

Life can be a fickle thing sometimes. You can fall to the very gates of Hell one moment, and then the next find yourself walking the golden streets of Paradise. Harry Potter had learned this rough lesson about life long ago. He knew the hardships that the best of people could endure at the worst of times. He also knew that he was extremely lucky to actually reach the light at the end of the tunnel. Luck had blessed him and his friends with the types of lives they could only dream of when they were fighting the war. He and Ginny had got married 3 months after the war was over. They had built their dream house on the outskirts of Ottery St. Catchpole, not far from the Burrow. They had four wonderful children, James (18), Sirius (17), Lily (15), and Rose (12). Ron and Hermione were married close to a year after them, and had three children of their own, Arthur (18), and the twins, Remus and Albus (16). Their best friends Neville and Luna Longbottom had had two kids as well, Alice (18) and Frank (15). They had a large house on the outskirts of Hogsmeade, as Neville had to remain close to Hogwarts to teach Herbology.

Harry was lost in his thoughts, staring out the window, and did not hear someone enter the room. When he felt a hand on his shoulder, he jumped, and his hand shot for his wand, and leveled with the eyes of the new arrival.

“Wow,” James said. “Take it easy dad. I just wanted to talk to you, not be murdered,” he said with a smirk at his dad. Harry smiled, he knew that James liked to have him on about his nervousness, one of the many relics he had left over from the war with Voldemort.

“James...sorry about that, you know how I get when I...”

“Sure thing,” quipped James. “We know it’s just you getting older and a bit senile now” he finished, flashing a wicked grin. Harry narrowed his eyes at his son.

“That’s not what you were saying the other night in the training room...” Harry had been training with James, in preparation for James’ Auror application and exam.

James blanched. “Okay, okay. Enough of that, I was just kidding, give me a break...old man” he added in a whisper. “I actually have something I need to talk to you about...”

“Oh?” replied Harry surprised. “What’s on your mind, James?”

“Well, erm...” James replied, rubbing the back of his neck, reminding Harry uncannily of himself when he was talking about something uncomfortable, “you know that I have been seeing Allie (Alice) for a while now, since sixth year, and well...I...um...”

“What’s wrong? Is everything going ok?” Harry asked casually, although he was worried about the conversation that might have to occur with Neville and Luna had his eldest son hurt their only daughter.

“Well, I like her a lot,” he said with reddening cheeks, “I love her actually. She’s my better half, she’s the sun to my earth, she means the world to me...and well...I want to

take it further.”

Harry blanched. “What do you mean...take it further?” Harry asked shrewdly, eyeing his son with a mix of exasperation and curiosity.

“Dad,” James screeched, “it’s not like that! I love her! I want to marry her!”

“Oh,” Harry said, very surprised, “Are you sure this is what you want? Marriage is a huge step, and it’s forever.”

“That’s actually what I wanted to talk to you about. I...well...the way you and mum are...erm...how did you know that she was...um...the one?” James asked with the air of someone who had forced the words out.

Harry thought on it, and responded quickly.

“That’s an easy one, James. It was my fifth year at Hogwarts, the year that your Uncle Sirius died...” Harry said sadly, memories of his long deposed godfather flitting through his mind, “your mum and I were friends and well...sit down, son. Let me tell you about the power of chocolate.”

“Okay,” James said, sitting down and eyeing his father curiously.

"Well," said Ginny slowly, helping herself to a bit of egg too, "if you really want to talk to Sirius, I expect we could think of a way to do it..."

"Come on," said Harry dully. "With Umbridge policing the fires and reading all our mail?"

"The thing about growing up with Fred and George," said Ginny thoughtfully, "is that you sort of start thinking anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."

Harry looked at her. Perhaps it was the effect of the chocolate --- Lupin had always advised eating some after encounters with dementors---or maybe because he had finally spoke aloud the wish that had been burning inside him for a week, but he felt a bit more hopeful....

“Um,” said Ginny, interrupting Harry’s thoughts. “Are you alright? Its just that you seemed that you had a lot on your mind lately.”

Harry’s eyes narrowed in thought. He wondered vaguely if he should mention what he saw in the Pensieve in Snape’s office. It was one thing to slightly diminish his own opinion of his father, but he did not want to change any one else’s opinion of James Potter.

