

Movie Night at the Granger's

"May I help you with the dishes, Mrs. Granger?"

"Thank you Harry, but I'm sure that you did a lifetime's worth with the Dursleys. Why don't you go and pick out a movie while we finish up here in the kitchen?"

Harry nodded and walked into the living room of the Granger's new home. Hermione's parents had gone to ground right after Dumbledore's death; too many people in the Ministry of Magic knew where Hogwarts students lived, and the chance that one of them was a covert Death Eater was too high to take lightly. The Grangers had therefore arranged an extended leave from their surgery and told friends and family that they were taking Hermione on a tour of the States.

Roger Granger joined Harry in the living room and gave a wave out the front window as he handed him a cup of tea. Two large men standing by the curb dressed in dark suits and dark sunglasses gave curt nods in reply.

"Where are your blokes tonight?" Roger asked.

Harry glanced out the window. "Oh, since I knew we'd be staying over, I gave them the night off. Your two seem competent enough for the four of us, especially with the extra training."

Hermione's father nodded; he and his wife had participated in some of Harry's supplemental training exercises for the hired bodyguards. Telling the difference between a car backfire and the pop of an apparition was just the latest wrinkle in their lives as the parents of a Muggleborn witch.

"Harry, I know you get tired of hearing this, but Emily and I can't thank you enough for arranging for this house and all this protection. You really shouldn't have."

"Of course I should have," Harry replied. "It's only because Hermione is helping me that you are in danger. And Merlin knows money wasn't an issue....I just hope this doesn't turn into a long-term situation."

"Well...from the little Hermione has told us, it sounds like this Voldemort chap is intent on forcing the issue." Mr. Granger paused. "By the way, how is the secret research business going that keeps you two occupied?"

"Still working on it, sir, but we are making progress," Harry replied. "I can't tell you how much help Hermione has been. Not just these past few months, but for the past six years. Don't know what I would have done if she hadn't gone chasing after a toad on that first train ride to Hogwarts."

"And I don't know what Hermione would have done her First Year without some brave young Gryffindor there to put a troll in his place," said Mr. Granger. "Yes sir, the two of you are quite the pair...oh, and that Ronald Weasley fellow, too, of course. By the way, how are he and his family doing?"

"Oh, they're fine, thanks. We haven't seen Mr. and Mrs. Weasley since the wedding, but so far the magical wards that they have up around the Burrow seem to have kept the Death Eaters at bay."

"And Ron? You know Hermione used to describe everything she did at Hogwarts as 'the three of us did this,' or 'Harry, Ron and I did that.' But I haven't seen Ron since we picked Hermione up at King's Cross station."

"Well, sir, things are kind of fluid right now," Harry replied. "Ron and Hermione had both planned on staying with me this past summer, but first Ron was busy with his brother's wedding, and then we made the decision to go off the grid, magically speaking. While Hermione and I don't have any problems living as muggles, Ron's family is all magical, and he's always lived in a magical house. He's stays with us once in a while, but he gets a little frustrated trying to figure out non-sentient toilet seats, and mirrors that don't tell him when his hair needs to be combed."

"Yes, I imagine it might be like us trying to live in a magical house."

"But it's actually worked out pretty well," Harry continued. "Ron's staying with his brothers – the ones that run that joke shop in Diagon Alley – and he's been able to get us books and check into things for us in the wizarding world while we live on this side."

"I see," said Mr. Granger. With a casual air that he'd actually been practicing for a while, Hermione's father then asked, "And Ron's sister...Ginny, right?"

"Oh, yes...Ginny. Well, we saw her, of course, at the wedding. She was one of the bride's maids. But we really haven't kept in touch all that much, especially now that Hogwarts has re-opened."

"Well that's too bad," said Mr. Granger, with a look of interest. "From the owls Hermione sent home last year I understand that you and Ginny had become quite close."

"She told you that?" Mr. Granger asked, with a touch of concern. "I'll have to ask her what other...things... you've learned about me by owl post."

Mr. Granger laughed. "Well, you'll probably be surprised how much Hermione's mother and I know about you. I shouldn't be telling you this, but for the first four or five years of school it seemed as if every letter Hermione sent told us more about what you did than what she did."

