

My Brother's Child

by beaweasley2

Fred's girlfriend Lydia goes to Fred's the funeral to lay flowers on his grave and breaks down crying. After the funeral, she tells George that she's pregnant with Fred's baby, and he accidently announces her pregnancy to the entire family. However, George decides at Fred's wake that he'd like to raise his brother's child. How can he convince her to marry him? Does she? What do the others think?

The Wake

Chapter 1 of 3

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Thanks to my beta, Amsev, who spent so much time and patience cleaning up all my mistakes and errors. Amsev you're the greatest. How did I ever get so lucky?

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### The Wake

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The skies were a gloomy grey, which just seemed appropriate somehow. George stood between Charlie and Percy watching the slight breeze ruffle the petals on the flowers. If he had to listen to Percy lament about how it should've been him instead of Fred that died in that corridor one more time, he was going to hex him. His mum was crying still. She hadn't really stopped, at least not in his presence. Somehow, just the sight of him sent his mum into hysterics all over again. He was thinking about transfiguring his nose and donning a new hair color. *Everyone expects me to be falling apart... coming over teary eyed. It must be my ornery side, the obstinate part of my personality.* Even Charlie kept whispering to him, what he supposed were words of comfort or something of the sort, but his brother was usually on his bad side, the one with the missing ear. *Blimey, I actually have a bad side now... Bugger. I'd happily agree to it for the rest of my life that he was the better looking of us anything just to have him back!*

A lone bagpipe played Amazing Grace not too far away. It wasn't really for Fred; there were several people being buried today. An area by the forest and not too far from the lake had been designate as a burial place for the fallen heroes of the Hogwarts Battle. Mum and Dad had been sad but pleased that Fred had been given 'hero' status to be buried here. The ring of tired and sad people that surrounded the site, all dressed in somber robes, holding flowers for loved ones, was quite a crowd. George looked up to where Firenze stood with his herd, the bandages from Professor Grubbly-Plank still in place. *Even the centaurs are standing vigil along the trees*

His gaze traveled slowly from the path where Firenze and Dramoon stood to the hole in over which Fred's coffin hovered, only a few steps from the centaur hooves *Good place, we used to go into the forest just past where Fred's grave is. I wonder if anyone but Hagrid knows that. Course, it was Hagrid that laid him here.*

George looked up across the graves at the other mourners and saw Lydia. She was in black, her eyes looked tired, and her hair was tied back in a ribbon of Gryffindor red. *The black does nothing for her... makes the dark circles under her eyes show up more* She was wearing the ruby earrings Fred had given her for Christmas. *Well, we both bought them for her only she was so amazed by the gift, hugging and kissing Fred so warmly, I didn't have the heart to tell her I paid half! Well, actually the money came from the shop's profits so it was like I paid half. She'd done so much for us these last two years since we'd all left Hogwarts, helping us keep up with product production and helping with the purchases of supplies. She's a real sweetheart.*

It was simply a chance of fate that she hadn't been at the castle that day. Fred had magically sealed her into his bedroom before they left and never had the opportunity to tell him why. *Her being an Animagus would've been downright helpful* but Fred, in his hurry to respond to the call from his DA Galleon, hadn't explained. Just dropped her wand in the kitchenette table and ran for the Floo.

George had come home to find Lydia curled up on Fred's bed, hugging his pillow and crying. She had run from the room, screaming for him, angry at being locked up *Who could've blamed her.* George told her then. She'd stood frozen, waiting for him to laugh or tell her it had been a joke, then ran down into the shop thinking it had been a trick. He'd found her on the floor in a ball, crying hysterically. All he could do then was hold her. He'd felt like a clod, inhaling the fragrance of her hair and wishing she was lamenting for him like that.

She'd refused to leave Fred's room afterwards, even to eat. George had spent several meals, sharing sandwiches on Fred's bed, watching huge tears roll down her cheek. Her long, silky, sandy-blonde hair had hung loose, framing her face, and her soft amber-brown eyes had been blood shot and puffy. Even her nose had been pink from wiping it so often. Nevertheless, he'd still thought her pretty. *If she'd only sat next to me that night instead of Fred, asking for help on her homework. Or that night in the hospital wing when she sat on Fred's bed instead of mine... I reckon she'd have been my girl. Well, she would've if I'd been sleeping on my side facing Fred, instead of on my back that night like a blanker. She'd never really been able to tell us apart in school, constantly confusing herself by trying to figure out who was who. It'd been so fun all those years teasing her, and she was so gullible to fall for it each time. Nevertheless, in the end it'd been Fred who'd kissed her first so I backed off. I was the one who didn't come out with the first move. I just didn't know I wasn't sure if she liked me or Fred then.*

A canon fired from somewhere back at the castle, jerking George from his memories, and the coffins magically lowered into the ground. Fred's coffin vanished under a white marble slab that simply bore his name, the dates of his life and a few words that Hermione had written for him. George turned around and sighed. *Fifty-nine*, he thought, although he didn't really want to count. *Fifty-nine marble slabs, all in rows and squared off. At least Fred's here, right at our favorite path into the trees...* As his family began to move off, George noticed that Lydia hadn't moved, clutching a bouquet of water avens to her chest. *Her favorite flower, the ones Fred used to send her by owl.* Instead of following his family, George walked around Fred's marker and approached Lydia. She looked up at him, biting her lip with thick tears running down her face.

Her face reflected how he felt, but was unable to match. He'd not cried since that day in the shop when he'd held her, to give her his support, and hadn't shed any tears since. Instead, he'd just held her, feeling their shared pain as she cried against his chest until she fell asleep.

"Hi," he said, not sure what to say.

Another tear ran down her cheek. "Hi." She looked up from the grave and tried to give him a small smile.

"You okay?" *No, she's not, you wanker*, he berated himself.

She turned to stare at Fred's marker. "Yeah, I suppose so." She bent down and wiped some nonexistent dust from the surface of the stone. "He wouldn't let me... He locked me up. I could've..." Her head dropped.

"He was adamant," George stated, trying to explain. "I reckon he didn't want you anywhere near the fighting." George helped her to her feet and placed an arm across her shoulders. She turned toward him, crushing the flowers against his chest. Gently, he removed the flowers and she looked up at him.

"He used to give these to me," she said softly.

"I know, I had to watch the shop when he went to get them," he replied, looking at the partially crushed white blooms. "You want to hang onto them?"

She shook her head and looked down at the crushed flowers. "They're smashed."

"He won't mind." George watched as she bent down to lay the flowers on Fred's grave and stood back up. He pulled her into a hug, and Lydia cried against his chest, eventually placing her arms around him. He could feel her pain and held her tighter, allowing her to shed the tears that wouldn't come for him.

"George," Charlie said softly. "Oh hi, Lydia."

George hadn't even noticed that his brother had approached. He looked up at Charlie over Lydia's head and simply nodded, not moving away from her or letting her go.

"Mum is having everyone come home to the Burrow. Lydia, do you want to come?" Charlie asked.

I should have invited her, George mentally kicked himself. *Well, I would've after she stopped crying*

Lydia turned her head to look at Charlie and nodded. George released her as she turned away from him to face Charlie. "Can you Apparate?" Charlie asked.

"I'll bring her," George said. *It's the least I can do...*

Charlie turned and walked away. "I shouldn't Apparate," Lydia said softly.

The corner of his mouth lifted into a half smile. "Fred told me that you hated Apparating, but, Lydia, I can..."

She looked up at him, her expression worried. "No, I mean I shouldn't... not without..." She looked away from him, obviously uncomfortable with the idea. "I haven't seen my... been cleared for Apparation yet."

"You Apparated when I told you about the funeral," George stated, confused.

"That was reckless of me. I shouldn't have done that." She looked down at Fred's grave. "He'd've been really mad at me if he'd known I'd risked..." She started to cry again.

"Splinching?" George asked, surprised. "I don't think that would've been a problem with all the Healers around here."

A strand of hair escaped the ribbon and brushed across her face, sticking to the wet trail of her tears. "No, it's not that... I haven't seen a Healer yet."

He was confused now. "Are you hurt? Do you want to see Madam Pomfrey? She's right over there helping Mrs. Creevy."

"I'm not hurt. It's okay. I can wait. Mrs. Creevy needs her more than I do." Lydia turned to walk away.

"So are you coming?" George asked, quickly catching up to her. "I'm sure I can make a Portkey or find one?"

"Can't..." She stopped and looked at the lake. "I'm sorry," she said, turning to look at him again. "I can Floo if I'm careful and for short distances, and I can try Apparating, but I don't want to if it's far..." She looked back at the graves. Already a stone and wrought-iron fence was being magically erected. "At least he knew. At least he..." She

fell to her knees crying again.

"Lydia, tell me." George hated to see her so crushed. "He knew what? That you loved him? We both knew that." He reached down to help pull her to her feet. "C'mon to the house, I'll get you there safely."

"All right. But be extra careful," she said, still holding his hand.

"I can do this, I won't splinch you," he said, pulling her closer and wrapping his arms around her.

"Not me, the baby," she said softly, just before George Disapparated with her.

"*Baby!*" he shouted as they Apparated in front of the Burrow. "You're you are? He you baby...?"

Ron, Charlie and Harry were still in the front garden, being ushered inside by his mum when George and Lydia appeared in front of the house. Lydia flushed and bowed her head. He tipped her chin up to make her look at him. "A baby? How long? Are you? Really? When?"

Her face lit up in the first real smile he'd seen since the day he and Fred had left to go fight. Her simple smile warmed his heart. "He asked the same things and in the same order too."

"What's this about a baby?" Charlie asked, turning around and starting to walk over to them.

"You're pregnant?" Ron shouted from the front stoop.

