

## CHAPTER 35

### LOVE IN A BROOM CUPBOARD

The air in the Gryffindor common room after lunchtime had once customarily overflowed with the cheerful, lighthearted banter of gaggles of vivacious teenage witches and wizards. However, the recent public exposé of mass murders initiated by the hands of the Dark Side now tainted the once welcoming ambiance with intense, organized, and dismal discussions relating to Voldemort's ascendancy. The seventh year students, in particular, spent most of their free periods hovered over *The Daily Prophet*, analyzing the report of each slaying, and gasping occasionally at the accounted executions of familiar witches and wizards.

"*Look here!* Rufus Ollivander was found dead in the Dark Forest last night!" exclaimed Seamus to Harry and Dean, both of whom were knelt over the coffee table on either side of him, reading diligently over the article.

Harry's heart sank. He recalled the first time he'd met Ollivander six years ago when he purchased a wand from his shop.

"Geez," he whispered, seizing the newspaper from Seamus's grasp. He read the article meticulously, mumbling a few words from every other sentence audibly, "'The killing curse...Death Eaters...They kept him alive for nearly a year...signs of torture.'" And when Harry reached the last sentence of the article, he sat upright and exclaimed aloud, "He was found lying in a heap of broken wands believed to have originated from his shop?!"

"What do you suppose that means?" asked Seamus.

Harry thought for a moment, then concluded quietly, "I don't know."

"Potter? *Harry Potter!*" called a mousy looking boy sporting appropriately coordinating mousy brown hair. The elfin lad was jumping up and down in the back of the room, waving a piece of crimson red parchment in the air by the grace of his diminutive hand.

"Yeah, Dennis, I'm over here," said Harry distractedly, flagging the boy in his direction.

"Hey, Harry!" exclaimed Dennis, skipping over to Harry exuberantly while continuing to wave the bright red envelope in the air. "It's an *urgent owl!*" he said his eyes wide with excitement.

"An *urgent owl!*?" repeated Harry with a touch of alarm, withdrawing the note from Dennis's hand.

“Who’s it from, Harry?” inquired Dean anxiously.

Harry slipped his finger through the seal of the red envelope, pulled out a piece of red parchment, and read the contents to himself.

“Erm, it’s nothing...just a silly alert,” said Harry, stashing the owl awkwardly into his robe pocket, depriving his scandal-thirsty friends of any further detail. Then, he leaned over to Dean and whispered, “Dean, I wonder if you can cover for me if I slip on my invisibility cloak and head off for a bit.”

“I don’t know, Harry. Shackbolt’s out there right now. He frightens me a bit. Can’t it wait until Remus comes back from his Ministry meeting? He’s not nearly as intimidating.”

“Aw, come on. I can’t get out of this place without some help, and Remus won’t be back for another hour. Besides, he’s way too nosey. He’s sure to notice straight away that I’ve gone missing.”

Dean sighed heavily and said hesitantly, “Alright, I’ll do it. But, if push comes to shove, you know I’ll crack if anyone catches on that you might be missing.”

“I really appreciate this, mate! Thanks!” said Harry, patting Dean gratefully on his back.

“What is it you need me to do?” asked Dean.

“Just head off through the portrait hole. I’ll follow after you concealed beneath my invisibility cloak. Shackbolt will only see you heading out, and he’ll assume I’m still inside,” said Harry.

“Where am I to go?”

“I dunno. Take a quick lap about the corridors and then head back here. He won’t think anything of it, trust me.”

“You’re going to meet Hannah, aren’t you?”

Harry said nothing.

“Aw, *come on*, Potter!” said Dean. “If you’re going to have me risk my neck getting in trouble for you, the *least* you could do is let me in on the details.”

“Alright, *yes*. But, you’re to tell no one, *understand*? If you do, I’ll know it came from *you*.”

“I won’t say a word,” said Dean somewhat disappointedly, and he followed Harry to the fat lady portrait.

Harry stuck close to Dean's side as they crossed through the portrait hole.

"Mr. Thomas," said Shackbolt amiably.

"Hey, Shackbolt," answered Dean anxiously, staring off to his left at the space where he was certain an invisible Harry was standing, which, much to Dean's amazement, did not alert Shackbolt in the least."

