

Princess

Hi.

My name is Hermione Granger, and this is my account of some of the events leading up to the day, and what I saw on that day that is now as infamous as it is famous.

Only, unlike other accounts, I'm going to start with a secret – and how being a bossy-know-it-all really embarrassed a couple of girls, as well as myself, and could have had much worse repercussions than it actually did.

This is the episode that taught me one thing, more than any thing else, and that was to never, ever, underestimate Harry James Potter.

So, this is my warts and all account of the build up to that fateful day, and how I wandered blindly into it, secure in the knowledge that I was helping my friend.

It seemed like such a good idea.

Ron and I had crossed the final frontier, so to speak, and I was more than happy about it. Ron has certainly grown out of his selfish phase - which is a good thing for him as well, as he'd never have crossed said frontier with me if it was all about him.

So, I was happy, content, and according to some people, much more relaxed than ever. Why, not only did I make a joke one week - to the shock of some who shall remain nameless - I even played a prank. I'm sure that Draco will recover the use of his key equipment at some stage. Well, I say prank, revenge might be a better word. I may be a Mudblood, but I am certainly no whore.

I have heard it be said that someone should have seduced me years ago.

I refrained from hexing them.

This led my thoughts to my best friend in the world, Harry James Potter.

He is far to tense for my linking.

Of course, he had the whole 'must save the world' thing on his shoulders, but he's done that now. And he's still the same adorable boy that I first really met when he saved my life so many years ago. He's innocent and sweet, and somewhat clueless about us girls. The only difference is that he's now close to six feet tall, and can lift Malfoy up with one hand and hold him there while the ferret dangles.

Harry doesn't like anyone calling me names, especially not a Malfoy.

Voldemort is dead, very dead. As is Malfoy senior - to the delight of Draco, who has inherited the fortune - and numerous other prominent Death Eaters. From what I know, it was messy, it was awful, and it came down to a battle of wills. Voldemort thought he would win, Harry decided he was going to win, and no one on this planet can change Harry's mind when he decides something. The little bugger went off and killed Voldemort on his own. Dumbledore left plans behind with notes on the location of the other Horcruxes, and the Order of the Phoenix found and disposed of them.

Harry found out, and that very evening, he hopped on his broom and went hunting. We didn't even know until he turned up the next day, a slight smile on his face, and a cheerful bounce in his step.

"Voldemort is dead," he announced cheerfully. "You'll find his body and most of his senior Death Eaters in an old Mansion on Church Lane in Ascot. Now, I'm knackered, so I'm going to have a kip." He turned and walked out, before any of us could even react to what he had said, or the fact that he was coated in blood and bits I'd rather not think about.

Well, I was the first out of my seat, and was closely followed by Ron and a load of others. Utilising my famed intellect, I grabbed Ron, and took him through a few shortcuts, emerging just as Harry vanished into our shared bathroom. With out any hesitation, I pulled Ron in after him and sealed the doors.

"Hermione," Harry protested. "I really need a shower."

"You do," I agreed. "Badly. Don't let me stop you." There was no way I was letting him out of my sight, I needed explanation.

"Ron," Harry tried again.

My love knows when to argue and when not to. "Give up, Harry," he advised. "She's not going anywhere."

Which was true, even if I didn't agree with the given title. Hermione is not that much of a complicated name.

Harry pulled off his robes, and then his t-shirt, before he looked up, "Jealousy?" he asked Ron as his hands hovered around his trousers.

"Nah, not anymore," Ron said. "If she'd wanted you, she would have got you like she got me."

Harry smiled and I nodded, pleased at Ron's perceptiveness. Harry stripped fully, and I became the first adult female to see him naked. He didn't care, I guess he knows that we're siblings, well - I'm sibling to him, and Ron is to him, I'm obviously not to Ron, as that would be incest. It was either that, or Harry was too tired to argue anymore.

He jumped in the shower while I turned to Ron. "We're free."

He nodded. "Just for my sake, can you not hug him until he's dressed?" Ron asked the question with a teasing look on his face.

I smiled in return and started taking off my robes. "Strip, we'll talk in the bath."

He nodded and started to do that, leaving his shorts on. I went down to my bra and knickers, more for Harry's sake than mine. Ron turned on the taps, and before long we both stepped into the water.

Shortly afterward Harry joined us still dripping from the shower, and I discovered that my bra does not like water.

Harry rolled his eyes at me as I fidgeted. "Go ahead," he said with a sigh. "You've already warped me for life as it is."

"Thanks." I removed said item and marvelled at the idea that I was mostly naked in a hot tub with a mostly naked Ron and a very naked Harry Potter. A year ago, the chances of this happening were about the same as Snape joining the ballet. But I've grown up in the year - not just physically, although that was possibly the catalyst, but mentally as well. Sometimes you have to accept that you can't win every battle. A house-elf named Leena taught me that. I tricked her into freedom. She started drinking shortly after that, and it was touch and go for a while as to whether she would survive. Harry saved her - he does that a lot - and she now works for him.

It took Ron and Harry a lot of effort to get me over what I had almost done - and it needed a long talk from the elf in question and Dobby for me to come to terms with it. It is a lesson I will never forget.

Ron, Harry and I had been a lot closer since then - we've seen each other in various states of changing as I've got the Head girl's room and Harry's got the Head boy's room and we share a bathroom and living room. After a while you do become used to accidental nudity, especially as Ron sleeps with me - oh, I'm sure he shouldn't, but he worked with Harry so that no one would know. And of course, as soon as you mention rule breaking to Harry, he turns on his brain and the solution is normally brilliant.

"So, Potter, explain," was all I said.

And he did. For thirty minutes he sat with his head back, tears running down his face, as he recited in a dispassionate voice exactly how he had defeated Voldemort. I'm not going to go through those memories again. Ron and I are the only two people who will ever know what really happened, and that's enough. At the end of it, we hugged, and Harry started to let it go.

As strong as he is physically - and that's pretty damn strong - he is stronger mentally. All that turmoil when he was growing up and things like Cedric and Sirius's death has forced him to become the adult he has.

We got out of the bath, paying some regard to modesty now, and Ron and I went into our room, while Harry went into his.

When we emerged, dressed, we hugged again, and got back on with our lives.

There were many conversations, up to around Christmas, between us as we worked through some of Harry's demons, and we all become closer because of it.

Requests for information about that fateful night were flatly denied, and I wrote a tidied up version for the people who really did need to know. And that was it.

After Christmas, I settled down with Ron for a bit, and Harry pulled back, wanting some time to just be Harry - we weren't worried about him anymore, and beside, we appreciated the ability to explore our relationship.

Which is all the back story you need for what my great idea was. I was going to get Harry Potter laid.

I was happy and content, and so should he have been. After all, he's young, rich, good looking, polite, honourable, and slightly shy. And he puts up with me and Ron being lovey-dovey one minute and down-right physical the next. And as I had recently discovered, he has nothing to worry about with his body either.

It was shortly after Easter, and a good five months since Harry had defeated Voldemort that I decided that something had to be done.

Harry was far too tense for my liking. Which is a little weird, because he's been channelling his father recently - or so people have told me. When he talks to me or Ron, he can be hysterically funny, or completely charming. Out in the school, when he's being Head Boy, half the school loves him, and I am being literal when I say half the school. Every student under the fifth year knows Harry, he's talked to all of them at one stage or another, and they know they can take serious problems to him.

It's only with the older groups he's not so charming, and really, even then, it's the older girls that he's wary of. Apart from me, and occasionally Ginny and Luna, he never lets the inner Harry-Potter out to play with them.

Which is probably a good thing, because that must oestrogen around would irritate the hell out of me.

This lead me to the obvious conclusion, that Harry really needed to get laid. "Ron?" I asked.

"Hermione?" He looked up and smiled at me. It was a smile I love; it says that he can't quite believe that he has me, and that he'll do everything he can to keep me. I love him, even if we do sometimes argue simply because make-up sex is really intense.

"We need to find Harry a girlfriend. He needs to get laid."

Ron placed his book down and looked at me. "Yeah," he agreed. "I'm not sure how he's relieving the pressure - or even if he is, so to speak - but I've noticed he's quite tense these days."

"Part of that is down to the fact that he's venerated," candour forced me to admit.

"Yeah, but well, I'm always in a much better mood after we snuggle, imagine what it will do to him. Who do you have in mind? Ginny?"

"Would you be okay with that?" I asked him. "We've all become a lot closer over the last nine months, and pretty casual with our appearances. Can you handle walking in on them having sex, or Ginny topless in the bath?"

He closed his mouth and looked thoughtful. I have no idea when he learned to do that - to actually think before he says something, and I suspect it was something Harry said, as it happened soon after there was a slight disagreement between the two of them, and Ron sported a bruise on his cheek for a few hours - "You know, I think I would be. If you and Harry, who are as close as Ginny and I, can do it, then I should be able to as well." He paused, "Whether Ginny could handle it is a different matter."

"True," I agreed. I love that girl, but she has issues. "I wasn't really thinking of her anyway - well, not quite."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Harry's liked Cho and Ginny so far, right?"

Ron nodded.

"There could be a lot of reasons for Ginny, and I think part of the whole Cho thing was because Cedric had her, and he really looked up to Cedric."

"Right."

"So, I was thinking that we should throw away any preconceptions and do this logically."

Ron sighed and smiled playfully at me. "Explain."

"We find out what sort of body type he likes, and then we find the girl that fits."

"Okay," Ron said slowly, a sign that he thinks I'm slightly nuts, but will back me up anyway. "First, I thought personality was more important?"

"No, we're trying to get him laid, not married."

"Right, secondly, how are we going to get this information? We both know that Harry can normally see through me in about two and a half seconds."

I nodded; Harry had been getting more and more perceptive. But as always, I had planned for this. "Pornography."

Ron blinks, then turns white, and then turns red. "What?" he squeaked.

"I sent off for some pornography," I explained. "There's a lot of it out there, mainly Muggle, so that's what I ordered."

"You ordered pornography for Harry?"

He can be so loveably slow at times. "Yes." I paused. "And I've learnt a few new things for us as well."

Ron's eyes lit up, and he lost what ever argument he was planning on protesting with.

"I've charmed the pages," I continue, "so that I'll be able to tell what pictures he looks at the most, and how long and so on. We'll just find the nearest matching girl in Hogwarts."

Ron slowly shakes his head. "And how are we going to give him the pornography?"

"Simple. It was yours, but I've made you throw it out - you got it from Fred and George in the summer. And yes, you'll be embarrassed, as he'll expect, as it's dealing with pornography, so he won't work out that you're lying." One of my more convoluted sentences.

"Simple," he agreed. "You don't want to give it to him?"

"Please," I replied, rolling my eyes. "Hermione Granger with pornography? I don't think so. Now, come to bed." It was a little unfair of me to end a conversation like that, but he wasn't exactly complaining.

The next day, I was under Harry's invisibility cloak when Harry walked in to the shared living room.

“Harry,” my boyfriend greeted him nervously. “I wanted to talk to you.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, look.” Ron passed him the pile of magazines. I was very thorough in my choice. The age range is from eighteen to thirty-four, and covers all body types and genetic heritage. There’s not much of a difference between Japanese, Vietnamese and Chinese, but I covered them all the same.

Harry looked at the magazines, and then looked at Ron. “Been collecting?”

Ron blushed furiously. “My brothers got them for me,” he explained, “as some soft of weird prank to get me into trouble with Hermione. Well, it’s worked. She found them, and ordered me to get rid of them immediately.”

Harry nodded. “Thorough, aren’t they?” he asked as he glanced through the covers.

Ron shrugged, “I’ve not really looked through them,” he admitted. “When you have the real thing...”

I decided to kiss him for that later.

“So...” Harry prompted.

“So do you want them? They’re only going to be thrown away otherwise. And well, you’re still single...”

I wondered if men were capable of finishing sentences.

“Nah,” Harry eventually declined. “It wouldn’t be right.”

There was that honour of his. Ron sighed. “Harry, they’re well paid for this, and they know what they’re getting in to.”

“Really?” he asked, a surprised look on his face.

“Yes,” Ron said. “If you don’t want them, I’ll throw ‘em, but I just figured it’ll give you something to do until you get off your arse and get your own girlfriend again.”

“Yes, mum,” Harry replied with a roll of his eyes. He took the package. “Thanks.”

“Can we never, ever, mention this again?” Ron asked.

“I think we’ll all be happier that way,” Harry agreed, and moved into his bedroom.

Ron collapsed into a chair and I removed the cloak. “Well done,” I praised, kissing him.

He kissed me back and looked relieved.

Two weeks later I started to analyse the results.

“So?” Ron asked as he lounged on my bed, reading a Quidditch magazine.

“He’s glanced at every page in every magazine, but that gives the impression of flipping through. Some of the pages he never looked at again - which is useful, as we don’t actually have any of those girls in Hogwarts, and it would have been irritating to try and find out outside. So, first off, Ginny...”

“Yes?” Ron asked, putting his magazine down.

“Definite no. There were eight red-heads in there; four of them had bodies that will be similar to Ginny over the next few years.”

“And?”

“Not a second glance.”

“Poor Ginny,” Ron replied and then smiled happily.

“There is,” I admitted reluctantly, “the slim chance that it was their likeness to Ginny that put Harry off, as it was too close to life, but I’m discounting that.”

“Okay,” Ron agreed, probably just happy to be away from the subject of his baby sister naked and posed on a bear-skin rug.

“What is interesting, is that he spent a lot of time looking at the blurbs,” I continued, I was a little surprised, I expected him to look at the pictures more. “And that gives some more of a hint. Anyway, a statistical analysis shows that he likes brunettes, preferring either under five foot 2 or over 5ft 9. He’s pretty equal on legs and boobs, but seems to like bums a lot. A hell of a lot.”

“Right,” Ron said, his voice a little choked. “So, short and tall brunettes with great arses. What years are we looking at?”

I hadn’t really considered that. “Sixth and Seventh,” I decided. “The whole point is to get him laid, and he wouldn’t feel comfortable with a girl younger than that.”

“Luna?” he suggested.

“No,” I replied instantly. “She’s a nice girl, and a good friend, but she drives me insane. I do not want to be lounging around in an evening, while she jabbers on about Snorkacks or anything. Besides, she’s more dirty blonde than true brunette.”

“Hermione,” Ron chided me in disapproving manner.

“I know it; not permanent,” I explained, a little embarrassed, “but even so...”

Ron nodded. “I know,” he said and let me off the hook.

That’s not an aspect of my personality I’m proud off. “So, the short brunette is easy. Susan Bones.”

“Yes,” I agreed. Susan’s a very pretty brunette, and possibly a good match for Harry as well. She’s a few inches smaller than I am, and slightly curvier than me as well. According to the gossip I pay no attention to in the library, she’d not really dated much. “So, the tall brunette?”

“We’re going for good looking, right?”

“Absolutely.”

“I’m coming up empty,” Ron said. “There aren’t that many pretty witches in the school, the best looking tall brunette is you, the others are either short, overweight, or haven’t mastered their anti-spot charms.”

“We could help with that,” I murmured absently, “but you are overlooking one girl.”

“Who?”

“Tracey Davis.”

“Hermione, she’s a Slytherin,” Ron pointed out.

“So you have noticed her.”

“Of course, but she’s still a Slytherin.”

“Ron, that doesn’t really matter anymore, we’re a bit beyond that,” I said, conveniently forgetting my own irrational refusal of Luna.

“How can we know that she isn’t a Death Eater?” Ron countered.

That was a good point, actually. “I’ll deal with it.”

“So we’re going for Susan, with Davis as a back up?” Ron asked.

I thought about that for a while. We’ve only had two months left at school, and if we go one then the other, then it might take to long. “No, we’ll do both at the same time.”

Ron groaned. “I thought you’d say that. Okay, so, under the presumption that Davis isn’t some form of Voldemort sympathiser - which I’m sure she is, she is a Slytherin - exactly how are we going to get Harry laid?”

I was prepared for this question, “We’ll let them know, in a subtle way, that Harry fancies them, is available, and then stand back. Susan’s had a crush on Harry for a few years now, and Tracey’s a Slytherin, so she’ll recognise the benefits of a rich and powerful boyfriend.” I left unsaid that the element of competition should have an affect on both of them.

It’s a conscience assuager, as for all my talk, I don’t really want to get any more involved in my friend’s lovelife. The only real reason he’s not swimming in hormonal girls is that most of them are in awe of him, and when they do talk to him, his reticence and shyness gets in the way, and they completely misinterpret it.

