivander's old apprentice?” Mr. Weasley chimed in from his spot inspecting the pie fillings.

“Yes, well, Professor Trelawney always said wand making is just the practical parts of Divination, and I know they can use the help,” she smiled.

“Well, isn’t that nice,” the older witch smiled back, before shooing her husband away. “The others are in the den, Ron. Dinner should be ready soon.”

They headed back, as Mrs. Weasley ordered, where they were met by a very loud group of mostly redheads.

“Oh ho, look who decided to show up!” One of them yelled over. “And he’s brought a friend?”

“Oi!” A girl whisper shouted. “What did I just say!”

“Oh, please, they’re not waking up anytime soon.”

“Hey, gang,” yet another red head said. This one, however, stood up, so she could see his face. A face she recognized.

“Let's move this outside shall we?” George requested of the room at large. He put his arms around Ron and Lavender and led the group out.

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“Hey Harry,” Lavender smiled at her coffee buddy, as everyone made to sit around the table in the garden.
“Hey,” he smiled back.

She raised her eyebrows thinking only he would notice, as Ginny sat next to him. He shrugged, still grinning, causing the girl to look suspiciously between the two.

“So, Won Won,” Ginny teased.

“Ginny...” Harry groaned.

“What?” She shot back, in an apparent effort to sound innocent but missing the mark entirely.

Ron stared at the pair curiously.

“So, this is your surprise?” Ginny tried again.

Everyone waited patiently for him to speak.

“Well, Lavender,” he cleared his throat. “Yeah. We’ve been seeing each other. Made it official not too long ago.”

He put his arm around her shoulder, defiantly. She always thought it was cute when he got defensive.

“You two gonna keep the snogging to a minimum, then?” Realizing she had practically shouted this, Ginny scrunched her face in what Lavender thought was an attempt at a welcoming smile.

Harry, Ron, and George all tried to stifle laughs.

“You okay, Gin?” Bill asked in fake concern. “You look constipated.”

“Shove off,” Ginny rolled her eyes heading over to the field behind them.

“George, do me a favor, take the kids over there with the Bogey Queen.” Bill turned back to Lavender. “Nice to see you again,” he smiled. “I’ve got a very important question.”

She looked at the eldest Weasley, curious.

“Who do you think is faster: my perfect daughter or the kid cursed to have Harry as his godfather?”

Lavender answered with an unsure laugh, as she was led out to the grassy area she assumed they used as a quidditch pitch.

The two infants, now fitted with miniature gear, were clapping their hands while George sprayed them with glitter from his wand.

“This,” Bill introduced, “is a little game we play.”

“George and Fred keep the bets,” Charlie informed her.

“Minimum is one sickle,” George chimed in. Whispering to her, he added, “Charlie plays dirty, and he’ll be flying Teddy today.”

“I don’t play dirty!”

“I already checked the course,” Ginny announced. “No tricks from him this time.”

But Lavender could have sworn she saw her wink at her cheating brother.
With Bill and Charlie in position, the men levitated the babies from the ground.


The babies flew forward, the small crowd yelling for their preferred wins.

Lavender couldn’t believe her eyes. Her mouth was wide with shock. The babies might have been laughing, but there’s no way this was safe. She was about to say something, when a voice came screaming.

“BILL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY DAUGHTER?”

A beautiful blonde woman was making her way towards them, hair flowing behind her. As she got closer, however, Fleur’s face took on a terrifying state. Sparks flew from her wand as Bill took off running, either to his floating child or from his wife, Lavender wasn’t sure.

Fleur situated herself and her crying daughter at a table in the kitchen, while Mrs. Weasley berated her oldest son.

“What is it?”

“Honestly, love,” he craned his neck around his red faced mother to speak to his wife. “Vic and Teddy were enjoying it, she’s only crying because you stop—"

“Because I stopped eet?” She spoke with a quiet, venomous anger. “She’s a child, Beel. She couldn’t possibly ‘ave known zee dangers.”

The blonde dropped the little girl into Lavender’s lap, before pulling Bill outside to continue their argument.

“She always has to ruin the fun,” Ginny rolled her eyes, Teddy on her hip.

“Ginny, go get everyone, and set the table,” Mrs. Weasley told her impatiently, taking the young boy and handing him off to Harry.

“I’m not going to shut up, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“Fine, then talk while you set the table.”

“Fine,” Ginny gave up, sighing loudly as she left.

Lavender followed as they all went to escape the irritated Molly Weasley. Ginny entered, a mischievous grin on her face that looked like it belonged to one of the twins.

“Who’s got those ‘matches’?”

Harry and George grinned, and the three promptly left.

“Wonder what that lot’s getting into,” Ron mused.
“Reckon it should be a hell of a show.” Charlie nudged Lavender. “You coming to witness the rare twin-on-twin prank?”

She looked at Ron, not understanding why he seemed so tense.

“Come on, Ron,” she pulled him out the door.

They came to the entryway, when it clicked. She realized she hadn’t seen Hermione yet. She’d wondered how their first meeting might go, but Ron was sure she wouldn’t be here today.

The two girls had certainly had their differences in the past, and she didn’t really hold too much against her, after all they were so young. But still, a twinge of jealousy intertwined with guilt crept up her throat when she saw her.

“What’s going on in here?” she asked in her nicest voice.

The room got quiet and looked up at her.

“So, Won Won,” Ginny teased, but Lavender didn’t pay her any attention. The bushy haired girl had gotten up, and they were making eye contact for the first time in a very long time.

“How are you?” she asked.

Lavender couldn’t help herself, and pulled her in for a big hug.
Hermione passed the gravy dish over to Ginny, eyeing the girl sitting at the other end of the table. Lavender was avidly talking to Fleur about something, her fingers interlocked with Ron’s, his other shoveling food into his mouth.

‘Classic Ron,’ Hermione thought. But she wondered why he hadn’t told her. Why, if he was with this girl, would he continue to ignore her? She considered that perhaps it was Lavender preferring his secrecy, but she had been more than excited to speak with Hermione. In fact, she seemed so intent on being friendly, Hermione had to pretend to excuse herself to the loo just to get away from the incessant chatting.

“Oi,” Fred elbowed. “You should try actually putting the food in your mouth. It’s all the rage these days.”

Hermione looked down at her plate. She had done a great job dissecting her sausage from its pudding.

“Saving room for pie,” she shrugged but took a bite of roasted carrot to appease his rising left eyebrow.

After dinner, the younger crowd, except for Bill and Fleur, moved outdoors for tea and dessert. Teddy’s grandma, Andromeda, arrived just before and was very much engrossed in conversation with Molly and Arthur inside.

“Not like mum to shoo us away with liquor,” Fred said to his twin, gaping at the bottle in his hands.

“What’d you ‘spose they’re talking about?” George muttered. “Wonder if it’s worth lending an…”

“Ear?” Fred finished, handing the bottle off to the nearest redhead.

As the twins wandered off, Charlie started pouring drinks.

“Alright then. What game are we playing?” Angelina asked.

Ginny looked at Charlie and shared a look that Hermione knew as one to tread lightly around.

“Truth or Dare?” Ginny asked, a slight saccharine tone in her voice.

“Bit played out, that one, innit?” Ron looked nervous.

“Think so?” She placed a drink in front of him, challenging.

“Seems a bit childish,” he shrugged, though he refused eye contact with his sister. Instead, it seemed he was quite content inspecting his nail beds.

“Seems a bit scared.”

Ginny whipped her hair around, as she went to grab a glass of her own. Hermione looked at Ron
whose face was becoming steadily red. ‘Don’t take the bait Ron,’ she willed to him. Harry seemed to have been thinking the same, clapping his best friend on the back.

“Plenty of other games, mate.”

Ron only blushed harder, as he apparently took this as an insult.

“No,” Ron stated. “Let’s play, shall we?”

Harry rolled his eyes and wandered over to sit by Hermione.

“This should be a bloody mess,” he said so only she could hear him.

“That’s our Ronald,” she groaned, dropping her shaking head.

“You first then, Gin.” Ron was staring down his sister, who positioned herself across from him. Beside her a grinning Charlie, was failing miserably at hiding his laughter.

“Dare.”

This was evidently not what Ron had wanted, his face dropping as the word left her mouth. His eyes darted around the dark garden as he thought about what to say.

“Finish your drink.”

She smirked, but drank it down in one go all the same.

On went the game, suspiciously, without any argument. They kept the dares to silly things, like apparating to the roof upside down, or what’s the most random place you made out in at Hogwarts. Ginny had tried a few times to get under Lavender’s skin, but consistently went too subtle, earning her only warning looks from Harry.

The twins eventually came back. Hermione noticed their pausing a few yards back, talking in a huddle, before rejoining the group. She caught them often sharing looks. As this was normal behavior for them, no one seemed to pay it any mind, but still there was an odd feeling building in the pit of her stomach.

“Truth!” Lavender giggled.

“How’d you and Ron start back up?” Charlie asked, genuine curiosity in his voice.

She looked at Ron, and beamed.

“We ran into each other at St. Mungo’s, actually. I was on my way out from being discharged. We got to talking, and he invited me out for coffee. It just sorted itself from there.” She hiccupped, leaning in to kiss her boyfriend on the cheek.

‘St. Mungo’s?’ Hermione thought. “So, then how long have you been together?” She found herself demanding out loud.

Ginny looked over, her jaw dropped in shock, her eyes giving away her excitement. Hermione’s hand leapt to her mouth, realizing what she’d said.
“I just meant..uh,” her mind was racing for excuses, stumbling over itself in the drunken fog.

“Guess we’re all a bit curious about the timeline. Can’t imagine you were there longer than me.” Fred came to her rescue.

“Oh,” Lavender looked back at the pair. “Well, we’ve been talking about a year I suppose? Ron?”

