

Ron's Feet

by Fanny T

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He lies awake at night and watches a pair of feet that stick out awkwardly over the edge of the bed.

It's a strange thing, that. The beds in their dorm are enchanted to adjust themselves to growing boys, always staying a comfortable length, but for some reason, Ron's bed has never kept up with his frequent growth spurts, and he's always been left with his feet dangling out. Or—Harry finds this scenario equally plausible—it may also be that Ron is simply used to sleeping in that fashion, having lived all his life in a house where space was hard to come by and everything was a hand-me-down from his considerably shorter older brothers.

Whatever the case, Ron's feet are in prominent view as he twists and turns in his sleep, his toes folding themselves over each other.

One foot kicks suddenly. *Spiders*, Harry thinks, then adds, *or Lavender*. He's proven right when Ron next mutters something about "don'twant to." In his spider nightmares he's rarely that vocal, and if he does speak it is only to plead mercy, or to scream "No!" The Lavender dreams, however, although of a similarly unpleasant character, do not merit the same cries of terror.

He knows these things. He knows Ron's dreams and Ron's annoyances and Ron's fears. He is closer to that boy, with the large feet and dirty, slightly-too-long toenails, than he is to anyone else in his life.

But he wants to be closer.

Harry has faced many revelations about himself in less than seventeen years. He has found out and dealt with the fact that he is a wizard, that he is famous, that he can talk to snakes, that he was chosen and singled out in a prophecy made by a (possibly mad) woman who thinks the height of fashion is amber beads and shawls.

He's finding this one hardest yet.

As a sixteen-year-old boy, you tend to obsess about normality—even more so when your view of "normal" has had quite a turn only five years previously—and Harry pushed thoughts of Ron firmly into a "mate" compartment, labelling any stabs of ire at the glances that passed between his friend and Hermione as simple annoyance at being left out of the companionship. But after the Lavender experiment, he's beginning to realise that the little monster that rears its head every time he sees Ginny kissing Dean (because Ginny has red hair, doesn't she? And it is easier to look at her with feelings of want, to project these feelings unto her—she's a girl, and he is supposed to want girls) may not be a new-born thing. It may have been growling softly these past five, almost six, years. Growling at Hermione.

Hermione. His best friend. His rival.

He watches the toes curl as Ron's feet twist about themselves, crossing at the ankles, and wonders if it's about Hermione he dreams now. If, in his dream, he's caressing her feet with his own as he whispers loving words into her bushy hair. It's a dream where a friendship of three has been neatly reduced to a couple of two; a dream where

Harry no longer has any part.

Sometimes he hates her. It isn't really fair of him, or even justified. She can't help who Ron loves.

She can't help who Harry loves.

She can't help that he has to watch their relationship slowly budding, that he has to make soothing noises and give advice, that he has to mediate between them when every instinct is to destroy that relationship as thoroughly as possible. To push it into the ground and spit on it—to make sure it can never be. And she can't help that Harry, seeing Ron's eyes ever turn away from him and towards her, knows that he will never have what he wants.

That he will have to settle for watching a pair of hairy and rather smelly feet in the darkness, with more tenderness and love than he will ever watch Ginny's eyelashes.