

Potter the Poet

"No, Ron, I'm quite certain," Hermione stated with a fair deal of exasperation, "the samurai did not write limericks."

"We don't know that now, do we?" Ron replied. "Maybe they did and we just never knew because the rhyming was off in Japanese."

"Oh...honestly," Hermione exclaimed. "That makes no sense at all. And it is besides the point...*Sensei* Yukihiro specified haiku for our homework."

"Homework, homework, homework," Ron muttered. "What's the point of skiving off Seventh Year if we are still studying just as much?"

Harry looked up from his parchment at his two best friends, engaged in one more verbal slug fest around Baron Black's kitchen table. "What's the point?" he asked rhetorically. "Erm - I don't know, maybe it's trying to learn a few tricks to save our sorry arses at the Final Battle?"

"Poetry is going to help us defeat Voldemort? Ooooh, let's meet him at a slam and embarrass him to death. Only thing sillier is the idea that making tea would help just as much."

"You really aren't getting, it, are you?" Hermione said. "For hundreds of years, some of the finest muggle warriors in the world had a training regimen that included not just sword play, but poetry and tea ceremony. And it made them better in battle. Now quit your complaining and finish up...we're leaving for the dojo in an hour and if you aren't done I'll ask sensei to instruct you in flower arrangement."

Hermione stormed out of the room as Ron turned towards his best friend.

"Why did you ever let her convince us to study the way of the samurai?"

"Erm - quite simple, actually," Harry replied. "When it's down to just me and Tom our wands will be useless against each other. So I've got this really nice sword to throw around, but the only thing I can do with it is stuff it down basilisk throats. Not very practical, is it?"

"But there were those fencing academies, weren't there? They looked a tad nancy-ish in those white outfits and helmets, but at least they focussed on sword play."

"Yeah, but then there's the mental stuff, isn't there? I still need to work on occlumency and the samurai were supposedly great at meditation and mind focus. Which brings us back to poetry and tea. Focus on perfecting simple movements and the sword will follow the same path."

"Merlin, don't look now, but Samurai Harry is in the house." Ron muttered.

"That's right, but if you don't complete your homework it'll be Samurai Hermione that kicks your arse."

"Alright," Ron said morosely, as he looked down at his parchment and chewed on his quill tip.

Five minutes passed.

"Hey Harry, what rhymes with cape?"

"Would you give it a rest!" Harry implored. "You've been trying to finish that one all week."

"Yeah," Ron said, "but I'm so close, and it's so much better than my back up."

Harry looked at Ron warily.

"Back-up....you mean you've actually completed a poem?"

"I certainly have."

"Well, do share it with us, then."

Ron rummaged through a pile of crumpled parchment, finally finding the one he was looking for. He used both hands to flatten it against the table top, before he pushed back from the table and cleared his voice:

*There once was a witch named Narcissa,
Who liked to grab Tom Riddle's pissa.
But his wand was so bent,
that each time they went,
for a shag his aim always missed'ha.*

Merlin, that doesn't even rhyme," Harry said.

"Sure it does," Ron replied. "You just have to say it in Australian."

"No limericks, remember?" Harry said. "Haiku...come on...only three lines long and all you have to do is count up to seven...surely that isn't so hard, is it?"

"Fine," Ron muttered.

He chewed on his quill tip for another five minutes.

"Harry?" he asked.

"Yes, Ron?"

"Does chocolate have two syllables or three?"

"It's supposed to be about nature, you git!" Harry shouted.

"Well," Ron reasoned, "chocolate does come from nature, don't it? And we are supposed to be writing about something we're passionate about, aren't we?"

Harry pushed his quill and parchment away from him and rubbed his temples.

"Oh, I give up," he declared.

"Ha," Ron replied, "You mean you can't do it either, more like."

"Of course I can do it...just can't decide if I want to."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah...pull my other leg and it plays Jingle Bells. Put up or shut up."

Harry looked at Ron with sudden seriousness.

"You really are daring me to write a poem?" Harry asked.

"Nah, not just write a poem, but to write a poem that actually packs a punch...brings somebody down...makes 'em fall."

Harry thought for a moment, then silently resolved whatever issue was being debated within his head.

"Case of butterbeer says that I can."

"You're on," Ron said. "And you're also on the clock...we've got all of ten minutes to wrap things up."

Harry placed his quill tip in ink, and paused, while Ron stared at his unfinished poem and, after a great deal of thought, wrote a single line of text. When Hermione returned, Harry's quill was still in the well, and his eyes were still fixed on the empty parchment in front of him.

"Okay, boys, time to survey the damage...you first, Weasley."

Ron wore a self-satisfied smirk as he handed his parchment to Hermione. She frowned as she examined the fruits of his labor. "Still going with the samurai limericks, huh?...let's see..."

*There once was a wizard named Snape,
Who wacked off each night in his cape.
But so meager his issue,
he didn't need tissue,
the stains he could cover with spell-o-tape.*

Hermione laughed in spite of herself. "Well that started off alright," she said, "but that last line is pretty lame. I suggest you work in it next time we go drinking with Hagrid, okay?"

Hermione then turned towards Harry and smiled. "Alright, Potter, your turn, give it up."

Harry looked up at her as if he'd just returned from another plane of existence. He then reached into his pocket and retrieved a folded piece of parchment that was dog-eared and slightly discolored. His hand shook slightly as he passed the note across the table.

Hermione smiled somewhat nervously as she flattened out the folds.

"Oh, look, something longer than five lines, I like it already."

But then she started to read, and the teasing smile was quickly replaced by an open-mouth oval.

"Well it can't be that bad," Ron said. "Let's hear it then."

Hermione cleared her voice. She then cleared it again, all the while staring at the parchment. Hermione looked towards Harry, who could do nothing more than nod, then began to speak.

Oh ghosts, your burden I now share.

*As one who dreads that, once proclaimed,
an unrequited love might strain,
that perfect friendship we now share.*

*As one who fears that there's no hope,
of passion lying in her breast,
and love for one that she knows best.*

Oh ghosts,

*I know your fear of great unknowns,
that kept you from the promised land,
and warm embrace and loving hand.*

*Will I ever find that hidden strength ,
to profess the truth, to tell my tale,
to find what lies beyond the veil?*

*Or will that love hid haunt my heart?
Mock me with what might have been,
had I found the courage from within?*

When she finished reading, Hermione set the parchment down on the table in front of her. Her eyes never wavered from the text as she placed her hands on her lap.

"Tell me, Harry," she said, "how long have you had this poem in your billfold?"

"Dunno," Harry replied quietly, "Year and a half, maybe two."

"I see."

"Well that was something different," Ron proclaimed "Might as well pay me now."

"Harry," Hermione asked in a very small voice, "what is Ron talking about?"

"Erm, well, you see," Harry said nervously, "I bet Ron a case of butterbeer that I could write a poem powerful enough to make somebody fall."

"So tell me, Harry," Hermione asked, "who is supposed to suffer a fall from this poem?"

"Well, actually....me," Harry replied. "But only if the poem wasn't powerful enough."

Hermione's head snapped up and she fixed her eyes on Harry.

"Ron," she said after a pregnant pause, "I believe Harry owes you a case of butterbeer."

"Because I lost?" Harry asked.

Hermione broke into a brilliant smile. She reached across the table and gave Harry's hand a squeeze.

"No, silly," she replied, "because you won."