My first step was to check where Tracey’s loyalties lie. We don’t normally move in the same circles, but we’ve helped each other out in homework a time or two. As much as it galls me to admit it, she is better at potions than me, but then, she is a pureblood and can practice over the summer.

I arranged to meet her for a quick talk about polyjuice, original I know, and we quickly settled down. She’s a little snobbish, but not really a bad person.

“Are you a Death Eater?” I asked after we’ve both had a drink that Leena bought us.

“No,” she replied.

“What did you think of Voldemort?”

“I hated him,” she growled through gritted teeth as she tried to fight the magic.

“Explain.”

He made it obvious that females were for breeding only.”

I nodded, Voldemort was a misogynist.

“Are you trustworthy?”

She started to shake. “Yes,” she finally admitted, the magic forcing it out of her.

“Are you a virgin?”

The shaking was worse. “Yes.”

I sat silently and waited until the Veritaserum wore off.

“What the hell was that?” Tracey demanded.

“Veritaserum,” I offered helpfully.

She growled at me. “Why did you drug me?”

I decided it was time to adopt a Slytherin mindset for a while. “I didn’t,” I replied calmly.

“Yes you did.”

“Prove it,” I challenged. “You are saying that the Head girl of Hogwarts, Hermione Granger, famed for following every rule under the sun and with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Hogwarts rules and regulations used a banned substance on you to check your alliance to a dead Dark Lord?”

She slumped down and glared at me. “Pensieve evidence.”

I smiled pityingly at her. “At the moment, I’m sat in the library, in plain view of every student in there.”

She sighed. “What do you want, Granger?”

“Information, honest information, and now that you’ve given it to me, I’m happy.”

She nodded, still glaring at me. “*Why*,” she emphasised, “did you want this personal information?”

I decided to be truthful. “Because Harry needs a girlfriend, and there are two girls in the school that he fancies.”

“Weasley and me?”

“Susan Bones and you. He likes brunettes. Redheads don’t make the list.”

Her glare was gone, to be replaced by a thoughtful look. “Looks are important? I’m not the only brunette in Hogwarts.”

“To Harry, probably not,” I admitted, sticking with the truthfulness for now. “But as I’m the one who did all the research - without him knowing about it - I’m the one who gets to decide.”

Tracey looked at me for a long moment. “You know, Hermione, I might actually like you,” she admitted to my surprise. “You’re no longer just a Gryffindor. I suspect it’s Potter’s influence. You do know that he is responsible for your happiness?”

I blinked at her. “In what way?”

“Harry took your boyfriend for a little chat and when they returned, Ron was bruised and had this new attitude.”

I nodded, I did know that.

“Well, it wasn’t just listening. Potter also killed the rumour that he wanted you, by doing the Big Brother routine on Weasley. As you can see, he was successful.”

I smiled. “Family is like that,” I agreed. “Harry’s shy, and while he comes across as confident this year, it’s this reticence that is why he is still single.”

“Most of us are somewhat in awe of him,” Tracey admitted. “It’s shyness, not aloofness?”

I nod. “Absolutely. He’s still not really sure how to approach girls, and doesn’t want someone to say yes because of who he is. He doesn’t want to use his fame like that.” I paused. “I, on the other hand, have no such compunction. I could have tried to match him personality wise, but that would have needed a lot more information that I could get easily, and the risk of him seeing through it was too high.”

“And you’re going to be giving this talk to Bones?”

“In essence, yes.”

She nodded again. “And no one would ever believe that you would do this.”

It was my turn to nod.

"I don't believe you."

I looked at her quizzically.

"It's not looks," she stated. "If it was, you wouldn't pick me. Not because of how I look, but because of how I am."

Damn it, she wasn't supposed to be that smart. I looked at her and tried to decide if I should still be honest.

"I might have done a little personality matching," I admitted with a sigh.

"And Ron doesn't know."

I nodded in agreement. "I'm not sure who would be best for Harry - you and Susan have different personalities, but you're both strong in different ways."

"What happens now?"

I looked at her and decide to come completely clean. "From me, nothing. I step out now. I'm trying to help Harry, not run his life. I'll be here for advice, but only the sort that I would give anyone. He is as likely to turn you both down flat and continue down his own path, but Harry deserves to have some happy moments in school - and not the sort that I can provide."

"Because you're in love with Ron."

"Exactly."

"You're being daring here."

"A little," I allowed. "But all I'm doing is telling two girls that Harry finds them attractive. I'm not signing him into a contract or anything, if he doesn't like you, nothing will happen at all. It's not really that much different from Harry taking Ron out the back and beating some adulthood into him."

Tracey nodded. "You're quite the little Slytherin aren't you?"

I smiled coldly. "When it comes to looking out for my friends, yes."

"One last question. What if I didn't fancy Potter?"

I smiled at her gently. "Tracey, you're far too ambitious to let something like that stop you. You've probably been raised with the idea that you'll be married off in some political deal. This gives you a way out."

She didn't disagree. "Bones too," she added.

I nodded and decided to try and finish it. "I love Harry, I wouldn't allow just anyone near him. When I first started this, I thought about a lot of the girls in Hogwarts, and about what is going to happen when Harry leaves. I truly believe that he needs some experience before he is faced with a lot of witches who aren't in awe of him, and who want to nab him quick. Out there, I can't help him, in here, I can. I did the research to find out what sort of person he finds attractive, and then chose the two girls from the short list who were nearest."

Tracey nodded and stood abruptly. "Let's go find Bones."

I blinked at her. "Susan?"

"If we're going to have a competition, we ought to get the rules set straight to start with." She marched off and I scurried after her.

It was this time that I started to realise that I'd made a mistake.

"Yo, Bones," Tracey shouted, attracting the disproving look of the librarian.

"Davies," Susan drawled, sucking the tip of a quill and batting her eyelashes. "You've finally decided to tell everyone about our affair?"

Tracey paused and laughed. "For a 'Puff, you've got a wicked sense of humour," she stated. She turned to the nearest table, "No, we're not dating," she growled, "and if I hear any rumours, you'll be the ones found hanging from the flag pole."

The kids paled dramatically and scampered away. I had to hide a smile.

"So, what can I do for the Head girl and the Slytherin queen?" Susan asked casually.

"We need to talk, in private. Little Miss Perfect here has been busy."

Susan looked at me for a long moment. She sighed softly. "This is going to be fun," she predicted sarcastically, as she packed her stuff into her bag and marched out of the library.

Why is it that everyone seemed to know a private place to go?

Susan's place was a comfy old office that she knew the password too.

She collapsed into a chair and offered one to Tracey - who slumped down as well. Their posture will probably give them back problems when they are older.

"Go on then," Susan said with a fake smile. "Hit me."

"In short, Hermione's done some research, and reckons that Potter's got a thing for brunettes, short and tall. She decided to help him get one, and we hit the grade. You've got a crush on him, I think he's hot. We need some rules between us before we start."

"Such as no sabotaging each other?" Susan asked calmly, as if they were discussing ordering some milk.

"And blocking external interest," Tracey agreed.

Susan looked thoughtful. "Shyness, not aloofness?"

"Yup."

"Hmmm. So you're not a Death Eater?"

Tracey rolled her eyes. "You already know that."

Susan laughed. "True, she didn't though."

'She' again, Hermione is not that long!

"Yeah, little bitch doused me with Veritaserum and asked a few questions."

I'm not a bitch either.

Susan sniggered. "So, we'll hex anyone else who looks at him interestedly, not sabotage each other either directly or indirectly, and take it in turns?"

Tracey pulls out a galleon. "Call." She flipped the coin into the air.

"Dragons."

Tracey smiled happily. "Me first then."

Susan held out her hand. "May the best girl win."

"I will," Tracey agreed, as she shook it - but she was being playful more than anything else.

They both turn to me. "Your job is to back up the no-outside-influence rule," Susan informed me calmly.

This was when I realised that the problem with dealing with attractive and intelligent witches is that they have the self-confidence to do what they want, and that I'd lost control. Susan had accepted what Tracey said with the sort of insight that was one of the reasons I chose her in the first place.

"I'll start tomorrow," Tracey said, "you can have Sunday."

Susan nodded. "Good luck, Tracey."

Tracey smiled at her, rolled her eyes at me, and wandered out.

Susan looked at me for a long time. "Should I be flattered?"

I shrugged. "You think I'd let just anyone near him?"

Susan's gaze was uncomfortably direct. "No," she agreed slowly. She stood. "I've got a boy to prepare to ask out," she announced, and left.

With a sigh of relief, I headed back to our suite and collapsed bonelessly.

"Success?" Ron asked.

I nodded. "Tracey tomorrow, Susan on Sunday."

"Cool," Ron said. "Want to look over my transfiguration essay?"

"In a bit," I agreed.

The next morning, I was a little late to breakfast. I overslept slightly, it happens. It wasn't hard to notice that some of the boys were very focused on the Slytherin table. A quick look at Tracey showed why. The girl is quite unique among the Pure Bloods as she is very good looking. Most of them - say, like Pansy, look like the inbred mutants they are.

Tracey wasn't wearing the Hogwarts robes, and the shirt she had chosen was very flattering, even if the emerald green was a bit obvious.

I'd just settled down and absently stopped Ron from eating two sausages at once, when Lavender leaned over. "So..." she said, trailing off after the first way in that irritating manner of hers. "Rumour has it that our boy Potter's just a little shy, and that a couple of girls have decided to go for him – and that anyone that interferes will get cursed."

I tried to look as innocent as I could.

"Really?"

Lavender nodded. "And what I want to know, little Miss Organises-it-all, exactly why wasn't I considered worthy of his Hotness?"

"Because you're a blonde," Ron said calmly in the gap between the finishing of one sausage and the starting of another. "And Harry prefers brunettes."

Lavender huffed. "I do know my hair charms," she announced crossly, "I could be a better brunette than Shorty-McCurves or Leggy-SmallTits over there."

I actually think that Lavender likes me. 'Organises-it-all' is a much nicer nickname than some of the others – you should hear what she calls Pansy – to her face.

It wasn't until the seventh year that we realised just why Lavender was a Gryffindor. The girl is fearless.

Before I came to Hogwarts, I went to a normal middle school. Back then, it took around two days for a rumour to circulate the entire school. At Hogwarts, that time is down to around ninety-minutes. People really don't have anything better to do.

Anyway, it was about that time that Harry entered the Great Hall.

That's another thing. Most people enter a room and sit down and no one notices. Not our Harry. He'll slouch in, he'll charge in, he'll even stroll in – and when he does, people notice, even if he doesn't want them to. It's the charisma he has in buckets.

This time, Harry bounced into the Great Hall like the Energiser bunny on steroids. He arrived in front of Ron and me, did a little dance and twirled on the spot. It would have looked dorkish on anyone else, but he pulled it off – which was irritating, if only because of the numerous sighs of appreciation from certain near-by people.

"Git," Ron sighed. Ron likes Harry – you could tell by the way he swallowed first, and then stopped eating, before saying anything.

"What?" Harry asked playfully.

"If I'd done that, you and Hermione would be on the floor, laughing hysterically."

Harry grinned. "True," he agreed, and mock-preened. The preen was more effective than usual because he was dressed to the nines in some incredibly regal looking black and silver robes. They looked like they must have cost an absolute fortune.

"So," I asked, "why the good mood and the snazzy outfit?"

"I," he said, drawing himself up to his full height, and with a dramatic pause that managed to capture the attention of everyone who wasn't already looking at him, "am about to listen to your endless complaints, hints, suggestions and whines, and get myself a girlfriend."

The sound of many eyeballs blinking at once is an interesting one. The sound of many single girls gasping in hope is not such a good one. The sound of at least ten boys gasping is just disturbing.

Not that there is anything wrong with being gay. It's just that Harry's so hetero-sexual that the mere thought of him going for a guy can send me into endless hysterics.

"Congratulations," Ron said. Behind Harry, Tracey was glaring as a large number of girls suddenly felt the need to remove their robes and unbutton a button or two of their blouses.

"Yes," I agreed.

"So," Ron said, "spill the beans. Important question first, what does she look like?"

"Tall," he started dreamily. "She's a little shorter than I am, with the most beautiful hair I've ever seen, and more curves than the Colossus at Thorpe Park."

"Harry," I protested playfully. Ron's the only Pure Blood who got the analogy. Harry and I dragged him to Thorpe Park a few weeks ago during a Hogsmeade day. I have never seen my boyfriend so happy. Even if the fish and chips we got for lunch were so disgusting that even Ron left half of his. He loved roller coasters, and kept Harry company on the rides that I wouldn't go on if someone put a gun to my head.

But I'm digressing here.

All the short single girls looked disappointed. Tracey, on the other hand, really started to smirk.

"How about, 'eyes so deep I could spend the rest of my life swimming in them?'" Harry asked.

“Much better.”

He grinned at me.

“Personality wise, she’s smart, can appear aloof and stand-offish until you get to know her well, then she can be incredibly sweet.”

I don’t think I’d ever seen Harry like that, and was contemplating patting myself on the back at the earliest opportunity.

“I think that out of all her features, it’s her hair I like the best. That long silky silver-blond hair grabs my heart and makes me want to learn Goblin poetry.”

“Silver-blond?” I choked out, suddenly feeling my stomach clench in an unimaginably painful way.

Tracey was a brunette!

“Yeah,” he agreed, looking at me strangely. “You remember Fleur’s friend, Melissa, right, from the wedding?”

I suppose that this is a good time to go back and bit and explain who this Melissa girl is.

In fact, just imagine some wavy lines and cartoony fade away, as I go into the convenient plot device of a flashback to Bill and Fleur’s wedding last Christmas.

“Who’s that?” I asked, as Fleur squealed and dived half-way across the Marquee at a new arrival.

“I have no idea,” Ron answered. “We could go and find out?”

“Good plan,” I agreed, ignoring the banality of our dialogue, and we walked over to the other side of the Marquee that had been hired for Fleur and Bill’s wedding on Saturday.

“Ermione, Ron, thiz iz Melissa,” Fleur said, “My best friend.”

“Hi,” Melissa said, with just the softest of French accents.

“Hi,” I replied, a little frostily, wanting to hate this woman in front of me.

“Hi,” Ron squeaked next to me.

Melissa seemed to sigh slightly, “I’ll see you later,” she said to Fleur, and backed away. I was about to say something, when Fleur glared at us.

“I ‘ad ‘oped that you were over this silly behaviour,” she snapped at us. “Melissa means ze world to me!” She stormed off, leaving us gaping at the space she had just occupied.

“So,” Harry said, as he appeared in said space. “You two look like freshly smacked puppies.”

“Harry!” I complained.

He grinned unrepentantly. “So, what’s up?”

“Fleur just shouted at us,” I explained.

“Hmm,” Harry said. “The caterers are meeting with Molly and Aimée, why don’t you go and make sure that they remember that there will be Muggle guests, and that pumpkin juice is not the only drink in the known world.”

“Harry, what are you suggesting?” Ron gasped with a horrified look on his face.

“That if I see another pumpkin again, it better be carved into a scary face for Halloween. I’ll catch you later.” And with that, he did a passable attempt at vanishing. Only, without the magic.

“He didn’t mean it, did he?” Ron asked.

“I think he did,” I admitted. “I like pumpkin juice, really I do, but there are times when I’d kill for a diet Pepsi.”

Ron grumbled under his breath all the way over to his and Fleur’s mothers. “We’re under orders,” he announced.

“Oh?” Aimée asked.

“Yeah, *someone* has committed heresy,” Ron continued.

“Ahh,” Molly interrupted. “That’s already been covered, hasn’t it?” she asked the caterer.

“Excuse me?”

Muggle drinks," Molly prompted.

"Oh, yes, of course," the caterer replied. "We've ordered Coke, Fanta, R Whites Lemonade, and sparkling and still water."

"Get a couple of crates of Becks as well," Harry said as he joined the conversation with the same style in which he had left us earlier.

The caterer scribbled a note down at the bottom of his list. Harry moved around and scanned the list. "Brilliant," he said cheerfully. "You two have done wonders," he said to Molly and Aimée, who both blushed.

Harry steered the caterer away, talking to him in a low voice.

"Does he do that a lot?" Aimée asked.

"Ever since he defeated Voldemort," Ron said.

"He does channel James a lot more these days," Molly said fondly. "How's he doing at school?"

"With all the guys, fine," I admitted. "He doesn't talk to many girls."

"Why ever not?" Aimée asked.