*Merlin's balls! She's pregnant? By Fred...* "So, when? How?" George stammered, still gobsmacked by the news.

"What did you say, dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked from the doorway. "Who's having a baby?"

Lydia simply blushed and looked down at the ground. Ron was now following Charlie, closely followed by Harry.

George was watching Lydia, wishing he'd known about this before he'd Apparated with her. *That's what she was trying to tell you, you idiot!*

"Well, are you?" Ron asked in his usual tactless way.

"Ron, don't yell at her," Harry said. "George's the one that said anything about having a baby."

"Did you know she was pregnant when you Apparated?" Charlie asked, stopping next to George. "What were you thinking? You have to be extra careful when Apparating with a pregnant witch, so you don't splinch the baby!" He turned his attention from berating his brother to Lydia. "Are you all right? Do you hurt anywhere I mean down in does it hurt?"

Lydia shook her head, refusing to look at anyone.

"So she is pregnant!" Ron said, and George groaned.

"Lydia, are you sure? No cramping, no pains of any kind?" Charlie asked, pulling his wand free from his pocket. "If you start bleeding, we'll get you a Healer..."

"Who's bleeding?" Mrs. Weasley asked, hurrying over. "George, is Lydia bleeding? Oh, my goodness, are you all right?"

"She's pregnant, Mum," Ron announced, and George really wanted to hex him.

Lydia turned a deep pink and bowed her head as she did when his family surrounded her. Her shyness around large crowds, or the entire Weasley clan, was one of her more adorable traits. "I um... No. I don't think I'm bleeding. I don't hurt anywhere..."

"Lydia dear, are you sure...? Do you need...? Of course you do," Mr. Weasley began her fussing over Lydia, and Lydia stepped closer to George as if needing rescuing.

*Bludgers... I had to open my big mouth!* George sent his Patronus into the house to get Hermione and Ginny. *Hermione will know how to handle Ron and Harry, and it's always good to have the girls around when Mum starts going. If Mum starts acting anything like she did when Fleur or Tonks was pregnant...*

"Well, let's get you in the house, you need to sit down!" Mrs. Weasley said, reaching out to guide Lydia into the house. "Boys, come on, let's get inside. There are others arriving... Lydia, do you need anything?"

George felt Lydia's hand slip from his as she was ushered into the house by his mother, followed closely by Charlie and Harry, as Ron looked from George to the retreating group as if confused. Sighing, George ran into the house after Lydia, hoping to be able to do some damage control. *Really great! Now the entire family will know, and Lydia's embarrassed and having to deal with Mum's infernal mothering.*

When George entered the house, Charlie, Ginny, Fleur and his mum were clustered around Lydia. Hermione was keeping Ron and Harry occupied in the opposite end of the house, but still kept looking up occasionally at either Lydia or George.

*So, Fred was going to be a father? His baby... George watched Lydia blush from all the attention and smiled. She did say that he knew. 'At least he knew,' her voice echoed in her mind. She's going to have Fred's kid so... She's going to keep it! Wow. Oh. Oh!*

As more people began to arrive, and the house became crowded, the excitement about Lydia's announced pregnancy died down somewhat; still George was unable to find a moment alone with her to find out what she was going to do about the baby.

~x~

George had been thinking about Lydia and her baby all through the wake. Well, about Fred, the times they shared together and the stories he'd get to tell Fred's baby *The kid will never really believe all the stuff Fred and me pulled or all the stuff we got away with. I'll be able to tell him all kinds of bedtime stories. I'll make sure that he, or she, knows about her or his dad.* He'd caught Lydia's eye several times, but she either looked back at him annoyed or flustered. Charlie rarely left her side nor did his Mum. George had so many questions... so much he wanted to ask. The ones that kept popping up were; *Is she going to keep it? Where's she going to live? Who's gonna take care of her now? When she gets big, will she be able to work? If she works who's gonna take care of the baby...?* His questions were endless and didn't stop plaguing him.

Only when Mrs. Weasley stated cooking did George think he'd have a chance to pull her aside. "Oi! Lydia, I wanted to talk with you..."

She looked up expectantly when he approached. "What do you want, George?"

George stared into her amber eyes and suddenly needed to be alone. "Can we talk for a minute?"

Lydia sighed. "Okay, a minute. What do you want?"

"Can we go somewhere to talk more privately?" George asked as he looked around the room quickly *Charlie's refilling drinks... Mum's in the kitchen... Ron's on the stairs...*

Lydia tried to follow his gaze and looked up at him confused. "Like where?"

George chose the only place possible. "Let's go outside." He'd expected her to decline, but she nodded, rose from her chair and turned for the door. He followed her, plucking up the balls to swack the cockatrice head on. She led him out into the grass of the large garden. George watched her as she walked, trying to follow her gaze as she seemed to be looking around at the weeds in the flower beds and gnarled trees that stood along the walls, and then stopped next to an old apple tree next to a big, green frog pond. She stood staring at the surface of the water in the pond. "What's wrong, Lydia?"

Lydia turned on him, her usually soft eyes angry. "You just announced to your entire family that I'm pregnant!" she said with a wave of her hand in the direction of the house. "Your mum is already planning my baby shower, choosing my Healer, giving me a list of potions I need, and she's having your dad bring out the family crib and baby clothes! She wants to know if it's a girl or a boy, and Charlie keeps offering to check!" she crossed her arms, hugging herself.

"Blimey, it's not like I planned to say anything. It just came out..."

Lydia dropped her arms. "Well you did, didn't you? Your brother Charlie keeps trying to pull me aside and check the baby to make sure I we didn't harm it like he's my personal Healer now or something. And Ginny she's still dancing about asking me over and over what I want to name it! I wasn't ready for all this!" She started pacing, looking a little frightened. "Your mum expects to help with the baby!"

"I was taken by surprise! You said it just before we Apparated, and it just hit me what you'd said as we came out," George said, although it sounded lame as soon as he'd said it. Lydia looked up at him, and he sighed. "I would've wanted the announcement to have been better planned. I would've let you do it if you'd wanted to, but it just I went mental all right? I'm sorry."

Lydia sighed heavily. "Me too. I wasn't ready to tell anyone yet. Well, not your entire family..." Her eyes swelled up with tears again. "I'd just told him, you know... just before..."

*When? How long ago?* "No, I didn't know," he said.

Lydia looked down at the grass under her toes. "Yes, in the bedroom before his Galleon vibrated... and he suddenly had to leave. He locked me in his bedroom, saying he'd be right back and never did." Lydia's tears slid down her cheek.

He wanted to wipe them away. "Fred didn't tell me but I'm sure he wanted you safe from harm..."

"Obviously!" she said in a soft sneer. "You ran off to fight. Locked me up and ran off to defend the world. I I suppose he forgot all about me in his big rush he didn't bother to..." She turned head to avoid looking at him. "I could've would've helped."

"But understand where he was coming from. If anything would've happened to you, it would've crushed him just like it's crushing you right now."

She looked at him, her eyes narrowed slightly. "What's crushing me is that he'll never see our baby his baby. And he didn't even have time to tell me if he was happy or not. He just stood there, staring at me, then pulled out his bloody money and left! With my wand! He left me in the room alone without my wand! I don't even know if he was happy or angry or mad about I..."

"Just the fact that he locked you away in the room and took your wand away tells me that he was happy," George tried to second-guess his brother. "It's what I'd have done would've if you were if I were him. Lydia, he cared enough about you to do that for you..."

"Happy?" she asked incredulously. "He didn't he looked angry! I don't even know if he even wanted the baby..."

George was surprised. "Of course he'd have wanted the baby! Lydia, I'm sure of that. If he looked anything other than pleased..." He shrugged and ran his fingers through his hair. "Lydia, I have a Galleon just like his. It sends us messages, or we can send messages to each other and other friends. Harry Potter and Hermione Granger gave it to us when we joined a club. You remember Dumbledore's Army? You heard us talk about that, remember? Neville Longbottom used the coin to send us a warning to call us to come fight. It read *Vol attack Hogwarts*. It was a signal we'd been waiting for."

She crossed her arms as if considering his words carefully and bit her lip the way she did when pondering something.

"If Fred didn't look happy, it was because Voldemort was attacking and the battle had begun. His look was more concern for what was going on around us. I'm sure if he had more time to talk with you, he would have told he was happy for both of you. So don't think he was mad at you," he explained.

He stared at her lip as she released her lip slowly and it quivered slightly. "Do you think so?" she asked placing her hand on her tummy. "He was happy?"

George smiled. "Trust me. Twins have this sense about them to feel each other's feelings. No one knew him like I did." He winked at her reassuringly. "So, can I see a smile?"

She sighed and mouth stretched into a small smile. "Sure."

He pulled her to him and hugged her. "Everything will be alright." She started crying again, and he looked at her, actually feeling her pain "I know. I miss Fred too." He tipped her head up and wiped away her tears. "Lydia, what are you going to do?"

She sighed. "I don't know... Richard is still in Egypt and my parents... Oh, my parents! They're going to kill me! Mary, she's gonna freak I don't know... I'm still staying at my brother's with Mary until he gets back."

*She hadn't told anyone yet but Fred* George smiled at her trepidation. *And here I go and tell the whole family* "Let me help you."

"Help me? How?" she asked.

"I will be here for you and the baby. I want to help raise the baby with you," he said.

Lydia's eyes grew large in surprise. "What?! Are you daft!"

He chuckled. "Why? Fred was my brother and the father of your baby. It makes good sense."

