

Harry's Problem

by Pennfana

It's a beautiful, sunny afternoon, and Hermione is relaxing with a book, a cat and a hot cup of tea. Nothing can possibly go wrong... or can it?

Harry's Problem

Chapter 1 of 1

It's a beautiful, sunny afternoon, and Hermione is relaxing with a book, a cat and a hot cup of tea. Nothing can possibly go wrong... or can it?

Disclaimer: If I didn't create it, it isn't mine and therefore I don't own it. Many thanks to JKR for letting us fanfic writers play with her characters and places.

Warning: This is a corny, fluffy one-shot that deals with a non-canon 'ship and completely ignores the epilogue from book seven. Anyone who doesn't like this sort of thing should turn back **now**.

Ah, what bliss, Hermione thought, curling up in her favourite comfy chair with Crookshanks and a copy of *Northanger Abbey*, a hot cup of tea and a plate of chocolate biscuits on a small table close at hand. She took as much pleasure in the sunlight pouring in through her window and the purring half-Kneazle in her lap as she did in the comforts of tea and literature, knowing that on this lazy afternoon she finally had the luxury of rest.

It had been a long week at the Ministry. Although Kingsley Shacklebolt himself was far more willing to consider the health and well-being of magical creatures than most of his predecessors had been, many of Hermione's co-workers and superiors had been raised in an environment where these creatures' marginalization was not simply acceptable, but was held to be necessary for the survival of wizarding society. To an extent, Hermione could understand the reasons why her co-workers were so resistant to the idea of improving the lot of House-elves, Centaurs and other magical creatures. Change was difficult to accept, and if wizards had to acknowledge that these creatures had intelligence and that they deserved the dignity and status that they themselves already had, then uncomfortable questions would have to be asked and long-held values would have to be examined. Still, she believed that it was long past the time for these out-dated values to be changed, and she would work as hard as she could to see that this happened. The work was challenging, and she loved it; she felt like she was being given a chance to make a real difference in the wizarding world.

But oh, she was glad to have the day off today. Nothing could disturb her rest now, not even those two nuisances she called her best friends...

As if on cue, her somewhat-neglected fireplace roared to life in a burst of green flame as a familiar head of messy black hair appeared in the middle of it, sending Crookshanks scampering away into the bedroom. "Hey, Hermione, mind if I drop in for a sec?"

Forcing herself not to sigh, Hermione carefully put her book down beside her plate of biscuits. "Of course not, Harry. Come in."

Harry grinned and stepped through the flames, taking the time to clean himself up before he stepped off of the bricks in front of the fireplace onto Hermione's cream-coloured carpet. Dire things had been known to happen to people who got soot onto Hermione's carpets and furniture.

Hermione hid a smile. Ron still hadn't learned yet, but at least she'd been able to train Harry reasonably well. "So, what brings you here on this lovely afternoon?"

She noticed that he seemed a little nervous as he spoke; his right hand was in his pocket, and he seemed to be fidgeting with something. "Actually, I need your advice about something. Remember our little talk a couple of months ago, when you encouraged me to start dating again?"

She nodded, feeling her heart constrict a little. Ginny Weasley's marriage to Roger Davies the year before had come as the worst kind of shock to Harry, who'd been trying to get up the nerve to propose to her shortly before she announced her engagement. Nobody had even known that they'd been seeing each other. "Yes, and I'm glad that you took my advice. It's nice to see you smile again, Harry."

He grinned, flopping down onto the settee that sat adjacent to her chair. "Yeah, I guess it was time to let go. I just realized one morning that I was all wrapped up in self-pity out of habit, not because I actually *felt* that way. Anyway, you know that I've been dating several girls recently, and...well, I think I've found The One."

Hermione gasped. "So soon? You can't possibly know any of them well enough yet to know for sure!" *I will not panic, I will not panic...but for the love of all that's holy, I thought I'd have more time!*

"I guess you're right," he shrugged, "but it feels like I've known her forever. She's the most amazing girl, Hermione, and I love her. She's so beautiful, so smart and so kind...nobody else could possibly compare."

