

Opposite her, Ernie looked down at himself; his Hufflepuff tie now as white as his shirt, his trousers suffering a similar fate. Then he looked back up, slowly, staring at his girlfriend. “Well,” he said, the flour on his lips making his mouth go dry. “It’s a good thing we hung our robes up before we started, I suppose.”

A quiet giggle escaped Hannah’s mouth. Then another. Then, both of them were laughing their heads off, getting even more flour on themselves as they leaned against each other, gasping through laughter — then choking on flour, which prompted even more laughter. A few of the elves sniggered too, though quickly clamped their lips shut.

“Winky will be cleanings this up!” one of the elves announced, stepping forward with her hands on her hips. With a snap of her fingers, the flour disaster was gone, leaving the workbench and their clothes spotless. The elf huffed, her huge brown eyes staring up at the two students. “Yous is being lucky that we elves is having a soft spot for badgers,” she muttered warningly. Ernie fought a smile — the relationship between the Hogwarts elves and Hufflepuff house was long-standing, with their common room being so close to the kitchen. All new badgers were taught about the importance of respecting the castle elves.

And since his girlfriend had become one of the four heirs of Hogwarts, that had only increased the elves’ eagerness to make her happy. Ernie doubted anyone else would be allowed to get away with making such a big mess in the kitchens during dinner prep, otherwise.

“Thank you, Winky,” Hannah said, bestowing her sunny smile on the elf. No one could stay mad in the face of that smile. “We’ll try and keep the mess to a minimum, from now on. I really didn’t mean to drop it.”

Winky huffed again, though she didn’t look nearly as scolding as before, and with one last nod she turned back to her kitchen duties. Ernie looked at the workbench they had been set up with, at the ingredients to bake chocolate chip cookies still laid out before them. “Let’s try this again, shall we?” he said wryly, and Hannah giggled once more. “Maybe I should pour the flour, this time.”

“That’s probably for the best,” Hannah agreed sheepishly. “And, wait a minute.” She waved her wand, and suddenly both of them were wearing butter-yellow aprons, the ties undone at their sides. “Just in case.”

Ernie wasn’t sure it was a look he could pull off — but Hannah looked adorable in hers, a cute frown of concentration on her face as she tied the strings at her hip. When she was finished, she glanced up with a smile, which soon became impish. “You’ve still got a little...” She reached up, cupping his jaw, thumb swiping at a spot just below his eye. Ernie stepped closer, settling his hand on the curve of her waist, while the other tucked her honey-blonde hair behind her ear.

“And you’ve got a little...” He tilted his head down, covering her lips with his. Her hand slid to the back of his neck, deepening the kiss while the sweet flowery scent of her perfume filled his senses.