Lydia opened her mouth to respond, and he tried to continue breathing, hoping she would say yes, just as Mrs. Weasley walked up on them. "Hey, you two. Get back inside. I've got the food ready. Lydia, it's frosty cold out here, come inside before you catch a cold. You cannot get sick it wouldn't be good for my grandchild. George, you've better sense than bringing her out here. Come along now come eat!"

Mrs. Weasley quickly ushered Lydia back to the house leaving George standing, wondering. *Simply splendid! Circe, Mum, she was just about to tell me 'Yes, sure, George, I really need you or no, I can't impose... Gods! What if she says no? She can't... I'll have to... No, she'll come around. It's the best choice. Who else should raise Fred's kid other than me?*

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Author's Notes:

Original Prompt is: #20. Fred's girlfriend (you decide who) goes to George after the funeral to tell him that she's pregnant with Fred's baby. George decides he would like to raise his brother's child. How can he convince her to marry him? Does she? What do others think?

To Woo a Witch

Chapter 2 of 3

George mistakenly blew it and announced to his entire family and their friends that Fred's girlfriend is pregnant. Nevertheless, he has now decided he would like to raise his brother's child and provide for Lydia. However, Lydia isn't exactly seeing things his way. How can he convince her to marry him? Will she? Moreover, what do his family and friends think?

Thanks you, Amsev, for all your time and patience cleaning up all my mistakes and errors. Amsev you're the greatest. How did I ever get so lucky?

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To Woo A Witch

George spent the next two days trying to find time alone with Lydia. The problem was now that Mrs. Weasley knew about the baby she was rarely alone. Lydia's sister-in-law, Mary, had owled everyone in her family, and Lydia had gotten into a horrible row with her, so Mrs. Weasley had convinced Lydia to move into the Burrow until things settled down. Unfortunately, Lydia's parents didn't take the news of Lydia's pregnancy any better than her sister-in-law did, especially since she was having her dead boyfriend's baby and was unmarried. Then news came that Lydia was carrying twins, and her family became even more insistent that she not carry the twins to term, but allow them to be switched to surrogates. Lydia was adamant that she wanted to keep her babies, and her relationship with her family deteriorated to shouting. Lydia fled to the Burrow and the support of his family. Still, single, unwed mothers were not looked upon too favorably in wizarding society, and George really took Lydia's chastisement to heart. He could help her if only she'd let him.

One night at the Burrow, he was finally able to corner Lydia in Bill's room. "Lydia, really, it's the next best thing, right? Look, is it my ear?"

"No, it's not your ear," she replied, shaking her head. "You only want to because of the twins."

"No, I really want to," he persisted.

She backed away from him, walking over to the crib his parents had set up in the room. "I can't it wouldn't be right," she said with a deep sigh.

"Who says? Look, I really like you, always have," he said.

She looked up at him and tilted her head, her hand rubbing the rail of the crib. "But you've never shown me any interest before?"

He plunged his hands into his pockets. "You were seeing my brother! What was I supposed to do?" he asked, hoping she'd see reason. "I'd have been a right prat to hit on you while you were a couple."

"And suddenly, now you love me so much you want to marry me?" she asked with mild indignation.

"Lydia, if you'd showed me any preference over my brother... if you'd asked me to help you with your spell work instead of Fred that night, sat on my bed in the hospital wing instead of his, or that night you twisted your ankle coming down the Astronomy tower and asked me to help you instead of Fred... these would be my kids."

Her expression turned to one of amused shock. "Oh, you think so? A bit self-assured are we?"

"Yes," he replied. "Look, I wanted to date you, but Fred and you got together so I backed off. But, if he'd dumped you, I would have asked you out."

"Really?" she asked, crossing her arms.

"Well, maybe," he said as he withdrew his hands from his pockets and held one out toward her. "But this is different."

"How's that?" she asked, looking at him as if he were nutters.

I've seen that look a hundred times before "He's dead, so you'd be like a widow... only you weren't married. Lydia, you know that unwed mothers are frowned upon. I want to spare you that. I want to raise Fred's twins, yours and Fred's," he rambled the speech he'd practiced a dozen times in the mirror. Somehow, it didn't sound as convincing as when he'd said it in his loo. "I'd love these kids as if they were my own. Really."

"I have no doubt that you'd love my babies; my doubt is whether you love me *me*. I'm half of this package, and when they go to Hogwarts, then what? What if we've made a mistake, and you and I aren't suited? Then what? I don't want to divorce... nor do I want a marriage of convenience."

"You were suited for Fred?" he retorted, hoping that she'd see his logic.

She obviously didn't. "That's different," she answered him.

"How?" he persisted. "No one could tell us apart growing up not even my mum. And you you were constantly confusing us for the other."

"You'd switch your names on me! Fred told me!" she exclaimed and tears welled up in her eyes.

Great. Don't make her cry, idiot! "Well, yeah, that was before you started showing us any interest," George tried to explain.

She lowered her gaze to the two stuffed teddy bears sitting in the crib. "I was interested in you since fourth year."

"See, you were interested in me, then," he said hopefully.

"You were not interested in me in fourth year, in fact you never showed interest in me at school," she pointed out. "I was even hoping you'd take me to the Yule Ball but you didn't."

"Yes, I was... Okay maybe I was a bit thick. I could've been. I didn't know," he stammered, and she looked at him incredulously. "Too many Bludgers to the head."

"You were never hit by a Bludger, you were too good," she replied, shaking her head.

"Thank you," he said with his most winning smile. "Marry me."

"No."

"Why are you making this so difficult?" he asked, walking over to her.

"I'm not, I'm being practical," she answered as he placed his hands lightly on her waist.

She didn't pull back or resist so he took a risk and pulled her closer to him. "Practical would be letting me raise these kids with you and marrying me."

"Not practical convenient," she said with a sigh, not meeting his eyes.

"Then simply have dinner with me," he suggested, brushing a tear from her cheek.

She thought about it a while. "Okay, when?"

"Every night for the rest of your life," he replied, pulling her into a hug.

She didn't resist him, but her arms didn't move any further than his waist as he held her. "I'll think about it."

~x~

Lydia spent the week working in the back room, charming objects for the shop. She was finished charming the trick wands and playing cards that afternoon. So far she had spent most of her evenings with him, but frequently, dinners were at the Burrow rather than alone in his flat. Still, she was spending more time with him than without. But George wanted her to spend time in his flat with him, alone, so that he could flirt and tease with her easier and get her to realize that she could love him as much as he cared for her. That wasn't so easy to do in the shop with customers needing his attention or at the Burrow with his mum's constant presence.

So it was fortuitous when Hermione stopped by the shop to have lunch with Ron and while he was still busy packing up the last of the owl orders that had to go out that day. George took advantage of the situation and pulled her aside to ask Hermione's advice regarding Lydia. "Hermione, you're good with understanding girls," George asked. "Can I ask you something?"

Hermione looked at George, confused. "Sure."

George watched as Verity walked over to assist a group of giggling girls over by the Pigmy Puffs. "I want to marry Lydia," he said just getting to the point of the matter.

His seriousness must have caught her off guard. "Okay?" she asked, shrugging. "And the problem is?"

"She said no," he clarified for her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Did she say why?"

He took a deep breath and picked up a feather quill out of a bin of trick rubbers some customer misplaced. "She didn't want a marriage of convenience, and she said I only want to marry her because of the babies."

"Is that true?" she asked, eyeing the feather cautiously.

"NO! Okay, at first yeah, sort of," he said, looking at her, the feather tip pointing at her chest. "I like her loads. I would've dated her if Fred hadn't first."

"But he dated her first, and she doesn't feel the same way for you that she did for him," Hermione summarized. "You're not Fred."

"I'm as good as," he argued.

"But you're not him you're you. She sees the difference. You're his brother, her friend and boss. It's got to be a little weird to her to um switch brooms like that," she explained.

"Fred and I had the same brooms," he replied. "We switched brooms all the time."

"Yes, but it's like... Okay, it's like you wearing Fred's pants," Hermione replied, trying another comparison.

"Done that loads of times," he said. *What does this have to do with trying to get Lydia to marry me?*

Hermione held up her hands and grimaced. "Not a picture I really wanted in my head, thanks," she said with a laugh.

George suddenly caught on to his slip and blushed. "No, they'd be clean, Hermione!" he said, catching her innuendo. "Mum wouldn't fold anything, so we'd just divide and dump. Heck, even the house-elves got our stuff mixed up."

"Don't you understand what I'm trying to tell you?" she asked, laughing. "Ok, she kissed Fred. Obviously, she shagged him. Now, she's faced with the idea of being with you, and she's probably wondering if every time she kisses you, who will she be thinking about? You or Fred. And, if she shags you, will she wish she was with Fred or will she be happy it's with you? And if she starts anything with you, is she only with you because you're so like Fred in the first place? In a way you are very much like your brother, and if you two did get together, it might feel like she was just accepting a replacement look-alike for him."

"Oh. Oh... right," he stammered as he sorted out what she said in his mind. "Blimey, I didn't think on it that way. Thanks!"

"You have to convince her you are you and *not* Fred. And help her see the real you your differences," she said, smiling as Ron appeared to take her to lunch.

"Mione, I'm ready to go."

"Yeah, you go, have a good time. Hermione, thanks, I really appreciate it," George said, leaning against the counter looking at the quill still in his hand.

Hermione smiled encouragingly. "Anytime. Good luck."

George watched her leave, more confused than before they'd had their talk. *Blimey, girls are complicated*. He watched as three girls filled a shopping basket with Wonder

Witch Products and even considered slipping Lydia one of his love potions. *Nah, she'd hate me for it. I'll just have to woo her with my charming wit. I mean it's not like we aren't already friends. I'll just have to convince her I want more than friendship. I want a family.*

~x~

George had been sweeping the front door as Verity and Lydia finished straightening up the sales bins and returning the misplaced items to their proper places. There were still six potions simmering in the back room to be added to the biscuits and candies used in the Skiving Snackboxes. He was going to ask Lydia to stay and help him, hoping she'd say yes. He really liked working after hours with her and knew that she did, too. He waited until both girls went to hang up their magenta robes before approaching Lydia. "Hey, do you have a moment?"