"Good question," I agreed. "I think he's just shy around people his own age."

Molly nodded. "He did date Ginny last year, didn't he?"

"He did," Ron confirmed, "but no one knows what he is thinking any more."

"I know," Harry agreed, putting his arms around both me and Ron as he appeared between us. "If you'll excuse us, we need to have a little chat about keeping our brains to ourselves." And before Aimée and Molly could react, he'd steered us both away and into the main house.

"Am I going to have to pontificate at you?" he demanded.

"No," I said, looking down. "She's a Veela, right?"

"Full Veela," Harry agreed, "hence the control."

"She's still beautiful though," I countered.

"And that excuses the frosty greeting?"

I blushed, "No," I said meekly.

"Ron?"

"I wasn't frosty," he said, "I was, erm..."

"Yes, you were 'erm'," Harry agreed. "Right, consider yourselves spanked. Now, let's get on with the solving of the problem."

I searched through my memory. "The problem is that she's perfect. It's an instinctive reaction for the two of us. I hate her for making me feel less than perfect, and Ron wants to jump her irritatingly perfect bones."

"Hmm," Harry mused. "That gives me an idea. In the mean time, you two can come with me and get over it the hard way."

Which was how we ended up sitting down with Melissa and having a cup of tea.

"So," I said into the slightly awkward silence. "How do you know Fleur?"

Melissa smiled. "We were friends growing up; I was devastated when she went away to Beauxbatons."

"Didn't you go?" Ron asked. He had placed a hand on mine, and seemed to be using that as a mental anchor. I was actually quite impressed.

"Oh no," Melissa replied, "I was not allowed to attend a public school."

"Not allowed?" I echoed her words into a question.

Melissa winced. "I am a full Veela," she explained. "I went to a school for Veela. Fleur did not want to be so insular, and I agree with her."

"Parental responsibilities," I nod. "I know them well, if I hadn't been a Witch, I would have ended up at Stoutings School for Girls, just like Mum."

Melissa smiled at me and I squeezed Ron's hand. My dad would kill to look at her teeth. Each one a perfect shape and gleaming with health.

"So how long have you two been dating?" Melissa asked.

"A few months now," I said, "and it's been wonderful."

Ron smiled proudly, and I squeezed his hand again, for a different reason this time.

"What is it like?" she asked.

"Dating?"

She nodded.

"You've never dated?"

"Alas, no. I am Veela, and well, the men I tend to meet are normally a lot older, or well, want me as a trophy."

"Then date a normal person," Ron suggested.

"I have no choice," Melissa sighed. "Mother and Father are very concerned that I marry appropriately.."

"Eww, sounds like blood purists," Ron said, "and Harry only just got done killing a bunch of them."

Melissa giggled cutely. "It is difficult," she said, "sometimes I find myself agreeing with my parents, but a quick bang of my head against a wall makes it go away."

I laughed, and she smiled brighter. And as I looked under her skin, so to speak, I felt a little guiltier about my earlier reaction. She seemed to really want to meet new people.

Harry joined us, absently conjuring a chair. "I've got it, Princess," he said.

"Harry," I scolded, "there's no need to invent cute nicknames for everyone."

Harry laughed and Melissa blushed.

"You didn't recognise her ring?" he asked.

My eyes immediately dropped to her hand, and sure enough, there was the crest of the Veela royalty.

"Can we all pretend that I've asked the obvious question?" Ron asked.

"Melissa Marguerite de Flandres," Harry said, bowing extravagantly, before dropping into his conjured chair. "Heir to the Royal throne of Veela."

Melissa was blushing furiously now.

"But," Harry continued, "rumour has it that our fair princess here would much rather just be called Melissa."

Melissa nodded hard.

"Anyway, I have a plan."

"Is this a 'Get out of detention' plan? Or a 'I'm nipping off to kill Voldemort, I'll be back later covered in bits of Death Eaters' plan?" Ron asked.

"Hmm, probably the former," Harry said. "Behold, a wand!"

"Wow," I said as dryly as I could. "What do you do with that then?"

"Use it to make gestures?" Harry asked impishly, flicking his wand at me. "Anyway, as I'm sure it's escaped your perception, we're all magical. And with these wands, we can do magic! Such as..."

He waved his wand dramatically, and then pointed it at Melissa. "Chata wnow kong bantha poodoo."

"HARRY JAMES POTTER!" I yelled, rounding on him.

"Yes, Hermione?"

"I've accepted silent magic from you. I've accepted wandless magic from you. I've even accepted that occasionally you will say your spells in German!

"But I will not, under any circumstance, accept you casting spells in Huttan!"

"But..."

"No," I demanded. "Swear, here and now, that you will never do that again!"

He looked down like I'd just killed his favourite puppy. "I'm promise," he pouted. "No more Huttan."

"Thank you," I said gratefully.

"What's Huttan?" Ron asked.

"It's a made up language from a Muggle film," I muttered, turning back to Melissa. Only to find that Melissa looked different, very different.

Her hair was a more normal plain blonde, and her features were less perfect, she just looked like a normal pretty girl. Even the spectacular curves that she had had, were now merely great curves.

"Wow," Ron said, shaking his head in disbelief.

"What?" Melissa asked warily.

I used my wand perfectly, enunciating the necessary words to create a mirror with a perfect flick and swish.

"That is me?" Melissa asked.

"Yup," Harry agreed.

Melissa smiled – and it was just a pretty girl doing it – and thanked him. He shrugged. "Not a problem, anyway, I'm wanted elsewhere, hope you enjoy the wedding."

And with that, hurricane Harry vanished to give his help where ever it was needed. And some places where it probably wasn't, but there are very few people willing to argue with someone who kills Death Eaters and Dark Lords on a day out.

"That was Harry Potter?" Melissa asked.

"Yeah," Ron nodded.

"He is not what I expected."

"Me neither," I complained.

"Oh, tell me about it?"

So I did.

And Melissa was normal for a few days. She got to enjoy her best friend's wedding, and make friend as a real person.

I don't think that Harry even realised what sort of gift he had given her – he's just seen a problem and fixed it.

Enjoy the flashback?

So, Melissa. Veela are creatures known for their physical perfection. Melissa is the ultimate pure-blood Veela. And it shows.

And as soon as we parted company, I tried to forget about her – so I wouldn't have to worry about eating that extra slice of pie, or not getting up at the crack of dawn to exercise, or even forgetting to remove my eyeliner after a late night.

Because I knew that she had never gone for that extra slice of pie, that she had never skipped an exercise session, and she had never forgotten (or needed) to remove any makeup.

And the fact that she was nice, intelligent and charming was just galling.

"I remember her," Ron said next to me.

"Me too," I squeaked.

"Well," Harry said, absently conjuring a hard-backed chair, spinning it around so he could straddle it, and sat in front of us – I guess he didn't want to walk around to the other side of the table to his normal spot. "In life, I've been of the opinion that red-heads are nice enough, and that brunettes are cute, but it's blondes that do it for me. In my book, blondes can get away with anything."

"I thought you preferred brunettes," Ron blurted.

"What made you think that?" Harry asked.

"The porn was mainly brunettes," Ron said – and I really wished he hadn't.

Harry leaned backward. "I thought we agreed never again to talk about that?"

"Sorry," Ron said, blushing the cute Weasley-Red.

"I gave it away," Harry said. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Neville Longbottom blushing furiously, and I had a sinking feeling just who had the perchance for brunettes.

"So," Harry continued, "over the past few months I've been pestering Fleur, learning French, and generally working out just what you need to do to get into the heart of a pure blood Veela."

"Why her?" I eventually managed to croak, desperately focusing on him and not on the ruins that were my plans.

"Well, after I finally danced the dainty tango on Voldemort's rotting corpse, I started to have a bit of a think about what I wanted to do next, and let's face it, getting a girlfriend was high priority."

Harry was talking in this slightly dreamy voice, and I don't think he even noticed that everyone, from Headmistress McGonagall down was listening to every word he said.

"And I got to thinking who did I want to date? I mean, it's not as if I've been some sort of Casanova, Cho was a disaster, and while I enjoyed dating Ginny, we're better off as friends."

Whether Ginny agreed with that statement didn't seem relevant. Especially as Ginny had slept in that morning.

"I thought of some of the girls here, and some of them are crackers, but it all just seemed so provincial, you know?"

"Besides, that's what my parents did, and I'm quite happy to live my own damn life and not follow in anyone's footsteps."

"I started to look around for a bit of a challenge, when Melissa fell in to my lap, so to speak. Pure blood Veela princesses aren't exactly the sort of thing you find floating around every day."

The doors to the Great Hall opened, and Harry's head turned like it was attached to them by a bungee cord.

There was a beautiful blonde in the doorway, sadly for Harry, it was the wrong one. And she was accompanied by a tall man. "Fleur, Bill," Harry called, before saying something in French that flew by too fast for my liking.

Bill replied in French, and Harry grinned.

"Mind if we join you?" Bill asked Minerva.

"Welcome back to Hogwarts," Minerva said with a warm smile. "I'd offer you breakfast, but I'll presume you've eaten?"

"Yes, Harry popped around for breakfast."

"Might I ask just how you managed to do that?" Minerva asked, an amused tone in her voice.

"Erm, Apparated?"

"To France?"

He nodded and created a couple more chairs.

"See me when your schedule allows," Minerva ordered.

"Okay," Harry agreed, before looking at me. "Are you okay, you look pale?"

"I'm fine," I said, forcing a smile to my face. I could literally feel the glares from two very annoyed girls on me. Bill and Fleur sat down next to Harry.

"We're escorts," Bill said, before turning to Ron. "You owe me a galleon."

"I do," Ron agreed. "And what do you mean by escorts?"

Fleur smiled, "You can hardly expect Melissa to travel on her own."

"Especially when she's being let out to see a non-Veela male," Harry added.

"Please, her Muzzer and Father like you." Fleur paused for a few seconds, and then added, "now."

Harry grinned and I could actually feel the energy he was putting out. I had never seen him so excited.

"I thought Melissa said that she couldn't date?" Ron asked. He took my hand and squeezed it. I was grateful, really grateful. It's was times like that when I remembered just how much I loved him and his unconditional support.

"That was the case," Bill agreed, "until Harry popped in to see the King and Queen."

"It was just a quick chat," Harry said with a shrug.

Bill snorted. "He asked them for permission to date their daughter last week. They said no. Harry created a chair and started to negotiate. They ordered the guards to remove him. Harry took exception to the guards, and removed them instead, shut the doors and spent an hour locked up with them."

"What he opened the door, he was laughing with the King, and the Queen was blushing like a schoolgirl."

"We just had a little chat," Harry explained.

And he might have mentioned the fact that he's also Lord-Baron Potter Black, can keep Melissa in the style that she's accustomed to, and that fresh blood can help the problems of in-breeding."

"Well, that too," Harry admitted bashfully.

The door opened again, and this time the correct drop-dead gorgeous Veela appeared. She was wearing Muggle clothing – a pair of jeans and a light grey sweater and the effect was the same as if she had been wearing the most elegant of ball gowns.

Every straight male in the school looked at her like she was a glass of ice cold water after they'd spent the last few years on a desert island, drinking brackish rum.

And, as earlier, I found myself wanting to hate her, but I couldn't. Even if she did make me feel as inferior as Pansy at a beauty contest.

If it wasn't impossible (and Hogwarts: A history states quite firmly that it is) I would have sworn that Harry Apparated next to her he moved so fast.

He paused in front of her, as if not sure what he should do next.

Melissa smiled softly at him, before she whispered something in French. As his back was to me, I had no idea what happened to Harry's face, but he stepped forward and pulled her into a gently hug.

Melissa looked surprised for a second, before she relaxed into it.

I could see her eyes moved as Harry whispered something back in her ear, and I lip read her saying 'Oui' which isn't quite the limit of my French, but its close enough.

Harry slid out of the hug and put an arm around her waist. He guided her over toward us, before he paused and looked at the Professors.

"Headmistress McGonagall," he said, "allow me to introduce Melissa Marguerite de Flandres," he said. "Melissa, this is the Headmistress of Hogwarts, Minerva McGonagall."

"It's wonderful to meet you," Melissa said, bestowing a smile that, had she smiled it at Voldemort, would have had the snake-faced gimp melting in a pool of his own acidic blood.

"Welcome to Hogwarts, Princess de Flandres."

"Melissa," Harry interrupted firmly. Melissa nodded along side him.

"Melissa," McGonagall said with a smile. "Are you planning on staying the day?"

Melissa looked at Harry.

"We'll be around this evening," Harry said. "Hey, I've got an idea."

"Quick, hide," someone shouted from the Hufflepuff table.

Harry grinned. "How about we have a Ball tonight?"

"A Ball?" McGonagall asked doubtfully.

"In the spirit of international relationships," Harry said. "Specifically, mine," he added in a low tone.

"A day is not enough time to organise a Ball."

"Challenge accepted," Harry said, "Thanks."

"But..." McGonagall said, before she went quiet as Harry had already turned away from her. "Dobby, Leena," he called.

The excitable house-elves appeared. Both of them looked at Melissa and grinned, before Dobby bowed to her and Leena curtsied. Melissa winked at them both, and they winked back.

"How do you two feel about an excessive amount of work in a short amount of time?" Harry asked.

"Really?" Leena asked hopefully.

"Professor McG seems to think that it's not possible to organise a ball in one day. What do you think?"

"A Ball?" Leena asked, "music, food, decorations, drink, chaperones, band?"

Harry nodded.

Doby clapped his hand sharply. Hundred of elves popped into place. All of them stared at Melissa, who started to look uncomfortable.

Dobby snapped something in the language the house-elves used, and they all looked at him. Like a little general, he started to point to groups and give orders. The elves would nod and vanish.

When he had finished, he looked proudly at Harry. "Hogwarts will be having the best ball," he promised. "This is easy work for best house-elves, not real challenge," he complained to Harry. "Any house-elf is being good enough to organise this in short time. Dobby and Leena were being hopeful for real challenge.

"Dobby will be being band organiser; Leena will be being drinks organiser."

"Great," Harry said cheerfully. "You've both got access to my vaults, right?"

The elves nodded. "Then don't go cheap."

"We is going to be making Harry Potter sir proud."

"You already do."

Both elves managed to glow with happiness, before they popped away.

"See," Harry said to the McGonagall. "A Ball only takes three minutes to organise."

Minerva smiled faintly at him.

"Hey, I can do one of those Head Boy things and make a point here!" He turned and his eyes swept over everyone. "Loyalty that has been earned is worth a thousand times more than loyalty that has been demanded or forced. And it goes both way, I ensure that Dobby and Leena have everything they want, including the occasional amount of hard work –that's what they like after all – and in return they dedicate a scandalous amount of attention on me. When you leave Hogwarts, you will no doubt end up in positions where you have people who work for you. When you do, remember what you just saw."

He paused for a few seconds. "And now I return you to your normally scheduled breakfast." And with that, he finished guiding Melissa over to us. Bill and Fleur had extremely amused looks on their faces.

"What's the plan for today?" Bill asked.

Melissa looked at Harry curiously. "Yes," she said softly, "what are we going to be doing today?"

"Alton Towers," Harry said firmly. "Bill, you do remember your hand-to-hand fighting, right?"

"Of course, but why?"

"We're going to a Muggle amusement park," Harry said, "and when we appear in public with the two most beautiful girls in the world, we're going to have to protect ourselves from the hordes of maddened Muggles ready to prostrate themselves at their dainty feet."

Melissa and Fleur both blushed and giggled in a synchronised display of beautiful-cuteness that made me want to stab them both with my fork.

"Shouldn't we let them?" Bill asked. "For such feet are meant to be worshipped."

And then I wanted to stab Bill, if only for revealing that he was partly responsible for Harry's new attitude.

"Yes, but only in private," Harry agreed with a teasing grin at Melissa, before, in a stage whisper, to Bill, he continued, "remember that some of us haven't got around to the asking-out properly stage yet, never mind the marriage and foot-worshipping stage yet."

"Oh," Bill said, matching the whisper, "hadn't you better get around to that?"

"Melissa, fair and beautiful princess," Harry said, going down on his knees before her. He paused and looked at Bill. "How many guys do you reckon have started like this, lying through their teeth, when I'm here saying it to a real fair and beautiful princess?"

"Seventeen in the last week," Bill replied promptly.

Harry nodded and turned back to Melissa. "Will you marry me?"

It was that moment that Ginny decided to join us for breakfast. Her reaction was simply to faint. Everyone else's reaction, including mine, was to gape in complete and absolute shock.

