

A Plan Comes Together

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The World Cup series was hectic this year. Viktor had only hours to come home, bring his laundry, kiss Hermione, and then head out to the next practice at a new stadium. He had been doing this for weeks now and was getting very tired of the schedule. The next game was to be held in the upper reaches of Norway. As it was now the end of November, icy conditions were almost guaranteed.

Hermione always had clean laundry waiting for him and a hot meal. She knew he would be home eventually, exhausted, but triumphant when they won.

It wasn't until he was on his broom during practice that he noticed he didn't have his wedding ring on.

His heart sank, knowing that Hermione would be devastated at him losing the ring. He remembered she had been upset because Crookshanks had gone missing the day before he got home this last time. She would be livid when he told her the ring was gone.

Over the next few days, he tried to remember where he could have lost the ring, but couldn't come up with any idea. He was frustrated because they didn't need any more stress just at this moment. Between Crookshanks running off, the World Cup series, the ring going missing, and trying to get pregnant, their lives were nearly frantic. It was a wonder that neither of them had gone insane.

Immediately after the Norway game, in the locker room, the coach had informed Viktor there were two Aurors waiting to escort him back to London.

"There's nothing wrong, Viktor, except that there have been some threats against you and Herms. We were sent to make sure you got home safely. You don't have another practice for ten days and the game is four days after that," Harry Potter spoke directly to Viktor, who was confused.

"Threats? What kind of threats? Against my Nin, too? What kind of idiot would threaten us?"

Harry just shrugged and looked at his partner, Ron Weasley, who answered, "The threats weren't specific, mate. Just some nonsense that you shouldn't make plans to play in the playoffs. 'Mione got a bit spooked and sent for us."

"Let me get changed and we can go. Oh, Harry, I want to talk to you about something privately."

"Sure. Get changed and we'll get out of here. We're going through the Norwegian Floo to Copenhagen, then taking the train to London. I know it is a longer trip, but we'll have time to talk, Viktor."

"I will probably sleep on train, Potter. I haff something I must tell Nin, that I fear she vill not like. Haff lost vedding ring."

Ron Weasley's ears perked up at that. *Was Viktor Bloody Krum cheating on 'Mione?*

"Hey, Harry. Find out if he was ..."

"Ron, you know he isn't cheating. Get your mind out of that rut. Don't you remember their vows? He can't cheat. If he does, he dies. Use your brain for once." Harry was unsurprised that Ron would immediately think that, though. Ron had never quite understood why Hermione chose Viktor instead of himself.

The Floo trip was uneventful, and they made the train in plenty of time. Ron was in the dining car while Viktor and Harry discussed the threats and the missing ring.

"Potter, the cat went missing the day before I got home from Ireland game. I had ring in locker that game, too. Took shower, got dressed, and talked to reporters. I don't remember if ring was still in locker. Was so tired that all I could think of was getting home to Nin. Am so glad there are only two more games before championship game. Is going to be Ireland again. I am sure. I think they are cheating somehow. But do not know how."

"Are the two of you still trying to get pregnant? That has to be adding to the stress. What I see is a relentless campaign of harassment against the two of you. Moreover, you're right; I think it is tied to the championship. Get some sleep. I'm going to talk to Ron. If it is Quidditch related, he is the expert."

"Da. Thank you, old friend."

Viktor closed his eyes and leaned back into the comfortable seat in first class. Harry set a notice-me-not spell on the carriage where Viktor was sleeping. It would keep people out of the carriage.

"Hey, Ron, I need to talk to you about the Irish Quidditch team. Vik said that Crookshanks went missing before the last Irish game with Bulgaria. His ring went missing around that time, too. He thinks there is something wonky about the Irish playing. Any ideas?"

"Well, they have beaten every team other than the Bulgarians this series. That in itself is unusual. I wouldn't be surprised if they were cheating to a certain extent. I'll bet Flitwick or Minerva could come up with a spell to nullify any spells they are using. Do you think the Irish are behind the stuff with the Krums?"

"It is certainly a possibility. I'll be glad when this journey is over. Will you send a message to Seamus to see if anyone has seen the cat?"

