

Getting an O

by pokeystar

Pansy adjusts her plans for the future, with a little help from Life.

(No gnomes—or goats!—were harmed during the creation of this story.)

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Good morning, students, and welcome to Learning About Magical Existence. My name is Professor Lupin, and it will be my pleasure to teach this class. Yes, Miss... you have a question?"

"Why are we here? Really, aren't our *parents* supposed to be teaching us this stuff?" Pansy sneered and held up the syllabus. "The Ministry and how it works..." Hermione partially smothered a sardonic bark of laughter. "...establishing a bank account at Gringott's; obtaining accidental magic insurance; Wizarding courtship rituals? Who *doesn't* know this stuff?"

The majority of her fellow students' hands shot up into the air, though it had been posed as a rhetorical question. In fact, the only people not raising their hands were Hermione Granger and Blaise Zabini.

Which figured, given that they inhaled more books than food; they probably even pissed ink.

But...

"Draco?" Pansy asked, confused.

"My parents were far too busy throwing parties and planning wars to spend time actually raising me, Pans. Besides, who needs to know courtship rituals when your marriage was arranged at age five?"

Professor Lupin saw the storm gathering in Pansy's face and rushed in to avert disaster. Or an emotional hissyfit, which he found an equally unappealing prospect. Even though Pansy's hissyfits were both legendary and Olympic medal-worthy. The Slytherins were disappointedly bored.

"You see, Miss Parkinson, due to the war a lot of students are not well-informed in this area. Thanks to Harry, the war is not a concern anymore. Nice job melting Voldemort," several students shuddered at the name by force of habit, "with that bucket of water, by the way. What made you think of it?"

Harry ducked his head a little at the praise and replied, "Ah... well. The Dursleys had watched the Wizard of Oz." Hermione Granger and everyone who had taken Muggle Studies nodded in recognition. "You know, the week before, so when Voldemort and those Death Eaters showed up at The Burrow before Bill and Fleur's wedding, the

bucket of water I was using to mop the kitchen floor was the only thing handy."

Draco snorted. "You killed the Dark Lord with a bucket of water? Preposterous!"

"As preposterous as death by drapes," Hermione muttered.

"It wasn't *that* easy," interjected Ron. "He only lost his body. His vapor form flew out of the kitchen and into a garden gnome. Do you have any idea how hard it is to catch a possessed potato with legs and sharp teeth? That little wanker bit me twice!" He held up a hand with teeth marks clearly visible on the knuckle of his index finger. "And once we had him in the cage, we had to go looking for..." He paused as he realized Harry, Hermione, and Remus were all giving him the 'shut up, Ron' look. "...for the de-gnoming desiccant... yeah, that worked..."

"As I was saying, before that lovely tale of the demon spud tangent, most students are not well-informed of certain life skills or knowledge due to the distraction of war, and so the Ministry ordered Hogwarts to address the lack." Professor Lupin smiled warmly at the class and began writing on the board. "Your first assignment, which Miss Parkinson kindly read off the syllabus, is the Ministry and how it works." Hermione, Harry, and Ron all snorted at this. "You have been assigned a partner and a department of the Ministry to research. You and your partner will write a paper and give an oral presentation in three weeks."

Professor Lupin tapped his desk with his wand and a flock of little parchment birds winged their way to each student and opened themselves, revealing their partners and research assignment.

"Please rearrange yourselves to sit next to your partner. I'll give you the rest of class today to discuss your project and arrange to meet your partner outside class. This is very important, as you will be given little in-class time to prepare your paper or presentation."

There was a lot of shuffling and muttering as people got up and moved around, finding their partners. It did not occur to Pansy to follow suit or even to look at the little birdlike missive. She was still stunned by what Draco had said. Someone sat next to her and she looked up automatically. Oh, *swell*. Scarhead. Boy hero with a bucket. *Hey, life, thanks for the kicks.*

"I thought you and Draco were going out," Harry said softly.

"We were. We broke up last year. Before the Infiltration," Pansy replied mechanically, and they both winced. "But, still! He never told me he was betrothed already! I let him... I thought I was..."