"Really?"

"Yes, Harry, really. In fact, it's because of Hermione that I've become a big Quidditch fan. Never seen the game in person, but the play-by-play reporting that Hermione provided for each one of your matches was just as good as being there."

"Hermione wrote you about my Quidditch games?" Harry asked, with increasing amounts of incredulity.

"Sure, and not just the games, but most of the practices, as well."

"But she doesn't even like Quidditch."

"Ah, yes, she's told us that. But perhaps," Mr. Granger said with a slight grin, "there's a difference between liking Quidditch and liking to watch a certain person play Quidditch?"

Harry mulled that one over a bit. He couldn't decide whether Mr. Granger's revelations were teasing material for Hermione, or something he should treat with more seriousness.

"You know, Harry, the letters we got last year weren't nearly so descriptive. Hermione wouldn't say why, but we could tell something was really bothering her."

"Well, Mr. Granger," Harry said rather cautiously, "last year was hard, and not just because Professor Dumbledore died. There were a couple of huge issues that your daughter and I disagreed upon, and I'm afraid that really tested our friendship. Thank Merlin we've had the time to sort things out since then."

Roger Granger nodded. "Yes, Harry, Emily and I certainly see that now. The way you and Hermione act towards each other – if I didn't know you two were avoiding using magic, I would have thought you had some magical string connecting your brains. You're at such ease – it's as if you can read each other's minds."

Mr. Granger finished his tea, placed it on an end table, and turned towards Harry with his hands in his pockets. "Which brings me around to another question," he said with a slight smile. "Harry, to put it rather formally, Emily and I are interested in what your intentions are for my daughter."

"Excuse me, sir?"

"Intentions, Harry," replied Roger, "relationship-wise. It's not that we don't trust you...Emily and I trust you with Hermione's life. But can we trust you with her heart as well?"

"You need to trust her heart with me? Erm, sir...I don't know quite what to say...maybe... well, are you really sure that this is a concern? Because, I don't quite know how to answer..."

"Mind if I ask that you try, Harry?"

Harry paused for a moment and gathered his thoughts. "Well, since you haven't objected about Hermione and me sharing a flat, I guess I owe you and your wife at least that much."

Harry moved to the point in the living room farthest from the kitchen and rubbed his temples with his fingertips. "Hermione and I...well, we probably went beyond the 'best friends' stage about Third Year. Not romantically, mind you, but almost like...well, it's like you said...there's a connection between us that's downright scary at times in its intensity. I can't imagine living a life without Hermione being a huge part of it. Haven't been able to do that for some time. Been a bit of a weight around my neck when it comes to other girls, actually."

"How so?"

"Well...I think my friendship with Hermione has been pretty intimidating for any girl that might have fancied me. My first girlfriend sort of forced me to choose between her and Hermione. Hermione won. And when Ginny found out how close Hermione and I had worked together this past summer, and that we were planning on disappearing from the magical world, she went bonkers. She told me that I had to choose between her and Hermione. Doesn't matter that we'd already broken up, or that I didn't think I needed to make a choice – she insisted that I choose. Well, Hermione won, and Ginny can now wait for Merlin's beard to bloom flowers before I even consider looking her way again."

"So, this bond between you and Hermione isn't romantic, but keeps you from getting romantic with anyone else?"

"Well, I guess it seems that way," replied Harry. "Besides, it doesn't really matter if I wanted to get romantic with Hermione. She's got feelings for Ron, I think."

"Wait. You two have this magical borderline telepathic connection, but you don't know whom she might fancy?"

"Yeah, funny, isn't it," replied Harry, with a somewhat rueful grin. "I guess there's always been this unspoken tension. Seemed like Ron really fancied Hermione for a while, but then he went and started snogging somebody else. Maybe to make Hermione jealous, even though he'd never had the courage to tell Hermione that he fancied her. Well, Hermione got jealous, alright, but I'm not so sure that there was some self-esteem issues involved. I mean, Hermione has no reason for low self-esteem. Not just the brightest student at Hogwarts, but incredibly smart, and brave, and

pretty, and we've got this magical connection between us, and now I'm really starting to babble.... But then Ginny and I got together for a while, and Ginny and Hermione were friends and I thought Hermione wanted to see Ginny and me together, although I was never quite sure it wasn't part of that loyal-devoted-friend-that-just-wanted-to-see-me happy thing going on. Ugh....more babbling, I guess."