"I meant asking her out," Bill said dryly, into the silence.

Harry looked at Melissa. "Oops?"

Melissa looked at him for a long moment. "You are insane," she said softly.

Harry shook his head. He held up his right hand, on the back, rubber stamped, was the word 'Sane.'

"See!" he said proudly.

Melissa started to laugh. "I have received forty-one marriage proposals before this one," she told him. "From kings to political leaders to artisans. I have been chased since I was thirteen years old, and I have never met anyone like you."

I've had poets write sonnets about me, I've had artists draw me, and I've had authors write books about me. And I've had gifts from rich and powerful men all over the world. How are you so different, Harry Potter?"

He shrugged. "Because I'm the forty-second, and everyone knows that's the meaning of life?"

I swear, only Harry Potter would quote Douglas Addams at such a time.

"When I was growing up, I dreamed of who I would marry. Before I grew up, the qualifications were short – that he be handsome and like horses.

"As I became a teenager and then an adult, my tastes developed more sophistication, and the qualifications changed accordingly. Looks became less important, when compared to the ability to make me laugh.

"In fact, that whole list was that he must be able to make me laugh, my friends and family must approve, and he can make me feel like a Princess with his kiss.

"My parents respect you, more, my mother adores you. Fleur has told you more about me than she has ever told anyone, which is her sign of the deepest approval. Some of your notes have had me crying in laughter. And I hoped today that we would have an indication of the last part.

"Are you serious, Harry Potter?"

He smiled faintly.

Melissa stood gracefully. "This is your chance for the last part of that."

As I've said before, when doing something that breaks rules, Harry is a genius. So he didn't hesitate. He shot to his feet and looked Melissa directly in the eye. His right hand crept up and he cupped her cheek. His thumb brushed her bottom lip gently, before he leaned in and softly kissed her.

Melissa's eyes closer as her hands went around his neck.

Harry dropped his hands to her back, and seemed to take that as an encouragement.

To add to my earlier list, it seemed that Harry could kiss as well. And I mean really kiss. I suspect that if they hadn't been entranced, most of the guys would have been furiously scribbling notes for later.

The kiss was so passionate that I could feel it; actually, I reckon that my Mum could probably feel it, back in the south of England.

Harry broke the kiss, and looked at Melissa.

Melissa was now breathing deeply, and her control over her Veela power had slipped slightly, as she was glowing. Harry, of course, was about as affected as I was that time Draco used his 'charm' on me and I kned him in the testicles.

The glow faded from Melissa.

"Yes," was all that she said.

Harry smiled at her. Not a grin, but a full blown smile. "Sure?"

She nodded.

Harry looked thoughtful, and I knew what he was thinking. "No," I said, "you can't."

"Hermione," he chided. "That's such a negative word."

"But..." I tried.

He looked at me seriously. "Can you think of a single person better for me?" he asked softly.

The damnably annoying thing was that I couldn't, I could think of many reasons why this was insane, but at that current time, I couldn't think of anyone as good for him at that moment. I suspect he crafted the question specifically because of that. "No," I sighed.

"Ron?" Harry asked.

Ron gulped, looking a little touched that his opinion meant so much to Harry. "Harry, mate," Ron said, "you know me, I'm beside you all the way. And," he added, with a thumbs up and a sly look at Melissa, "one hundred percent pure fox!"

"I know," Harry grinned. He turned back to Melissa.

Melissa stared at him, and his grin, before she must have realised what I had worked out a minute earlier. "You can not be serious," she whispered in shock.

"And if I am?" he asked.

"We won't be able to go to Alton Towers."

“Honeymoon,” he countered. “Disney World!”

Melissa looked at Fleur, who was staring at them in confusion.

“Non,” Fleur said, her face clearing. Her accent, which had improved dramatically since I saw her at Christmas, deteriorated. “It iz not possible!”

“Nothing is impossible,” Harry chided.

“Oh, Sweet Merlin,” Bill swore as he worked it out. “Your hand is wrong!”

“Don’t mock the hand,” Harry growled playfully. “And you’re all wasting valuable time.”

Fleur stood and interposed herself between her best friend and Harry. “‘Onesty, ‘Arry, do you tink you can pull dis off?”

Harry lost his playful grin. “Yes.”

“You remember ‘er ancestry?”

He nodded. “I can do it,” he said with complete confidence.

“If you do not,” Fleur said, growling and baring her teeth at him, “I will call it off!”

“Agreed.”

Fleur slowly smiled. “What time?”

“Seven.”

“Close your eyes, or its bad luck.”

Harry smiled and did as he was told. Melissa lightly pecked him on the lips, before she scurried out with Fleur.

“They’re gone,” Bill said. He had his arms crossed over his chest and he was shaking his head as he looked at Harry.

Harry opened his eyes.

“Harry,” Ron said, “what, in the name of Merlin, were you lot talking about?”

Harry took a deep breath. “At seven o’clock tonight, you’re going to be my best man, along with young William here.”

“You’re going to organise a wedding for a Veela Princess in eleven hours?” Ron shouted.

Sadly, I happened to notice that Ginny had just regained her feet, in time to here Ron’s shout, and for her eyes to roll back and for her to slump back down.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed.

“You’re insane,” Ron said flatly.

“You’re going to help, right?”

“Absolutely,” Ron replied instantly.

“Professor McGonagall, any objections to having a wedding here tonight?”

Professor McGonagall was staring at Harry like she had no idea who he was or what he was doing in front of her.

“I’ll take your silence as a yes,” Harry declared.

Minerva didn’t seem to be able to say anything at all. Her mouth was moving, but no sound was coming about.

“Tacit agreement rules,” Harry exclaimed. “Dobby, Leena.”

The two elves appeared instantly.

“You know you said that what I gave you earlier wasn’t a challenge?”

Both elves nodded eagerly.

Harry kneeled down so that he was eye level with them. “You’ve said for a while that you two can do anything.”

Both of them nodded again.

“I’ve put my reputation in your hands,” Harry explained. “I’ve got a deal with Melissa and Fleur, that if we can arrange it, Melissa and I can get

married this evening, at seven.”

Both elves gasped. “Harry Potter is being sure?”

Harry nodded. “After that kiss, definitely!”

“This is being Dobby and Leena’s chance,” Dobby said in awe. “We is saying that we is being the bestest, now we can be being proving it!”

“We’re going to need decorations, transportation, dresses for Melissa, and Fleur, outfits for Ron, Bill and me.”

Leena nodded, “invitations, wedding feast, wedding cake, priest, everything for the Ball, flowers, rings, carriages, guest quarters.”

Harry nodded in agreement.

“Eleven hours?” Leena asked. “No budget limit?”

“Spend what you need.”

“Harry Potter is being the best master in the world!” Leena said firmly. “We is not letting him down!”

“I know you won’t,” Harry said.

Leela clapped her hands, and all the elves from earlier re-appeared.

“Not being enough elves,” Dobby mumbled. He looked at Leena, and they clapped together. The clap was definitely magical, as I could feel it sweep through me.

More and more elves started to pop in. Elves of all different shapes, sizes and ages appeared, and from the looks of the students, a lot of them were family elves. Soon, every free space in the Great Hall was full of elves, all of them looking at Dobby, who was now standing on something invisible so that he could be seen.

I swear that what happened next was the sort of scene that was more suitable to a certain leader in the Second World War addressing the Nuremburg rally!

Dobby would say something, and the elves would cheer back.

Elvish, or what ever their language is called, had some interesting cadences, and Dobby seemed to be getting into it.

With frequent pauses for elvish-cheers, he continued his speech, before finished with what must have been a rallying call.

The noise several tens of thousand elves could make was deafening.

Dobby turned to Harry and actually smirked. “See,” he said, “Dobby and Leena are being truth telling. Elves are happy to help Nasty-Snake-Man-Killer have best wedding ever!”

“I never doubted you for a second,” Harry said.

“We are having food elves, dress elves, decorating elves, transportation elves, writing elves, and all other elves that we are being needed.”

“Thank you, all,” Harry said.

The elves all swooned at his words, as Dobby and Leena looked even prouder.

“Go!” Dobby yelled.

That was obviously the cue, as hundreds of elves popped away every couple of seconds. Several bounded up to Harry and cast a number of spells on him. Another brought out a book and opened it to a page.

Harry blinked and nodded.

The elf with the book vanished.

“She is being measuring with Soon-to-be-Mrs-Potter,” Dobby said.

“Brilliant,” Harry said, and I think that even he was a little shocked at what was going on.

“We is having Harry Potter’s measurements now, sir,” Dobby said. “Is Harry Potter needing a lift to France?”

Harry looked at the two elves for a long moment.

“Dobby, you are going to need a suit as well, as you’ve just volunteered to be a Best Man along with Ron and Bill.”

As Dobby and Leena gaped at him, Harry summoned a knife from Ron’s plate, said, “Portus!” He grabbed Bill by the shoulder, “You’re in charge, Dobby, Leena, I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

And with that, they vanished.

“Harry Potter is greatest wizard in world,” Dobby said to Leena.

“Harry Potter is barmiest wizard in world, too,” Leena added.

“True,” Dobby agreed. They looked at each other, giggled, and then popped away.

I had a headache forming.

And I don't think I was the only one.

The quiet was broken by a loud hiss. “Granger!”

At this stage, I'd kinda forgotten about my wonderful plan, and how Tracey was supposed to be going out with Harry today. And some how, as much as I like him, I don't think that Tracey would be pleased to know that I chose her because Neville has a thing for her arse!

“I'm sorry,” I said meekly. “I swear I didn't know!”

“You didn't know that your best friend was learning French, and bugging off to France half the time to chat up a bloody Princess!?”

“No,” I said, feeling my face heat up in embarrassment. “I thought he was off moping somewhere.”

“Moping?” Susan asked, getting in on the act. “Harry?”

“Yes,” I said weakly, realising now that I had managed to avoid a lot of important clues. Like, well, the fact that one of his books had a French title.

“The same Harry who organised a snow-ball fight inside the Great Hall for the lower years at Easter? The same Harry who decided it would be a great idea to bring roller blades into Hogwarts and teach everyone how to use them, that Harry?”

I nodded, wondering if my face could get so hot and flushed that it would leave third degree burn marks.

“It's partly my fault as well,” Ron said, jumping feet first into the fray. “I managed to miss the fact that he's been spending time with my brother.”

“You're Ron,” Tracey said, “That's to be expected. So, exactly why did you choose Susan and I to humiliate?”

“I thought he liked brunettes!”

“You have noted that you're a brunette, right?” Susan asked acidly, “and that he made it very clear that he's not interested in you?”

“Erm,” I said intelligently.

“Cho had black hair,” Tracey continued, “the unconscious Weasley, who, by her reaction, appears not to agree with Harry's ‘just friends’ outlook, has red hair. So, please answer the question. Why did you choose a couple of brunettes?”

“I gave Harry some charmed porn,” Ron said, with a little more honesty than was perhaps needed at this junction. “We analyzed the results.”

“And Harry gave that stuff to someone else,” Susan said with a sigh. “Granger, I knew I shouldn't have listened to you when you and Davies came up to me. Please, do me a huge favour, and next time you have a fucking bright idea like this, don't bring it to me!”

“Agreed,” Tracey said.

Susan looked at Tracey. “Shopping?”

“It sounds like we have a wedding to attend,” Tracey agreed. “We can beat the rush.”

Together, the two girls gave me another glare, and marched out, heads held high.

“Wow,” Lavender said, “your really screwed that up, didn't you?”

“Yes,” I agreed.

“In which case, I won't point out the fact that Harry likes blondes, and I am blonde,” she said, “if only because he said he didn't want to date anyone at the school.”

“You have to admire his balls though,” Seamus said. “First he kicks Voldemort's scaly arse, then goes for a frickin Veela Princess!”

Ron grinned at him. “I know,” he said proudly.

“Hermione,” Professor McGonagall called, “ignoring this issue with dating, you don't happen to know how Harry can create Portkeys that can get through the wards would you?”

“I do,” Colin Creevey said excitedly.

Mr Creevey?"

"He's Harry Potter," Colin said, "he can do anything!"

Bizarrely enough, that answer seemed to satisfy most of the school. It didn't satisfy me or the Headmistress.

"No," I replied, ignoring the laughter around me. "A lot of today is being a rather large surprise for me as well."

Poor Professor McGonagall still looked like she'd had a few too many shocks this morning. I would have thought that having taught Harry for nearly seven years, that she'd be used to him doing his own thing.

And let's face it, marrying a Veela Princess is a lot more sensible than hopping on a broom and going Voldemort hunting.

The doors to the Great Hall opened, and the Weasley Twins entered.

"What's Harry doing now?" They demanded as they skidded to a stop in front of me.

"Huh?" Ron asked.

"All the house-elves vanished this morning, and then reappeared like a horde of locusts on Diagon Alley, buying all sorts of things," Fred said.

"So we came here instantly," George continued. "Because this sort of chaos can only be caused by one non-Weasley twin."

"Harry James Potter," Fred finished, with impeccable logic. "Oh, and why is our sister passed out over there?"

"I'm getting married," Harry announced as he returned with Bill, and two people I presumed were Melissa's parents.

Well, I say presume, but the fact that the man looked like he'd just come from Michelangelo's studio, where he was posing for 'David', and the woman looked like an older version of Melissa, complete with should-be-illegal-gravity-defying breasts, did give it away... as did the crowns they were wearing.

"Congratulations," George said. "That probably explains Ginny. When?"

"Seven o'clock tonight."

"When did you ask her?" Fred asked curiously.

"Fifteen minutes ago."

"When did you start dating her?" George asked.

"About thirty minutes ago."

"Is she as hot as she is?" Fred asked, nodding to Melissa's mother.

"Hotter."

"Harry," George said, "you do know that you're our hero and we love you?"

Harry grinned at them.

"So, how can we help?" Fred asked.

"Yes," George agreed. "Direct us."

Before Harry could say anything, Rufus Scrimgeour stormed in to the Great Hall, accompanied by a team of Aurors, including Kingsley and Tonks, and Percy Weasley.

"Exactly why have the house-elves left their posts?" Rufus roared.

"Good morning, Minister," Harry said dryly. "How good to see you. Welcome to Hogwarts."

"Cut the crap," Rufus ordered. "The Ministry elves must return to the Ministry immediately."

"Oh?" Harry asked, going quiet.

It's now time for a quick primer on the various moods of Harry James Potter. Most of the time he's cheerful. That means that you are going to get teased, and you'll laugh a lot. Then there's grumpy, that's when he can shout and say things he doesn't really mean. That mood doesn't last long, and he's always apologetic afterwards. There's sulky, when he doesn't want to talk to anyone, and that's the best time to leave him alone. And then there's quiet.

When Harry goes quiet, there are two things you can do. If it's aimed at you, then the best thing is to apologise and get the hell out of there. If it's not aimed at you, the very best thing to do is hope that the other person doesn't apologise, and enjoy the show.

The poor Minister didn't know Harry's moods.

"The elves must stop what ever nonsense you've got them up to and return to their work right now!" Rufus roared again. The man had some serious volume issues.

"Yay," Ron cheered softly. "Who do you think is going to be the next Minister of Magic?"

A lot of the Gryffindors in earshot laughed.

"I know just how to resolve this problem," Harry said, "I'll be back in a jiffy." With another Portus spell, he vanished, leaving the Minister now scowling at fresh air.

"It is interesting, how the Minister acts, is it not, my dear?" Melissa's dad noted idly.

"It is indeed," her mum agreed.

Rufus turned and then seemed to swallow his tongue.

"King de Flandres," Rufus said in shock. "What are you doing here?"

The King merely stared at Rufus with one eyebrow raised.

Harry returned with two more people. One a non-descript male carrying a box, the other a goblin with some paper.

The speed with which he returned made me think that at least some of what was happening today was pre-planned.

I was a little hurt that I hadn't been involved in this pre-planning.

But then, knowing Harry, it probably wasn't what I would call pre-planning, it was probably just a couple of conversations spread out over an indeterminate amount of time, that he has suddenly pulled together.

"Just need two more people," Harry announced, as the goblin sneered, and the man made his way to one side and was instantly forgotten. "Dobby, Leena?"

The two house elves appeared in a pop. "We is being busy," Dobby pointed out to Harry.

Harry nodded. "Sorry," he apologised. "But the Minister is demanding that you send all the house-elves that work in the Ministry back."

Dobby and Leena turned and stared at the Minister.