Harry took off running for the opposite end of the corridor, not chancing to slow his pace until he neared his final destination. When he cleared the corner long past Gryffindor tower, he began the mad hunt for his girlfriend.

"Hannah?" he whispered, working his way to the end of the deserted seventh floor corridor. "*Hannah?*" he repeated in a loud raspy voice.

All of a sudden, a narrow doorway off to his left flung open; a pair of delicate hands gripped the shoulders of his robes, yanking him through the entrance and into a congested broom supply cupboard.

"Hey, Potter," murmured Hannah breathlessly, tearing off his invisibility cloak and instantly masking him in her fervent kisses.

"W-*wait*," muttered Harry into her lips. "W-what are you doing? I got your owl saying you needed to see me, that is was *urgent*," he said, trying to break free of her.

"It *is*. I want you."

"*What?*"

"You heard me. *I want you.*"

"*Here?* No, not in here, not now, I've got class in half an hour," said Harry firmly, shaking her off him.

"Oh, come on, I'm aching for you," said Hannah with a pronounced pout.

Drawing him back to her, she stalked him with a strong grasp of her evident desire for him while attempting to sway him with her increasingly sensual kisses.

"What if someone catches us?" murmured Harry in a tone voicing a clear softening of his will.

Hannah pointed her finger at the entryway of the cupboard, and a bolt of white light shot forth, sealing the doorframe shut. "There. I've put a Sticking Spell on the door. No one can burst in on us. Now, come here," she demanded playfully, grabbing hold of him. She

brushed her lips lightly across his before claiming him fully by virtue of the scorching heat of her zealous kiss.

Wholly surrendering to her with a willing growl of gratification, Harry clung to her moist, pouty lips and her sensational embrace.

Together, they rushed through the incessant passion of thirst-quenching kisses and the delectably intimate handlings of one other.

“I love you, Harry,” whispered Hannah breathlessly into his mouth, running her hands beneath his shirt, over his chest, and around to his back.

“I love you too, Hannah,” he replied, eager to further the calls of this glorious encounter blossoming between them. Abruptly, however, he was startled back to reality by the sound of voices echoing down the corridor.

“I-I hear voices,” he said in a quiet gentle panic, backing away from her and going for the door handle.

“Don’t-don’t you dare leave me like this,” said Hannah, pulling him back and reclaiming his kiss.

“Hannah, we’re gonna get caught,” muttered Harry into her lips.

“Relax, Harry, just relax. I sealed the door closed, remember?” she said beseechingly. Clutching his face with her desperate hands, she proceeded to melt him with her sweet kisses to distract him.

As the remarkable passion of their encounter soared, the voices outside the door of the cupboard grew louder and louder...

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“Have you seen Harry?” asked Ron.

“No. I haven’t seen him since lunch hour,” said Hermione. “He asked me to meet him in the common room to help him with his Silent Spells for his test tomorrow, but he never showed. Dennis Creevey said he got some sort of urgent owl and took off.”

“Urgent owl? Who would send him an urgent owl?”

“Can you think of no one?”

“You mean Hannah? Nah, she’s on duty today. I saw her patrolling the corridors earlier.”

“So did I, but I haven’t seen her in the last half hour. Interesting how they’ve both gone missing, isn’t it?”

Hermione and Ron continued their stroll along the corridor, passing the cupboard where their best friend was engaged in his illicit affair. They were just about to round the corner to take the passageway to their left, when Hermione heard a shrill creaking sound coming from behind them. She paused and spun around to greet the door to the broom cupboard as it slowly cracked open and watched as Harry emerged reluctantly from the other side of it.

“Harry? What were you doing in there?” she inquired loudly, a fleeting air of perplexion crossing her face.

“Uh, Hermione, Ron, alright, then?” he responded, tensely, heading straight for them at a rather quickened pace. “Erm, I was just looking for some supplies.”

“Supplies? What kind of supplies?” asked Ron sounding baffled.

“For Quidditch. Come on, we’d better hurry. Herbology starts in a few minutes and I have to get back to the Gryffindor common room to catch Shackbolt. Ron, I’ll need your help to distract him so he doesn’t know I left,” said Harry, swiftly trying to steer them around the corner by hooking the necks of their robes with his tightly fistled hands.