She gritted her teeth against further revelations of naïve folly. *Some Slytherin she was.*

"The arse-sucking wanktastic git. What a steaming pile of Hippogriff poo," Harry muttered under his breath.

"Pardon?"

"Malfoy. He led you on..."

"Glass houses, Potter. You broke up with the Weaselette to flit off on your grand adventure..."

"Flit off? Grand adventure! I broke up with Ginny to protect her from that foul-smelling, concentrate of evil snake-snogger. He'd killed...or had ordered killed...nearly everyone I loved! I wasn't about to get her killed, too!"

"Well, then. Why aren't you back together?"

He stared at her sullenly and then looked at his assignment sheet. "Class is nearly over. Our topic is the Improper Use of Magic Office. When can you meet?"

"You have Quidditch, right?" She paused and he nodded. "I'm a prefect and I tutor in Ancient Runes. Can we start with tonight, in the library at seven? Bring your schedule and we'll figure out some regular times."

He nodded again, like those boy hero bobble-heads..*Now with glow-in-the-dark curse scars!*...in the window at Wheezes, just as Professor Lupin dismissed the class.

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Harry was moody and withdrawn the rest of the day, but it went virtually unnoticed since it was a fairly regular occurrence. Only Hermione and Ron were truly concerned...also, a fairly regular occurrence...and tried to bring it up at dinner. Harry glanced down the table at Ginny holding hands with Dean and growled, "Later!"

After Ron ate his weight in roast chicken, Hermione nibbled on salad, and Harry sculpted Mount Doom out of some rather lumpy mashed potatoes, they retreated to the Gryffindor common room.

"I can't believe I'm partnered with Millicent Bulstrode," complained Ron. "Lupin likes me, right? The least he could've done is pair me with Daphne Greengrass."

"We'll just all have to make the best of it," replied Hermione primly. They were very on and off again, she and Ron.

"I saw you flirting with that slithery Casanova!" Ron accused.

"Who, Blaise?" Hermione asked innocently.

Off again, then. Harry sighed.

"At least you guys avoided rehashing painful memories," he said.

Hermione bristled. "Did that little pug face brat say something..."

"I asked her about Draco and she got defensive and brought up Ginny," Harry cut in. "She wanted to know why we aren't back together."

"Ginny just needs to grow up a little," said Ron. "She'll soon realize you two were meant for each other."

"Hello, kettle, this is pot calling." Hermione rolled her eyes. "Maybe you'll get back together, maybe you won't. Not that many people end up with their school-day sweethearts. It's a little *twee*, don't you think?"

"Oi! We are a couple, aren't we? Don't you want to marry me someday?"

"Oh, Ronald. Honestly! I wasn't talking about *us*..."

Harry sat there, staring at the fire, and avoiding his friends' eyes, until with a jolt he remembered his meeting with Pansy.

"I've got to go meet Pansy in the library about our assignment," he said, grabbing up his bag and left before anyone could say anything else.

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"You're late," Pansy stated irritably.

Harry slumped into a seat across from her and said, "Sorry, got sidetracked by relationship drama."

"Granger and Weasley off again? Surely not!" Pansy adopted a look of mocking dismay. "Whatever shall we do? There's no hope for the rest of us if they can't stick it out! They're the perfect couple!"

"Give it a rest, will you? I'm sorry I said anything about Draco, for fuck's sake."

"You are sorry a lot, aren't you?"

He sighed in exasperation.

"Never mind that. Blaise will be happy, at least."

"Oh, goody. Ron's jealous enough as it is."

"There's a pool going, did you know? I have May tenth. Do you think they'll last till then?"

Harry smirked at her. "That was optimistic of you."

"It wasn't optimistic. I was in the shower when the book opened."

"Bad sense of timing, eh? Must come with the black hair."

They grinned at each other.

"Well, let's get started, shall we? I pulled all the books on improper use of magic..."

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Harry paced the dusty unused classroom nervously. *Where was she?* Their speech was scheduled for the next morning, and they hadn't got much practice in. *He was dead.* They were dead. He had hoped to start practicing much earlier in the week, but between his Quidditch training and her prefect duties, *and to be totally honest, the river of denial he'd been swimming in*, it kept getting put off. He was contemplating a full-scale panic attack when Pansy walked in the room.