"That's right," Rufus said, sneering at them. "Get your filthy elves back where they belong."

Dobby and Leena looked at each other, and then did their magic clap. Around seventy-five percent of the earlier elves turned up. The rest sent their ears.

I can't tell you what it is like to see thousands of floating ears suddenly appear, because there is no analogy I can make.

"Elves are being busy," Dobby explained to Harry, a bit redundantly, "so they is sending ears so they can hear."

Dobby floated up so that the elves can see him.

"Him is demanding that we is stopping organising," Dobby said, pointing at Rufus. "Him is demanding that filthy elves get back to where he is saying they is belonging."

"Dobby is being clean," one of the elves shouted. "I is being clean to. I is bathing this morning."

There was a loud cheer of agreement.

Dobby looked at himself and nodded. "There is being no filthy elves here," Dobby said to Scrimgeour. "All elves are being clean and being doing what they is doing."

"Enough of your lip," Scrimgeour yelled, going red. "Punish yourself!"

Some of the elves started to do exactly that, only Harry said a single word. "No."

The elves stopped and looked at Harry gratefully.

Rufus glared at Harry.

"I know how to solve this," Harry said, with a cheery smile – the sort of smile last seen when he announced that he'd just turned Voldemort into his component parts.

"This is my good friend Gobblecoque," Harry said. "He's an independent contract maker from Gringotts."

"You," Harry continued. "You're a Ministry elf, correct?"

The elf nodded shyly, looking down.

"When is the last time you had a day off?"

"July 14th, 1976," the elf said proudly.

"And when was the last time you were given a party?"

The elf frowned. "Lanky is being sorry, Lanky is not remembering."

"That's okay," Harry said. "Thanks for answering."

The elf's eyes managed to grow around forty percent as he looked at Harry. I could almost see the phrase "Harry Potter is the greatest wizard in the world," floating through his – and most of the other elves – brains.

"Put your hands up if you can remember the last party you had."

"This is ridiculous," Scrimgeour said. "Aurors."

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," Harry said.

"Why not?"

"Because it would irritate me, and the last time I got irritated I killed forty Death Eaters and Voldemort."

Kingsley gulped audibly. "I think," he said, "That the Aurors should allow the political arm of the Ministry to deal with this."

"We don't need Aurors," Percy said, his nose so high that it was in a different weather-zone. Of course, the fact that he had given us a thumbs-up earlier meant that he knew more than I did about what was going on.

"Can any of you put your hands up if you can remember the last party?"

One old elf did raise his hand.

"You, sir," Harry said, "do you remember the date?"

"I do, indeed, Gramps was being a young-elf then. It was 1918!"

"Thank you, Gramps," Harry said gratefully.

"What is this tomfoolery, Potter?" Percy demanded. "Your elves are disrupting the Ministry by not being there."

"Oh, so you can't run the Ministry properly without them?" Harry asked.

"Exactly," Percy agreed pompously.

"Shut up you idiot!" Rufus yelled.

As soon as Rufus looked away, Percy winked at Harry, before adopting his pomposity again.

"Gobblecoque, my good fellow," Harry said. "Can you read the terms of the piece of paper in front of you?"

"Why certainly, it is very small." the Goblin sneered. "Highlights of the House Elves agreement with the Ministry of Magic for Proper handling of Voluntary Slavery.

"In grateful acknowledgement of the protection of the House-Elves, from the Dragons, the House-Elves do hereby place themselves in Voluntary Slavery to the Ministry of Magic.

"The Ministry of Magic does agree to this Voluntary Slavery, and promises that they will provide At Least One Party for the House-Elves every year, and will allow the House-Elves to organise at least Two Ministry functions.

"In return, the Elves will bond to the Ministry, and to any People they delegate the right to, as long as the above rights are upheld.

"The Minister will be able to rescind this slavery from any Elf that does not do his best, and this will be signified by the giving back of original clothes, where the Elf will then become homeless and helpless by all other Elves.

"The rest is the signing," Gobblecoque finished.

"Why, this sounds like the contract has been broken," Harry said.

"Nonsense," Percy said. "The elves don't deserve contracts."

There was some hissing sounds from the elves.

"Weasley, shut up!" Rufus said, as he went very pale.

"Minister is calling house-elves filthy creatures," Dobby called. "Dobby's old master was calling Dobby filthy creature. Is Dobby looking filthy?"

"No!" The elves yelled at one.

"You is knowing what Dobby and Leena is doing today?" Dobby asked rhetorically. "Dobby and Leena is being organising the Great Harry Potter Sir's Wedding!"

The elves cheered.

"But Minister is ordering you's elves not to help!"

The elves booed loudly.

"Dobby is thinking that the contract is broken!"

There was looks of shock from the elves. "But what would we be doing?" Lanky asked

Harry moved next to Dobby.

"You'll come and work for me," Harry said to them. "I've got seven buildings that I need elves to renovate for me. I guarantee that I will have elves organise my birthday party every year, Melissa's birthday every year, and the biggest New Years Eve party in the country.

"And," Harry continued, his voice now ringing out like a political leader at a rally, "and I will allow your current masters to request your assistance, but there will be no punishment, no insults, just lots of work.

"And I will charge them for the privilege, and twice a year, all the money that you have earned will be given to you, with the instructions that you are to spend it all on the biggest party you can, so the more money you make, the bigger the party!"

The elves cheered loudly. Rufus opened his mouth, but was hit by a spell that took away his voice. I wasn't quite sure where the spell came from, although Percy acquired a smirk.

"Harry Potter is offering Elves real jobs," Dobby yelled. "If all Elves is agreeing, Elves will no longer being slaves, elves will be earning parties! Elves will be not-being forced to punish-selves, unless they is wanting to!

"What say elves?"

The elves were quiet. "Grampy is saying 'Yes'!" the oldest elf yelled. "Elves are not being treated like the old days, and Grampy is fed up of ironing his hand. Makes Grampy's ironing bad afterward!"

The elves cheered their agreement.

"Gobblecoque," Harry said, his voice raising over the elves. "The elves would like to end their contract with the Ministry of Magic, and their associates, due to the breaking of said contract!"

"As independent arbitrator, I decree the contract broken by the Ministry of Magic." Fifteen sheets of papers in his hand burst into flames, and he dropped them to the floor.

The elves cheered.

"Dobby, Leena," Harry called. "On behalf of your peers, will you sign a new contract with me, as by the terms I stated earlier?"

"Dobby and Leena will!"

The goblin held out another piece of paper, confirming my suspicion that some of this had been planned.

Harry signed it dramatically, then passed it to Dobby and Leena.

"We is having new master!" Dobby yelled.

The elves cheered again.

"Dobby, Leena," Harry said, "please show everyone to places they can stay tonight."

"Dobby and Leena will be doing that."

"And tomorrow, show them the work that needs doing. But, the elves that work for Hogwarts. I would like to hire them for Hogwarts, doing the same thing that they did before. And for every elf hired, it will be ten galleons per month."

"That is being too much," Dobby objected.

No, it's not enough," Harry replied, "but, if you don't spend it all on the party, then maybe the elves could start buying their own places."

Dobby stared at Harry. "Harry Potter sir is greatest wizard in world," he said firmly. "But we is wasting time! Hogwarts elves will be staying at Hogwarts. All elves will be working on wedding!"

There was another cheer, before the elves all popped away.

"Did you get all that, Jim?" Harry called.

Jim held up two fingers, signifying he needed a bit more time.

"So, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Secession of the house-elves from the Ministry of Magic, and from all the Wizarding Families has been completed. The incompetence of our Ministry has once again, led us to a position where things we thought we had by right, have been removed from them. All it would have taken is a party a year to keep our servants happy, but we couldn't even manage that.

"So, for those hoping to hire a house-elf, rather than the stupid amounts Pure Bloods have tried to sell them for in the past, you can now hire one for the basement price of only ten galleons a month – a bargain if you ask me.

"I'm Jim Broadband for the Wizard Wireless Network, and I'll be at Hogwarts all day as we gear up for the wedding of the century as Harry James Potter and the beautiful Melissa de Flandres join themselves in matrimony.

"For now, I'll hand you back to Marjorie Masters for the Top Ten hits you've chosen.... And I'm off." He started to put a microphone back into the box he had been carrying.

Harry turned to the Minister. "Oh dear," he said, his voice dripping with fake sincerity. "You do appear to have screwed up, and all of it broadcasted live. Why, I expect that a lot of very important people are going to be wondering just how you mismanaged their house-elves!"

"I hate you," Rufus muttered, looking totally defeated.

"And I don't care about you," Harry replied. "The house-elves are now practically free, and under Dobby and Leena's control. I wouldn't try and do anything, you won't win, and I'll stop the elves from ever working for the Wizarding world again."

"Harry," Fred called. "Can we arrange for two elves?"

"Sure," Harry agreed.

Rufus turned and stormed out of the Great Hall. The Aurors sniggered and followed him.

"Harry," Percy said, "on behalf of the Ministry, I'd like to hire all of them back, for the same terms as Hogwarts."

"Jim, can you let it be known that Percy arranged this?"

"Will do, Harry," Jim agreed.

"Thanks," Percy said cheerfully. "I'm going to go and annoy some pure-bloods. Congratulations on your wedding, I can come, right?"

"Of course, bring Penelope."

"See you later." He turned and bowed respectfully to the King and Queen, before strolling out.

I stared at my best friend for a few moments, before I realised there was only one thing I could do. I jumped out of my chair and leaped at him. I hugged him as tightly as I could and burst into tears.

Harry patted my back gently and whispered, "wanna be in charge of all their contracts?"

"Yes," I mumbled gratefully. He'd paid attention to SPEW and done something about it! He'd freed the house-elves!

I sniffled slightly, kissed him on the cheek and sat back next to my boyfriend, who was looking highly amused.

"How long you been planning this?" Ron asked.

"Not long," Harry admitted. "It was just a series of chats. Goblecoque is also their archivist, and we were chatting about an unrelated issue when Dobby and Leena popped in to ask me something. That was when I found out about the contract. I was planning on doing something later, but this whole thing was to good a chance to pass up.

"Anyway, Ron, Hermione, allow me to introduce their Gracious Majesties, King Michael and Queen Anna de Flandres. Mike, Annie, this is Ron and Hermione!"

I stood and did my best curtsy, while Ron gave an awkward bow.

"Delighted to meet you," the King said.

"Indeed, Harry has told us many stories. Now, as amusing as watching that was, we're here for a reason."

Leena,” Harry called.

The elf appeared instantly.

“Can you take Hermione and the Queen to Melissa and Fleur?”

Leena smiled. “Leena will be doing that,” she agreed.

“Come, Hermione,” the Queen ordered, and we followed the bouncing house-elf out of the Great Hall.

It didn’t take us long to arrive at a corridor I’d never been down, and enter a huge room. There was a team of house-elves with books showing them to Fleur and Melissa.

“I let you out of our house for an hour, and in that time you don’t just get engaged, but you plan to get married the same day!”

“erm, oops?” Melissa asked, smiling at us.

“And you,” the Queen said, turning to Fleur, “you’re supposed to be looking out for her!”

“I did,” Fleur protested with a grin. “I told Harry that if it wasn’t a wedding fit for my best friend, I’d call it off.”

The Queen put her hands on her hips and sighed.

“I was supposed to get at least a year to organise your wedding,” she complained. “Not a few hours.”

Melissa smiled. “Look at it this way; you’re going to cram that whole thing into a short time. Now, are you going to help me choose the dress? And let these lovely people help us out?”

“Did you know that your brand-new fiancé just freed them all?” The Queen asked.

Melissa smiled proudly. “It sounds like something he’d do.”

“Okay,” the Queen said, walking over to her daughter. “Enough joking. Tell me, my dear, just why you have agreed to this madness?”

“Please, Mama, take a seat, you to Hermione.” She looked at the elves, “could you please give us five minutes?”

The elves nodded and popped out.

“Before I explain why I said yes, Hermione, you’re Harry’s best friend; will you please be one of my bridesmaids?”

“Yes,” I squeaked. Ron was going to be a best man, and I definitely wanted to be involved. Although, I was a little nervous about being the odd-one out in the looks department.

“Head up, child,” The Queen ordered. My head was up so fast I almost got whiplash.

She studied me for a moment. “Do not worry about how you look; I will take care of it.”

I nodded. The fear I had receded to a feeling I was going to be sick, rather than the paralysing I’m-going-to-pass-out I had endured a few seconds ago.

“Thank you,” Melissa said to me. “Now, I said yes, because it made sense.”

“In what way?” the Queen demanded.

“Because this is a man who looked at the fact that I was more protected than Rapunzel, more out of reach than the moon, and thought, ‘challenge accepted’.

“The very first time we met, he didn’t fall at my feet like every other male; he just grinned at me, grabbed my hand and dragged me to meet his friends, before he cast a spell on me to make me look normal.

“He didn’t ask for anything in return, he just made sure that I could enjoy Fleur’s wedding in anonymity. And then he started to pursue me, but not by sending outrageous gifts or syrupy poetry, but by sending me little notes until I gave him my Floo address, and then he’d call me to practise his French. He was so silly with me, making up strange stories and deliberately using the wrong words, and I found that I was spending my days looking forward for his call.

“He’d send Dobby and Leena with little stick-figure drawings he’d done, or with little gifts with silly slogans on them. I’ve kept every single one of them.

“At the same time, he was picking Fleur’s brains for everything that would help him, and she told him everything she could.

“After that, every few nights he’d grab Bill and Fleur, and they’d Portkey to my rooms and we’d spend all night laughing and joking.”

“But our wards...” the Queen started.

"The biggest thing," I interrupted, "that you will have to understand about Harry, is that he is, what I like to call, a focused genius. Every day things and he is just intelligent. But, if you involve rule breaking, or defeating Voldemort, or freeing an entire race, he pulls things together that you wouldn't believe, and before you know, he's accomplished his goals. Your wards would have been a mere challenge to him, not a hindrance."

"Exactly," Melissa agreed with a softly-loving look on her face that made me realise that she really was stupidly in love with my friend. "Then he came to talk to you and Papa a few weeks ago, and he persuaded you. So I knew, today, that he had already made me laugh, and he had already got my best friends approval and my parents. And he was a hero; I knew he could protect me, and that I would always be safe with him. He doesn't care about the fact that I'm Veela, he likes Melissa, not Melissa Margarite de Flandres."

"And although he's good looking, he's not perfect, and that is something I like. He has scars, his hands are not soft like most Veela men, because they are hands that can do things other than fencing duels and wand holding. His face has more character than our entire court."

"Finally, this morning, he gave me the kiss."

"The kiss?" The Queen asked, confusion in her voice.

"The kiss that every woman gets that tells her that the man kissing her loves her with his whole heart and soul."

"Good," the Queen announced. "You are marrying for the right reasons. Having some of his insanity in the family will liven up our parties and will make up for the real insanity we have to deal with. We can work out the details of you and Harry taking our places in fifty or sixty years when we're ready to retire."

"Mama?" Melissa blinked.

"He's a scamp," the Queen said. "And like you said, he is not a court butterfly. He is a powerful man, who uses his power as needed. He inspires loyalty and devotion from others. He is rich, and has many properties. He is a fitting match for a Princess."

"It did not surprise your father and I at all when he wandered in to our Palace last week and asked for permission to marry you in the future, although when he arrived this morning and confessed that he'd done so already, we were amused."

"I was not as amused by the fact he wanted to do so today, but having seen how he has an army of capable individuals assisting him, I am sure. Now, let's get on with it. I've ordered the court to appear at five o'clock to help with any last minute details. I'm sure the dress makers of Paris are being forced into work immediately."

There was a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Fleur called.

"Me," Harry's voice replied. "I need two minutes of Melissa's time."

"You can't have it," the Queen replied, "it will be bad luck."

"Trust me," Harry said.

"We could argue for a while or just save the time and give in now," I suggested.

Fleur opened the door, and Harry walked in, guided by Bill and the King, as he was wearing a blindfold.

Melissa laughed, which allowed Harry to hone in on her. "As I didn't do this properly earlier, I thought I'd do it now."

Harry dropped down to one knee, and held out a small black box. A diamond ring that looked like it cost more than Hogwarts glistened in the lights. "Melissa, will you do me the honour of becoming my wife?"

"Yes, oh, yes," Melissa replied, as she dropped to her knees in front of him. Harry took the ring out of the case and chucked the case – Bill caught it. Melissa guided him, so that he put the ring on her finger, before she kissed him softly.