“I...I just found out some stuff about my Dad that I wanted to ask Sirius about...” Harry

supplied lamely.

“Harry,” said Ginny eyeing Harry closely, “what could you have possibly found out about your father that would upset you so much? Come on. You can trust me.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you,” sighed Harry, “it’s that I found out something about him that I didn’t...that I didn’t like,” Harry finished looking down at the desk, a frown playing on his face.

“What was it?” asked Ginny softly. “I promise I won’t say anything about it, or think any less of him either.”

Harry looked up, startled. How did she know that that was the reason he was tormenting himself? Had he been that obvious?

“Well,” said Harry steeling himself to tell her, “I was in Snape’s office for Occlumency, and Malfoy interrupted because Montague finally turned up. He told me to wait, and then rushed out to help. He left the Pensieve on the desk, and well....”

“You got curious?” asked Ginny with a raised eyebrow and an air of amusement.

“Well,” replied Harry defiantly, “yeah...yeah I did. The memory inside was the day that my dad, Sirius and Moony were taking their OWLs along with Snape. Everything was fine, but then my Dad and Sirius started tormenting Snape, picking on him and hexing him. My mum tried to get them to stop, but they didn’t right away. He refused her help, and called her a,” Harry dropped his voice slightly, “a...a mudblood. But the worst thing, the worst of it all is...is that throughout this whole thing, since I found out about the Wizarding world, I’ve been able to find comfort in the fact that my dad was a good person. After this though, it was like all of that was wrecked. My Dad was exactly as Snape described him. He was arrogant, he was a prat, and he was a mean person. It’s like all the strength his memory gave me has been a lie...” ended Harry, unaware of the unshed tears shining in his eyes. He swallowed convulsively trying to dissipate the lump that had formed in his throat.

Silence fell over the table. Harry glanced at Ginny through his fringe, hoping she could say something that would help him remove the awful weight pressing down upon his chest.

“I’m sorry, Harry,” replied Ginny slowly, deliberating each word. “I know how much your Dad’s memory means to you. But really, there is sort of a catch about this isn’t there?”

“What do you mean,” asked Harry, frowning.

“Well,” said Ginny thoughtfully. “Your dad was only 15 at the time wasn’t he? I mean a lot of teenage boys are prats when they are young, and have to grow up. I’m willing to

bet that's what happened with your dad. You should have seen Charlie when he was that age. His head was so big, Mum used to joke that they would have to weigh him down with a few hundred bricks to keep from floating away," she ended with a smirk.

Harry looked up at her and treated her to a smile. A genuine smile, one that she had not seen from him in many months, the last one she could remember was before the resurrection of Voldemort.

"Fair point, that," ceded Harry. "I know that I haven't always been the most mature of blokes."

"It's been a long time since I have seen you smile like that Harry," Ginny offered with a piercing look.

Their eyes locked, and Harry saw Ginny's eyes darken. Before he could ask her about it, it was as if a hot poker had been pressed into his skull. Wincing, Harry smacked his hand to his forehead.

"Harry!" yelled Ginny looking concerned. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah...yeah, I'm fine. It comes in waves like that now that he's back," gasped Harry, his face curving into a frown. He looked down at his desk. Voldemort was getting too strong a hold already. Harry didn't know what to do about the war. With the Ministry acting like it was, Voldemort would surely win. The hopelessness of the situation was echoed clearly on Harry's features.

"Harry," asked Ginny seriously, "what's the matter?"

"Ginny," replied Harry, "do you ever just feel like no matter what, the worst will always happen? It's like no matter how hard you fight, no matter how much you do, you will still lose? I...I just...the way things are right now; I don't see a victory for us. I feel like I am too weak to win, too weak to make a difference. I'm terrified, of losing this war, of losing everything I have left...of losing you."

Harry shocked himself by saying it, but the words were out, and he couldn't take them back. Where had they come from? Since when did he care about Ginny like that? She was just his best mates sister...wasn't she? He looked up at her, and saw the surprised look on her face. He knew then that he cared about her. He knew that he did not want any hurt to come to her; he wanted her to be happy. In that infinitesimally small moment, it was like it all made sense to him. The tumblers of his life fell into place, and he could see the big picture. He wanted her to be happy, he wanted her to be safe, he wanted her to be with him, and most importantly, he knew that she was his reason to keep fighting. She was his reason to keep his hope alive.