Lydia turned around. "Sure, what's up?" she asked.

"I wanted to know if you'll stay and help me with the Snackboxes?" he asked, hoping the excuse didn't sound lame.

"Doesn't Ron usually help you with those?" she asked, confused.

George shrugged, knowing that he'd given Ron the evening off with the excuse of revising for his Auror training exams next week. "He's not coming in tonight, exams. So I could use the help."

She shrugged and turned around to retrieve her robe. "I can if you like."

They started on the Canary Creams, which now came in six variations, each making the person who ate the cream turn into a canary of different colors, the most popular being yellow, red, green and blue hues, although lavender and orange sold fairly well. "Have you given any thought to where you'll live when the babies are born?" he asked, smearing the filling on the crisp biscuits.

"Your mum insists I stay at the Burrow," Lydia stated.

He watched her from the corner of his eye as she carefully smeared the cream fillings. "Things aren't going well with your sister-in-law?"

She shook her head. "Mary's still nagging me about keeping Fred's babies. Richard came home over the weekend, and they had *a* discussion about me. It was like I wasn't even there. I'm nineteen for crying out loud you'd think I was still a minor. Everyone wants to decide for me."

George took the tray she'd finished and began filling the boxes. "You are welcome to move in here."

"That's thoughtful of you. Seems I have several places I could live, your parents' place, my brother's, my friend Robin offered," she said, concentrating on the next set of creams. "Mum and Dad are still disappointed in me and aren't offering to help, but that's all right. I wouldn't want to move home and deal with Mum's and the twins' constant... Well, that's not an option."

"But what do you want?" he asked, trying to sound nonchalant yet supportive at the same time.

"I like working here. I was saving up for a flat of my own, but that's been changed. I dunno. Either stay with your parents or my brother's place with Mary. Richard travels all the time, so it's just her and me..." She sighed heavily. "Mary and I get along, but she's so demanding and opinionated. She's smothering me all the time."

"Like my mum is, I suppose," he said with a grin. "Offer still stands. Move in with me. It's close to work, you won't have to Floo or Apparate, I'm a decent cook, even if I do say so myself, and you're not too far from your Healer here."

"You just want me to move in," she said, giving his shoulder a playful nudge.

"Look, the flat is right upstairs. You can keep the twins here in the back room while you work or up in the flat. I can rig something so that you can hear the babies if they cry or need you," he replied, stacking the ready boxes on the back counter. And yes, I want you here. *We* get along grand, don't you think?"

"People would get the wrong idea, me living with you," she said, sliding a completed tray of creams to his side of the workbench.

"Let them. It's the idea I'm hoping you'll get that matters anyway." He stopped and turned to face her. "Lydia, I really like you. Well, it would be premature to say I love you, but I do."

She blushed and turned away from him. "It just still feels weird, me seeing you."

She dropped her knife, and George pulled her into a hug. "It will be okay with me, you know. I know you like and respect me. We're good friends and all. Can't that be the basics of us getting married, being good friends? Who knows, you may even come to love me someday."

She wrapped her arms around him and rested her head on his shoulder. "I already love you, just not like that," she said.

"That's a start," he said, kissing her temple.

"Oi, what's going on here?" Ron asked, standing in the doorway.

Lydia was the first to pull away, blushing profusely. "Ah, er, nothing. Just filling creams."

George had no idea that Ron had come into the shop or how long he'd been standing there. "I thought you wanted the night off?"

Ron looked angry. "You offered to let me have the night off, but I came in anyway. So, what's this, you moving in on Fred's girl?"

"It's not like that, and it's none of your business," George said defensively. *Leave it to Ron to come in and spoil my plans*

"She's carrying Fred's twins," Ron said indignantly.

"I'm aware of that," George snapped back.

"You've asked her to move in with you," Ron said sounding accusingly judgmental.

"Yes, he has," Lydia stated. "So what?"

Ron looked at her aghast. "You're not married to him and you're not a couple," he said. "People will talk."

"So, what? It's not as if I didn't propose to her," George stated, wishing Ron would mind his own business. "Besides, it makes good sense."

"What does? Shacking up together?" Ron asked, crossing his arms.

"Us, Lydia and me. Me marrying her and raising Fred's kids," George said, hoping to get his baby brother to see reason.

"You're nutters!" Ron exclaimed.

"I love her," George stated. This was not how he wanted the evening to go. He wanted to convince Lydia to move in, not shout about it with Ron as if she weren't standing beside them. "It's what we were talking about, Ron. It's her..."

"Stop it just stop it! It's not up to you, either of you! It's up to me!" Lydia pulled off her work robes and tossed them on the floor. "I have to decide what's going to be best for my twins and for me! If you're just going to fight over this I'm leaving!" She stormed from the room in tears.

"Bugger, you are mental, Ron! How can you be so thick? Who else should raise Fred's kids? Do you really think it would be best if she raised them on her own? She's a single parent and only nineteen. I have a flat and a thriving business, and technically those kids are family she's as good as family. So what is your problem?"

Ron's ears turned beet red. "I didn't see it that way."

"Well, I have! And I *want* to marry her," he responded angrily. "So if you're done making things even more difficult for Lydia, maybe you could start mixing the ingredients for the Whiz-Bangs!" He picked up the completed Snackboxes to stock the shelves. "Make yourself useful or go home."

~x~

George arrived outside the Burrow, flowers in hand to see Lydia. Actually the flowers were for his mum to soften her up after the ridiculous owl he'd received. Apparently, Ron had blabbed to everyone that George had proposed to Lydia and that she'd moved in with him. Mrs. Weasley put her foot down saying that the girl couldn't live with him as it wouldn't seem proper. He had no idea why it would seem improper for a pregnant, single girl to reside in his flat. *Blimmey, she'd have her own room! She used to stay with Fred and me loads of times. I mean, bloody horntails, it's not like I don't have good intentions!*

Just before he opened the door, George heard Lydia's voice through the open window. "Charlie proposed to me, too. What is it with the males in your family?"

Ginny's voice followed. "That's disgusting. He hardly knows you!" George leaned against the house, listening in and hoping that maybe Ginny would talk some sense into Lydia. At the least he'd know what the girls thought.

"Are all Fred's eligible brothers going to propose to me? Even Percy sent me an owl asking what he could do," Lydia asked.

"They are only trying to look out for you, dear," Mrs. Weasley stated.

"Ron is telling everyone that George is trying to pull Lydia," Ginny said and giggled. "So it may seem like all my brothers are trying to snag you. But I know Ron isn't. He still wants to marry Hermione."

George stifled a laugh. *Good match, Ron. All you two do is fight and argue when you're speaking with each other. You'd be better off with Lavender Brown!*

"Charlie doesn't think George is mature enough to be a dad," Ginny added, "but I'd have to disagree. I mean he could easily support you, and he does really like you."

"That's the problem, he likes me. I still think he's only doing this because of the babies," Lydia said. She sounded sad to George.

"Do you like him, dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked.

"He's my best friend and my boss. That's hard enough," Lydia said.

"Do you trust him?" Mrs. Weasley asked. George couldn't hear Lydia's response. "Do you respect him? He's been nice to you, hasn't he? Has he ever shown you any indication of what he may feel for you?"

George was frustrated; Lydia wasn't answering his mum's questions verbally, so he had no idea how she was responding.

"Do you like George?" Mrs. Weasley continued. "Do you think you could be happy with my son?"

He wished that he could turn into a fly or a beetle and sit up on the windowsill to watch the girls inside.

"I think that's what you should be thinking about: what would make you happy. Either way, know that Arthur and I will be happy to have you stay here until you work things out. However long you need."

George decided it was time to face the girls. He opened the door smiling as if he'd not heard a word spoken and hoped it disguised the concern he felt. "Hi, Mum, Gin. How are you, Lydia?"

"The same I was fifteen minutes ago in the shop," Lydia said with a chuckle.

"Well, you never know, one of my daft brothers may have made some lame blunder and upset you. I know Ron has been a prat lately." He handed the flowers to Mrs. Weasley. "Apologies for being a daft prick myself," he said. "So, did you change your mind and want to marry me?"

Lydia shook her head, but at least she was smiling. "No, I haven't."

"Well, I'll wear you down eventually," he said, grinning. "I mean how can you resist my magnetic charm and good looks?"

Ginny pulled on George's arm and leaned in close to his good ear. "You were listening, weren't you?"

"I heard a little," he admitted.

Ginny gave his arm a playful shove, then pulled him back down to her. "If anyone should raise Fred's twins, it should be you, not Charlie. She'll come around. You've just need to keep reassuring her, that's all."

~x~

It had been nearly three months since George's grand announcement to the entire family about Lydia's babies, and he had used that time to try and convince her that he wanted to marry her for her. At least he and Lydia were spending their evenings together, either in the shop or at the Burrow, and she'd even agreed to go out with him on dates. However, she was reluctant to go up into his flat. He started bringing her bouquets of flowers entwined with ivy: roses, carnations, daffodils, stargazer lilies and sunflowers knowing that water avens would only remind her of Fred. He was thankful to Ginny when she handed him a list of flowers and their meanings so he wasn't sending the wrong messages.