Fred held his chin in his hands, leaning forward in character, as someone completely immersed in the enthralling romance of Ron and Lavender.

“‘Bout a year, I ‘spose, yeah,” he focused on pouring another drink.

Harry cleared his throat, noticing an awkwardness settling in the air. “I think I’d like a dare.”

Lavender, still hanging onto Ron’s arm, made a face Hermione supposed was her trying to playfully think.

“I dare you....to send a howler to your crush!”

“Merlin,” Hermione groaned, earning her a kick in the foot from George. ‘What,’ she mouthed, but it was his twin who answered. Fred elbowed her, nodding his head slightly in Ginny’s direction. Catching the youngest Weasley blushing, was a rare sight. An accomplishment that did not go unnoticed by Ron, who was preparing for the inevitable attack. Lavender paid her no mind, however, and merely smiled at Harry, whose eyes narrowed.

It occurred to Hermione that no one, besides herself and Fred, was aware of the reconciliation that had taken place earlier that day. She couldn’t understand what this girl was trying to accomplish. How could she be so entirely thick, walking in here so naive. These dynamics were complex, couldn’t Lavender see that, she thought.

“Lavender–” Fred started

“You know I think it’s actually my turn,” Charlie announced.

“No!” Lavender giggled. “It’s Harry’s! It goes me, Harry, then you, George–”

“I think Harry just went, didn’t you?” He nodded slightly, his eyes wide.

“Yeah, I could’ve sworn I just did.” He shrugged wildly and gestured with his drink, so it spilled over.

“Look at this tosser!” Charlie sighed dramatically. “Lightweight per usual.”

Charlie conjured up the red howler paper, and began to write using his wand as a quill.

“Oi! That’s not english! You can’t write gibberish!” Ron shouted.

“Oi! That’s not gibberish!” Charlie mimicked his brother.

“What is it then?” He challenged.

“Worry about yourself mate,” he said getting up to fetch one of the owls.

“Who do you reckon he’s sending it to?” Ron asked the table.

“Probably some flavor of the week in Romania,” George shrugged. “Not like he ever sticks around
“Plays the field, that one,” Charlie said, sitting back down.

“Didn’t mean it like that, mate.”

“Sure;” he countered, refilling his glass. “You ever consider that maybe I’m embarrassed by you lot?”

“Embarrassed?” Fake shock took over Fred’s face. “How could you?” He began to sob hysterically.

“What if…” Charlie sounded nervous, something Hermione couldn’t recall having ever experienced. “What if I did bring them round?”

“You should!” Angelina smiled.

“I’ve got another week before I head back,” he shrugged.

“Is my big brother…” Fred started.

“…in love?” George finished.

“Love’s a strong word there,” Charlie straightened up, clearly uncomfortable by the word usage. “Just...well I’ve met their family. Thought I’d return the gesture.”

“Charlie! If you don’t invite them, I’ll hex the lips right off you,” Ginny threatened, a big smile across her face.

George and Angelina were the first to leave, when the latter began falling asleep on the other’s shoulder. Ron and Lavender headed out not too long after the lights in the kitchen’s windows turned down low. The five remaining went inside, gathering around in the den, continuing to drink.

Settled in, Charlie, with his liver of steel, demanded they all take shots.

“Anymore, and I won’t be able to apparate home, let alone floo,” Fred slammed down the glass. He was far too familiar with drunk splinching, shuddering at the thought.

“Yeah, because you couldn’t just stay here,” Ginny rolled her eyes.

“House of a thousand beds;” Charlie added, refilling their glasses.

Harry groaned, but Ginny laughed, laying her head on his shoulder.

“I see someone’s made up,” Charlie raised his eyebrows.

Realising what she’d done, Ginny’s head shot back up.

“‘Bout time,” Fred said.

Harry blushed. “Took a little too long, probably.”

“Probably?” Ginny smiled. “But can we just keep this between us?”

“Embarrassed by him then?” Fred nodded his head in understanding.
“How could you?” Harry made a little choking sound.

“Shove off,” she rolled her eyes. “We’re just figuring it out still,” she said to the rest of the group. “Anyways, it’s not as if we’re the only ones operating lowkey.” She stuck her tongue out at Charlie.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I think you know.”

“Yeah, what’s all this about a secret lover?” Hermione finally chimed in.

“Don’t worry about that when you’ve got another shot to do.”

“I’ll take two back to back shots if you tell us who you’re seeing.”

“You wouldn’t know them…” But Fred was already pouring, and Charlie could never resist a challenge. “Oh, alright!”

They took the shots, with the younger brother choking a little on the second go.

“So...the thing is…” he was nervous. “You all might actually know him, actually.”

The group got very quiet, unsure of where this was going.

“You’re actually quite good friends with him, Hermione…”

She stared at him, her mind blank of any possible names.

“Well,” he cleared his throat. “Viktor and I...met at the wedding obviously. But he was on holiday...loves dragons. It’s adorable, really…”

“What is it with you lot and Triwizard champions,” Fred shook his head.

Chapter End Notes

I'm gonna be honest, writer's block hit me full in the face with this one, lol. I'd been planning Viktor/Charlie for a minute. Plus, I needed a way to pivot the gang into another chapter's storyline. So, I struggled a bit! And I'm sorry! It might be a few days before I update again. But it's bc I want to start uploading several chapters at a time. Stay healthy! <3
After everyone went up to bed, Fred joined a smoking Charlie out on the kitchen porch.

“Viktor bloody Krum,” he said, sitting on the lowest step.


“Won’t lie to you, wasn’t expecting that one.”

Charlie looked at him puzzled. “You think he’s out of my league?”

“Course not. No one’s good enough for my brother,” Fred shrugged. “To be honest, I thought he was still hung up on Hermione.”

“Well, to be fair, he was. 'Til he met me.” Charlie leaned back, letting the smoke fall slowly from his mouth.

Fred rolled his eyes. Always the showman, Charlie, even when he had no one to show off for. A trait the twins had certainly worked hard to mirror. Though, where George had mastered it, Fred often found himself struggling without a target around.

“Mum and dad already know,” Charlie said. “He’s coming in the next day or so, actually.”

“Were you ever planning on telling us?”

“Just did, didn’t I?”

“Spose so,” he laughed.

Charlie finished his cigarette, but as Fred made to go back in, he stayed planted on the stairs.

“You coming?”

“Thinking I might go fly around for a bit.”

“It’s 2 am…”


“Literally, not at all,” Fred laughed, heading back inside.

He made his way up the stairs, bumping into the walls a little as he went. Knowing Harry and Hermione would be in his old bedroom, and assuming Ginny would have snuck in there too, Fred opted for the spare in his sister’s room. He stumbled inside, tripping over his trousers as he attempted to pull them off. After the brief struggle, he fell into the bed.

However, instead of meeting the mattress, he found he had fallen back first onto a rather unhappy, bumpy mound.
“Gehorf!” the mound shouted, pushing at Fred until he rolled off onto the ground. “Bloody hell!”

“Hermione, what in Merlin are you doing in here?”

“What are you doing in here?” She sat up, adjusting the sheets angrily.

“I thought you were in my room!”

“I am, usually. But you can imagine how quickly the happy couple’s ‘we’re just figuring it out’ turned into make up sex,” Hermione groaned.

“What?”

“Keep it down, will you? People are trying to sleep.”

“Hermione, that’s my sister.”

“Oh, like you haven’t got a girl in your flat every other weekend.”

“But not in this house.” Fred sounded incredulous.

“It’s just Harry.”

“But it’s my sister.”

“Yeah? Go tell Gin that. See how well that goes for you.” Hermione was laughing. The Weasley brother over protection was more symbolic than anything. None of them would dare infringe on Ginny’s choices. Rather, they’d just berate her into irritation.


He resigned himself to Ginny’s bed, but as he was settling into the creaking mattress, Hermione stopped him.

“She’ll be back in the morning you know. Before your mum is up.”

“So, I’m meant to sleep on the couch, because my sister couldn’t stay away from the ‘Golden Boy’?”

“What about Percy’s room?”

“Charlie’s in it.”

“And Bill’s…”

“In Bill’s room,” he finished.

“Well,” Hermione thought a moment. “Just come sleep in this one.”

“You think it’s better for me to be found in your bed, then for Ginny to get caught?”

“What’s it matter if we happen to share a bed?” Hermione countered, lifting the blanket up for him.

“Hermione,” he had on a very overserious voice. “I’m wearing boxers and I haven’t shaved in weeks! What will you think of me?!”

“Shut up and get in this bed will you? I’m exhausted.”
Fred crawled in next to her, careful they didn’t touch.

“You’re not going to attack me like earlier, are you?”

“Like earlier?”

Fred shushed her dramatically, realising they had never got around to explaining the questionable calming draught Ginny gave to Hermione.

“Night, Granger,” he said, ignoring her question.

She huffed in response and turned away, leaving him with a face full of hair.

As he dozed off, he couldn’t help but feel the warmth from her body radiate. The way her scent filled him with a comfortable familiarity.

Chapter End Notes

Happy reading! <3
Ginny felt a limp hand brush her stomach. Watching the sky grow a deep pink from across the room, she sighed quietly to herself. Better she got up sooner than later. She rolled over in bed to look at the man sleeping beside her. His shaggy hair was sticking up wildly, and his eyes fluttered slightly as he groaned in his sleep, muttering something about elf baskets. She had a lot to think about, things that she had no hope of considering pragmatically as long as he was within eyeshot.

She was as emotional as the next Weasley, and often found herself acting accordingly. She had also spent the better part of her twelfth year reacting to the events of the previous. As a result, she’d found a great deal of comfort in practicing practicality, something which remained consistent into her adulthood.

Looking at Harry though, as he began to snore, she smiled. She had been patient through her crush, and she would be patient now.

