

Christmas Epiphany

by Hechicera

Hermione and Padma at the Yule Ball

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This is a little one-shot I wrote for the August PotterPrOnPrompts challenge.

Thanks to my RedSkyAtNight and corianderpie for their amazing beta skills!

The initial exchange in italics is quoted from GoF.

"Why don't you go and find Vicky, he'll be wondering where you are," said Ron

"Don't call him Vicky!" Hermione jumped to her feet and stormed off across the dance floor, disappearing into the crowd.

Ron watched her go with a mixture of anger and satisfaction on his face.

"Are you going to ask me to dance at all?" Padma asked him.

"No," said Ron, still glaring after Hermione.

Hermione pushed her way through the crowd of dancers and out the front doors, angry tears pricking at the corners of her eyes. She stood for a moment at the top of the steps, taking in great calming lungfuls of the balmy night air. Beyond the edges of the rose garden she could see the trickling wall of condensation where Flitwick's warming charm met Nature's frigid winter night.

"Ron Weasley is an insufferable cockwaffle."

She turned to see Padma behind her. "Did you say *cockwaffle*?" she said, a little snort escaping her.

Padma nodded. "Sorry, I know he's your mate, but he's a hosenozzle of the first order."

Hermione laughed. "Honestly. I don't know why we bother with them. Boys, I mean."

"I do," said Padma bitterly. "At least in my case. Because my parents would kill me if they knew I liked girls."

Hermione looked at her, wide-eyed.

"Fuck, I'm sorry," said Padma. "I don't know what made me say that out loud."

"No, really, it's all right," said Hermione. "I just...I didn't know."

"No one does."

"Parvati must."

"Least of all Parvati." She did not expand on this, and Hermione hardly felt comfortable asking for details. *Bloody hell.*

There was a burst of loud laughter as a gaggle of students came through the doors behind them. Hermione laid a hand on Padma's arm. "Let's go for a walk," she said.

They strolled between the tall rose hedges, enchanted to bloom even in December. Hermione took Padma's hand in hers, their fingers intertwining in the darkness. "Padma, are you...are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Have you ever...you know...with a girl?"

"No. Nothing, not even kissing."

"Then how do you...I mean, well, how do you know?"

Padma gave her hand a little squeeze. "You mean how does a person know if they're gay?"

"Miss Granger. Miss Patil number two. Why aren't you inside?"

Both girls jumped as Snape's familiar figure emerged from the darkness, and Padma snatched her hand away from Hermione's. He had his wand out, and was scanning the rose garden intently.

Padma found her voice first. "It's a bit warm in there. Sir."

He seemed to spot something, for he abruptly lost interest in them and moved swiftly off; almost immediately there was a muffled explosion, followed by the startled cries of two students.

"Meddlesome git," said Padma. "Let's get out of here."

It was dark beyond the yew hedges that bordered the garden, and cold. Neither girl knew how to cast a Warming Charm, but Hermione produced half a dozen globes of blue flame, and Padma Transfigured the carpet of dead leaves into a soft patchwork quilt on which they sat, drawing the edges up around them. Almost as an afterthought, Hermione cast a Muffliato, then snuggled in against Padma.

"You were talking about...about how a person knows if they're gay," she said.

Padma stared fixedly at the ground. "Do you ever touch yourself?" she asked.

"I...well...sometimes," she admitted.

"Who do you think about when you do? That's the test."

Hermione thought. "No one, really. Just, you know, hands. And mouths." *I can't believe I'm talking about this.*

"No cocks?"

She giggled. "No. What about you?"

Padma turned silently to look at her. Her dark eyes glistened in the light of the blue flames, and Hermione was surprised to see fear in them.

Finally she said, "You. I mostly think about you."

Hermione felt a flush rise up from her neck. For a stunned moment she could think of nothing to say, and just looked open-mouthed at Padma.

"Oh, shit," said Padma, covering her face with her hands. "Oh, shit, I'm sorry. I'm a fucking idiot, I'm so sorry."

"Don't be silly. There's nothing to be sorry about."

"I just thought maybe...I mean, you hang around with blokes but you've never really had a boyfriend, you clearly don't give a monkey's that Ron's got a thing for you...I just thought . . . I don't know what I thought. I wasn't thinking. Please, say you'll forget I ever said anything. Please."

"Padma." She reached forward and pulled the other girl's hands away from her face. "Padma. Stop it."

And then she was kissing her, Padma's lips warm and soft and trembling beneath her own, and after a second's hesitation, the other girl's tongue darting forward to explore her mouth, at first tentatively and then eagerly.

A flash of heat blazed across Hermione's belly, and she pulled Padma against her, the two of them sinking down onto the quilt, the cold forgotten. She slipped her fingers under the cool silk of Padma's gown and sought out a tiny nipple, brushing against it and feeling it harden with desire. *Lovely, oh god, so perfect and lovely.*

"Oh, please," Padma whispered, "please." She pushed the strap of Hermione's gown down over her shoulder and lowered her head to kiss the hollow of her throat, her hand reaching to cup Hermione's breast as her lips grazed the skin of her chest, laying a feather-light trail of kisses along the path to her breast, finally taking the nipple in her mouth and sucking it lightly, her teeth just barely scraping against it.

"Padma, oh god," said Hermione, arching up against her. "That feels...oh, god." She reached down and began gathering up the folds of Padma's gown, pulling it up until she could slip her hand under it and in between Padma's soft, smooth thighs. She heard the other girl's sharply indrawn breath as she slowly moved her fingers upward. Stroking, caressing, her own heart pounding furiously in her chest, one finger brushing against the silk crotch of Padma's knickers and eliciting a low moan. Her mouth was against Padma's neck, and she could feel the pulse fluttering there under her lips, smell the earthy scent of her own excitement mixed with Padma's honeysuckle perfume.

"Padma," she said, "I don't really know what I'm doing, here. What am I supposed...what do we do?"

"The same as we do to ourselves, I would think," said Padma huskily. "Only to each other." She tugged impatiently at the skirt of Hermione's gown until it was bunched around her waist, then slid her hand around behind, only to stop in surprise.

"You're not wearing any knickers."

"The line showed," Hermione said defensively. "Besides, it's not like I was going to let Viktor anywhere close."

Padma raised herself up on an elbow. "Hermione . . . you're not doing this just to humor me?"

"Are you mad?" Hermione opened her legs and grasped Padma's wrist and pulled it between them. "Feel this." She gasped as Padma's fingers touched her.

"You're so wet." Padma's voice was edged with wonder. "You really want this."

"Yes," she groaned, pulling Padma's knickers aside and sliding her fingers into the slippery warmth there. The skin under her fingers was velvety soft, plump with arousal, the clitoris standing up hard with desire. So like her own, so familiar, and yet so . . . other. "I didn't know that I did, but I do."

"Hermione . . . oh, god," said Padma in a choked whisper, and pushed two fingers deep into her, her thumb flicking back and forth over Hermione's clitoris.

Hermione gave a little cry and ground against Padma's hand. Hungry, suddenly frantic for release, seeking out her rhythm, the feel of Padma's rigid little button under her own fingers unbearably arousing, oh god, it felt so good, so unbelievably, terrifyingly, uncontrollably good, oh god, yes, yes, god, oh god...

"Padma!" she cried aloud, and felt the other girl convulse against her hand with a little sob, and then lie still.

Home, she thought incongruously. I'm home.