Charlie had returned to Romania, but he still sent regular owls to Lydia and made it quite clear in each letter that he'd still marry her. He even sent her forget-me-nots. It made George laugh. Lydia's brother was starting to be more supportive, but Mary was now pregnant herself, and Lydia didn't really want to add her burdens in the house, knowing that she was having twins. Two newborns would be enough of a handful, but the idea of three in one house was making Mary anxious. George couldn't have been happier about the news and regularly suggested baby names, usually ones that rhymed. Still his biggest concern was Lydia's parents.

Lydia had agreed to let George fly her to her parents' home for dinner, mostly because she didn't like facing them on her own. Her mum was cordial enough, but her father pulled George aside and had the 'talk' about intentions, responsibilities and commitments. In the end, the best part of the dinner had been the pudding and the flight back to

the shop. It was also the first night Lydia had stepped into the flat since the battle at Hogwarts.

They were on the floor, leaning against the couch, legs stretched out, sitting on a fur rug by the Floo and sipping on grape juice. "I'm really sorry about my dad; he's usually a really nice guy."

"Well, he definitely got the right impression, I think," George stated, moving his arm to rest on the couch behind Lydia's head. "I do still want you to marry me." He started to play with her hair, enjoying the soft texture between his fingers.

She sighed and leaned into him. "I know you do. I'm beginning to think it may not be a bad idea."

"Really?" he asked, trying to control his grin.

"Well, don't look so smug about it," she chided him. "You've hardly given me any time to myself, and you've been the most persistent suitor I think a girl could ever have."

He set his glass down and then took hers. "You know I really do care for you. *You*. Not just because of the twins." He tipped her head gently to place a gentle kiss on her lips. She usually pulled back when he tried to kiss her, but this time she didn't, encouraging him on and even placing her hand on his chest so she could lean in closer to him. It was all the indication he needed. His arms went around her and their kiss deepened. He wasn't going to push her, not tonight, but he'd wanted this tenderness from her, and he was going to savor every minute. The log in the Floo crackled as it split in two, but neither George or Lydia cared.

"I think you should stay here tonight," he said softly as their kiss ended. "I mean, I'd really like you to stay."

She smiled and nodded. George helped her to her feet, holding her hand as they walked over to the bedrooms. She looked at Fred's door with an expression of longing sadness, and he pulled her into his arms. "If I'm going to do this, I think I would prefer your room," she said softly, hugging him back.

"Sure, I can sleep in Fred's room if you like," he replied, looking down at her.

"No, with you. I'm not really ready for anything physical, yet, but would you mind just holding me?" she asked, uncertainty in her voice.

"I'd like that," he replied, pushing open his door. "I even bought a bigger bed, just in case, for when I finally convinced you."

"How presumptuous of you," she said back, following him into his room.

"I like to think of it as prepared."

~x~

Author's Notes:

Flower meanings:

Carnation: My heart aches for you, admiration.

Daffodils: regard, unrequited love, you're the only one, the sun is always shining when I'm with you

Ivy: wedded love, fidelity, friendship, and affection

Sunflowers: warmth, adoration, sunshine and longevity

Forget-Me-Not: faithful love, undying hope, memory, do not forget

The Blessings

Chapter 3 of 3

So, George is now a father. Are the fates as kind to him as he and Fred were to their parents? They do say that the apples don't fall very far from the tree!