"Harry! What's wrong? You look like the Dark Lord just invited you for tea."

"It would probably be poisoned, wouldn't it?" he joked weakly and sat on a desk. "I'm not looking forward to the presentation."

"Hold the Patronus. *Harry Potter* is actually afraid of public speaking?"

It was an indication of just how much when he couldn't even summon a lopsided sneer.

"Swell. Think you could've mentioned this sooner?" She wasn't sure, but she thought he muttered something about a river and boats without paddles. *What was a paddle? And what did it have to do with a boat? Or talking in front of people?*

"The kid who faced pure evil with only a bucket of mop water is pissing his pants over giving a presentation. Will wonders never cease?"

"Pansy."

"Okay, okay. What are you so afraid of?"

"All those people staring at me or laughing at me. Staring *and* laughing." He gulped and started jiggling his foot. "Forgetting what to say. Saying something wrong and looking stupid."

"Alright. Well, the last is the easiest. We're scheduled to talk after Goyle and McLaggen. You could hardly look stupid no matter what happens after that disaster in the making, could you?" She was gratified to see him smile and relax just a little. "Do you have your notes? Why don't you try reading them out loud? Remember, Lupin said we could use them."

Harry started reading stiffly, and Pansy resisted the urge to bury her head in her arms and groan. They might actually have a shot at making Goyle look good, at this rate. She gritted her teeth a little.

"That was... good, Potter. Can you, um, imagine everyone in their underwear, maybe?"

Harry looked at her, and a deep shade of pink crept up his cheeks. He shifted a little where he stood, as if he was fighting a *Rictusempra*.

"Are you imagining me in my knickers, Potter?"

"Er... yes." His finger slipped under the collar of his shirt and wiggled a little, trying to loosen it.

She smirked a bit and asked, "Is it helping?"

"It's, um, distracting... but I'm not relaxed, per se."

"Per se? Such a fancy word, Harry. What do you think would help you relax?" She leaned forward and watched his eyes drift down to her chest. *Boys.* "Try reading now, Harry."

It was... better, but only slightly more natural than Aberforth Dumbledore's love of goats.

Hmmmmmm... What to do? What to do?

Unfortunately, she needed a good grade in Lupin's class, since good grades meant good jobs and there was no 'lady of the manor' position open at the moment. *Pity.* All that interviewing, down the drain. *It didn't all have to go to waste, however.* Certain well-honed skills could be applied here to achieve the results she desired.

Pansy Parkinson was going to kiss Harry Potter to get an O. She shrugged to herself. She'd done worse for less. *Oh, who was she kidding?* She fancied him. At this point, she was looking for the bittiest excuse to lay one on him. So she did, right in the middle of his speech.

"Furthermore, the Improper Use of Magic Office monitors... "

On the s, his lips fell into an acceptable smooching position, and she swooped in for the kill. Well, not the kill, precisely, as that would have included tongue, and Pansy

wasn't that fast, whatever *Draco* liked to imply.

Harry froze at first contact, but as she brushed her lips softly against his, he became a willing participant, wrapping his arms around her waist to bring her closer to him. After a few minutes, he pressed his mouth against hers firmly and then grazed his lips across her cheek as he pulled back.

"What was that for?"

"O...h my. O. I want an O." She collected herself belatedly.

"I'd give you one," he replied bemusedly, his smile crooked. "Can we do that again?"

She giggled. *Giggled!* "Maybe to celebrate after the presentation."

"I'll be sure to do well, then."

And he did.

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Originally posted at lj community pphpficexchange.

For Lyliaf, who gave this prompt: "Harry doing public speaking. (can be a project during Hogwarts, or even Post-Hogwarts) Pansy loves to criticize, especially seeing that the Boy Who Lived is unafraid of death, but deathly afraid of speaking in public. Doesn't have to be anything more than implied friendship, but I don't mind more."

Thanks to my beta Elyaeru for keeping my weirdness comprehensible.



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