

“Don’t blow up the basement,” Harry teased, earning a dirty look from his boyfriend before the blond also left. Harry glanced at Tonks, shrugging. “We’ve got an hour or so until lunch. Would you mind going over that rope-tripping thing you used with me? I’ve never seen it before.”

“Of course, yeah!” She grinned. “It’s something my dad taught me, actually. Dead useful in a fight.”

She happily launched into a demonstration, and Harry paid close attention. After a while, he finally gathered the courage to ask a question he’d been thinking about for a while. “Hey, Tonks,” he started, and she raised an expectant eyebrow. “Can I ask... why doesn’t Kingsley call you by your name? Y’know, since you two are together and everything.”

She blinked, perplexed. “He does?”

“No, I mean like, your first name or anything,” Harry clarified. “Draco calls me Potter sometimes, but it’s not really the same thing.” He and Draco used surnames practically as a term of endearment by now, after so much time only being able to use them in public.

Tonks frowned, and Harry wondered if he’d misstepped. “I’m sorry, it’s none of my business, I—“

“No, no, you’re fine,” she assured. “It’s just not always an easy one to explain. I...” she sighed deeply. “My first name... I hate it,” she told him. “Not just in the way that it’s old-fashioned and a bit of a mouthful. For a while at school I tried shortening it to Dora, but... it’s such a *girl’s* name, y’know?”

Harry blinked, trying to figure out where she was coming from. “But... you’re only a boy sometimes, right? Does having a girl’s name bother you even when you are a girl?” Had he misunderstood the whole situation? Was he using the wrong pronouns, even now?

“I’m only a boy sometimes,” Tonks agreed, “but even when I look like a girl I don’t always *feel* like a girl, y’know? It’s like... something in-between. Not quite one or the other.” She huffed in frustration, running a hand through her hair. “I’ll be honest with you, Harry; I can hardly explain it myself, let alone to anyone else. But... Tonks is a name that feels like me no matter how I’m feeling gender-wise, y’know? There might be days where I don’t mind being called Dora — though I will *always* hate the full name, really, I don’t know what Mum was thinking,” she added with a look that made Harry grin, “but Tonks is just... me. So yeah, it might sound weird when my boyfriend calls me by my last name like we’re just auror partners and nothing else. But it fits.” She grinned playfully. “Sometimes I like to think it’s like I’m one of those muggle pop stars, like Cher, or Prince, or Madonna.”

Harry snickered. “You could bring the trend into the magical world.”

“Right?” she agreed enthusiastically. “Clearly I missed my calling as the next greatest magical pop star. Weird Sisters eat your hearts out.” She winked, reaching out to ruffle Harry’s hair. “Anyway, I like to pretend my first name doesn’t exist, and Kings is happy to do the same.” Her gaze turned teasing all of a sudden. “Or were you thinking about what he calls