Harry kissed her back for a second, before he broke the kiss, grinned at her. "I need to get out of here," he said. "So much to do. I'm going to send Leena by with the guest list shortly, and I'll do a quick tour to ensure everyone comes."

He stood and walked out, followed by Bill and the King.

"That," Melissa said, "is exactly why I am going to marry him."

"Right, where are those assistants with the dresses?" The Queen asked.

"We is being here," the elves said as they appeared. Leena popped in with one of them. "This is being Marty," she said, bringing one of the elves forward. "She is wanting to be designer, but her old master had her being cleaning elf. Marty is being throwing together design while waiting, and Leena is liking it."

Leena held out a piece of paper.

Melissa gasped softly. It wasn't a design; it was a full blown sketch of Melissa in a gorgeous wedding dress.

"You can make this in time?" the Queen asked.

Leena and the elves all nodded. "We is being able to do anything for soon-wife of Great Harry Potter."

"Please," Melissa said, as she moved over to them. "Please make me this dress."

The elves looked like they were about to burst into tears, before they vanished.

"Dress will be being ready," Leena said.

"Leena," Melissa said. "Do you think the elves that are making the bridesmaids dresses could make a dress around this high?" she asked as she held out her hand.

Leena nodded.

"Good, because you're going to need one, as you're going to be one of my bridesmaids."

Leena's eyes grew as far as Dobby's had earlier. "You is being good match for Master Harry Potter sir," she whispered, before she nodded and popped away.

Melissa smiled. "Right, flowers next."

What happened for the next few hours was a series of elves would pop in for decisions, measuring, and opinions, and would pop out again with the answers.

It was strangely exciting, especially after I remembered a charm that would allow us to see what was going on in the Great Hall.

All the students were now gone, and it had tripled in size. Row upon row of seating was being arranged by house-elves, while Harry Bill and the King had their shirts off, and were creating something.

"A fish tank?" I asked, as they filled it with water.

"For the Merpeople," Melissa said delightedly. "Murcus and Lartter will be coming."

There was another knock on the door. "Is everyone decent?" Ron called.

"Come in, Ron," I replied.

Ron entered with a tray of drinks. "I've got the final guest list," he announced. "Harry's making Portkeys, and helping Bill and Michael are making sure that the exotic guests are..." he trailed off as he noticed the spell. "Which you already know," he finished with a grin.

"Oh," the Queen said, "and I've been so formal. Please, Hermione, Ron, call me Anna."

"Thank you," I replied.

With the drinks taken, Ron left us again.

"Hermione," Melissa said. "Do you think we should invite any of Harry's family?"

"Those disgusting examples of the human race?" I asked, the disgust evident in my voice.

"Oh?" Anna asked. "Please explain."

So I did, for thirty minutes I went through a litany of abuse that they had heaped on Harry. It was only after I was well into it that I realised that this was not a suitable topic for a bride on her wedding day, but it was a little late to stop.

When I had stopped, I looked at Melissa. Far from the tears I was expecting, she had a cold and calculating look on her face.

That look was doubled on Anna's face. "Right," she said. "Who's up for a trip to see these relatives? Most of the decisions are being made. Harry's wonderful assistants have everything under control. Our husbands, fiancées and boyfriends are having fun out there, and we're sat in a room."

Fleur smiled. "We should get changed first. Melissa and I are wearing clothing suitable for Muggles, but not when we want to make an impression."

"Quite," Anna agreed.

"Leena," Melissa called. As the elf arrived, she asked, "do you know where the Dursley's live?"

"Dobby is knowing," she said, "Leena will be back."

The elf popped out, and returned a few minutes later. "Dursley's is being at home at Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging."

"Are you able to transport us?" Anna asked.

"Leena can be getting elves to do that," she said confidently.

“Good, we need to get away from these wards, so that we can go home first, and then to see the Dursleys.”

“Dursley are being nasty-people,” Leena said warningly.

“We hope so,” Melissa said.

Leena smiled and clicked her fingers. Seven more elves appeared, and two of them took a hold of each of us, and transported us through the wards, straight to the royal Palace of the Veela in the south of France.

“I am impressed,” Anna said. “Thank you.”

Leena smiled. “Elves will be watching to make sure Dursley’s are behaving selves,” she said as she popped away.

“Come on, Hermione,” Melissa said, “I’ve got some stuff that will fit you.” With Fleur, the three of us ran off, leaving Anna to go to her own quarters.

Fleur dived into the huge wardrobe – which, to be honest, would be called a room in my house, and came out with three almost identical green dresses.

Fleur and Melissa stripped off their jeans with the confidence that girls with perfect bodies can have, which I, do not.

“I’ve got some great new makeup,” Melissa said, after she had pulled her dress on. She turned her back to me to show Fleur.

I appreciated the gesture that allowed me some privacy to get changed. As I did the zip up, Fleur and Melissa turned on me with wands.

Spells were cast, my dress was adjusted, more spells were cast, make up was applied, things were pulled tight, and before I could draw breath, I was placed in front of a mirror.

Or at least, someone was placed in front of a mirror, because the person standing in front of me certainly wasn’t me.

I reached out to touch this illusion, only for my hands to touch the silver of the glass.

“Wow,” I whispered.

“It’s all you,” Melissa said. “Well, that and several thousand years of make-up experience.”

I laughed. “Thank you,” I said.

“We’ll teach you how to do it yourself in the future,” she added. “As long as your promise never to show it to anyone else.”

I imagined Lavender’s face when I turned up like this for breakfast, and my promise was given instantly. It’s not that I’m normally vain, it’s just, well, ask any woman if she’d do anything different.

Especially when you’ve been dealing with Lavender and Parvati for close to seven years.

We dashed out, giggling, and met back up with Anna, who was wearing a similar dress to us and was without her crown. She smiled approvingly at me. “We are going to Apparate to The Ritz in London, where I phoned ahead to have a car ready to take us to Surrey.”

I know the surprise I felt was evident on my face.

“Hermione,” Melissa said, “name one famous Wizarding fashion designer.”

I thought for a few seconds, and then shook my head.

“Exactly,” Anna said. “All the good designers are Muggles, so we have to know how to get around properly, so that we can get these clothes.”

That made a great deal of sense. It was slightly shallow, but it did make sense.

“Take my arm,” Anna ordered, “and we will Apparate together.”

“Thanks,” I said gratefully. I am not Harry Potter, so international Apparation was a little scary for me.

Fleur and Melissa held hands and vanished, and we followed them a few seconds later.

I gasped for breath when we appeared, that had been a lot of hard work.

“Harry does that for fun,” Fleur said, while shaking her head.

“Come,” Anna ordered and opened a door from the corridor we had arrived in. She swept through the foyer as if she owned the place, and we followed. Melissa gave me instructions on how to walk out of the corner of her mouth.

For a few seconds, I had dreams about my nice comfortable trainers.

Outside was not just one car, but three, and four uniformed policemen on bikes.

The door to the car in the middle, a gleaming black Mercedes, was opened for us, and we all piled in. Well, I say piled in, entered gracefully would be a more accurate term.

I looked at Anna, and she smiled as she explained to me that the British Government recognised her status as a Queen, and gave her the same sort of diplomatic protection they offer to all heads of lesser-governments.

As we headed south from London, elves continued to pop into the moving vehicle to get our opinion on everything for the cake that was going to be created, to the layout of flower arrangement that Melissa would be carrying. The wedding was now organised a little more traditionally, with the wedding taking place at seven, followed by a sit down dinner for a few hours, followed by a party.

I clicked my fingers, and an elf arrived. I know I don't normally like using elves, but that was when they were slaves, knowing that Harry was paying them, and had freed them, and that they obviously liked organising things, made a big difference.

"Can you get ask Harry to see if he can get some Polaroid cameras that work in Hogwarts please, if he can, tell him to buy two for each table for the dinner, and to get some scrap books that people can use to stick the pictures in and write notes underneath."

The elf nodded seriously and popped away.

"What is a Polaroid?" Melissa asked.

"Muggle device for taking instant photos. You press a button and a photograph appears underneath, you wave it around for a few minutes, and it develops instantly. It's great for little candid snaps."

"Wonderful idea," Anna praised.

I blushed.

"You should here Harry talk about her," Melissa said to her mother. "He's prouder of her than Fleur is of Gabrielle."

My blush got brighter, but I was touched.

And it was around then, as Fleur laughed and hugged me, that I realised something. I'd made two new friends. Melissa and Fleur had gone out of their way to be really nice to me, and I knew it was because they both loved Harry – in different ways of course.

Our cars glided through traffic like it was non-existent, and it didn't seem like long before we entered the village of Little Whinging.

It was a cookie-cutter post-war town, when new building were made on identical plots of land, everyone getting three bedroom, one bathroom houses with a drive way, a garage, and a small garden.

Over the years, the regimental nature had been lowered as people had built extensions, painted their houses, and done any of the hundreds of ways that British people likes to show their independence.

That, of course, excluded Privet Drive, where everyone seemed to have worked very hard to have no individuality at all.

The car slowed to a stop, and we slid out. I watched how Melissa did it, and managed to copy her. She grinned at me, and we strolled, leaving our guards behind us.

I pointed out Anabella Figg's house.

Anna led the way up the small path to Number 4, and she knocked firmly.

Dudley opened the door, and practically drowned in his own drool as he looked at Melissa and Fleur. I had to laugh, because the looks of contempt on their faces was identical to the look of contempt I had given fatso the first time I'd seen him.

"Boy," Anna ordered, "fetch your father."

"G'wah?" Dudley asked.

"Dudley, you're letting the heat out!" Vernon roared from the Living Room. "Who is it?"

Dudley seemed incapable of actually answering, and as Anna wasn't saying anything, I didn't either.

Finally, Vernon, wearing badly fitting suit-trousers and a shirt, waddled to the front door.

"Smal-ti-wallah," he said.

"Vernon Dursley?" Anna asked, her accent now so sharp that, had she directed it at a window, it would have cut a circular hole in it.

"Fnork," Vernon replied, nodding his head hard.

"The guardian of Harry James Potter?" Anna asked.

Vernon nodded again, before he shook his head, and his face went red.

"Not any more," he yelled. "That little freak is nothing to do with us. What ever he's done, you can't come to me for compensation."

Anna raised one eyebrow. "What made you think he has done anything?" she asked.

"Why else would you be here," Vernon said, moderating his volume a little, as he noticed the police outside.

"Actually," Melissa said, "we're here on Harry's behalf to invite you to his wedding."

"That little shit's getting married?" Dudley asked, regaining the use of his tongue. "I hate to see the poor moo he's knocked up."

"Yeah," Vernon agreed. "And I have no wish to spend thirty minutes in a Registry Office watching that freak get married."

I looked around, and smiled, the effect that Anna obviously desired was happening. Practically the entire neighbourhood was gathered around, watching and listening.

"Actually," Melissa said through gritted teeth. "I am neither a 'moo' nor, as you so charmingly put it, 'knocked up'."

"How much did he hire you for?" Dudley asked, "cos.."

"Shut up you insensible oaf," someone shouted. We all turned, to find that there was a new Mercedes double-parked next to ours, and a tall gentleman was hurrying toward us. He was wearing an impeccably well tailored suit, and had a small grey moustache.

He gestured toward the police, who followed him up the path.

"Clarence D'Williams," he introduced himself. "Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, Diplomatic Division. It's a pleasure to meet you, Lady de Flandres."

Anna gave him a faint smile, and nodded her head.

"What..." Vernon started.

"Shut up," Clarence said without looking at him, "or I'll have you arrested for treason."

"Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, asked me to pop by this morning. It seems that she has heard of the upcoming wedding for your daughter?" He pulled out a handkerchief and patted his forehead.

"This is my daughter, Melissa," Anna said. "She is getting married tonight, at seven."

"Congratulations," Clarence said. "Might I ask you what brings you to Little Whinging, which isn't our finest example of post-war architecture?"

"Certainly," Anna replied. "We thought that the groom's family may want to attend the wedding. Unfortunately, we hadn't realised that the family who had raised him were such uncouth louts."

"Hey," Vernon protested.

"I quite understand," Clarence agreed. "Tell me," he said as he turned to Vernon. "Exactly where did Mr Harry James Potter attend school?"

"St. Brutus's Secure Centre for Incurably Criminal Boys," Vernon replied instantly. "Where his type belong."

"Dursley," Clarence sighed. "You could at least invent a place that existed!"

The crowd gasped in shock, and Vernon went bright red again.

"What's going on?" Petunia asked, as she joined them. Not that you could actually see her, the bulk of her husband and son blotted out the light from inside the house.

Vernon moved forward, and we moved back, as we wanted a public execution, so to speak.

"Your husband was just telling us that one Harry James Potter attended a school called 'St. Brutus'," Clarence explained.

"Quite right," Petunia agreed firmly.

"Which does not exist," Clarence finished.

Petunia gulped, her long neck swaying.

"In fact," Clarence continued, "I would love to know why you couldn't just say that Lord Baron Potter attended the most challenging boarding school in the country?"

"He's a freak, and you're all freaks as well," Vernon roared, ignoring the titles that had just been publicly announced. "Get off my land!"

"Your land?" Clarence asked. "This is England, and you live here at the Queen's sufferance. It is her land, not yours."

Clarence turned back to Anna. "Do you still wish to invite these people to your daughters wedding?"

"No," Anna replied. "It was a mistake thinking that there was going to be some form of civility here. I had heard a few rumours about my future son-in-laws relatives, but I paid no heed to them, he himself simply doesn't talk about his time here, and I can understand why."

"Dudley," Melissa said, smiling at him. This was a Melissa-special smile, backed up with an expert touch of Veela power, and more charm than should be legal in one person. "What was it like sharing rooms with Harry on holiday?"

"Share a room with that freak?" Dudley replied glassily, "we didn't take him on holiday, we just locked him in his cupboard for the week with a bit of food."

There was a sharp intake of breath from the surrounding people.

"Freak!" Vernon yelled, as he pulled back a huge fist and launched it at Melissa.

Melissa slid to one side smoothly, so that the punch missed her, she grabbed his extended arm, and with a small and dainty looking twist, sent Vernon head over heels so that he landed heavily on his back.

"Dad!" Dudley yelled, as he moved forward, only for Fleur to slide in the way, grab his arm, guide him in a half-circle and introduce him to the brick wall face first, and at full pace.

Dudley bounced off, leaving some cracks in the pointing, tripped over his prone father, and fell heavily on to the floor.

"Dudley," Petunia yelled, dropping to her knees next to him. As she looked up, she screamed, as the four police officers were now standing over her, batons in hand, and looks that promised violence.

Melissa and Fleur both had butter-wouldn't-melt-in-their-mouth looks. And butter probably wouldn't have dared melt if it had been in their mouths.

"Officer, I think an investigation might be in order," Clarence advised.

Two patrol cars screeched to a halt outside, and several more uniformed officers arrived, these carrying large sub-machine guns. One of the original officers moved over to them, and brought them up to speed. Clarence moved over and joined them, and after a quick discussion, the four new officers walked over to the Dursleys.

"Vernon Dursley. Petunia Dursley. Dudley Dursley. We have reasonable grounds of suspicion of child abuse. I hereby place you under arrest." The officer proceeded to caution them.

Vernon showed some intelligence, by demanding his solicitor. He did the demanding in a reasonably polite manner, probably due to the large gun in his face.

"Perhaps we should let the officers do their jobs," Clarence suggested, and we followed him back to the cars. "Her Majesty has asked me to request your presence at St James's Palace immediately."

"Of course," Anna replied, and we all climbed back into the car.

As soon as the door shut we started to laugh.

"That was perfect," Melissa said. "Got him for child abuse and completely destroyed their reputation."

"Not to mention that he and Dudley were taken down by two girls," I added.

Melissa and Fleur grinned at me.

"Mama, are we going to have time to go to the palace?"

"We shall make time," Anna replied. "One does not turn down an invitation from Queen Elizabeth."

"Yes, mama."

"Now, we've had our fun, it is time to get back to work."

That was the sign for the house-elves to start re-appearing. I looked out the window, and realised that we had attracted some new guards, and that with the flashing lights, we were travelling extremely fast back into London.

Anna didn't seem concerned at all, so I tried to relax and not worry about the fact that I was about to meet the Queen of England.

I'm not exactly a monarchist. I believe firmly in democracy, but that didn't help my sense of nerves.

Fleur and Melissa tried to involve me in the decisions, and that distraction worked until we arrived on the outskirts of London, and we watched as we were whisked straight into the very heart.