"Harry," whispered Ginny, breaking Harry from his thoughts, "you won't lose me. We won't lose this war. We have you, and that has to count for something. You are the most

brave and courageous person I have ever met..."

"I'm not strong Ginny, or powerful. All the things that have gone right, I've been lucky. Someone has always been there to bail me out, to save me. It's never been me..."

"Harry, shut it!" said Ginny, her voice rising. "You are very powerful, and so incredibly brave. I know of absolutely no one who could go through what you have, and still come out as good as you did. I only wish that I could have been as smart, and as strong..." she added meekly.

"What do you mean?" asked Harry curiously. She had been ranting at him, and all of a sudden, she looked really sad. She looked hesitant, like she didn't want Harry to know what was bothering her. "Come on, Ginny. You helped me, maybe I can help you to..."

"Well, I...I'm talking about...Tom...Tom Riddle, Harry. If I had been stronger," Ginny gulped. "I could have stopped him earlier. If I were smart, I would have stopped writing in that diary straight away. But I didn't, I failed everyone. I failed myself and I failed you. I nearly got you killed Harry! I should have been able to stop it...but I couldn't..." she ended. Tears were freely running down her cheeks at this point.

"Ginny, you mustn't think that was all your fault!" said Harry, who was staring at her intently. "Voldemort tricked you. You held him off for months and months! Most people wouldn't last a second! That alone shows how strong you are, shows the kind of person you are! I can see the strength in you, the power." Harry stopped momentarily, and placed his hand on her arm. "You only need to look inside yourself, and see your own strength, your own value. I wish you could see you, like I see you."

Ginny looked straight into his eyes and asked "And how do you see me?"

"You're a smart, beautiful girl. You are extremely courageous, and you mean the world to me," said Harry, surprised at the words. He had wanted to tell her these things, but he hadn't planned on doing it now. What if she rejected him? Hermione had told him that Ginny was over him now. Plus, she was dating Michael Corner. Had he ruined it all? What had he done?

Harry was looking at his knees, afraid of what he had just done. He waited to hear her footsteps rushing from the library, but they did not come. He looked up at her, and saw that she held a watery smile on her face.

"Harry," asked Ginny timidly, "did you really mean all that?"

"Yes, every word of it," Harry responded breathlessly, looking directly into her chocolate brown eyes.

Ginny slid down the bench towards Harry. Her hand went to his, and he saw a fire in her eyes that made his heart race. She leaned in, and gently pressed her lips to his. Harry sat

there for a moment or two in shock, and then he pulled back on instinct. He saw the hurt in her eyes when he looked at her, and it tore him apart. He lowered his mouth to hers, and captured it in a tender kiss. Ginny put her hand on the back of his neck, and pulled him closer. Harry cupped her face softly, and he felt her tongue on his lips, and let her deepen the kiss. It felt like several days before they finally pulled apart. Harry had leaned his forehead against hers, and looked directly into her eyes.

“Wow,” whispered Harry, “we need to get your mum to make those eggs more often I think.”

Ginny giggled, and leant in for another kiss. The half-eaten eggs lay forgotten on the table.

“Wow,” said James to his father, “I had no idea. You and mum...that seems so...so...so storybook-ish.”

Harry chuckled. “We did have all the ingredients for one. It wasn’t always happy though. There were some rough times back in those days. Thanks to your mum though, I was always able to make it through. I once saw this Muggle movie that said that ‘true love is a soul finding its counter-point in another.’ I believe that. Your mum, she makes me feel alive. Back then, she awoke parts of my heart that I didn't even know existed.”

“I think I understand now, Dad. I know what to do. I’m going to propose to Allie. I’m going to do it tonight.” James ended resolutely, but with a broad grin.

“James,” said Harry smiling back at his eldest, “I wish you the best of luck. I would love for her to be a part of our family. You two are great together.”

“I think so too,” replied James. “Its kind of funny isn’t it? Our whole family got started because of chocolate,” he added with a smirk.

“The power the Dark Lord knew not, indeed,” Harry added with a laugh.

Life was indeed a fickle thing. He was just glad he had managed to be on its good side.

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