“He needs to be better at communicating,” she thought. Her smile faltered.

With one last look, she brushed his lips with her own and slipped into the hall.

Tiptoeing down the stairs, she turned to find her door was cracked open. Her brows furrowed. Hermione and she had always been quite adamant about sleeping with it closed. It was extra security against her nosey mum. Pushing the door forward, she found Fred's trousers and shoes thrown across her floor.

“That explains the door,” she rolled her eyes, getting into bed.

Knowing she’d have to pretend to be asleep another hour or so, she flipped on the lamp beside her, absentmindedly deciding on one of the books next to it. Out of the corner of her eye, Hermione’s curly hair appeared. Her mind registered this as nothing, taking her a few minutes before she turned to look across the way, completely confused.

There was Hermione’s hair, yes, but it was laying on a man’s chest. And not just any man. A very familiar redheaded man. A twin man. A twin’s chest. Fred’s bare chest.

Her eyes widened.

“What in Merlin’s bloody beard,” she spat. Neither Hermione or Fred moved.

Her first instinct was to chuck the book she was holding at them. Her second, to run to Harry and drag him down. Both these options would cause a ruckus that threatened to wake the whole house.

Instead, she chose to turn on all the lights and stand threateningly over the pair. Hermione was the first to open her eyes.

“Ginny,” she said surprised, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. “What time is it?”

“Nevermind that,” she could hear her mother in her voice. “What in the hell is going on here?”

Hermione looked between herself and the man beneath, and started to laugh, causing Ginny to turn a very bright red.

“I’ve just caught you in bed with my brother, and you’re laughing?” She was half whispering, half
yelling.

“Oh, Ginny, it’s not like that.” Hermione was shaking Fred awake, her bare hand gripping his chest.

“Oh, gross!” She made retching sounds. “And why is he naked?!”

“He’s not naked,” the curly haired witch shook her head, chuckling. “Fred…wake up.”

The boy only groaned and turned into Hermione, snaking his hands around her waist and burying his head in her chest.

“Okay, well this looks bad,” she grimaced.

“You think, huh?” Ginny rolled her eyes.

“He was looking for a bed, Gin, and I wanted to make sure you’d have one to come back to.”

“That’s all well and good, but it doesn’t explain why my brother is down to his knickers, with his nose down your shirt,” she laughed in spite of herself.


He rolled into the pillow. Her voice was becoming more stern with every mention of his name.

After one last unsuccessful, “Fred!” she finally slapped his shoulder.

“Little lower next time, Granger,” he muttered.

Much to Ginny’s obvious dismay, Hermione giggled. Her eyes narrowing, she took her turn yelling.

“Oi! Mind explaining why you’re in here?”

Fred turned to his sister, annoyance all over his face.

“Mind telling me why you were with Potter?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she shrugged. First rule Fred and George taught her: never admit to anything ever.

Hermione rolled her eyes at the staring contest beginning between the two siblings.

“Well, while you lot do that, can I start anything for anyone? Tea? Coffee?”

Ginny watched as her brother broke eye contact to watch the girl moving around the room. Hermione pulled on a sweater, wrapping it tightly around her.

“Tea’d be lovely ‘Mione.” Fred practically cooed.

“Coffee,” Ginny grunted exasperatedly.

“Brilliant.” Hermione shook her head all the way out the room, closing the door behind her.

“What’re you playing at?” Ginny turned on her brother.

He just blinked at her.
“If you and Hermione are sleeping together…” she warned.

“Sleeping together? Are you mad?” He looked at her crazy.

“I saw you looking at her!”

“So, I can’t look at my friend?”

“You know what I mean.”

“Oi, crazy lady! She wouldn’t let me sleep in your bed. Reckoned better us than you who get in trouble. Something about the others don’t know they’re back together.”

“We’re not,” she shrugged, making her way back to her bed.

“Then what the hell were you doing in his room?” Now, Fred was getting worked up. “I’ll kill the bloody git, if he’s playing with you. Nevermind he’s the ‘Chosen One.’”

“Oh, shut up.” Ginny snapped. “Harry couldn’t play with me if he tried.”

She sighed involuntarily.

“I should join Hermione.” She walked to her door, muttering a quick, “put on a bloody shirt, Freddie.”

Downstairs, Hermione was sitting at the table, steam drifting heavily from the mug in her hands. Ginny sat across from her.

“I don’t mind that you two slept together.”

Hermione dropped her head to the table with a thump.

“Nothing happened,” she groaned.

The redhead waved her wand, catching the cup that floated to her.

“You’re telling me—”

“Yes! I’m telling you nothing happened.”

Ginny saw the exasperation creep red up her friend’s cheeks. She believed that they hadn’t slept together. But there remained a lingering feeling of suspicion.

Yesterday, when they had attempted to wake Hermione and pull her off of Fred, everyone blamed Ginny’s poor potions skills. However, she had received an Outstanding on her N.E.W.T. s and knew her calming draughts to be perfect every time. What she failed to do was double check the label of the vials in her dresser. She’d mistakenly grabbed the twins’ new Daydream potion, in lieu of the draught. It was her intention to inform Hermione of the accident, but by the time she realised they were all a bit drunk.

At any rate, she could have sworn she heard the unconscious Hermione mumble Fred’s name. And she definitely didn’t love the way Fred had lingered during their little couch cuddle. He was a bit of a noncommittal guy. He loved a challenge, and what bigger challenge than the family’s beloved Hermione Granger.

Maybe she was being paranoid, or maybe she was on the mark as usual, but it didn’t matter at that
moment as her thoughts were interrupted by a light rap on the kitchen door.

“Viktor bloody Krum,” Fred’s voice came from behind them.

And sure enough, through the door’s window, was a smiling Bulgarian seeker.

Charlie appeared from seemingly nowhere.

“None of you could be bothered to get I see.” He pushed the door open for the newcomer.

Viktor stepped into the room, a large backpack hung on his shoulders.

“Charlie,” he said in that deep, gruff voice of his before pecking him gently.
Charlie has had plenty of flings. He was a flirt, he was charming, and he enjoyed all the things the bachelor life offered him. Falling hard was just not something you’d attribute to this man. So when he stood there in the kitchen, hands locked around Viktor’s face, kissing him with a fierceness so unmatched Aphrodite herself would be jealous, the family members left standing in the background were long past shocked.

“Have a nice trip?” he asked in a cheeky voice. He took the old bike tire portkey from the man he was still wrapped around, leaning slightly to toss it out the door.

“Hell of a welcome,” Viktor smiled, pulling him in to return the kiss.

“Ahem,” Harry coughed. He had just stepped into the room to see a blushing Ginny, a studious Fred, and a Hermione whose mouth looked as if it might never close again.

“Harry,” he pulled away to clasp the other man’s hand. “It’s been awhile. And Hermione.” He made the rounds, kissing hers and Ginny’s hand, shaking Fred’s.

“So, Viktor,” Hermione started, a smirk forming on her face. “Per your last letter…” she giggled.

“Yes, eet vas about Charlie,” he turned back to the man, and winked.

Charlie moved to sit down at the table, gesturing Viktor to his side.

“Any plans while you’re here?” Harry asked.

“Some English officials for zee International Quiddtich Committee vant to meet vith me. Likely some publicity…” he trailed off and turned to Ginny. “You are a Harpie, no?”

They launched into a great in depth conversation about league politics, while Fred slid closer to Hermione.

Whispering into her ear, he said, “try not to look absolutely crushed, love.”

She slapped him lightly on the arm, and got up to put on the kettle.

There was a small scream from the hallway, causing everyone to look around at a red Mrs. Weasley darting away up the stairs. Behind her Bill and Fleur made their way into the room, with Victoire toddling behind.

The little girl screamed wildly, not too unlike her grandma, at the sight of Krum. However while the older woman’s was one of embarrassment, Victoire's was positively excited.
Bill had taken it upon himself to instill a strong love for quidditch in his daughter. Then there was Fleur, who could care less about the sport (but loved the way Bill insisted Vic and him matched on game days), but made use of her close friendship with Krum.

“Vicky!” Krum shouted, taking the girl into his arms.

“No, you Vic! Vic!” She shouted back, pointing between herself and him.

“She theenks eet eez funny they ‘ave zimilar names,” Fleur beamed.

“Look at this Miss Thing, barely 1 and she’s already hanging out with celebrities,” Fred snorted.

“Oh, yes!” Fleur laughed. “And she’s ‘as a very exciting life. She even rode a little dragon.”

Everyone turned to Charlie confused.

“Victor was nice enough to get us tickets to a few matches. Got around to talking.” Bill answered. “Turns out he’s been quite the dragon fanatic. Invited him on a trip to Romania.”

“He had quite a lot to say about Chinese Fireballs,” Charlie chuckled at the memory.

He leaned back in the seat, stretching his arm across the back, absentmindedly scratching Viktor’s neck, watching his niece babble something of apparent interest to the man.

Mrs. Weasley eventually came downstairs, no longer in just her dressing gown, and set to work on a feast fit for a small army.

“I didn’t realize you’d be in today dear, or I’d have had something ready,” she apologized.

“You didn’t tell your mother?” Viktor cocked an eyebrow at his boyfriend.

“I may have fudged the details,” Charlie smiled, getting up to help his mother with the pancakes. “Best way to meet the family,” he added, earning a smack on the hand from a floating spoon.

“Suspect he’s a fan of the chaos,” Fred chimed in, dropping a fresh mug in front of the houseguest.

“Explains where you get it,” Hermione said in her best prefect voice.

“Something tells me you don’t hate it as much as you let on,” he replied smugly.

“I recall Skeeter woman calling you devious at any rate.” Viktor offered this bit of information knowing Fred would find ways to torment Hermione with it. She glared back at him.