Harry looked around and found a chair to slump down into. "I do know that Mrs. Weasley would like nothing better than to see Ron and Hermione pair up, and Ginny and me pair up to form one great big even bigger family. But that's not what I want. I want....I want...well, please don't be upset with me, but what I want is something more than I have right now with your daughter."

Harry shook his head and closed his eyes for a second. "There, I've said it. Now I'm the Boy-Who-Lived-to-Make-A-Fool-of-Himself-and-Lose-his-Best-Friend-in-the-Process. Bloody pathetic, I imagine."

"No, Harry," said Mr. Granger seriously, "I think that what you just said was bloody brave of you. Would've been braver if you told that to Hermione rather than to me, but brave nonetheless."

Harry cast a worried look down the hallway towards the kitchen. "Mr. Granger," Harry asked with a near-whisper, "you've got to promise you won't say anything to Hermione about this. I want something more with Hermione in the worst way, but if she doesn't feel the same way then everything will be ruined. Her, me, our friendship, defeating Voldemort, end of the world...everything."

Roger Granger looked down the hallway himself, then began to chuckle. "You know," he replied quietly, "for someone that's shouldering more responsibility than any adult should ever be expected to hold, you are thinking so much like a teen-aged boy. Kind of nice to see....it's gives me faith that when this mess is done you might have a normal life." He walked over towards Harry and sat facing him on the coffee table.

"Harry," he said, "I'm not going to tell you what to do., I'm not going to tell you how much I think Hermione fancies you. Think you ought to find that out yourself. But..."

A voice called out from the kitchen. "Hey Roger, have you and Harry picked out a video yet?"

Hermione's father looked over his shoulder. "Not yet dear...getting right on it, dear," he said, turning back to give Harry a wink.

Mr. Granger reached out and placed a fatherly hand on Harry's shoulder. "You know" he said, "I think I might be able to kill two birds with one stone....allow me to show you the family DVD collection."

Roger led Harry across the room to the well-stocked entertainment center. When he opened the cabinet doors, Harry saw six shelves filled neatly with DVD cases. "These are pretty much all Hermione's, actually," Mr. Granger said. "In fact, we ought to box them up so you two could bring them back to the flat."

Harry scanned the spines of the DVD cases and noticed the number of times the word "love" appeared within the titles. "These are really Hermione's?" he asked, with some incredulity.

"Yes, she's even got them all categorized. She wouldn't tell us what those categories were, mind you, but I've got a few ideas." He waved towards the nearest shelf. "On this side there's the '*Reluctant Hero Saves the World*' movies, and over there it's the '*Hunk That Falls in Love With the Girl Next Door*' movies. Of course there's some cross-over...got 'Spiderman' right here if you want to watch a '*Reluctant Hero Falls in Love With the Girl Next Door but Sacrifices that Love in Order to Save the World*' movie. Have to warn you though, Hermione goes through a box of tissues every time she watches that one.

"I see...well, does she have a category called '*Reluctant Hero Is a Prat for Not Telling The Girl Next Door HowMuch He Loves Her But Eventually Does and Gets to Save the World Without Being Forced to Give Her Up*?'"

A voice called out from behind the two men.

"Well, Harry, that pretty well describes the entire top row."

Harry Potter froze.

Roger Granger grinned.

And Hermione Granger walked up behind Harry, reached over his shoulder, and dropped two extendable ears into his hand. "Sorry," was all she said, in a voice that sounded anything but sorry.

Harry saw Hermione's mother out of the corner of his eye as she joined them and grabbed her husband's hand with a smile. He then felt Hermione nuzzle up to his left ear as she pointed up towards a specific movie on the shelf. He then heard whispered words that were as electrifying as they were revelatory.

"Pick that one Harry— the reluctant hero doesn't wait until the end of the movie to share his feelings and gets to shag the girl next door half-way through."

Harry's eyes went wide. He grabbed the movie, leaned his head back into Hermione hair, and got lost in the sweet smell of lilac.