Hermione raised an eyebrow. *Can this woman possibly be human? It sounds like he thinks she's too perfect for words.* "She sounds too good to be true, Harry," she said, a little more sharply than she intended. "Are you absolutely certain that she's so perfect? It sounds almost impossible, and even if she is, could you really stand living with someone like that? Saints can be awfully difficult to put up with, you know."

Harry laughed. "You should know me better than that, Hermione...I never said she was perfect. She's bossy and a bit overbearing at times, and she's got a temper that could flash-freeze a boiling cauldron from thirty metres away when she's angry. I know her faults, and I love her anyway. I'm pretty sure that she loves me, too; nobody else has really ever been able to put up with me and still tell me that I'm being an arse when I get into one of my moods. So, Hermione, what do you think?"

She smiled, trying to keep the tears from her eyes. She'd cry later, when he was gone. "It's really up to you, Harry. It sounds like you really do love her, but love alone isn't enough...it won't resolve arguments all by itself, and it won't ensure that things won't happen that could put a strain on the marriage." She paused. "I'm not saying all this to put you off of the idea, but Harry, I really don't want to see you make a mistake. You mean far too much to me."

He looked at her quickly, as if she'd startled him. Hermione tried not to wince. *Shite. I think I've said too much...*

He studied her seriously. "I know. But I also know in my heart that she and I could make it work if we were given the chance."

Still smiling as convincingly as she could, she reached over and ruffled his already-disastrous hair. "Then I'd like you to promise me that I can be a bridesmaid at your wedding."

He reached out and cupped her cheek with his hand, gazing into her eyes. "Actually, Hermione, I was kind of hoping that you'd be the bride."

WHAT?!

She opened her mouth, but nothing coherent would come out. "I...Harry...you...what?"

He grinned at her again, reaching over to her and taking her hand. "I said that I'd hoped you'd be the bride. Hermione, I love you. I thought before that you loved me too, but this afternoon I realized it for sure; you really are a terrible liar, you know that, right? I'd say I was sorry that I almost made you cry, but it wouldn't be true because the moment I saw you try to smile instead, I knew that you loved me and that makes me incredibly happy."

She stood up and joined him on the settee, where he wrapped his left arm around her and pulled her close. She lay her head down on his chest, her arms going around his waist. She noted that his heartbeat was loud and very fast...was he still nervous? He took the object he'd been fidgeting with earlier out of his right trouser pocket and reached back for her left hand, placing the object carefully within and then closing her fingers around it. His voice was a low rumble in his chest as he spoke. "I realize that after all that, this question may not come as a complete surprise, but even so...Hermione Jean Granger, will you marry me?"

She unfolded her fingers and looked at the ring she now held. Wordlessly, she offered it back to him and his face fell. "You won't?" he asked, visibly upset.

"I will," she beamed. "I just wanted you to place it on my finger...even I would find it very difficult to put it on my left ring finger if I'm holding it in my left hand."

It wasn't really very funny, but he laughed anyway. And when the ring was put in its proper place, he lowered his lips to hers for their first kiss.

Author's Notes: Yes, it's corny and more than a little unrealistic (even for a fic set in a fandom which includes dragons, Quidditch, a flying Ford Anglia and blast-ended skrewts), and I apologize for that. It's my first attempt at writing romance in a very long time, and I'd say I was out of practice if I'd really been *in* practice at writing it to begin with, but I never really was. I thought, though, that it was time to branch out a little.

I know I've read the basic premise of this story (girl is best friends with boy, girl falls in love with boy, boy intends to propose to girl but temporarily leads girl to believe that he intends to propose to someone else, then proposes to girl, who still accepts him even if he *did* just play a rather dirty trick on her) somewhere else, but I'm not sure where. It might have been in the Harry Potter fandom or in another one I sometimes read, or it might not even have been a fanfic. All I know is that I read another story with this premise a long time ago and I can't remember who came up with it first, and I apologize to whoever it was. I'd thank...or blame...you for helping to inspire this story, if only I could remember who you were...