“Viktor, I think this is the start of a long friendship,” he slapped his hand on the other man’s back.

Over the next few days, things remained relatively quiet at the Burrow. Viktor spent his mornings in meetings with ICWQC, and the rest of his day seeing London and enjoying the family’s company.

Towards the end of his visit, Viktor was begging Charlie to attend a lunch meeting with him.

“They’re so boring and stuffy,” he complained. “Come vith me.”

Charlie had been putting up quite a fight. He knew how tedious these old wizards were, and how
incredibly unfunny their jokes could be. He would go anywhere Viktor asked, but he also loved the way Viktor asked and he wasn’t about to miss an opportunity.

Viktor pulled Charlie next to him, slowly kissing his neck.

“Meche,” he growled when he’d reached his ear. “Meche, come with me.”

Charlie moaned when the heat of the whisper tickled his skin. Viktor moved to straddle his boyfriend, pulling the redhead by the hair and looked him in the eye. He took Charlie’s bottom lip, sucking on it until he began to feel a hardness settle beneath him.

“Come with me,” he said again, quieter this time. It was a statement now, and as he gripped Charlie with one hand, he used his other to guide his boyfriend to his own need.

Chapter End Notes

Trying to write accents is a strange ordeal, and I will most likely not for the rest of the story. I did a little bit of research on Bulgarian though, and it's a pretty cool language. I'm hoping to get into the A plot moving forward, but I've been really excited for Krum/Charlie because these boys are just too cute a pairing. So, here was a short little chapter.
Thank you for reading!!
Stay safe <3
The sky was getting darker, and the family had long since resigned to the den. The fire crackled low, and the room itself had an air of drowsiness. Andromeda and Molly entered the room, having just settled the grandchildren into bed. They were whispering with a muffled purpose.

Viktor sat with a drooling man asleep at his shoulder. Rather than wake him up, he flicked his wand at the teacup placed at the edge of the coffee table. The small mug rose into the air, clanging unsure against its saucer. Before it reached its owners hands, however, it toppled over spilling its contents onto Charlie. He shot up, still steaming liquid soaking the front of him.

“Oh, shit,” Viktor apologized, waving his wand to dry the shirt. Charlie chuckled puffing his chest out, making a great show of it. The other man ignored him, emitting warm air from his wand.

“Bit hot, love,” Charlie pulled at his wrist to alleviate the direct heat.

Krum furrowed his eyebrows at this. Shaking his head, he murmured the spell once more. Instead, a small stream of fire burst out and onto Charlie’s chest.

“Oi!” George yelled from the other end of the room.

Charlie jumped away. Lavender reacted with a quick *augamenti*, extinguishing the fire on his shirt.

Viktor leapt off the couch, throwing his wand to the floor, terror lighting up his face.

“As much as I love dragons…” Charlie forced a nervous laugh, pulling off what remained of his shirt.

“I don’t know vhat that vas. Charlie,” he trailed off, pulling the man into him by the shoulders.

“I’ve got a tube of burn paste in the kitchen.” Molly was back as quick as she’d gone.

“Courtesy of yours truly.” Fred winked dramatically, throwing up finger guns at his brother.


“Nonsense,” she argued.

Krum meanwhile turned back to the wand still on the ground. He held it to his face, studying it closely. Pointing it into the fireplace he said the spell once more. Again, fire shot out. He tried levitating a book off the nearby shelf. It fell after a brief moment of shakey flight. The room watched as he continued to test himself, his face screwed up in deep concentration all the while.

“Viktor,” Hermione broke the silence. “What’s wrong?”

He was a talented wizard. No one could doubt the skill he’d shown over the years. So, why was he unable to perform even the most elementary of spells?

“Something feels…” he trailed off. The wand in his hand felt different, somehow.

“Perhaps you’re sick?” Andromeda offered. “I had a nasty flu once, set all my spells off wrong.”
“I’ve been fine all day,” he shook his head.

“It’s true. The Quidditch Committee were testing out all sorts of spells,” Charlie added. “They wanted to be sure the fans couldn’t interfere with games. Vik shot out all sorts of curses, no problem.”

“Do you mind?” Lavender crossed over to him, her hand outstretched. He handed her the wand and watched her. “Birch wood...I’m not sure...” she looked up at him. “I’m fairly new at this, and cores are much harder to determine.”

“Hornbeam,” he stated. Lavender just looked back at him, confused. “You said birch, my wand is made of Hornbeam,” he clarified.

“No, I’m positive this is birch...” she said definitively. “I’ll admit I’m rubbish with cores, though I’d venture this was Unicorn. But I know wood, it’s the first thing they teach you. This is birch.”

“Unicorn?” Viktor’s voice was full of shock, and frustration. “Hornbeam, dragon heartstring. Your wandmaker said it himself.”

“If she says it’s birch,” Ron rounded on him, “it’s birch.”

“Ron,” Lavender put a hand up to her boyfriend’s chest. “Look,” she kept her voice steady, “I don’t know what else to tell you. This wand,” she gestured it at him, “is birch.”

“Let’s say it is birch,” Arthur finally chimed in, trying to keep the peace.

“It is,” Ron said angrily.

“Okay, so it’s birch,” he huffed. “Clearly this is just a case of switched wands. Who here has a birch wand?”

Everyone looked around, waiting for someone to come forward.

“Fred!” Molly reared on the twins, after a couple minutes passed. “George! These better not be your trick wands again! I swear–”

“It’s not ours!” They cried in unison, both ducking behind an exasperated Angelina.

“Okay, okay,” Arthur waved his wife down. “When did it start acting strange?”

“Just now,” Viktor replied.

“When did you last use it?”

But the man just shook his head at the question.

“You had to apparate here didn’t you?”

“Charlie did that.”

“You haven’t used your wand since getting back?” Arthur looked on surprised.

Viktor shrugged. “I find it best to practice muggle habits when at home.”

“He’s right you know. It’s good for the brain,” Arthur started, readying himself for one of his favorite rants about muggle behavior as wizard brain food.
“Another time, dad,” Charlie shook his head, his siblings sighing relief in agreement.

“I never put my wand down,” Viktor said, beginning to sound desperate.

“Ouch!” Ron yelped, looking down at the watch on his wrist.

Harry crossed the room to look at his arm, the same concerned expression crossing his face.

“What do you reckon it means?” Ron asked.

He shrugged, moving to look at his own watch. “Dunno, mate, but you’d better leave.”

The concern turned blank, and Ron kissed his girlfriend, leaving the room.

Harry began to pace back and forth across the hearth, thinking hard.

“Planning on explaining any of that there?” Bill piped up, startling Harry.

“The aurors correspond with us through the watches. They burn when we have to report in,” he lifted his arm. “They’re calling him in on a high level incident. Ron just flooed to the ministry.”

“Why are you still here?” It was Ginny who asked.

“Ron was already on call. Tonight was supposed to be my off night. But mine is telling me to standby…”

“What are you thinking?” Hermione watched him.

“I suspect they’re only calling in necessary enforcement for the time being. Most likely to keep attention low.” He stared back at the rest of the group. “It has to be important, or else they wouldn’t have alerted those of us off duty.”

“Harry…” Hermione eyed him.

“I don’t know…” he shook his head. He jumped just then. Rubbing his wrist, he glanced at Ginny, before quickly turning to Hermione. “They’re calling me.”

Hermione nodded and he raced out the room, the flash of a hand brushing Ginny’s cheek.

The air was tense with confusion and anticipation. The only sound, the crackle of the fire, the clinking of china, isolated sips.

Several minutes passed. Fred opened his mouth, the hint of a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. They would never find out what he intended to say, however, as the silver ghost of a pitbull raced into the room. It opened its mouth as if to bark, but instead Ron’s voice echoed.

“Hide Krum. Explain later.”

The dog dissipated leaving behind another uncomfortable silence. Everyone turned at once to Viktor, their varying expressions looking back at him. Charlie’s hand shot up to his boyfriend’s shoulder, confusion pulling at the corners of his face.

Before anyone could properly react, however, a bottle sitting on the fireplace mantle began to shake violently. It was made of a dark green glass with a crystal cap, and as it shook, it filled with steam. A noise began to emit, like a kettle, ringing steadily louder.
“Bill,” Arthur nodded at his son closest to the now screaming object. He nodded back, and pulled the top off so that the steam flew out in a great cloud. A face appeared in the fog, surveying the surrounding people, until her eyes fell upon Andromeda.

“Andromeda,” McGonagall’s voice sounded urgent. “Good. You’re here. This will make things simpler. Is this everyone?”

Molly nodded.

“Very well. I assume the boys have been pulled away already?”

She nodded again. “What’s going on, Minerva?”

“It would seem–hold on.” Her head shot around to Krum. “What’s he doing here?”

Charlie stepped in front of him protectively, opening his mouth to say something. Before he could, the head was gone, leaving behind only fog. There was a crack in the distance, a door creaking open, and a very straight backed, blank faced McGonagall walked into the room, her wand raised, pointing at the face behind the redhead.

“What the hell is going on?” Charlie’s voice was raising, though he did not reach for his own wand.

“Minerva,” Andromeda crossed over to the other witch, gently tugging at her arm. “What is going on?”

“Step aside, please, Mr. Weasley,” she said shrugging off the hand. “It’s nothing personal, but due to the night’s events, I need to question Mr. Krum, before we do anything.”

“I don’t really care, Professor,” Charlie was practically growling in frustration. “First Ron tells us to hide him, now you’re demanding questioning. Someone needs to tell us what in Merlin’s name is going on here!”

“Ron?” This seemed to take her by surprise, the stiffness in her arm faltering. “Kingsley’s been attacked.”

Gasps fell through the room.

“What’s that got to do with Viktor?” Andromeda asked, replacing her hand.

