

# Strawberries

*by CB McWhorter*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Anti-litigation charm: I am definitely not a world-changing British author, and I make no money off fics like this. I just take these characters out to play with from time to time. Many thanks to JKR for inventing such a beautiful playground.

### STRAWBERRIES

Minerva McGonagall sat next to a weepy Poppy Pomfrey on the bench behind Arthur Weasley's workshop. "Have you heard anything more?"

Poppy shook her head. "Not since I sent that lot on. I used the system Albus advised, but I have no way of knowing if it got there..." She started to cry again. Minerva patted her shoulder. "I don't know if he's all right," Poppy sniffed. "He could need help, and I wouldn't know..."

"We just have to believe that things are going along," Minerva murmured, hoping she didn't sound as useless as she felt.

"I know. If it all fell apart, I'm sure we'd learn of it in the cruelest way. But, oh, Minnie! Blood replenisher! Why would he still have needed that?"

Minerva shrugged. "The hippogriff..." she started, and instantly regretted it. "Poppy, it won't do to fall to pieces now, would it?" she asked gently. "I mean, there are Aurors out there."

Poppy gave a short laugh. "And where would it do, do you suppose?" She looked into the bowl on her lap. "You know what started me off, don't you? These. I brought them here for a moment's peace, and then I remembered how much he likes them and what he'd be like if he was here, and, well, off I went..." She pressed her handkerchief to her face & took a deep breath to calm herself. She regained her composure only to find Minerva sniffing into her own hankie. "And Heaven forfend anyone should know that our snarky boy has a weakness for anything nice, you know."

Minerva was able to chuckle at that. "Well, here," she said. "Let us enjoy them in his honor. You eat yours. I'll eat his." She plucked a strawberry from the bowl.

"Oh, no," Poppy said with a smile. "You eat yours. I'll eat his." She sank her teeth into a fat berry of her own.

"Just where would we be without our little traditions?" Minerva mused.

Inside the workshop, just inside the window above the bench, in fact, Arthur Weasley took a deep breath as the women's voices faded away. He would have cast a silencing spell as soon as he realized what direction their conversation was taking, but he had his wand hand firmly gripping Harry Potter's shoulder, and he hadn't dared to let the boy go. Harry was standing still, white and cold, green eyes snapping. On Arthur's other side stood Hermione Granger, hands clamped one on top of the other

over her mouth, tears flowing down her cheeks. Eventually, she turned to Arthur.

"It was all planned?" she croaked.

"Of course not," Arthur snapped. But they knew he lied.