Thanks you, Amsev, for all your time and patience cleaning up all my mistakes and errors. Amsev you're the greatest. How did I ever get so lucky?

~~~~~

~o 3 o~

Just Like Their Father

The Blessings

"To the happy couple," Lee Jordan said as he raised his glass to toast the bride and groom.

George didn't think this day would ever come. It almost hadn't, considering all the hassles that started when Lydia had finally agreed to marry him. He'd asked her nearly every day, slipping the question into their conversations at random moments, and each time she'd let him kiss her. Lydia had spent the night with him frequently over the three months they were dating. George loved caressing her belly as it grew and had even started massaging her feet for her every night. They had been in cuddling on the sofa when she'd made her decision.

~x~

"It's daft, you Flooing into the shop every day," George said as he breathed in the fragrance of her hair. He liked these times best, right after a late dinner, curled up on the sofa with her, staring at the flames in the fireplace. "Do you want to stay here tonight?"

She turned to look up at him. "Did you just smell my hair?" she asked, amused.

George smiled, but he felt his cheeks warm. "Yeah. I like the smell of your hair; it's warm and flowery."

"You never say it, you know," she said as she snuggled back against his chest.

He looked down at her. "I don't say what?"

"Love," she replied. "You never say 'love.'"

"C'mon, I tell you all the time," he replied, confused.

She laughed; the sound of her laugh warmed his heart every time she did. "No, you say, 'I like,' or 'me too,' and 'ditto,' but never 'love.'"

"But I do," he stated.

"Do what? Say the word love or feel it?" she asked.

He pulled back so he could see her better. "Both."

She laughed at him again, settled back against his chest with a contented sigh, and closed her eyes. They sat like this for a long time, just holding her comfortably as the evening wound down. "So would you like to? Can I convince you to stay here?" he finally asked when Lydia tried, unsuccessfully, to suppress another yawn.

"When," she replied cheekily in what had developed into a game with them.

"Every night for the rest of your life," he replied, kissing the top of her head.

"I think I will," she answered.

It took him a few seconds to realize what she'd said. George pushed her up so he could look in her eyes. "Did you just say yes?"

"Yeah, I said I'll move in here with you," Lydia said, grinning. "But on a few conditions."

"Name them," George replied, still reeling to the fact she'd said yes.

"One, you have to tell me every day that you love me so I remain convinced," Lydia stated, her fingernails caressing his arm in soft swirls that made concentrating difficult.

"Okay," George said as he nodded. "I can do that."

Her fingers stilled on his wrist. "Two, you have to put up with my cat."

"No problem," George said, still grinning like a clabbert. "I can do that, too."

"And three, you have to marry me," she said, trying to control her expression into something serious, but failing as she watched the smile widen on his face.

"You mean it? You'll marry me?" he asked, surprised but feeling elated all the same.

"Yes," she said, laughing at him.

George pulled her into his arms, never feeling happier. "I love you."

"Took you long enough to admit that," Lydia said cheekily.

~x~

The dinner with her parents had been a real testament to his seriousness of wanting to marry Lydia and raise her twins, or so George thought. Lydia had insisted on getting her father's blessing before they bought rings, so George had tucked the engagement ring he'd had for the last five months back in the Droobles box in his junk drawer. At the rate they were going, he'd considered simply giving it to her as a Christmas present. As it was, it was early December when he and Lydia had gone to her parents' house to make the announcement.

"Dad, this is George, not Fred." Lydia had been explaining who George was and their relationship to her father for the last five minutes since they'd arrived. It didn't help that Mr. Thacker, a well respected Oblivator, had recently been hit with a rebounding Oblivate Charm. He was still suffering short-term memory loss, although the Healers had said the damage would reverse in time. Therefore, it was like facing Lydia's father for the first time all over again.

"You were dating George, but you were friends with Fred? I didn't know you knew a George." Mr. Thacker looked at George, befuddled. "You told me you were dating Fred, weren't you?"

"I and George were friends in school," Lydia said patiently. "But I was dating Fred, except he died in the war, remember? You've met both of them. You met Fred the summer after I graduated, and George was here a month ago." Lydia smiled warmly.

"So this isn't Fred this is George? He looks like Fred." Mr. Thacker's brow furrowed. He still looked completely confused. "So you are pregnant with this bloke's kids? I thought it was Fred's baby, but George is the father..." Mr. Thacker shook his head once. "Who's the bloke you're living with?"

Mrs. Thacker was smoothing out her apron for the third time since they'd arrived. "Would anyone like a cup of tea and a slice of fruit cake?"

"George is Fred's twin brother, Dad. These are Fred's babies," Lydia repeated for the third time, her hand on her enlarged abdomen. "I've been living with George for the last two months, remember?"

Mrs. Thacker clasped her hands nervously. "Is that a 'no' to the fruit cake?"

"So this is Fred?" Mr. Thacker asked.

"No, this is George. I am carrying Fred's twins," Lydia said again. "Fred died, Dad, he's gone. But George and I fell in love, and he's going to help me raise my babies." George was quite impressed how patient Lydia was being. He'd have lost it ages ago and started messing with the man.

"So you are marrying George," Mr. Thacker said, pointing at George. "I thought this is Fred, he looks like him... but his name is George?" Mr. Thacker asked, sizing George up. "That's bloody convenient. At least you're keeping it in the family, young man."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like some tea?" Mrs. Thacker asked, although neither Lydia nor Mr. Thacker were paying her any attention.

Mr. Thacker looked unconvinced. "So you are marrying him as a substitute for that fellow that knocked you up?"

"Dad!" Lydia exclaimed, beginning to get angry with her father, although tears were welling up in her eyes. "George has been with me for months now. He really cares for

me, and I love him."

"I could make some biscuits?" Mrs. Thacker asked, wanting to divert Mr. Thacker's attention to avoid unpleasantness.

Mr. Thacker scowled at his daughter, ignoring his wife. "Must be convenient, marrying the twin. At least when the kids grow up there won't be much scandal they'll look like him."

"Yes, they will," Lydia said. Mr. Thacker's brow furrowed as his daughter raised her voice at him. "Or they might take after me. Regardless, I want to marry George, Dad."

"Tea would be nice," George said amiably to Mrs. Thacker.

"What is the point? You're already living together," Mr. Thacker stated as he stared at his daughter, standing arm in arm with George in the lounge. "The wizards at the club... Well, we've kept the scandal suppressed so far."

"Randolph! You promised," Mrs. Thacker admonished her husband with a phony smile.

"Well, she is," Mr. Thacker said, crossing his arms. "Don't expect me to throw a huge wedding since you're already living with him."

"That won't be necessary, I can afford the wedding," George said, hoping to avoid any more problems.

"So, when is it," Mrs. Thacker asked. "Did you get rings?"

"In the spring," Lydia said to her mum, "and no, we haven't bought rings yet." Just then Robert and Mary entered the lounge, and Mrs. Thacker walked over to hug them.

"He can afford a wedding but can't afford rings," Mr. Thacker said, frowning, turning to his wife and nodding to the new arrivals. "Did you know anything about this?"

Robert was helping Mary remove her cloak. "Yes and no. I know that George has proposed to Lydia more times than I can count. Hiya, George. Would have been here sooner, but Mary hates flying and Apparation makes her sick, so we have to Floo, although that makes her sick too."

Mary gave him a playful shove and then extended her hand to George. "Lovely to see you again, George."

"... and I didn't have her Nausea Potion. Isn't pregnancy grand?" Robert continued uninterrupted.

"Good to see you, too," George replied then greeted Robert with a nod. "Lydia hates Apparating regardless, but she finally admitted that Floo travel was getting too much for her."

Mary smiled at Robert and then turned to the family. "We had to stop at the apothecary on the way here. I brought double fudge and caramel ice cream. Did you know that Fortescue's is open again? But I think it's under new management."

"So, sis, I take it you've finally resigned and you accepted his proposal!" Robert said warmly, giving Lydia a gentle hug.

"Yes," she replied, grinning. "We are hopefully getting married over Easter holiday."

"But why wait until spring?" Robert asked.

Lydia smiled at her brother, walking over to give Mary a hug. "I'm the size of a Hippocampus! I don't want to waddle at my wedding. Besides, my choices were over Easter Holiday or in June so George's sister can attend." She plopped herself down on the sofa next to Mary.

"Congratulations," Robert said, extending his hand out to George. "I knew you'd bring her around."

"You actually approve?" Mr. Thacker asked.

Robert smiled at his dad. "Blimey, of course I approve, Dad. He's been supporting her for a while now and obviously cares for Lydia a great deal. His dotting attention to my sister has even made my own life harder." He winked at Lydia and she stifled her laugh at his jesting.

Mrs. Thacker looked confused. "How's that dear?"

Robert caressed Mary's head, smiling down at her. "Thanks to all Lydia's bragging that George massages her feet every night, I've been having to do the same thing." He turned back to George, his expression changing into a smirk. "I hope you can appreciate how hard it's been to equal you when my job has me traveling all over the place three to four days of the week?"

"What can I say? I would have done anything to convince her to marry me," George said, shrugging. "Despite my charming wit, good business sense and constant persistence, it ended up being my dexterous fingers that won her over to me."

"That and the Canary Creams," Lydia said with a grin. "For some reason I absolutely crave them. I've molted enough feathers to make a feather bed."

"Merlin's balls! I'm glad you're not eating those things at my place," Mary said with a shiver. "I'm allergic to feathers! But I loved the box of chocolates you sent. Robert got pustules, nausea and a nosebleed all at the same time, and it took a while to sort out how to stop them. George Flooed over to help him and discovered that Robert has eaten both halves of the candy at the same time. I laughed so hard my sides hurt. So, which are you are planning, a March or a June wedding? If you choose March, I hope you have honking daffodils. I really love those."

"Oh, my! Robert, you were sick?" Mrs. Thacker exclaimed aghast.

"I'd love a March wedding! Then I can have singing pansillies, snap dragons, purr-lions, peek-a-boos and tinkling lily-bells, too!" Lydia said grinning. "I love spring flowers. I suppose it will depend on where we have the wedding. I always wanted a garden wedding, small, just family and a few friends."

"No, mum, it was the chocolates, they make you sick," Robert said jovially and then turned to his sister. "What? You don't want five hundred at the club with pipes and a band?"

Lydia turned to her brother, grinning. "Like you and Mary did. No, thank you! Just family, my girlfriends, George's friends and a cake simple, small and intimate."

"Excellent, we can have it right here," Mrs. Thacker suggested, and Mr. Thacker looked at his wife with a disapproving smirk. "The garden will have to be defrosted early, and we can have fairies in the roses... Won't that be nice, dear?"

"Whatever the girl wants, Catherine," Mr. Thacker said dismissively. "What chocolates made you sick, Robert? Don't eat food that's spoilt."

George and Robert started laughing as Lydia scrambled off the sofa and walked over to her father. "Dad, thank you."

Mr. Thacker looked befuddled again. "Anything, my little crumpet," he said, trying to hug her and avoid the belly at the same time.

"So you will consent?" Lydia asked. "It's all right if I marry George?"

"I thought you were seeing Fred? Who is George?" Mr. Thacker started on again. "Why are marrying George?"

"You have our blessing, dear," Mrs. Thacker said, hugging Lydia. "He'll come around and I'll keep reminding him so he won't forget again."

"Thank you, ma'am," George said, holding his hand out to Mrs. Thacker.

Mrs. Thacker held George's hand, her grip extremely firm. "You just make sure you make my little girl happy."

~x~

The announcement to his family that he and Lydia were getting married had gone much better than when he accidentally blurted out the fact Lydia was pregnant.