“My wand,” he said, clarity finding him. “They think it’s me that attacked?”

“He’s been here all night, Professor.” Ginny had walked over to stand by her brother and his boyfriend.

“Yes, Minerva, please. Let’s just,” Andromeda had finally succeeded in pulling McGonagall away. “We need to know what’s happening.”

McGonagall nodded and turned to face the rest of the room.

“There was an attempted kidnapping on the Minister tonight. Three of his armed guards were killed. They’re questioning Kingsley now, he couldn’t give me much information, only that they found Mr. Krum’s wand.” She nodded at him. “But as you say he’s been with you…”

“Professor?” Lavender stepped over nervously.
“Ms. Brown,” she answered, surprised to see her old student there.

“Professor, this wand,” she held up Viktor’s fraudulent wand. “It isn’t his.”

“How do you know?” she asked, not bothering to hide the suspicion in her voice.

“I work at Ollivander’s.” She flinched slightly under McGonagall’s glare.

“It would seem then,” she turned back to Krum. “You’re being framed.”

“Well, then,” Charlie grabbed Viktor’s hand and began pulling him towards the back door. “It’s time for us to go.”

“Where would you even go?” Molly asked, her irritation becoming evident.

“Does it matter? We’ve wasted enough time!”

“He ‘asn’t done anyzeeng!” Fleur protested. “Why must ‘ee leave? Surely, ze Ministry will understand.”

“Not likely,” Fred snorted. “Even Minnie here doesn’t believe it.”

“Fred!” his mother reprimanded his bluntness.

“Mum,” George defended, “you can’t honestly believe–”

“Kingsley would never–”

The silver bull dog was back again, cutting off Molly.

“Aurors coming.”

Before it disfigured, McGonagall was already on the move. She tapped her wand on Viktor’s head.

“Trust me,” she whispered fiercely as he shrunk to the floor with a clatter. In his place was a silver pocket watch. She stuffed it into Charlie’s hands.

“If I recall, your Aunt Muriel still has several Order protections on her place.” She looked to Molly who nodded in confirmation. “Good. Take him there. She has a room below her basement. Hide him there, until we sort this out. If Muriel has any issues, direct her to me. She owes me a favor,” she finished, pursing her lips tightly. She tapped her wand to Charlie’s head.

“Go now,” she whispered at his invisible body. “Ginny, follow him out, and keep an eye out for the Aurors, will you?”
Hey all! Hope you're staying safe out there in this weird time <3
Thanks to everyone for reading, and to all you commenting, I really appreciate you!

Ginny watched out over the darkness, the only light streaming checkered from the kitchen windows behind her. She took a seat on the old porch bench, stretching her legs out lazily. Her hand dropped on the wooden arm, but she kept her wand pointed to the night.

There was an eerie stillness to it, so that every rustle of leaves made her struggle to keep position.

Something was about to happen. She could feel it like a weight on her chest. Kingsley had been attacked. It didn’t matter the reason right now, he’s the Minister, it could be anything. But to claim Krum, who’d been at the burrow for hours...

Her mind raced. Were the Aurors intending on arresting him? And Charlie, now, for that matter. And Ron had warned them…


‘Subtle,’ she thought, attempting to laugh despite the fact her back had gone rigid, and the back of her neck grew sweaty.

A group in black cloaks marched across the lawn. Straining her eyes, the faintest red head was visible. Ron.

Ginny’s breathing slowed and she flicked her wand lightly. A faint crash sounded from inside the house, bracing herself as the rustling of cloaks grew closer.

She watched the man in the middle, the apparent leader, move forward with a rigid authority. The heaviness on her chest grew, and the realness of what was happening hit.

She steadied herself.

“Good Evening.” A few feet away the leader bowed his head in a quick nod at Ginny. She said nothing crossing her legs in an attempt to look intimidating.

He stepped up onto the porch and held out his hand to her. He stood tall with dark curls framing his face. She raised an eyebrow at him, and he dropped it sheepishly.

He chuckled warmly, gesturing to the group behind him. “I suppose you’re wondering why we’re all here.”

She sat up a little straighter, watching him carefully. “Oh, no. We have strangers walk through the wards to our house every night,” she said, using her sweetest voice.

“How very hospitable of you,” he smiled. “Though it would have been a bit more difficult without the help of Weasley here.” He motioned to Ron beside him.
Ron made a slight nod at his superior before looking straight to the house again. She did her best to stifle a snort at this new behavior and failed miserably.

“I take it you’re his sister?” The man asked, the corner of his mouth twitching upwards.

“What gave it away?” She rolled her eyes, running a hand through her long hair.

He coughed lightly into his fist, and Ginny caught the smallest blush creep up his neck.

“Signature Weasley style.” He laughed heartily. “I recognize you from the photos on your father’s desk actually.”

“You know my dad?” She asked, surprised.

“I sometimes work as a liaison for our departments,” he shrugged. “His work on the Anglia inspired me to start my own muggle inspired project.”

“Is that right?” She said it slowly, unsure of whether this was genuine or tactic. “I’m sure he wouldn’t mind you looking at it. It’s right around the corner here…” She stood up and started to walk off to the path.

“I’m afraid,” he caught her arm before she could get very far, “we’re here on official business.”

She looked around at Ron, whipping her hair dramatically.

“Come to show off the new team, then?”

He said nothing, still looking ahead, though his cheeks grew pink. She could practically hear him begging her not to antagonize him in front of his boss.

“Would you be so kind, as to escort us inside?” The man asked, his voice stern, yet soft.

Realising how close they were, she looked at him. As her head turned she caught his eyes flick up hastily to meet her own. She smirked. Slowly, she pulled her arm from him, moving her body to face his.

“And who exactly am I escorting?”

“Well, uh, myself,” he cleared his throat, seemingly struggling to look at her directly. “My team—”

“Your team?” She asked, incredulous. “You want to fit a dozen people in my kitchen?”

“Miss Weasley,” he said, side stepping her, “It’s not nearly that many of us.”

He nodded at Ron to get the door, making his way towards it. She hurried over, stopping in front of him.

“Don’t suppose you’d tell me who you are?” She asked sweetly, looking up through her eyelashes, causing his lips to twitch again.

“Fletcher Aves.”

“Fletcher Aves,” she repeated in a mocking seriousness.

He smiled at this, and stepped closer to her. “Level 6 Auror and Junior Assistant to the Senior Aurors.”
“Oh, a level six,” she rolled her eyes.

But he had moved forward as he said it, until she felt her back meet the door. “And as I said, we do have business, so if you don’t mind...” He trailed off and she cursed herself silently.

“It’s rather late, don’t you think?”

“Miss Weasley—”

“I do have a first name.” She could feel the nervous desperation wavering at the tip of her tongue. He smiled at her comment. “It’s really not my preference to be forceful,” he said, stepping closer still.

She turned the knob, and allowed the door to fall open behind her.

“Don’t suppose you want me to wake up the house then,” she stated loudly.

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“Muffliato.” Molly’s wand flew up at once.

Lavender was on the ground, picking up the pieces of the broken teacup.


“Right. Andromeda,” McGonagall turned to the other woman, a whispered urgency in her voice. “We can’t be here when the aurors show up.”

“And why is that Minerva?” The witch eyed her suspiciously.

“I’ll explain after they leave—”

“Go to the basement, it’s undetectable,” Molly started.

“We don’t have a basement?” Fred interrupted, his expression matching those of all his present siblings. All, except Bill.

“Well...” Bill said, shrugging his shoulders in exaggerated pride, “that you knew of.”

“What?!” George looked betrayed.

“Nevermind!” Arthur was becoming increasingly annoyed, the anger quivering behind his words. “We don’t have time.”

Molly, however, had already started tapping at a spot above the chimney. The bricks started to move, pulling upward and out, forming an archway. The mantle fell to the floor, curving as it went, jutting out in certain spots to make stairs.

The creaking of the kitchen door could be heard, and Ginny’s voice announced itself. “Don’t suppose you want me to wake up the house then?”

“Ginerva, isn’t it?” An unknown voice asked.
“Quickly,” Molly whispered, pushing the women through the new opening.

“Bill,” Arthur called, ascending the stairs himself. “Stall them.”

He nodded back to his father, picking up an empty mug from the table, before pushing open the door to the kitchen. Ginny stood there, leaning against the back door with her hips out, and her arms crossed. Still on the porch was Ron, a look of deep irritation having settled on his face. Across from Ginny, with one foot through the door was a man Bill had only seen in passing.

“Ginny,” the man seemed to be correcting himself. “Not Ginerva, I’ll be sure to remember—” he stopped, interrupted by the arrival of the newcomer.

“Bit late for company, Gin,” Bill said, walking to the tea pot being warmed on the table.

“That’s what I said, but it seems Won-Won’s insisting on dinner guests.”

“I’m actually here,” Aves started, but Ginny cut him off.

“Official business.”

Bill made a show of eying the badge on the man’s cloak. “Official Auror Business, look like.”

“Not just any Auror business,” Ginny corrected, not breaking eye contact with the man trying to get through the door. “Fletcher Aves, Level 6 Auror and Junior Assistant to the Senior Aurors’ business.”

“Well,” the man seemed flustered. “As Ginny, ” he emphasized her name, “says—”

“Seems Ron wanted to show us off to his boss,” she cut in, sarcasm dripping. “But it really is rather late, so…”

She moved herself off the door and made to shut it, but the man caught it, pushing back firmly, gaining the room.

Bill cocked his eyebrow, settling in at the table. “Do bosses usually make house calls?”

“They do when their employee’s sister plays for a top notch quidditch team,” Ginny reached across to grab the broom behind Aves, placing herself directly in front of him. “Care for a little one on one?”

She inched closer to the Auror, who seemed to be struggling to keep what little ground he’d made into the room. Bill forced himself to keep from gagging. Arthur had sent him in to distract them, but it seemed as if Ginny was already on it.