The cars didn't slow down until they entered the ground of St James's palace.

"Follow my lead," Anna said firmly. "Do not speak unless spoken to; address her as Your Majesty to start with."

I nodded, as I recognised that those instructions were more aimed at me, and I followed the three of them into the palace. I was so nervous that I

didn't even look around, and I felt like I was going to hyperventilate.

"Relax," Melissa whispered, taking my arm, as Fleur moved to the other side of me. "You'll be fine. Just act how Harry would."

"By calling her Liz and flirting with her?" I asked.

"Erm, no, bad example," Melissa agreed. "Just remember that you're the smartest witch of your generation, and that you can do this."

"Okay," I agreed, the flattery helping calm me down slightly.

We entered a rather large marble hall, where the Queen was sitting at a desk at one end.

I've seen the Queen on TV, but that doesn't come anywhere close to showing what she is really like in person. It's as you get close to her that you realise that her full title is Elizabeth II, Dei Gratia Britanniarum Regnorumque Suorum Ceterorum Regina, Consortionis Populorum Princeps, Fidei Defensor, and that she is truly awe-inspiring.

"Anna," she said, as she looked up.

"Elizabeth," Anna replied. "You remember my daughter, Melissa, and her friends Fleur Delacour and Hermione Granger."

"Please, be seated," the Queen said, as she pointed to four chairs in front of her. "You do appear to have upset the apple cart."

"I have?" Anna asked.

The Queen ignored her and looked at Melissa. "I hear congratulations are in order."

"Thank you, your Majesty," Melissa replied.

"However, it is customary to have slightly more than an eleven hour engagement."

"I know."

"And," the Queen continued, "Arranging a marriage on the same day is just not done. It does not give your guests any time to prepare."

"I'm sorry, Ma'am," Melissa said, looking down.

"Tell me about this boy that has encouraged you to break with protocol."

"Harry is wonderful," Melissa said firmly.

"Harry James Potter-Black, A Lord and a Baron," the Queen read from some notes in front of her. "And if I may quote from this report, 'he finally grew bored with the terrorist, Tom Marvolo Riddle, and decided that the best way to deal with the situation without endangering any lives but his own, was to fly his broom to Riddle's location, and deal with the matter personally.'"

Melissa smiled proudly.

"I think," the Queen continued, "that I would like to have a word with my Lord-Baron."

"Your Majesty," Melissa said, "it is..."

"Oh, of course," The Queen interrupted. "Through that door, you may watch what happens. I am assured that even the most accomplished wizard can not see through the charms placed on it."

"Thank you," Melissa replied, before she called, "Leena."

Leena appeared, looked around, and then prostrated herself before the Queen.

"Rise," The Queen ordered with no hint of embarrassment.

Leena rose.

"Leena, can you ask Harry to come here, as soon as possible," Melissa asked.

Leena nodded and popped away.

"I dislike having slaves in my country," The Queen noted with a frown.

"Oh, Harry abolished the house-elves slavery this morning," I said, before blushing, and adding, "Your Majesty."

The Queen nodded slowly, and gestured toward the door.

With a dramatic pop, Harry arrived in the exact spot that Leena had occupied, he was facing away from the Queen, and had a good look around.

Harry finished looking around and finally saw the Queen in front of him. He stared at her in confusion for a few seconds, before his face cleared.

"Your majesty," he said, giving her a perfect bow.

"Lord-Baron Potter," the Queen replied, studying him.

"Harry, your majesty," he said with a grin. "I'm still young, all those titles still squeak whenever I turn around. Melissa's been wearing Princess all her life, and she can get away with it."

The Queen smiled thinly. "Take a seat, Harry," she ordered.

"Where to?" he asked innocently.

"Sit," the Queen ordered humourlessly. "Our new Magical Ambassador has been giving us some startling reports recently. It seems that there has been a problem with a Tom Riddle over the past thirty years."

Harry nodded.

"And that, and I quote, 'he finally grew bored with the terrorist, Tom Marvolo Riddle, and decided that the best way to deal with the situation without endangering any lives but his own, was to fly his broom to Riddle's location, and deal with the matter personally.'"

Harry nodded again.

"Please explain why you felt the need to deal with this yourself, and not involve my representative on the government."

Harry looked at her for a long moment. "Your government is governed by incompetents," he said firmly. "They were of no use what-so-ever. I felt it prudent to take action before more innocent people suffered for their incompetence."

The Queen frowned at him. "And then there is the matter of your marriage to the Melissa de Flandres."

"Oh?" Harry asked, and I shuddered. Harry was heading toward his quiet mood with the Queen of England!

"You are not a suitable husband for Princess de Flandres. You will call the marriage off."

Melissa gasped in horror, Fleur growled and my republican tendencies leapt to the fore.

"Silence," Anna ordered.

"No, I won't," Harry replied.

"I am your Queen, you will do as I say."

"In most things, I probably would," Harry admitted, now very quiet and meeting the Queen's eyes directly. "In this instance, I will not."

"I can have a hundred guards in here with one push of a button."

"And you will have a hundred incapacitated guards, and I will still be attending my wedding this evening."

"I can have you banished."

"Then my bride and I will live in France. With the exception of handful of people, this country does not hold much of my affection."

"I can have you stripped of your titles."

"Titles are meaningless. The only thing I did to earn them was be born. I am much prouder of the one title that I have earned honestly – fiancé of Melissa de Flandres."

Melissa's smile erupted on to her face.

"I can have you bankrupted."

Harry's voice was now ice cold. "Then I will earn the money needed to keep Melissa in style she deserves. It really doesn't matter what you try and do, I am not calling off my wedding, Melissa means too much to me. I have lived through everything your societies have thrown at me, and at the end of that journey, I have the single most beautiful girl in the world in love with me. No matter what you and your societies continue to throw at me, I will survive, and in the end, I will win. There is no force on this earth that can make me stop loving Melissa, and I know, deep inside, that there is no force that will make her stop loving me.

"Now, either turn your threats into actions, or stop making them."

"And if I do act on them?"

"I'll move the wedding to France, and it will go ahead."

The Queen placed her glasses on her desk calmly, and leaned back. "You embarrass me, Harry."

Harry blinked at her.

"You have suffered under my normal society and my magical society. I have reports from the Dursleys, and I have reports from my magical government.

"Anna de Flandres is a valued friend of mine. She is often a guest at my court, and I have known Melissa all her life. You can imagine my surprise when I heard, a little over four hours ago, that she was getting married to one of my Lords, today.

"And to a Lord I hardly knew anything about. For those last four hours, I have read the reports about you. I have summoned my Magical Ambassador and listened to stories that have horrified me. Ignorance is not an excuse, and yet it is the only one I can give.

"My Prime Minister has been reprimanded for keeping these attacks of Tom Riddle from me, and I expect to see your Minister for Magic later this afternoon for him to explain his position to me.

"You, Harry, are exactly as my ambassador informed me. Fearless, loyal, brave, and resourceful, and now I see that you do indeed love Melissa. As such, I bless this wedding."

Harry sighed deeply and looked at the Queen. "I intensely dislike being tested," he said softly. "I have been English for my entire life. I classify myself as English first, magical second. I have given everything I can to this country. And I was ready to abandon this country, and if I had, I would not have been alone.

"I know of two of the best and brightest people who would have joined me instantly. I know of plenty more who I suspect would have left. The elves would come with me and attempts to bankrupt me would have left you in direct violation of the Goblin Accords of 932, and the Goblins would have cheerfully rebelled.

"The incompetents of your Ministry would have flamed the fires in their attempt to put it out, and your Magical society would have collapsed.

"The inequality and fear that rules your magical rule is a travesty and a joke. Any society that is morally bankrupt enough to put their future on the shoulders of an eleven year old, hardly has the right to exist.

"After I defeated Voldemort, it was only the love and friendship of Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger that stopped me leaving immediately. They worked endless to keep me from falling into depression, and offered me the unconditional love and support I needed.

"But I was still lost, until I met Melissa. The very first time I met her I knew I wanted her in my life. She was beautiful, clever, intelligent, and everything I had ever dreamed of having in a girl. Chasing Melissa, and having Melissa allow herself to be chased gave me the chance to recover from seventeen years of abuse from both societies.

"Now I have a reason, a reason to improve things, and she is that reason. Through her, I am closer to Fleur Delacour and Bill Weasley. I have made great friends with Dobby and Leena the house-elves, and all my friends will stand with me today at my wedding.

"I have lost everything to this country, and yet I remained loyal to her, and to her people, but then in a few words, you forced me to weigh my future – Melissa against everyone else, and it wasn't even close.

"You are my Queen, but, like any ruler, you rule at the sufferance of your people. Your sworn duty is to protect us, to guide us. You are the guardian of our bow of burning gold, and our arrows of desire, of our spears o'clouds unfold, and our chariot of fire. But only as long as we let you lead us."

"My duty is not something that I need to be lectured about," the Queen said sharply. "I have done my duty since long before you were born."

Harry didn't look away.

"You may leave."

Harry didn't even stand, he just vanished from where he sat and I felt a faint tinkling of magic smashing.

Anna sighed and marched back into the Queen's study. Melissa, Fleur and I shared a look, and scurried after her.

Anna sat in the same place Harry had, and stared at the Queen.

"That didn't go well," the Queen admitted.

"As your wards can now attest," Anna added acidly.

"Excuse me?"

"Your wards," Anna said with a saccharine sweetness. "He destroyed them as he blasted through them. Harry has a bit of a temper when dealing with people standing in his way."

"Anna," the Queen said warningly.

"I am not one of your subjects, Elizabeth," Anna replied frostily. "Do you think that I would not have checked out my future son-in-law fully? Do you think that I would have allowed this wedding to go through if I was not very sure of everything?"

"I wanted to see what sort of man he was," Elizabeth snapped back. "The reports make him out to be too perfect."

"They might have glossed over his stubbornness and his temper, but I bet those reports underplayed what happened. When most of the Wizarding

World was cowering in fear, he led the resistance against Voldemort, and he ended the battle, while your Ministry accepted bribes to ignore the problem. It is thanks to him that your terrorist attacks stopped.”

“They also glossed over his reaction to being tested,” the Queen sighed.

“Manipulated,” I said without thinking.

“Miss Granger?” the Queen asked.

“I’m sorry, your Majesty.” I added the honorary, even though I was practically ready to join the abolitionists.

“Lord-Baron Potter credited you with helping retain his sanity. Please, elaborate.”

“After Voldemort killed Harry’s parents, he was placed in the household of those people by the Headmaster of Hogwarts, who, in doing so, sacrificed any chance Harry would have for a normal life. That same Headmaster continued to manipulate Harry’s life like some great puppet master for the next six years, never telling Harry what he needed to know until it was too late, allowing others to torture and torment him, until Harry came close to cracking.

“Then the Headmaster forced Harry into a position where he would see the planned execution of the Headmistress, while helpless, in the hope that the act might save the most cowardly, evil, vicious swine I have ever had the misfortune to meet.

“And during this time, the press pilloried him for being human, for telling the truth, for being himself. Sometimes, we were the only thing that he could rely on, and we will never let him down. If it came to a straight choice, we would be on his side without a second thought.”

The Queen nodded thoughtfully. “And so he believed that I another person playing with his life, and acted accordingly. What is supposed to happen in these situations is that he accepts my half-apology, and we start a tentative friendship.” She smiled faintly. “He is not supposed to tell me that acting against him could destroy the magical world, and that I was negligent in my duty.” The Queen looked at me directly. “I have given my entire life to this country, and the implication of the dereliction of that very duty is one of my few buttons.

“Tell me, what will Harry do now?”

“He’ll go somewhere and let off some steam,” I said.

“Will you go and talk to him?”

“Melissa would be better,” I said honestly. “Harry loves me, but not the same way that he loves Melissa.”

You can bet I wouldn’t have thought that I would be saying that this morning!

“Miss Granger,” the Queen said softly. “What would be your opinion of Harry’s predictions?”

“Understated,” I said firmly. “There are four years worth of students at Hogwarts who think that Harry Potter is the closest thing to Merlin that will ever exist. The other four years would, with around ten or fifteen exceptions, follow him anywhere.

“The house-elves belong to him, and they can be fiercely protective if they love someone, and believe me that they love Harry.

“The goblins sent their chief Archivist to help Harry out this morning. I’ll bet he’s never set foot outside of Gringotts before. I suspect that, if pushed, the Goblins would simply close their doors, and concentrate on their European business.

“That would leave you with a realm full of people with magical power, and no one to stop the incompetence. The Ministry would cast more and more outrageous laws, everyone who didn’t follow Harry originally, will leave, and you will be left with powerful people with massive grudges, who will eventually start killing innocents because there is no one to stop them.”

The Queen nodded. “As I thought.” She sighed for a second, before her back stiffened. “There is no use crying over spilt milk. Melissa, will you please go and find my Lord-Baron and give him my apologies. I will endeavour to be straight in my dealings with him in the future.

“Anna, Melissa, if I may, I would like to attend your wedding this evening.”

“Of course, Ma’am,” Anna said softly. Anna may not be a British subject, but even she recognised when the Queen was giving commands that you do not argue with.

“I have the Minister arriving shortly, and I will get some new wards set as soon as possible.”

We all nodded. “Dobby,” I called.

Dobby arrived, and, to my secret amusement, glared at the Queen. Dobby’s loyalty to Harry has never been short of fanatical.

“Master Dobby, I presume?” The Queen inquired.

“I is being just Dobby, your Majesty,” Dobby said politely.

The Queen glanced at her watch. “Tell me, Master Dobby, exactly how Lord Potter managed to break you out of the Voluntary Slavery.”

Dobby looked torn.

"Please, Master Dobby," The Queen said, "I will be apologising to Lord Potter later."

Dobby nodded and created a small chair so that he could sit. "Elves are loving three things in life. Working hard, organising things, and parties.

"Many years ago, elves did all three, and elves were being happy. But as times were changing, two things were being removed.

"Back at the start, elves that were being given clothes would be dieing, because elves work as teams, not good on own.

"Elves were being afraid of clothes, so elves were willing to punish selves to please master, and not be's alone.

"Dobby worked for nasty nasty master, and Dobby was punished for doing everything Dobby was told, and Dobby was not liking it. Dobby heard nasty master talking about killing Harry Potter sir. Dobby always heard stories about how Harry Potter sir saved people, and Dobby would dream that Harry Potter sir would save elves.

"Dobby tried to help Harry Potter sir, but Dobby wasn't being good at helping. But Harry Potter sir was stopping Dobby from punishing himself, and was being nice and friendly to mes. Harry Potter is then tricking nasty master into being free. But instead of Dobby being scared, Dobby wasn't, because Dobby knew that the Great Harry Potter was always going to be there and help Dobby.

"So Dobby was free, and Dobby wasn't punished, and I's was even being asked to organise a few small things. Dobby was happy.

"Then Missy Grangy tricked Leena in to being free, and Leena was being scared. Harry Potter sat down with Dobby and Leena and we is talking to Leena all night. Harry Potter is learning all sorts of things about elves as we is talking, and Harry Potter is making Leena see that things could be being better.

"Elves is not capable of being lie tellers, and elves always believe that things are being getting better at some time. So elves are being trapped by being elves.

"Dobby and Leena were then with Harry Potter when Harry Potter was talking to Goblins, and Goblins are telling Harry Potter about contracts, and even Dobby didn't be knowing that.

"This in the morning, Harry Potter asked Dobby and Leena to organise his wedding to pretty Melissa, and Dobby realised this was being chance. Dobby and Leena summoned all house-elves, and told them that we was finally being trusted again to making things organised, and all elves were happy. Elves is liking organising even more than parties and working.

"Nasty Minister came and tried to stop elves from organising, and elves were being ready to listen to the Great Harry Potter, because elves hadn't had fun in many many years. Harry Potter talked to elves, not insulting like Nasty Minister, but like elves are being worthy of Harry Potter's attention. And all other elves were thinking that if someone as great as Harry Potter could be talkings to them, why couldn't other humans be doing that?

"So when they hears contract, and offer of better contract from great wizard, elves were willing to change so that they could work better, and get to be organising things in the future. So elves agree, and Dobby and Leena are signing new contract for elves, and elves are now being proud and working for Harry Potter sir and for themselves."

That was by far the longest speech I had ever heard a house-elf give, and while I was embarrassed at how I had screwed up, I was intensely proud of what Harry had done for this race that took such pride in their hard work.

