

Franklin's Bells

by ApollinaV

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter or anything recognizable to the HP-Universe; JK Rowling does. I'm not making any money off the writing of this fanfic.

Oh, there had been a few examples of uncontrolled magic in her childhood, Hermione recalled, but those had been awkwardly explained away by her parents and ignored. The house was obviously settling. The window must have been struck by something. Her dollies were... possessed. It was her very first conscious usage of controlled magic that created the uproar, and that was indelibly etched into memory.

She had always been, first and foremost, a natural scientist. It wasn't enough to observe nature and ask how it worked. Hermione had to question it, postulate theories and prod things with sticks. So when the opportunity arose to be her second-year class representative to the Painswick Junior Science League's annual Young Achiever's Fair, Hermione gleefully twitched anticipation.

After much dedicated research where she read two whole chapter books with very few photographs all by herself, she submitted her neatly written full-page proposal to Ms. Hopkins, her teacher and sponsor. When her paper was returned to her with a bright yellow smiley-faced sticker and the encouraging words, 'Excellent idea! I look forward to seeing your results,' Hermione was beyond giddy. For weeks she babbled of nothing else, oblivious to the slightly pained looks and tired smiles of her parents.

She was going to faithfully reproduce and describe the effects of 'Franklin's Bells.' The 18th century inventor designed a simple system of wire leads and bells that not only effectively rang when electrical storms were impending, but expressed in simple terms electrical charges - to which she would no-doubt write a brilliant accompanying paper. Except there was one small snag.

It was a lightning detector, and Franklin had hooked up one of the wire leads to his lightning rod and another to a grounded water pump. Hermione wasn't going to be able to reproduce a lightning rod, much less a thunderstorm. A modern adaptation utilized a hand-cranked wind turbine, but those weren't available during the 18th century. She needed something else that would hold a charge.

Hermione was at a total loss to find another energy source that would fit with her historical project, but soldiered on. She had already submitted her proposal, and Ms. Hopkins was looking forward to her project. Hermione just couldn't fail. She spent her allotted time dutifully writing in her research journal, using her favorite pencil, and highlighted critical data with different splendid colored pencils. She really itched to use a biro, but they were for older kids and weren't allowed until fifth year.

The night before the Young Achiever's Fair, Hermione was at a loss. Her paper was perfect. Her mother had corrected it, and Hermione had even re-written it in her best handwriting. Her bells were lovely and they sat waiting a spark. It was the wire leads that were lonely and disconnected, and she felt the failure acutely. Her bells would never ring. Nobody would be alerted to a thunderstorm. She really needed a power source, but batteries were out of the question. Batteries had been unavailable in the 18th century.

Eight-thirty was her bedtime, but she'd been given a special dispensation to stay up until nine-thirty, and Hermione knew if she whinged she could possibly eek out another half hour, but nothing was going to fix her missing power source. So she poured over her library books and kept returning to the potatoes. They were so... first year, but

supposedly effective. According to her chapter on electricity, a battery could be built from a potato that gave off enough of a charge to light a single bulb. Without any other hope, Hermione trudged softly downstairs and nervously raided the pantry for two potatoes.

Back in her room, Hermione connected the wire leads and hoped for the best. She held her breath, biting her lip and watching with anxious eyes the little ball that was supposed to move to herald the impending storm, but there was no movement. Nothing. Failure. She closed her eyes and concentrated, wishing with the very fiber of her being that the potatoes would hold the right charge and Ms. Hopkins wouldn't be cross with her.

Her bells rang.

Hermione danced around her room, whooping and laughing, before her father banged on her door and enquired why she hadn't brushed her teeth yet.

The next morning Hermione wore her best jumper and waited, shuffling side to side for the judges to see her booth. There was a very nice big blue ribbon for the Outstanding Junior Achiever.

When the judges approached Hermione gulped and began to show her experiment. They listened politely as she explained the benefits of such a warning device. When it came time to hook the wires to her potatoes, Hermione blushed and apologized, explaining the substitution. But then her bells rang and she smiled proudly.

The judges nodded in approval until one judge questioned the potatoes. Where was the nail? Or the copper? Potatoes didn't randomly generate energy. It was a chemical reaction due to the electrolytes inherent in the potatoes. Her potatoes should not produce energy. That was when with wide, hurt eyes, Hermione quickly recovered, pleading that her potatoes were indeed full of energy.

"Look," she pointed desperately, "they're doing it."

A judge fingered her average russet, weighing it in his palm for a hidden battery and examining it for trickery. "Young lady, this is not scientifically possible," he scolded. "Where have you hidden your energy source?"

Fat, hot tears streamed down Hermione's reddened cheeks and Ms. Hopkins stood back, watching her with thoughtful eyes, just when the lights flickered and went out. The civic center was plunged into darkness, as was the grid.

"You know, Hermione," Ms. Hopkins soothed, "I might just be able to help you out. I have some distant family that might be of assistance."

That year the big blue ribbon went to a spectacular baking soda volcano.

Hermione's feelings might have been terribly hurt, but the odd older gentleman who came to visit her and brought her sweeties made it all better.

A/N:

In case you're interested in the experiment, check out a demonstration at: <http://www.vimeo.com/2644322>

A bouquet of fresh tulips for Christev20 in thanks for her wonderful beta work. Thank you m'dear.

Original prompt was from silverdoe: In what way does Hermione first display her magic, and how do her parents react? You may also add in a visit from a witch/wizard to talk to them about it. Well, I totally missed the boat on her parent's reactions, but I hope I hit the rest of it. I wanted to focus on 'intentional magic' not the childhood outbursts.