“Given the circumstances, I’m not sure that’d be appropriate,” Aves said, unable to keep his smile down.

“That’s what makes it so much fun,” Ginny whispered, moving closer. He took a step back, his lips parting.

Bill was sitting at the table now, desperately trying not to laugh. He caught sight of Ron who seemed to be looking anywhere else. Bill turned to look out the windows and squinted. His eyes adjusted quickly to the night, a side effect of his ‘wolf powers,’ as he referred to them. There, in the yard, were about six others scattered with their wands raised offensively. He looked back to Ginny, who had managed to get Aves back to his one foot out the door.
His ears pricked, and he could swear he heard sniggering from the yard.

“It’s urgent business, Ginny.” Ron said sternly, trying and failing to hide his annoyance.

“Right,” Fletcher shook his head. “Urgent business. Right.”

He cleared his throat, making his way to Bill.

“Arthur Weasley isn’t here, is he?”

“Guessing you don’t make a lot of house calls?” Bill asked him, teasing.

Ron stepped inside, shooting daggers at Ginny, who was now making her way to sit across from the Auror’s line of sight.

“I know you’re dad,” Aves said politely.

“Lovely fellow,” he said sipping his tea.

Realising he was getting nowhere, Aves tried again. “I’m looking to speak with a Mr. Viktor Krum, more specifically.”

“More specifically, Viktor isn’t here,” Bill said.

“That’s funny,” Aves responded, without humor. “Our records show him as staying here while he’s in the country.”

“He is,” Bill stated plainly. “But he’s not here right now.”

“Mr. Weasley—”

“Bill.”

“Bill. Something occurred tonight—

“What occurred?”

“I’m afraid I can’t get into the details.”

“Try.”

Aves’ face was turning a deep red. Whether from anger or annoyance, Bill wasn’t sure.

“I have an official document from my superior,” he handed a parchment to Bill, “allowing us access to search your home.”

“Search?” Bill asked with genuine shock.

“As I said, we are aware that Mr. Krum has been staying at this residence while in the country.”

“And?”

“And,” he said frustrated, “we will be collecting him and bringing him back to the Ministry.”

“If you’re trying to get into quidditch matches for free,” Ginny chimed in, “there are better ways to go about it.”

“If you are going to insist on—”
“He isn’t here,” Bill stood up, handing back the parchment forcefully.

“I’m afraid then, I’m going to have to have my men search the house.”

“I’m afraid you’re not going to be waking up my daughter and nephew. I get very little sleep as it is. Now if it’s that’s all,” Bill gestured to the door.

“I really prefer not to be forceful—”

“It’s true,” Ginny nodded in fake seriousness. She winked at him.

Aves cleared his throat again. “According to the document, I am allowed to use any means necessary to bring all members of the household forward.”

Just then George walked in. “Oh, I love late night party guests.”

Aves rubbed his palms violently against his eyes.

“Alright, mate? You seem a bit tired.” George said, concerned.

“Seems he needs a head count,” Bill turned to his brother.

“We heard. Woke up poor ‘Mione with all the shouting in here.” George shook his head in feigned disappointment. “But by all means,” he gestured to the other room, “follow me. Though do try to keep it down.”

“Think of the children,” Ginny was at Aves' side. She patted his arm, grabbing hold of it to pull him forward.
“WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?”
Fleur whipped her way into the room, hair flying furiously behind. She pushed through the group to the two kids crying wildly on the bed.
“ARE YOU STUPID? ‘AVE YOU ANY SENSE?!”
She picked up her screaming daughter, managing to gently hand her off to Bill despite her own yelling.
Aves could only stand there, flustered and stuttering.
“I told you not to do it.” Ginny stood next to him, a look of satisfaction on her face.
Fleur scooped up Teddy then, smoothing his green baby hair. She kissed his nose before dropping him into her husband’s other unsuspecting arm, before turning her wand on the man that had insisted on banging open doors.
“Do you ‘ave any idea how ‘ard eet will be to get zem asleep again?” Her voice was dangerously low.
“I thought,” he stammered.
“You thought? Obviously not.” She was all but snarling as she pushed him from the room, sparks threatening the tip of her wand.
“Ma’am, need I remind you, I am a Ministry official.” He eyed her, forgetting to hide his fear.
“Need I remind you,” she poked his chest, “I ‘ave not slept in days.”
“For which I apologize, but I do have a job.”
Aves gained back some of his confidence, which seemed to only fuel Fleur’s anger.
“And yet,” she brought her face very close to his, “you inseest on not doing eet.”
“I was try—“
“ENOUGH.”
She ran down the two flights of stairs to the ground floor. She waved her wand in great circles above her head, and bright streams of silver dispensed from her wand. It seemed to float up like steam, before reaching the roof and exploding. It fell from the sky like opaque hail, beating hard into the ground. The men outside hurried into the house to take cover. As quiet fell, the bodies of everyone in the house grew warm. They could see the red silhouettes of the others outside their rooms.
“Bloody brilliant!” Ginny shouted, breaking the silence.
“See anyone you need?” Fleur called up impatiently.
A few moments passed before Aves stomped down the stairs.
“Very well.” He was clearly irritated. “Krum is not here.”
“No, ‘ee eez not. And all of our time ‘as been wasted.” She huffed away up the stairs to her children.
Hermione was the first downstairs.
“Right. We will most likely be checking back in,” he said stiffly.
“If we hear anything,” she offered, hoping to make some peace. She knew this wasn’t over.
“I’ll be sure to come down personally,” Ginny said quietly, settling into the couch.
Aves stopped a moment, unsure of how to respond.
“I find it’s best not to let her see you sweat,” Harry clapped the man on his back a little harder than he meant to.
“Potter,” Aves jumped a bit. “What are you doing here?”
“Sent me over to let you know they’ve secured it,” he responded vaguely.
“Great,” he said distracted. “Right. Gin— Potter, you’re off the rest of the night then.”
“Great,” Harry fell in place next to Ginny. “See you tomorrow then.”
Aves looked between the two suspiciously, then nodded.
“Great party!” Fred called out behind them.
They waited until the apparation pops signaled the Aurors’ departure.
“Mum?” George called at the chimney. “Dad?”
Nothing happened.
“Minnie?” Fred tried.
“Fred,” Hermione reprimanded, but the others laughed, until the chimney began to transform.
“That’s Professor to you, Mr. Weasley,” McGonagall called, exhausted from the top of the mantle.”
“Beautiful bit of magic, that,” Andromeda said, following her out. “They really didn’t know?”
“Undetectable,” Molly said, proudly.
“Honestly, can’t believe you lot have been hiding that from us.” George shook his head.
McGonagall and Andromeda took their leave quickly after the Aurors, though not before the former shot a knowing look at Molly. The witch pursed her lips tightly, but proceeded to nod. McGonagall, apparently taking this as acceptable, called Ginny and Harry to go along with her. In mutual shock, the two followed her warily.

“Are you going to explain that or…?” George started, but his father shot him a look that immediately shut him up.

Arthur sat quietly, and the rest followed suit. They were waiting for Bill and Fleur to make their way back downstairs. He had no intention of repeating himself.

Once they settled, he began solemnly. Three hooded men had shown up to Kingsley’s home earlier that night. In a matter of an hour, they had managed to not only move past his wards undetected but petrified every member of his night guard. When they came upon the Minister in his study, their intention was clear. One of the men hit him with the Imperius curse. Kingsley, however, had shared a particular interest with Mad Eye in the years following the first war: a nearly impenetrable tolerance of the curse. So, when the curse hit, and their defense fell, Kingsley was able to disarm them. A short duel followed, but ended almost as quickly as it started. The arrival of the Aurors was less than subtle, a characteristic the department head, Rubin Prott, and the minister had often quarreled over. The hooded men apparated within moments of the announcement, though not before Kingsley sent off one last spell. By the time the Aurors made it up the stairs, all that was left were two of the three’s wands.

“And one of the wands…” Fred said slowly.

“Was Viktor’s, yes,” Arthur finished.

“But he was with us!” Hermione protested. “They can’t possibly-”

“They can.” Harry had just reentered the room, Ginny behind him. “It happened while Charlie and him were out at dinner. They only called in Ron and me after they learned the wands’ owners.”

“Do they at least know who the other wand belongs to?” Hermione asked.

“It’s an unmarked Gregorovitch,” he sighed. “Truthfully, Prott is suspicious of pretty much all Durmstrang Alum. Says its reputation is there, for a reason. Reckon he isn’t trying too hard to give Viktor a fair chance.”

“But if they were at dinner-” Hermione started up again.

“The alibi is he and Charlie were at dinner. In muggle London.” He rubbed his eyes roughly. “I’d wager it’s only a matter of time before they’re looking for Charlie.”

“My Charlie would never do anything—we fought alongside Kingsley—how could they–” Molly was red in the face, her anger bubbling just below the surface as the accusation settled in the room.

Harry looked back at her sympathetically. “I’m not saying it will happen that way,” he struggled. “But it might not be bad to keep them hidden awhile longer.”
Molly continued on about all the ways in which it would be absurd for anyone to ever accuse her good hearted and loving son of anything even remotely immoral, before she finally cut herself off suddenly. Turning the group she made an announcement.

“You’re all to stay here tonight.” Lavender opened her mouth, and Molly added a swift, “No ifs or buts.”

The twins sniggered at the word ‘buts,’ shutting up when she shot them a look that could petrify. Molly then said her goodnights and walked off to the kitchen, where the banging of pots and pans started almost immediately. Arthur followed.

“You don’t suppose we ought to…” Lavender trailing off, looking between the kitchen and the rest of the group.

“What? Console her?” George asked as he turned to follow Angelina up the stairs.