"Thank you, Master Dobby," The Queen said, a slightly regretful expression on her face.

"You is being welcome," Dobby replied.

"Master Dobby, do you recognise me as being your Queen?" she asked curiously.

Dobby shook his head. "Dobby's master is being Harry Potter sir," Dobby said firmly.

"Thank you for your time, I do know that you are busy, and I appreciate it."

Dobby nodded formally to her.

"Now, will you take Anna, Melissa, Fleur and Hermione to Mr Potter please?"

"Mr Potter is being in Little Whinging, in the park, on the swings," Dobby said. "He is being sad."

"Thanks Dobby, we can get there," Melissa said, as she dropped to her knees and gave him a quick hug.

Dobby blushed furiously and popped out.

"Your Majesty," Anna said, curtseying.

We all curtseyed as well, and Apparated away. We appeared at the other end of the park. "Give me thirty seconds," I said, and started to jog toward him.

I stopped and took my shoes off. Jogging in high heels just makes you look silly.

Harry," I called, as I got closer.

He was sat on the swing, hunched over with his legs out in front of him. He looked up.

"We know what happened, we were there," I said quickly. "Now, conjure yourself a blindfold, Melissa – who, by the way, really loves you, is coming, and it is bad luck for you to see her today, you stubborn idiot."

Harry smiled as he clicked his fingers and his blindfold from earlier appeared. I helped him put it on, and gave him a quick hug, before moving backward so that Melissa could speak to him alone.

I sat, on the grass, with Fleur and Anna and watched.

"I'd like to say that today is unusual, but really, it's just not."

Fleur and Anna laughed and relaxed.

"It is not how I expected the day of my daughters wedding to go," Anna agreed. "I think that, after here, we should go back to Hogwarts."

Fleur and I nodded.

Melissa was kneeling in front of Harry, her hands on his legs, as she talked to him intently.

"Young love," Fleur said.

"Speaks the old woman," Anna teased.

"I'm not saying I wouldn't do the same, but then, I am married to a wonderful man, who, is not Harry."

"I've got the younger version," I added. "Wonderful, supportive, loving – now that he's grown up – and who I am in love with. And who, is also not Harry. But they are both very close friends of Harry."

"And Harry doesn't even realise that he is Harry."

"That," Anna said dryly, "is a convoluted sentence that would not have made sense a few months ago."

"Melissa's almost done," I said, as I noticed that Harry was now looking embarrassed. "He's realising that he over reacted with the Queen, and that preaching to her wasn't the best response, especially after she had offered him a large olive branch."

"Two very stubborn people who both do and say what they think is right," Anna said. "If they do become friends, the rest of the world should watch out."

Harry stood, easily lifting Melissa as he did. He pulled her tightly against him and gave her another of the kisses that he had given her that morning.

Melissa reacted as she had before, her hands buried themselves in his hair, and she kissed him back.

Like this morning, I could feel the passion they were generating, and I was quite sure that my parents could. "Eek," I said.

"Hermione?" Anna asked, as she dragged her attention away from her daughter.

"My parents, I should invite them."

"Yes, you should," Anna agreed. "We'll pop there first."

"Thank you."

"Do you think my daughter might be finished kissing him soon?"

"Oi, Princess," Fleur shouted. "Save it for the honeymoon."

Harry and Melissa reacted by raising their middle fingers at us, but did break the kiss. It didn't take a genius lip-reader to read what Harry said before he pecked her one more time and vanished.

Melissa actually skipped over to us.

"Happy?" Anna asked.

Melissa nodded firmly.

"Harry okay?"

"He's gone back to repair the Queen's wards and have another chat with her. He knows he acted like a stubborn fool."

"If it's not heresy to say this in front of a Queen and a Princess, I felt my republican feelings grow stronger when she was talking to him."

Fleur laughed and hugged me. “Me too,” she said in a stage whisper. “Now, lead us to your parents.”

“Okay,” I said, and Apparated away. I’d never Apparated this much in one day before, and I was starting to find it tiring, but there was no way that I was going to show that in front of my new friends.

Our house is a very nice four bedroom converted barn. Mum and Dad got it for a song, and spent years doing it up. It’s now worth an absolute fortune, but they wouldn’t sell it for the world.

I didn’t have my keys on me – I hardly expected to be visiting my parents today – so I knocked on the door, and yelled in a rather un-lady-like manner.

“Hermione?” My dad shouted back, before there was a sound of the door unlocking, “Hermione?”

Dad then looked at me, blinked several times, “Hermione?” he asked with slight awe audible in his voice.

“Yes, yes, and yes,” I replied with a grin. “Hi, daddy.” I gave him a quick hug.

Dad hugged me back automatically, before looking at the three blondes next to me. It’s a credit to my dad’s will (and the fact that all three of them were controlling their Veela power as tightly as possible.) that he didn’t descend into a pile of goo.

“Did I hear someone yell ‘Hermione’?” My Mum asked as she joined us. “Hermione?” she said, “since when, exactly, have you cared about how you looked?”

“Mum,” I whined with a smile. I always thought that Mum was far too pretty to be a dentist, but strangely enough, teeth are what she loves. Well, teeth and Dad and me. I always suspected that the success of my parents’ practice was in part down to the men who were quite happy to spend their time staring at my mother’s chest while getting scolded for not flossing twice a day.

I wasn’t quite sure of the etiquette about who to introduce to whom, and I didn’t want to take Harry’s earlier example as gospel, so I decided to play it safe.

“Queen de Flandres, may I present my mother, Carol and my father, Simon Granger? Mum, Dad, this is Queen Anna De Flandres, her daughter Melissa, and close friend, Fleur Delacour.”

Mum and Dad looked a little stunned.

“Please, call me Anna,” Anna said, taking control of the situation neatly. “We’re sorry to drop in like this, and Hermione, dear, there is a time and a place for a formal introduction, this is neither.”

“Hands up everyone who’s been Harry Potter’s best friend for seven years,” I replied cheerfully, holding my right hand up.

Anna’s lips quirked into a smile. “I’ll bet you were much more restrained when you were younger.”

“She was,” My mother agreed dryly. “What can we do for you? It must be important, because Hermione would never interrupt Football Focus normally.”

“Stick the video on to record it,” I said, and rolled my eyes. My mother is football crazy, and I am thankful on daily basis that Ron only likes Quidditch. If he got into football I’d scream.

“Come on in,” Dad said, “it’s not often we get royalty here.”

“Speaking of which,” I added. “We’ve just come from St James’ palace.”

Dad actually stumbled as he turned to look at me. I smiled innocently at him.

“Evil child,” he sighed. “Right, go and put the kettle on, your guests are being nicer than you are.”

I stuck my tongue out at him and went to do as I was told.

And in case you’re wondering, yes, that is traditional. You get a shock, or a Queen, a Princess and a beautiful Part-Veela turn up at your door, the very first thing you do is put the kettle on.

I opened the fridge and pulled out a six-pack of diet Coke – Mum, again, I’m a Pepsi person, she’s a coke fanatic. “Diet coke,” I offered, as I poked my head around the kitchen door into the living room.

“Please, Hermione,” Melissa said.

“Me too,” Fleur added.

“Anna, would you like tea, coffee, orange juice, diet coke or water?” I asked, listing off the items I’d seen in the fridge.

“Water, please,” Anna replied.

I vanished back into the kitchen, and the kettle had finished boiling. I made my parents a cup of tea each – Ceylon, naturally, none of that PG Tips garbage, loaded up a tray, nicked some of Dad’s kit-kats and carried it into the living room.

I served Anna first, then Melissa and Fleur, and then my parents, before I sat next to Dad's legs.

"Go on then, dear," my Mum said, "hit me." She braced herself dramatically.

"Well," I said, "you remember Harry."

"Yay high," Mum said, holding her hand up. "Dark good looks with the most gorgeous green eyes, complete with unruly hair that has me itching for a comb, and in real need of a good mothering? The one who is the third side of your little love-triangle?"

Melissa giggled as I blushed. "Why did I think this was a good idea?" I asked the ceiling. "Anyway, said boy is getting hitched and I wanted to invite you to the wedding."

"Hitched?" Mum asked. "To that red-headed girl?"

"No," I replied. "To Melissa," I nodded my head toward the girl sat on our couch.

"Can't fault the boy's taste," Dad murmured.

Melissa gave my parent's one of her lesser-dangerous smiles.

"Hermione," Mum said slowly, "weren't you in the process of organising a new girlfriend for him just last week?"

I think that I set a new record for the degree of red that my face went.

"Mum," I hissed.

"Remember the cardinal rule, dear," Mum said calmly, "don't give it if you can't take it."

I buried my face into my father's thigh while I tried to regain some composure.

"Congratulations, Melissa," my father said, while stroking my hair softly.

"Thank you, Mr Granger."

"Oh, right, titles," he muttered. "Sorry, we're more on the republican side of things. As Hermione said, I'm Simon, and that Harpy in the corner is Carol."

"I hope you like the couch, dear," Mum said, "because you're going to be sleeping on it for a month."

I could feel dad laughing. I really don't think I can remember my parents ever arguing seriously, they're far too busy mocking each other playfully to do that.

"Okay," I said, looking at my watch. "We've not actually got time to go through all my mistakes, so I'll cut this short. Harry's spent his last few months emulating the Prince who went after Rapunzel here. The not-so-wicked Queen finally let Rapunzel out of her tower this morning to meet Harry, and well, you can guess what happened from there."

"Erm, no, I can't," Mum said.

"Well," Melissa said softly, "We were talking with Fleur and her husband, and Harry realised he hadn't actually asked me out on date yet, so he tried to do that, but well, got it wrong."

"How do you get asking a girl out on date wrong?" Dad asked curiously. "I mean, I almost managed it when I asked Carol's chest out when I was thirteen, but Harry didn't strike me as the sort of person to make that mistake."

"Ahh," Fleur said, "he meant to say, 'Anna, will you go out with me', but managed to get the 'go out' confused with 'marry'."

Mum and Dad were silent for a second, before Dad started to laugh. "An easy mistake to make," Dad agreed. "The words are right next to each other."

I elbowed his leg firmly.

"The problem with Harry," I sighed, "is that you can never tell what has been planned for the last six months and what was made up on the spot."

"I did think about it," Melissa said softly, a shy smile on her face that made me want to hug her immediately. "And then decided to say yes."

"I think she got her insanity from her father," Anna murmured.

"I've been saying that for years," Mum agreed, and the two mums shared a "mum" moment.

"So when's the wedding?" Dad asked.

"Seven hours."

Hermione," Mum groaned. "The time for jokes has passed. Now, when is the wedding, we're going to have to go shopping for a new dress and hat."

I winced.

"She was not joking," Melissa said. "We are getting married at seven o'clock tonight. Queen Elizabeth has given us her blessing now, and will be attending, so it's official."

Dad stood and strode over to the drinks cabinet. He poured out two large whiskeys and handed one to Mum, before he downed his.

Mum did the same.

Dad sat back down calmly. "Right," he said. "Are there any more shocks?"

"I know that Hermione thinks that Harry can walk on water," Mum said, "but how on earth can you arrange a marriage for a princess in a day!?"

"Oh, I know this one," Fleur said, a grin on her face. "It's because he's Harry Potter!"

A pillow flew from the vicinity of my father toward Fleur, who dodged calmly.

"Simon!" Mum scolded.

"Well," I said, "it's basically that, well, Harry abolished the institutionalised slavery of the house-elves this morning, and has an army of fanatical helpers organising everything, while he's off supervising it with Fleur's husband and the King."

"So, to get this straight, your good friend managed to grab himself the most beautiful girl I've ever seen, convince her mother, a Queen, that he could organise a fitting wedding in a day, and you've popped in at lunch time to invite us to said wedding, that will be attended by our actual Queen?"

"Correct," I beamed at her.

"And we are invited to attend, and you have plans to get us to Scotland?"

"Absolutely," I agreed cheerfully.

Mum looked at the whiskey bottle longingly, before she sat up straighter, and Dr Granger came to the fore. "Right, how are we going to get there?"

"Harry's producing Portkeys that will get you there."

"I thought that Hogwarts: A history said that only the Headmistress could do that?"

"Mum, Harry Potter!"

"Right," she murmured. "Fine, we're going to need a Portkey to London first." She turned to look at Melissa. "Where are you planning on living after the wedding?"

Melissa frowned faintly, and I noticed Anna looking embarrassed as well – well, as embarrassed as a regent allows herself to get.

"I think we need Harry," I muttered. "Dobby or Leena, if you're listening, can you ask a blindfolded Harry to pop in as soon as he can?"

Harry appeared next to me, half on the coffee-table, over balanced and fell onto Melissa, who caught him.

"Okay, whose bright idea was it to put a coffee table there?"

"Mine, it fits the décor perfectly," Mum replied.

"Carol," Harry said delightedly. "I'm going to have to rescind my offer of running away with me."

"Drat," Mum said, snapping her fingers dramatically. "Are you sure, youth and incredible beauty is all well and good, but you can't beat experience."

"Mother!" I yelled. "You will NOT flirt with Harry!"

"You know," Harry said, "the last time she used that tone of voice, she made me swear not to do any more spells in Huttan."

Dad perked up at that. "You can do spells in Huttan?" he asked.

"Not any more," Harry groused, as he stood, lifted Melissa up, and sat back down with her in his lap.

"What did you use?"

"Chata wnow kong bantha poodoo."

Dad frowned. "What was it supposed to do?"

Make Melissa look less like Aphrodite," Harry said. "It worked, too."

"Excuse me one minute," Dad said, as he moved into his study and shut the door behind him. There was a muffled howl of laughter, before he returned.

Did I mention that dad puts the fanatic into fan when it comes to Star Wars?

"Harry," Melissa asked politely, as my dad returned. "Exactly what do those words mean?"

"Moving on," Harry said hopefully.

Melissa dug her fingers into his sides, causing him to squirm. She whispered something in French that had Dad, who wants to buy a place in Provence, choking into his tea.

"Dear God, boy, tell her the truth!"

I couldn't decide if I didn't want to know, or if I did so I could use it on Ron. It seemed a rather effective threat or promise – I wasn't sure which..

"It means 'Now you're bantha fodder'," Harry muttered.

"Oh Harry," I sighed. "A bantha is like a Woolly Mammoth."

Melissa threw her head back and laughed. "I've never been compared to animal feed before," she said.

"You have to remember," I said to Mum, who was looking at Melissa as if she'd lost her mind, "that Melissa's been chased all her life by people with enough flowery poetry to irritate a greeting card company."

Mum shook her head. "Harry," she said, back in Dr Granger mode. "There appears to be a few holes in your planning. Exactly where are you planning on living, once married?"

"Oh, I've had Dobby and Leena renovate one of my properties in London. We'll stay there while I finish school, popping over to see my new parents every weekend. It's been separated into three flats with a shared living room, and Bill and Fleur are moving in to one of the others."

"We are?" Fleur asked in surprise.

Harry nodded. "Bill's gonna be discussing it with you later. I've had the Floo hooked up to the International Network, so that Melissa can do all her Princess stuff. Then, in the summer, we're going on a four week honeymoon, followed by a two week holiday to the Bahamas with Bill and Fleur, Annie and Mike, and Ron and Hermione."

"I am?" I squeaked. My squeak was echoed by Fleur and Anna.

"Yeah," Harry said, "Relevant spouses-slash-boyfriends are going to be talking to you about that later."

Melissa was just smiling.

"We could never let our darling, innocent, daughter, go on such a holiday unsupervised," Mum said in a wheedling voice.

"Then why don't you come along," Harry suggested on cue.

"Wonderful idea. Simon, pay the man."

"No chance," Harry and Melissa muttered together.

"Excuse me?"

"That is an argument you can lose later," Harry said cheerfully. "So, have I assuaged your fears?"

Mum nodded, then realised that was a silly gesture as he was blindfolded. "Yes. Now, we're going to need a Portkey to London, and then straight to Hogwarts."

"Okey-dokey," Harry agreed. "If you'll pass me two objects."

I stood and walked over to Mum's purse and grabbed her lip gloss and a pen, and handed them to Harry. Two Portus spells later. "London," he said, holding up the lip gloss. "Hogwarts," he said with the pen. "Hold, say the name, don't let go."

"Thank you," Mum said.

"Right, I'd love to stay and chat, but wedding's done plan themselves." He hugged Melissa for a second, whispered, "Je t'aime, ma chérie," before he vanished. Melissa managed to drop the few inches to couch gracefully.

Proof complete that she is a Veela.