"Harry, you know if the ring went missing from his locker room, it had to be staff, other players, or the cleaning crew. I'll tell Seamus to check on the cleaning crew for that game. The staff and the players wouldn't do that to him. They're all family. He's the only one who married outside the group."

"You're right, Ron. That makes sense. I knew you'd be able to suss things. Vik's sleeping so we can talk in the dining car."

"Did you put up a spell to keep folks out?"

"Yeah. He should sleep the whole way back, I think. We can check in with the Ministry to see if there are any developments. Come on."

As they walked, Ron was thinking of everything his Quidditch buddies had been talking about. Every one of them had money bet on Bulgaria getting to, and winning, the World Cup game. If Ireland was to win, there could be fortunes made on that single game.

"Harry, I think Bagman is behind this. My mates from the Cannons are betting heavily on Bulgaria. They say that Ireland doesn't have a chance this time; not when Viktor has gotten better than he was eight years ago. The only person I can think of that might be willing to bet on Ireland would be Bagman."

The look on Harry's face must have scared Ron. Then Harry grinned hugely and punched Ron on the shoulder. "I think you may have just solved our case, mate."

"I'll just send to Seamus to have the squads pick up Bagman after they check on the cleaning crew for that game. Um, Harry, would you come with me to that fancy witch's store in Diagon Alley? I want to buy something for Romilda. I mean, you know about knickers and that kind of stuff, right?"

"Ron, you'd be better off if you asked Vik. Your sister doesn't let me shop for her at all after I picked out that nightgown with Pygmy Puffs all over it."

"You think he'd help me? I mean..."

"Ron, he's married to Herms. He knew you'd eventually grow out of puppy love and find someone you want to spend your life with. He and Herms actually came to your binding, didn't they? Sure, he'll help you. He's that kind of guy."

In London, Viktor agreed to help Ron with lingerie purchases for Romilda.

Seamus said Lavender had been alerted when a cat matching Crookshanks' description had turned up at a Muggle animal shelter in Acton. She had rescued the cat, certain that it was Crookshanks.

Ron and Harry delivered a tired, but happy Viktor home to his wife only a couple of hours after the train had arrived.

When they arrived at the house, Hermione looked at the three of them and laughed.

"You all look horribly guilty of something. Beat it, you two. I have plans for my husband."

Ron rolled his eyes at Hermione and said, "Thanks, mate, for helping me pick out stuff for Romilda. I appreciate it."

Just as Harry and Ron were leaving, Lavender arrived with Crookshanks in a carrier. "I knew it was your cat, Herms. Can't stick around; Seamus is watching the baby, and you know what a disaster that can be."

Hermione had just closed the door and wrapped herself around her husband when there was another knock at the door.

"Hi, Luna, what do you need? Viktor just got home. We didn't expect anyone to come visit."

"Oh, Rolf said to bring you this new potion. He and Neville have been working on various things lately. I hope it does the trick. Hi, Viktor. We'll talk in a few days, Herms. Good luck."

Luna handed over a black lacquer potion box and a scroll of parchment, and then she was gone off down the street.

"What is potion, loff?" Viktor asked quietly.

"I have no idea, Vitya. Let's take it upstairs and I'll read the parchment. Isn't it strange that she now calls Severus Rolf? I think it is just weird that the Scamanders decided to adopt Snape after the war. Old Miss Sarina Scamander felt bad that she had stopped Eileen Prince from marrying her brother and wanted to make it up to Snape. Oh, it is a fertility potion."

"Then let's go upstairs and see if it works."

It was later noted that Rolf Scamander a.k.a. Severus Snape had used several times the amount of Felix Felicis in that fertility potion that both Hermione and Viktor had to drink.

The Auror squad picked up Ludo Bagman as he came off the ferry from Cork the next day.

The hope for a family soon manifested itself in Hermione becoming pregnant with twins and Viktor winning the World Cup Game by catching the Snitch before the Irish could even score one goal.

Ludo Bagman was the culprit behind the theft of Crookshanks, the disappearance of Viktor's ring and the magical assistance for the Irish team. Viktor's ring was found and returned by Ron Weasley in a gesture of kindness to a former rival.

A/N Fairfield's were: a lost wedding ring, a winter journey, an unexpected act of kindness, a wizard buys lingerie, hope returns during the dark days of winter, a pet returns, a surprise visit