“Not bloody likely,” Fred snorted. “How do you think they got around to having so many kids?”

“Better to let dad handle it,” Bill added.

A few minutes after everyone retreated to their respective rooms, there was a light knock on Ginny’s door. Hermione opened it, silently inviting Fred in the room, as though she expected it.

Ginny, however, looked surprised. “What?” she asked roughly, yanking back her bed sheets.

Confused, he stood there and instead turned to Hermione, who could only look at him with a mirrored expression.

“Gin,” she inquired softly. “You alright?”

“Fine.”

“You don’t seem fine…” Fred took a seat on the bed next to Hermione.

“I am!” She shot back in a wavering voice. She turned to look at them then. Her face was red, tears threatening to fall.

Hermione walked over and held her friend tight. “I know you’re worried about Charlie, but he’ll be okay.”

Ginny pulled back at that, wiping her eyes. “It-it’s not that,” she stuttered. “I am worried about Charlie but…”

“What exactly did McGonagall say to you?” Fred watched her carefully, something close to realization on his face.

“I can’t...I-I can’t…” she trailed off, burying her hands in her face.

“Look, Gin–” but a knock on the door caused them all to jump.

“Ginny?” Harry whispered, peeking his head in.

His eyes were red, and the color drained from his face.

“Harry, no.” It was a warning, though her voice was absent of conviction and Harry wasted no time in wrapping his arms around her.
Hermione sat back beside Fred, where they would both stare awkwardly at their hands while the other two stifled cries in each other’s necks.

Finally, no longer able to take it, Fred took hold of Hermione’s hand and led her towards the door. Although they were quiet, the movement seemed to spur the hugging pair out of whatever intense state they were in.

“Wait,” Ginny sniffled. Turning back to Harry, she gave him an almost pleading look.

“We can’t…” he trailed off, but knew what she was thinking was right.

They sat on Ginny’s bed, watching as the bewildered Fred and Hermione sat down, too.

“Harry and I eloped.”

“You...what?” Fred asked in disbelief, looking to Hermione for confirmation that what he heard was right. She was too busy with her jaw on the floor to answer.

“Almost,” she added quickly.

“When?” Hermione’s voice was just barely above a whisper.

“It’s why we broke up.”

Chapter End Notes

I know the last several chapters have been short as all hell. Writer's block is a bitch! but I'm working on having several long chapters before I post again, so there's more substance. I think I played myself jumping around on POVs lol. Thank you guys for reading!!
Going to the Chapel

The sun filtered through the tall windows, enveloping the drawing room in a golden filter.

It was an ordeal, moving into Sirius’ family home. He didn’t want to at first. The memories of his unhappy godfather being confined here, of those first nights on the run; it felt impossible to avoid.

The first time he stepped over the threshold after the Battle of Hogwarts, he broke down. Tears fell furious down his face, while he shot curse after curse at the vile portrait of Mrs. Black. Anything and everything he could think of blasted from the end of his wand, but to no avail. So, when Ginny came by an hour later, he laid crumpled on the ground, the picture screaming bloody murder.

She coaxed him up, and took him back to the burrow. He was determined to never go back, but he refused to sell it. Sirius had left it to him, a final token, and he couldn’t abandon it.

After watching Harry torture himself over the stupid house, Ginny turned to Hermione, and together they set off to make Sirius’ last gift habitable. They spent weeks cleaning the house pairing spells and potions with muggle tools to pull the damned portrait down, to tear apart that disastrous family tree. Buckbeak’s droppings were cleared, old artifacts and strange objects packed away safely in the attic. It wasn’t long until her brothers found out what they were doing, and insisted on helping. They pulled up dusty carpets, painted walls, reupholstered the furniture. When they finished, Grimmauld Place was unrecognizable.

They threw around the idea of presenting the remodel as a birthday present, but as no one was sure how he’d react, they reconsidered. Instead, Ginny brought him back in early July. If he liked it, well, ‘Happy early birthday!’ and if he didn’t, no harm, right?

“We don’t have to go, but I would like to show you something,” she said, taking his hand in hers. He nodded his acceptance and she apparated him to the front steps. He turned to her, the nervousness clear in his eyes.

“Trust me,” she smiled, squeezing his hand.

Opening the door, she let him step through first. She watched as he walked through the hall, his eyes wide. He turned back to her.

“The picture…” he trailed off, overwhelmed.

“Would you like to see more?” She asked tentatively.

He nodded, and she took him by the hand leading him up the stairs. As they explored, Harry stayed silent. Ending up in the kitchen, he took a seat at the old table. He ran a thoughtful hand over the rough wood.

“You kept this,” he mumbled, while she handed him a bottle of butterbeer.

“We can get rid of it,” she said quickly, unsure of if she’d made a mistake. “It’s just
that Sirius had mentioned once he liked—"

He had stood up then, and grabbed her face softly in his hands.

“He loved this bloody table,” Harry whispered, laughing. “No reason why. He just liked it.”

They stood there, giggling at his late godfather’s odd choice in dining. She held his wrists, his thumbs drawing small circles on her cheeks.

“I love you,” he said, smiling still.

He bent down and kissed her. It was soft, light, and she could feel his warm tears drop onto her cheeks. She muttered his name, when he moved to kiss her top lip. Then the bottom. He pulled on it gently, so she parted her mouth, and he let the tip of his tongue touch hers. A hand drifted to her long hair and he gathered it to the top of her head. Pressing his other hand to the small of her back, he pushed her into him. The longer the kiss went on, the more desperate he felt to pull her close to him. He wanted her to feel the warmth bubbling inside of him, because he knew it was hers. He leaned against the closest wall, and let her fall into him, squeezing her tight, pulling her off the ground.

It was a messy kiss—hot and sticky, but he couldn’t stop, and she wouldn’t let him if he tried. When he released momentarily to pull his shirt off, she groaned. He couldn’t help but laugh at that. Her face was red and raw, her hair a tangled nest. He laughed harder. She did her best to look annoyed, but failed miserably. She couldn’t help smiling at him.

“You’re cute,” she shook her head at him, walking back to sip his beer.

“Let’s stay here tonight,” he said, bending so he could wind his arms around her waist properly.

She kissed him, hoping that was a proper enough answer.

They eventually made their way to the drawing room. The room was large, with great big windows. They had fixed the big couch in there, and set up a TV, at Hermione’s insistence. It was an old pastime of theirs to make the Weasleys watch different movies during the breaks. Arthur was particularly fond of this tradition, of course.

“Brilliant,” he grinned, picking through the collection of videos and dvds.

“Glad you like it,” she smiled.

The rest of the night was spent taking turns picking movies, cuddled up on the couch. They ordered pizza, and drank butterbeers. Well, Ginny drank Harry’s, and he would roll his eyes and open another.

After she claimed his half emptied bottle for the umpteenth time, he finally turned to her. “You could just get your own.”

“I could,” she shrugged. “But I like yours better.”

She was sitting there, her head on his shoulder, too deeply engrossed in the movie to bother looking up at him when she said it. He stared at her, wanting to be annoyed.
Instead, he found that warm bubble filling him up again. He shook his head at her, as if trying to shake off the intense feeling cropping up. But it wouldn’t leave, and he didn’t want it to. Not ever.

“I love you,” he found himself whispering, as if shocked.

She smiled and turned to look at him. “I love you.” She kissed his nose.

“Thank you, for everything.” He was still whispering.

A look of surprise caught her face, and still smiling, she set the bottle down. Sitting up now, she moved to his lap, locking their eyes.

“You made this home,” he said softly, tears threatening his eyes again. “You’re home.”

Her hands slid up his shoulders, fingertips brushing his neck. Cupping his chin, she pulled his face up to hers, and slipped her tongue to brush against his. She pulled it back, but he caught it, sucking on it lightly before releasing it back to her.

“I want you.” He said it quietly, almost as a prayer.

He ran his hand down her body, stopping at the hem of her shirt. He yanked it over her head. He kissed her exposed skin, and he felt his blood boil in desperation for her. He reached for the button of his pants, biting at her lower lip until it was swollen. She stopped him then, pulling one of his fingers up to her mouth. Slowly, achingly slow, Harry thought, she slid his index finger in her mouth. She rocked her hips while she sucked, taking care to grind hard against the bulge in his lap.

“Ginny,” he moaned.

Smiling, she stood up, and watched as his eyes fell over her body.

“Off,” she commanded simply.

He did as he was told, removing his clothes while he watched her. She moved her hips in small circles as she stepped out her pants, and panties pooled around her ankles. She slipped her bra off, and threw it somewhere behind her, before settling back into his lap. She tilted her head, hiding them in her long curtain of hair. He slipped inside her easily, as they did so many times before. But as she moved on top of him, his arms wrapped around her, and he gripped her waist tight, so that their skin burned between them. She moaned between his lips, tangling him in her own arms.

He woke up that next morning in the golden light. Ginny curled up in his side, still naked, a blanket tossed over them. That bubble of warmth sat in his chest still, and he buried his face in her neck. He could smell their night on her skin. He groaned, still hungry for her. He was not sure he would ever get enough of her, of this, he thought, running his hand down her front. He felt for that little nub between her legs, moaning satisfactorily when he found it. He drew lazy circles over it, kissing her shoulder and neck and ear all the while.

His tongue found a spot on her ear it particularly liked, and he found himself quite distracted by it, so he barely noticed that Ginny’s hips began to stir next to him.

“Good morning,” he blew into her ear, when a small squeak escaped her mouth.
She parted her legs, giving him better access, and his fingers obeyed. He let the nub fall between his index and middle fingers, squeezing it between his knuckles while he rocked them. She squeaked again, and he smiled. “You like that,” he taunted, pushing his hardness against her.

