

Magic 8

by floorcoaster

Fred and Hermione team up for a new Weasleys' product.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Written for Romancing the Wizard's Challenge Nineteen: Bring Out Your Dead!

Word count: Exactly 750

Prompt: 14 – amazing discovery

"I really appreciate all of your help," Fred remarked, sneaking sideways glances at the witch beside him. She was focused on the cauldron in front of her, stirring methodically.

"It's really no trouble," Hermione said. "I'm excited to see the final product in action. I had one of these when I was younger, you know."

"Muggles." Fred chuckled. "They have such an interesting take on magic. Where do they come up with this stuff? Asking a ball questions and expecting answers!"

Hermione laughed. "It's just a toy, silly. Nobody really believed it."

"How's the potion coming?" He refused to let her musical laugh distract him.

"Almost finished," she replied, spooning out a portion of the swirling liquid. "As soon as it turns a dark shade of blue-violet, it'll be done. How about your part?"

"The dodecahedron is cooling," Fred replied. "Are you sure these answers are all we need? What if someone asks a really difficult question?"

"Even though this device will, with the aid of magic, give the true answer, it's still just a toy. Only yes or no questions can be answered. Ooh, it's ready." She removed the cauldron from the heat and cooled it to room temperature.

Fred gave her a curiously incredulous look. "You really think only kids will buy this, Hermione?"

She nodded, then frowned. "I don't see why anyone else would want it."

He raised his eyebrows, smirking. "Oh? Is that so? I can think of plenty potential uses for it."

Hermione dragged a stool over and sat down. "Name one," she challenged.

"Dear Weasleys' Magic Eight Ball: Do these robes make me look fat?" he asked, a wistful expression on his face.

She swatted his arm playfully. "You're terrible."

"See? It saves you from finding out the truth in a more embarrassing way. Plus," he continued, removing the shell from its box. "It's nearly indestructible, so when the answer is, 'It is decidedly so,' the angry witch can fling it across the room, no harm done. Good as new for the next question."

"All right, I see your point," she conceded.

"Always knew you were a reasonable woman," he said, ladling a serving of potion. "This potion is fantastic, Hermione. Your idea for modifying Veritaserum was brilliant! It made my job rather easy. Would you hold the shell steady?"

Hermione complied so that Fred could pour the mixture into it. "It was a lot of fun researching and getting it just right," she said.

"The trick is getting people to touch the thing," he remarked, dropping the answer polygon through the opening. "Now to seal it ..." He waved his wand, and a hard, clear film covered the window.

"What do you mean, touch it?" Hermione asked.

Fred picked it up and tentatively tossed it into the air, catching it deftly. "The outer surface absorbs the magical signature of whoever touches it, and the red moonstone powder in Veritaserum transmits that to the answer polygon. Since you touched it while helping me, I can now ask questions about you."

Her eyes widened. "Hey! I didn't know that!"

"Like this one: Does Hermione like books?" He shook the ball and waited for the reply. "'Without a doubt.' See? It works!"

"Wow, that's so amazing," she said sarcastically.

"All right," he said. "Does Hermione fancy anyone?"

"Hey!" she cried, lunging to grab the ball out of his hands.

Fred was too quick and pulled it out of her reach. "Ah, ah, Hermione! All in the name of research!" He glanced at the window. "'Yes—definitely!' That is news! Is it ickle Ron?"

"Fred." She used that menacing voice, the one that always made people pause and think twice.

He did, briefly. "'Don't count on it.'" A devilish idea entered his mind, one that he perhaps should have spent more time considering. "Does Hermione fancy ... Fred?"

"Fred, I'm serious. Give that to me."

She tried again to snatch it, but he held it above his head. Hermione didn't give up, and Fred ended up backed against another table with her pressed intimately against him. They seemed to realize their position at the same moment. Hermione blushed furiously and released his arm while he slowly lowered it, not looking into the window, despite desperately wanting the answer.

"Yes, all right?" Her voice was defeated, yet defiant.

He refused to jump to conclusions. "Yes, what?"

"Yes, I fancy you. Happy?"

An enormous grin spread across his face. "Without a doubt," he said, tipping her chin up and kissing her.

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"Publisher's Edition" – the longer, pre-trimmed version – to follow.

End Notes: All the 8-ball's answers are from the actual toy. List available on wikipedia. As the ingredients of Veritaserum are never divulged, I took the liberty of including red moonstone since the Truth Serum requires a full moon's cycle to brew. Many thanks to drcjsnider for the excellent beta! Proof-read by missblane.