After much cajoling, George had finally got Lydia to agree to let him to make the announcement of their engagement to his family. He'd decided to wait until Sunday dinner, during Christmas holiday, when everyone, even Ron, Ginny, Hermione, Harry and Charlie would be present as the most opportune time. He'd bought a bouquet of Kissing Lilliums for the table, with one special bloom still a bud, charmed to open at the utterance of a single word. He and Lydia had arrived early so that George could help his mum set up the extra seating for everyone. As everyone sat down at the table, George made sure Lydia was in the center of the table, right next to the flowers.

"So how is Auror training, Ron?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"Oi, Dad it's brilliant! It's much harder than Hogwarts! Harry and me start Deflection and Evasion right after the holidays," Ron announced as everyone started passing around the serving bowls.

"It's Harry and I," Hermione corrected him, and Ron nudged her in the ribs.

"Girls, how is Hogwarts this year?" Mr. Weasley asked. "Are they still reconstructing the towers?"

Hermione smiled, passing the roast beef to Harry. "No, they finished most of them and repaired the damage to the roof on the main corridors. The castle is nearly back to normal."

"Cool. That didn't really take long, did it? I still can't believe you went back to school," Ron stated for the hundredth time, judging by the expression Hermione gave him. "I mean the Ministry gave us honorary N.E.W.T.s for defeating Voldemort!"

"Ron!" three people exclaimed and two grimaced, still not comfortable hearing the name.

"Unlike some, Ron," Ginny said, passing the peas. "Hermione actually wants to *earn* her N.E.W.T.s. Besides, I think it's great! We're in the same dorm room and have most of our classes together!"

"I've got a bit of an announcement," Bill said, drawing everyone's attention. "I've been promoted."

"Bill! That's wonderful!" Mrs. Weasley exclaimed. "Your father has the same news. He's being promoted at the Ministry, too."

"Well, it's not really a promotion," Mr. Weasley stated. "But I will be heading up the newly formed Misuse and Unauthorized Magic Department. It will include an Underage Muggle-born Accidental Magic Office, which will handle all underage Muggle-born magical incidents. My old office, Misuse of Muggle Artifacts, has been reallocated to my department, too. Part of the restructuring of the Ministry. We'll be in charge of all Muggle-related and Muggle-born magical incidents. It's exciting!"

"Oi, why couldn't they have had that department when I was in my fifth year? You would have saved me a load of trouble! Now maybe things will be straightened out down there," Harry stated. "Speaking of the Ministry, Kingsley is going remain as the new Minister of Magic."

"Harry!" Hermione admonished him.

"Speaking of news, Lydia and I are getting married. Bill, pass the mashed potatoes," George said as nonchalantly as he could.

Lydia started to chuckle as Bill, who'd grabbed the mash potatoes, sat staring at his brother. "Excuse me?" Bill asked, holding the serving bowl between him and George. "I you're getting married?"

"You're what?" Mrs. Weasley gasped as she dropped her fork, and Ron's mouth dropped open as he exclaimed, "Blimey!"

"Splendid," Harry said as Charlie turned to look at him gobsmacked.

Percy was grinning at Lydia. "Cracking! When? Before or after the twins are born?"

George helped himself to the potatoes as Mrs. Weasley exclaimed, "When did this happen?"

"Very good, well done, George," Mr. Weasley stated as Ginny squealed. "You finally convinced her?"

Lydia was blushing profusely at his family's reaction. "I'd prefer after. We're considering March, over Easter holiday, so you can attend, Ginny, Hermione."

"And since she's said yes, I think it high time she wear her ring," George stated, standing up, moving to stand beside Lydia's chair. He picked up the single Lilliums bud, holding it out to her. "Lydia, I love you." The kissing bud made a kissing sound as it opened and dropped a ring onto Lydia's plate.

Lydia picked up the illusion beryl stone ring, astonished. "Is this mine?"

"I don't give big, expensive stone rings to every girl I know," he said, laughing, sliding the ring on Lydia's finger as Percy and Charlie stood up to congratulate them.

"Let me see," Ginny requested, and Lydia extended her hand to show off her ring to Ginny and Hermione while Mrs. Weasley dabbed at her eyes with her napkin.

"A toast then," Bill stated, raising his glass, and everyone followed suit as George leaned down to place a chaste kiss on Lydia's lips.

~x~

A few years later

George leaned against the mantle of the fireplace, talking with Bill and Mr. Weasley as his sons, Fred and William, played with Victoire, building her a castle out of their blocks. "Of all the toys these boys have, those blocks are still their favorites," Mr. Weasley stated.

George smiled proudly at the boys as they erected twin towers under Victoire's direction. "Yeah, they really like building things. They're constantly stacking the boxes in the storeroom. Gets frustrating having to sort them all out again."

"So when are you going to buy them their first brooms?" Bill asked jovially. "I hear that they already have Quaffles."

"They already have brooms," George said proudly. "The kind that only hover two feet of the ground and fly at a Streeler's pace, but Lydia wouldn't let me get them Cleansweeps."

"I should hope not," Bill said, laughing. "So, I heard that Will got hold of the Peruvian instant darkness powder last week."

"Merlin, yes! It was a disaster. The entire flat was pitch black for hours," George replied. "Thank Circe, I had a Hand of Glory in the shop! Nearly broke my leg trying to find the cupboard where I keep it, though."

"They really take after their father don't they," Mr. Weasley stated.

"Yep," George said with a grin. "Will has a knack for dropping things, most likely to see what will bounce and what won't; and both love building forts. I've had to Sticky-Tack Charm everything in place or spend all my time repairing all the breakables in the house. The kitchen table is now a permanent fort."

"So how's business?" Bill asked.

"Never better." Suddenly all three noticed Fleur's crystal ball and nine of her steamed crystal gobbets were being added to Victoire's 'castle.' "Fred, William, I've told you before no breakables," George admonished the twins.

"But Dad, it's a castle," Fred said, setting the last glass atop a tall, unsteady tower.

"Yeah, Dad," Will stated, scowling. "It needs shiny..."

"Sparkling things..." Fred continued.

"To be a proper fairy castle." Will said, trying to catch the tower before it fell.

George quickly levitated all the glasses up before they went down with the blocks. "No. If you want sparkling blocks, say so and I'll charm them. But no breakables! That means: no glasses, no vases, no crystal anything!"

Bill started laughing as he rescued his wife's crystal ball. "Just like you and Fred. Merlin, these two must keep you on your toes."

"Toes, ear and eyes on high alert at all times," George stated, grinning the boys started stacking the blocks again.

~x~

George couldn't have been happier, sitting on the porch at Shell Cottage with Ron and Harry, watching the kids run around and reenact the final battle at Hogwarts with trick wands. The spells on the wands were nearly worn out, but occasionally there were a few sparks, confetti or waterspouts still emitting from the wand tips.

Victoire squealed as Fred and Will rounded on Teddy, cornering him and yelling '*Expelliarmus!*'

Lydia, Fleur and Mrs. Tonks were inside with his mum, discussing mum things and sharing baby stories.

"Where did they learn that one?" Ron asked, amazed.

"From Harry, who else," George stated.

Harry ducked as a squirt of water emitted from Will's wand and nearly hit his face. "I was telling them about the final battle and how Remus died. Teddy wanted to hear the story again."

"Remus didn't use the Expelliarmus all that often," Ron stated. "That is your specialty."

"Fred, don't aim for faces," George shouted as Fred shouted "*Stupidfy.*"

"Stupidfy?" Harry asked, "Do they mean Stupefy?"

"Nope," George answered. "Stupidfy to make you stupid."

"*Bogyex,*" Will shouted and Fred ducked, chasing after Teddy

"Let me guess," Ron said, "turn you into a boggy?"

"Something like that," George said. "They like inventing spells. As long as it's not bad words or curses, it's all right."

Will grasped Fred's hand and pulled him behind the tree with him. "You go right, I'll go left," he said. Fred nodded.

Victoire ducked behind Fleur's daises and tried crawling around the bush to surprise Will and Bill from behind. Will saw her, but not before Fred did, and Victoire gave Fred a shower of confetti as Will hit her with a few drops of water.

Teddy aimed his wand at Will, turning it into a rubber haddock. "Mine's stuck again," he stated.

"Flick it backwards," Fred and Will shouted in unison.

Harry, Ron and George started laughing. "It's like watching a mini version of you and Fred," Harry said, grinning.

"You have no idea," George replied.

Fred rolled right as Will jumped to his left, both coming to their feet and aiming their wands at Teddy. "*Furunculus!*" they shouted and Teddy ducked, shouting "Jelly-legs."

"Furunculus?" Ron asked.

"They might mean Furnunculus," Harry stated, blushing. "I remember telling them about that one, too. I told them the story about when you and I hexed Goyle on the train the end of my third year."

"Blimey, Harry!" Ron said, laughing. "They must remember everything you tell them."

"They do idolize Harry a bit. You should see them with the cricket ball you gave them, Harry," George said, never taking his eyes off the twins. "I've charmed it to fly like a Bludger and gave them these little bats. They really have a knack for knocking it around. I'm so proud."

"*Trip-you,*" Fred and Will said at the same time, pointing at each other, then rolling on the grass as if the spell actually worked, making Victoire giggle.

~x~

Another year later

Lydia was feeding his twin daughters in the kitchen, trying unsuccessfully to entice Isabel to eat her peas and carrots, while Gabriela was having a good time trying to coax the cat into eating hers. Four kids were plenty for him. Already Fred and Will were starting to make little things happen, such as when Fred levitated his yams into the milk jug, or the time Will made his trainers shrink, or the evening Will made his eyebrows grow to his nose because he didn't want to go to bed. There was the day Fred turned the cat into a pillow when she scratched him accidentally, and the morning when he'd made a shelf disappear when Lydia wouldn't let him go down to the shop, making all Lydia's books fall on the floor. Then there was the morning Will managed to get the Floo pot stuck on the ceiling. Bath time was always good for mischief, such as Will sticking his feet to the carpet, and Fred making his hands swell up like balloons in the banisters to avoid a bath. It amazed him; whatever one did the other seemed to match with equal creativity, although that wasn't how Lydia saw it.

~x~

Several months later

Ginny's wedding was going to be beautiful. However, George had his hands full trying to keep Fred and Will in their seats. "I was never this poorly behaved!" he hissed to Percy.

"Do you want to bet?" Percy said laughing, blocking William from leaving their aisle. "You were a handful. These guys are just like you and Fred were."

"Thanks, Perc." Suddenly one of Fred's chair legs vanished, and George quickly restored it. "Pipe it down or I'll Stupefy you!" he hissed at the twins as Ginny started walking down the aisle.

"Oh, look," the twins said. "Aunt Gin is a princess!" Will stated as Fred replied, "Aunt Gin looks pretty, huh, Will?"

Several minutes later as Harry and Ginny exchanged vows, they both tried to duck under Aunt Muriel's chair, but George caught them by the coat tails. "Stay here," he hissed again. Suddenly the chair bounced and Aunt Muriel screeched. "Knock it off, you two," George warned.

"I just want to see Mum and Aunt Gin," Fred and Will said in unison.

"You will," George stated, "at the reception."

Both boys tried climbing up onto their chairs again. "Look, Dad, Uncle Harry is kissing Aunt Gin," Will stated loudly, pointing.

Harry broke the kiss, laughing. Ginny turned to smile at her nephews. "Yes, he was told to," Percy said.

"Why?" Fred and Will asked in unison.

"The priest told them to," Percy replied.

"Why?" Fred and Will asked in unison again.

"Because it's part of the ceremony," Percy stated.

"Why?" Fred and Will asked again.

"Give it up, Perc," George warned. "You're falling for it again!"

~x~

Several years later

The twins learned that they could levitate things easily and were trying the next set of spells in their new schoolbooks. Not only that but Fred was really good at making his nose enlarge, and Will had a knack for making things shoot across the room. It was all he could do to keep track of the mischief his sons caused. Still he was impressed with how studious the boys were. They'd each sat down with their spell books as soon as they'd arrived back from Flourish and Blots.

"Dad, I want a spell book," Isabel said, standing by George's workbench on the far wall of the living room.