She lifted her legs once more, and he took the hint, sliding himself in with his free hand. She jumped forward a little at this, moaning loudly in surprise. He caught her breast in his hand and brought her back to him, refusing the space between them. He leaned her back and caught her nipple in his mouth, his fingers carelessly pinching the other.

Ginny cried out again, messily thrusting against him. She called his name over and over, his hand still working her clit, until she seemed to lose her voice. She shuddered beneath him, and he slowed, letting her catch her breath.

She turned over, and kissed him. It started slow, but as he parted his lips, it became needy. Ginny’s hand grasped hard to his member, and Harry could feel her mouth water against his tongue, when he entered her.

“I love you,” she whispered into his mouth.

“Marry me.” It was barely words. It was so low, it was more of a breath. A single breath. But as soon as he said it they both froze.

“What?” She asked.

He considered making something up, covering it with another, more believable phrase. But he knew as soon as he said it, he meant it. He wanted her more than he’d wanted anyone or anything. She was Ginny. She was exceptional. She was insane. She was home.

“Marry me,” he repeated, more sure of himself this time.

She stared at him, her mouth dropping open.

“Yes,” she said, surprising herself.

He pulled her back.

“Yes,” she said again, giggling this time.

Harry pulled her in for a kiss, the warm bubble threatening to burst. She murmured something against his lips, that he mistook for moaning. He went to deepen the kiss, but she pushed him back laughing. He raised an eyebrow curiously.

“Today,” she grinned.

When he only stared back blankly, her face dropped. “Never mind,” she muttered, forcing a nervous chuckle.

“Gin.” He lowered his head to look her in the eyes.

“Let’s get married…”

“Today?” He posed it as a question, but her intention became clear. “What about the
“We can do it up big. Later.”

He watched her carefully. The idea was… it filled him entirely. “You sure?”

She nodded. “Just you and me.”

“One condition.” His tone was very serious, and she gasped when he flipped her onto her back, moving himself above her. “We’re starting this marriage off right.”

He winked as he bent down, kissing her abdomen as he went.

A quick trip to the Burrow for spare clothes and a shower later, Harry found himself waiting by the front door. His mind had wandered to Bill’s wedding. Arthur prodded his son, asking him if he was nervous. Bill merely shook his head, and straightened his tie. “Never better,” he had said. At the time, he’d reckoned Bill must be a very good liar. How could anyone not be nervous on a day like that?

But here he stood, waiting for this woman to make her way down the stairs. To hold his hand. To claim each other, as lovers, as partners, out loud. It was just right.

She came up at the end of the hall, an absolute vision. The dress was a pale blue, that faded into a light grey. The sleeves were long and ballooned at the wrists. Its skirt came up short, just above the knees.

He grinned so wide he thought his cheeks might jump off.

“I, uh, don’t own white apparently,” she laughed.

“I don’t care.” He shook his head, handing her the flower he’d transfigured from a kitchen glass.

“Marigold?” She smiled.

“It was the first thing I could think of,” he said sheepishly.

“I don’t care,” she mirrored him.

Holding out his arm, they apparated away to a busy street. They’d agreed to a muggle chapel, feeling they’d be least likely to run into any family or friends (or nosey Daily Prophet reporters).

“So, how does this work anyways?” Ginny chimed, as they walked lazily along the side street.

“How what works?”

“Muggle marriages.”

“I reckon you just sort of walk in,” he shrugged, kissing her hand absentmindedly.

“I dunno… you remember that one movie?” She trailed off on something about marriage licenses complicating a storyline, but Harry’s attention moved somewhere else.
A pair of burly men had been following them for a while now. At first he shrugged it off. Anytime he found himself in muggle London, he found that same creeping threat crawl up his spine. He was seventeen again, Hermione pulling him and Ron away from that cafe, leaving behind those Death Eaters.

Usually he could shrug it off, but after a few street changes he couldn’t shake the suspicion. Grabbing her hand, he pulled her into the first shop they crossed.

“Harry…” she eyed him suspiciously, as he pushed her into the first available booth.

“Coffee?” He spit out in his nervousness,

“Harry.” This time it was a warning.

He nodded to the window, pulling her head low to the table. They watched the two men pass by. Several minutes passed and nothing happened. Ginny just looked at him.

“Ginny…” he started apologetically.

“I know,” she smiled. It wasn’t the first time something like this happened. She squeezed his hand, and ordered for them when the server came by.

“You still up for a wedding?” She asked him between sips.

“There’s nothing else I’d rather do.”

They came back out along the street again, and Harry’s nerves, while still present, subsided enough. Ginny wrapped herself around his arm.

“What do you suppose the moral ground is for confunding a muggle in order to get married?” she asked.

“What?”

“Now that I think about it, there’s a process to getting marriage licenses in the Wizarding World, I don’t suppose it’s much different for muggles.”

They discussed the possible obstacles all the way to the small chapel, deciding a little confundus charm probably never hurt anyone when the woman at the desk told them they needed to set an appointment.

“Oh, how silly of me. I don’t know how I didn’t see that,” she said apologetically, shaking her head at a small notebook. “My mistake! If you’d like to take a seat, the Jensons are just finishing up.”

Ten minutes later, a pair of heavy wooden doors flew open, and a couple came giggling through. Behind them shuffled 50 or so guests, all talking with a happy buzz about them. Harry and Ginny walked into the room, giving up on waiting out the last few stragglers, still sitting in the far corner.

She was busy admiring the happy barrage of people. He was too busy admiring her smile. They were too busy entangled in each other, absolutely enraptured by what they were about to do.

Harry didn’t notice the familiarity in the stragglers’ faces. He didn’t notice them pull
out their wands.

The doors slammed shut, just as a flash of light flew out and hit Ginny’s side. She toppled backwards, twisted and crumpled on one of the pews.

“GINNY!” He screamed, terror rising his throat.

A red beam shot past him now. It barely missed, leaving a bit of his hair smoking. A warning.

“Potter,” a man growled.

It was one of those men from earlier. The realization hit him as he raised his wand. In his fury, he cast the spell too hastily, causing the wall it hit to grow hair.

The men roared in laughter. “So much for the Great Harry Potter,” the shorter of the two spat.

Harry raised his wand again, but before he could do anything, a light came from behind him and hit the short man square in the chest. Just as he fell, another light shot out, targeting the other attacker. Harry turned to find Ginny standing, the side of her face where she landed sticky with blood, her wand raised.

She shot another spell, this time hitting the man’s arm. The limb lit up for a moment before fading back to normal, as if nothing had occurred, but his face turned white. A stream of red trickled steadily from his nostrils to the front of his shirt.

“You bitch,” he muttered. It sounded like he was gurgling something deep in his throat, and his lips started turning blue.

She whipped her wand once more, opening her mouth, when the bleeding man grabbed at his companion and apparated away.

Harry did the first thing his racing mind landed on. He grabbed Ginny’s hand, and took them back to Grimmauld’s Place.

“Ginny, are you—” but when he turned to see how she was, Ginny collapsed onto the floor of the foyer.

A pool of blood was collecting quickly around her. There was a large tear in the dress, where that initial curse had hit, exposing a deep gash to her ribs.

“Ginny, Ginny, Ginny,” he muttered her name over and over, his hands clasped over the leaking wound.

The image of a blonde boy flashed to his mind, and he barely noticed his wand moving over her. Once. Twice. Three times.

“Vulnera Sanentur. Vulnera Sanentur. Vulnera Sanentur.”

He moved how Snape did all those years ago. He meant to be precise. It had to work.

Ginny lifted her shirt, showing the still vivid white scar to Hermione and Fred. Harry flinched, looking away, the memory pulling at the bags beneath his eyes.
“Why didn’t you tell me?” Hermione whispered. She was holding Ginny’s hands now, in a way akin to begging.

“What’s there to tell?” Fred answered for his sister. She shot him a grateful look. They always did understand each other well.

“She was attacked!” Hermione said, taken aback.

“We figured it was nothing,” Ginny shrugged.

“You figured it was—”

“Plenty of Death Eaters are going to be bitter.”

They stared each other down a moment, the heat of old arguments taking space in the room.

“We only told McGonnagall,” Harry added, turning back the others, irritation clear in his voice.

“And she told us to stay alert, but Harry there’s nothing else we could have—”

“She said the description of one of the attackers at Kingsley's reminded her of one the men that day.” Harry ignored her, not wanting to hear the beginning of a conversation they’d had many times before. “Wants us to compare memories.”

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Fred could feel their tension, to the point it was actually suffocating. After a minute of particularly long silence, he walked over the bed where Hermione had joined Ginny and Harry.

“Come on love,” he said quietly, taking Hermione’s free hand, and pulling her gently up.

He led her from the room, pausing briefly.

“Don’t think we won’t be talking about almost missing out on a Potter/Weasley wedding in the morning you two,” he threatened, closing the door with a light chuckle behind him.

“Bloody hell,” Hermione gasped, once inside the twins’ old (her) room.

“Bloody hell,” he repeated, lifting a loose floorboard.

He looked surprised at the secret stash. It seemed to have been restocked recently.

“You two may be clever, but you’re terrible at hiding places,” she laughed, pulling out the firewhiskey and taking a swig.

“Mum never found this in our near seventeen years here thank you very much!”

She snorted. “That’s only because your mum was terrified of booby traps. When I moved in, she was terrified to come in here. Insisted I take Bill’s room instead.”

“And why didn’t you?” He asked thoughtfully, taking a seat next to her as he pulled from the bottle.

“Hell of a view,” she said, leaning into him.

“You know,” he chuckled. “Dad tried to build this extension the muggle way?”
“No, he didn’t!”

“He did. Said it’s the muggle way or the highway.”

They took turns sipping at the whiskey, while Fred informed her of all the ways the floor caved in before Mrs. Weasley took matters into her own hands with the building plans.

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