“Harry, *wait a minute!* What’s happened to you? You’re a *mess!*” exclaimed Hermione, coming to a screeching halt the instant she grasped the sight of his overly windswept looking hairdo, crooked glasses, and flushed, sweaty face. She lowered her gaze to his lipstick-tainted collar, his twisted robes, and then down to where the fly of his trousers remained half-zipped, hindered by the bottom corner of his shirt, which was peaking conspicuously through the opening.

“Uh, I fell,” he said quickly.

Hermione swiftly returned her focus to the broom cupboard door as it piped open again. This time she watched on as *Hannah* scurried out from behind it. Hannah stood there fluffing out her skirt, tugging at her blouse, and combing through her curly locks with her fingers while she examined her surroundings. She waved ineptly to the trio before rushing off in the opposite direction.

“So, you fell, *huh?*” scoffed Hermione impatiently. “Harry, I can’t believe you two! A broom cupboard?! That’s just *dreadful!* And, she’s supposed to be on duty!”

Ron stared after Hannah, glanced to the broom cupboard, and back to his disheveled best friend, looking entirely envious of him.

“By the way, Harry, your fly is open,” said Hermione shortly, pointing to the front of his trousers.

Harry blushed and swiftly swung around to adjust himself.

“Honestly, Harry; I don’t know what’s gotten into you lately!” hissed Hermione.

“What do you mean by *that*?” said Harry sounding thoroughly insulted.

“Ever since you started going out with Hannah, it’s as though your sound judgment and morals have been flushed down the toilet. You’ve always had a certain disregard for the rules, but having sex in a broom cupboard is *disgraceful*!”

Harry’s face burned crimson red with embarrassment. He swiftly took the occasion to disappear beneath the welcoming seclusion of his invisibility cloak.

“Aw, Hermione, leave him alone; he likes her. What do you expect of him?”

Hermione shot Ron a look of outrage and snapped, “You’re just as bad as he is, Ronald! I see how you dote on Hannah! I know you wish it were *you* in that cupboard with her! I’ll just — I’ll never be good enough for you, *will I*!?”

Through an explosive bout of tears, Hermione stormed off around the corner in the opposite direction of Gryffindor tower.

“What’s gotten into *her*?” whimpered Ron as he hurried after an invisible Harry, toward the common room.

“I think she’s jealous.”

“Jealous? Why would she be jealous?”

“No offence, mate, but she’s right. You do sort of show an overly keen interest in my girlfriend.”

“Who doesn’t? She’s bloody spectacular! You see more action in one day with her than I do with Hermione in a month! But, that doesn’t mean I’m gonna break it off with Hermione and rush off into Hannah’s arms, even if she’d have me,” Ron rambled on innocently. Then, in a choking whisper, he added, “I mean, I *love* Hermione. I don’t want to be with anyone else.”

Harry felt a bit awkward discussing his best friends’ love lives so openly like this. Although, he couldn’t help but force himself to offer Ron some advice that he thought was essential for him to hear. “Well, maybe you ought to tell her that, Ron.”

“Tell her what?” mumbled Ron distractedly out of the corner of his mouth, noting they were fast nearing Gryffindor tower.

“You know — that you love her,” answered Harry uncomfortably.

Ron went pink and squirmed, then he mumbled, “What if she doesn’t say it back?”

Harry stopped in his tracks and seized his best friend by the arm, spouting off impatiently, “Look, Ron, if you truly love her as much as you say you do, you ought to go ahead and tell her so. And quit being such a prat! I believe you’ll be surprised with the response you’ll get. Besides, she’s got to love you to be willing to put up with your nonsense all these years.”

Ron went pink again and grumbled sarcastically, “Thanks for the vote of confidence, Harry.”

“I was only joking. We’d better get moving; we’re going to be late for class. I need you to distract Shackbolt for me so I can get back into the common room undetected and grab my knapsack. I don’t want to get another series of Saturday detentions with Filch on a count of *you*.”

Ron nudged an invisible Harry in his arm and proceeded toward Gryffindor tower at his side...