"You're too young, sweet pea," he stated, looking at his daughter. She had really grown up this summer, all legs and arms, with her long hair in braids.

"She doesn't even have a wand yet," Will stated.

"So it wouldn't matter if she had a book, Dad?" Fred asked.

Isabel turned to look at her brothers sitting on the sofa with their new school supplies. "I do to too have a wand," she said indignantly.

Will turned to look at his sister. "No, you have a twig from a Bowtruckle tree," he said.

Fred shook his head, grinning. "It's not the same..."

"Thing at all," Will finished.

George stifled a laugh, remembering how he and Fred used to finish each other's sentences.

"Isabel, you won't get a wand until you get your Hogwarts letter," Gabriela stated matter-of-factly from her chair by the window. She'd been trying to ignore the twins all morning, reading her book on magical insects.

"And then you can have my spell book," Fred volunteered.

"Fred, you're to keep your books," Lydia said from the kitchen. "We are perfectly capable of buying your sister her own school books."

"Awe, Mum, it's not like Fred needs to keep them," Will said, turning to face his mum. "He can use mine if he wants. Besides, we'll be in third year then and won't be needing them."

"But I want to go to Hogwarts with Fred and Will," Isabel stated.

"You'll be going to school with Gabriela," Lydia said, and Gabriela stuck her tongue out at Isabel.

Isabel stomped her foot. "Gabriela keeps turning my hair green! I want to go to school with Fred and Will!"

"Don't cry, Isabel," George said, trying to console his daughter. "You'll be going soon enough."

"We'll send you loads of owls," Fred replied, turning around to look at his sister.

"And if Dad's swamp is still there like Aunt Gin and Aunt Hermione said it was," Will added, grinning.

"Yeah!" Fred grinned quickly at Will and looked back at Isabel. "We'll send you a huge bottle of it!"

"Fred! You'll do no such thing!" Lydia admonished as she straightened, having placed the pot roast in the oven.

"And maybe a bottle of the lake," Will said and winked at Isabel. "And a Hinkypunk!"

"William!" Lydia scolded him.

Isabel was beaming at the thought of a bottle of swamp muck. "Will you really, Will?"

George was suppressing the urge to laugh, trying to keep a straight face.

"Sure, first day we get there," Fred promised. "I'll leave my *Hogwarts A History* with you, too."

"She already has the book memorized," Gabriela said, rolling her eyes.

"Now look, boys, I want you to mind the rules and obey your Professors. I don't want to hear about any mischief from you from Hogwarts," Lydia said, standing with her hands on her hips.

"But it's tradition, Mum Uncle Harry said so," Fred whined.

"Yeah, Dad promised Aunt Gin a Hogwarts toilet seat once," Will stated. "And Uncle Fred and Dad set off a whole box of Whiz-Bangs loose, made a swamp..."

"Set Dungbombs and Stink Pellets all over the place, put Exploding Snaps in the girls' loos and set Niffers loose in the dungeons," Fred stated.

"Pranks is a family tradition!" Will stated. "We have to continue the family honor!"

George cringed. "You will listen to your mother," he stated firmly.

"And not take the Decoy Detonators, Deflagration box of Whiz-Bangs, Snackboxes and headless hats?" Will whispered to George.

George looked to see if Lydia had heard. Unfortunately, she had. "No, boys, you will not take any of the shops items to school with you," he stated firmly, slyly giving his twins a wink. "All the items in the shop are on the restricted and highly dangerous list." He quickly turned to see if Lydia was still paying attention, then leaned in closer to his boys. "So don't get caught using them."

~x~

The twins' first Christmas holiday from school

Christmas at the Weasley house had grown into a huge affair. Neville and Hanna had brought their new baby, and Luna and Rolf were due any minute with their little girl.

Gabriela and Victoire were sitting with Ginny and Hermione in the lounge, while Teddy was trying to beat Ron at wizard chess at the table.

James, Rose, Albus, Hugo and Lily were running around in the front of the house dodging snowballs being thrown by Isabel, Fred and Will under the watchful eyes of Harry and George.

"So how are the boys doing at Hogwarts?" Harry asked, deflecting a snowball with a wave of his hand.

"Only twenty-some owls apiece so far. But they're doing well enough in classes, but are quite the pranksters," George stated proudly.

Harry watched James and Rose both try to hit Fred with snowballs. "So they are taking after you, then?"

"Nah," George stated, laughing as Lily walked over and squashed a lump of snow on Will's boot. "They take after their mother they get really good marks and do well in class, but they do like to do a prank or two occasionally."

Will picked Lily up by the legs and hung her upside down, spinning around before dumping her in the snow. "A prank or two? The way Hagrid tells it they are a right sight like you were. I hear that they are quite the mischief makers."

George smiled watching Lily scramble back to Will. "I do have to admit that my boys have definitely got their priorities right." Rose and Hugo started begging Fred to spin them as well. Fred grabbed Hugo's arms, spinning him around before letting him fly into a snow bank. "Fred, Will, don't hurt your cousins!" George yelled out as Will started spinning Rose the same way. "The boys have been selling the Snackboxes and a few of the other items on the sly but don't tell Lydia, she'd do my nut!" Fred and Will both swung Hugo and Lily into the snow bank. "I thought I told you not to hurt your cousins," George yelled out again.

"Awe, Dad. If we was hurting them they'd be crying," Will called back.

"Yeah," Fred said. "If we was hurtin' them, they wouldn't keep comin' back, begging us for another go!"

"By the way, Harry, thanks for passing on the Marauder's Map. Not that the boys needed it of course, they found the tunnel to Honeydukes by Halloween," George said, giving Harry a mischievous grin.

"I may have told them about that passage... You know how much they like to hear about our years at Hogwarts, but I didn't think they'd actually sneak out of the castle well, yeah I did, I just didn't think about that at the time. Sorry." Harry turned his head to hide his blush. "The map's a copy, actually. I found the book that said how to make it in my library. I thought that since they were getting into so much trouble with Filch, I figured it would be a good Christmas present."

"Don't worry about it, mate," George said, laughing. "I may have let it slip myself. Besides, Fred and I had the map when we were their age. Thanks for giving it to them. It means a lot to me like passing on a tradition."

"My thoughts exactly," Harry stated, smiling as Lily ran over to be picked up.

"Dad! Uncle George, did you see me fly?" she asked exuberantly. "Will made me fly!"

"He sure did, pumpkin," George said, ruffling her hair.

~x~

The twins' second year

"Another owl from Hogwarts! That makes six and they've not been gone a month," Lydia said as she brandished the letter from Fred and Will's Head of House, Professor Agrippa.

"That's nothing. Mum used to get that many and more from school about Fred and me when we were kids," George stated lightly, trying to defuse Lydia's anger.

"They will get expelled if they keep this up!" Lydia stated furiously. "We've corresponded so often, George, Altheda and I are on a first name basis!"

George knew that smiling wasn't a smart thing to do, but ever try concealing a smile when you felt like grinning like a Clabbert? "Nah, they know where to draw the line," he said, trying his darndest to control his expression to one of seriousness. The truth was he was just so darn proud of his boys. *A nut off their father's tree, and not too far from my own.* "Besides, it's only pranks."

Lydia looked as if she'd do his nut for that comment. "They stuffed hinkypunks in the toilets of the girls' loo and set a pair of jarvies loose in the Divination classroom!" she screeched.

"See, harmless fun," George replied. "Fred and I did that our third year. At least no one was hurt. Look, they definitely take after Fred and I, and you remember what we were like." He walked over and pulled Lydia into a hug. "Besides, if you recall, Fred and I have a whole drawer in Filch's office for all the stuff we pulled. Do you remember the singing pansillies we taught the rowdy waterfront songs to for your birthday or the time we sent the box of puffapods and bouncing bulbs to explode in your common room? How about the creampuffs we laced with Alihotsy and sent them to Slytherin because they beat us at Quidditch that one time, or do you remember the Nifflers we set loose in Ravenclaw?"

"Were those the same Nifflers that ended up in Umbridge's office?" Lydia asked, trying to fight down the urge to laugh.

"Yep, the very ones. Lee elevated them into her office through the window." George knew he'd won her over again. "And who do you think gave him the idea? Fred and I. Lee was standing guard when we levitated the critters through the windows in Ravenclaw tower."

Lydia started laughing, "Well the good news is they made the Quidditch team."

"Let me guess? Beaters, just like we were," George asked, trying to reach for the letter in her hand, but Lydia swung her arm, keeping it out of his grasp.

"Bet you're proud of that," she said, grinning.

"Of course," he said proudly. "They are wicked flyers, quick on turns and dives, daring and fast on their Nimbus brooms."

"Nimbus broom? George, you didn't!" Lydia exclaimed, astounded. "We were not giving them new brooms unless they maintained their grades this year!"

"But they made the house team!" he said defensively.

"You already knew, didn't you?" she accused him incredulously.

"I had owls from them as soon as they made the team," he admitted. "I knew that those brooms were a good investment... What?"

"They already have the brooms?" she asked, her eyes flashing between shock and annoyance. "When exactly did you give the twins the brooms?"

George tightened his embrace, pulling her roughly against him. "I knew they would go out for the team, so yes, I gave them the brooms at the start of school year... Lydia, they made the team! Beaters just like Fred and I were!"

"You're impossible!" she exclaimed, shaking her head, letting him pull her even closer into a hug.

"Thank you," he said nuzzling her neck.

~x~

All grown up

George was really proud of his daughters and sons. Isabel was now managing the new Hogsmeade Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, and Gabriela was an assistant to Hermione Granger in the Magical Law Enforcement Department. Fred and William had finally opened up their own contractor's office, and were finishing their first big project. Ironically, it was the Weasley boys, all eight of them including Harry, who were funding the enterprise of rebuilding the Burrow. The design was simple enough, a small Tudor manor house, with eight bedrooms and three bathrooms, four turrets and a large dining room with a huge oak table, large enough to sit most of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had argued that they didn't need such an elaborate home now that everyone was grown with their own families, but with everyone returning to the Burrow every year for Christmas, it was decided for them by unanimous vote. Even Hermione and Teddy Lupin insisted on pitching in.

George stood in the front garden, looking at the new Burrow. Lydia walked up behind him and wrapped her arms around his waist. "Why aren't you inside with everyone else?" she asked softly, laying her head on his shoulder.

"Ron is going to try and roust everyone up to go play a game of Quidditch," he said. "Will is getting my broom."

She looked over his shoulder at the new house. "They did a great job on it, didn't they?"

"Yeah," he said wistfully. "I can't tell you how many times Fred and I wanted to do this, make enough money to have a big house."

She tilted her head to look at his profile. "Are you saying that you wanted a big house? Why then did you buy the cottage in Brighton Hiding?"

He turned so he could hold her in his arms properly. "Because you loved the village and the gardens. I wanted you to be happy," he stated. "Besides, I love our home."

Lydia smiled and hugged him tighter, and George still felt the flutter in his gut, watching how her smile lit up her face. "I love you, you know," she said.

"I love you too," he said turning to face her so he could kiss her.

~x~

*Author's Notes:*

*Illusion beryl is of my imagination. However, Beryl is a family of precious stones that include green emeralds, watery blue aquamarine, golden beryl heliodor and the pink to peach tones of morganite. There is also a red beryl that rivals rubies but is extremely rare, and a rich, pale green stone, which is a green version of aquamarine. The Greeks called the stones berullos, which means crystal.*

*The main chemical composition is called Beryllium aluminum silicate with relative amounts of additional metals, which create the different color varieties. The mines in which beryl is found are widespread. Some of the major sources include Colombia, Brazil, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.*