

their intense bickering, and Hermione's determination to be *friends* with Ginny again — in a thinly veiled attempt to get back in Harry's good graces — Ginny would have run away to Longbottom Manor even if her parents had said no.

"Well, while I can't officially condone murder, I'll encourage anything that lets me see you more," Neville said, and it could have been a joke but his voice was so incredibly fond it made Ginny's breath catch. "There's not much to do here, honestly — we've got space for quidditch, but neither Susan nor I fly — but I'll try not to make you spend all week in the greenhouse."

"I don't mind," Ginny insisted. She wasn't brilliant at Herbology — constantly got confused with all the specific needs and variations of magical plants — but she'd been helping her mum with the family vegetable garden since Charlie started Hogwarts, in some capacity or another; the two of them were the only Weasley siblings with enough patience for it. Percy had patience, too, but he got upset at the feel of wet dirt on his skin.

"Still, I don't want to bore you."

"It's not boring." Ginny smiled at him. "I like watching you with your plants; they make you happy. Besides," she added, gaze dancing with mischief, "it's sexy when you get all knowledgeable and competent like that." Her hand rested lightly on his chest, and she could feel his pulse pick up as he blushed.

"Oh." His smile turned a little goofy. "I— really?"

"Very sexy," Ginny confirmed, stepping in closer. "Not that I came here to spend a week perving on you while you garden, or anything. But, y'know. If the opportunity's *there*." She winked, giggling when he blushed even brighter. Merlin, it was fun riling him up.

"I wouldn't mind," he said, stuttering ever so slightly. "If— if you did want to perv on me, I mean."

Not the smoothest of lines, but Ginny would take it — Neville was still pretty new to flirting, bless him. Like with most things, he lost his nerve as soon as he started overthinking it; he could be smooth as anything when he wasn't even trying, sometimes knocking the breath right from Ginny with his words.

But right now, even with the fumbling attempt, Ginny could feel her blood rushing through her. It hit her then that they were entirely alone in the greenhouses — the only other two people in the house were occupied with each other, and the adult supervision wouldn't be back for hours.

Even at Hogwarts, sneaking around in alcoves and abandoned classrooms, they were never truly that alone.

A thrill ran down her spine, her hand trailing down Neville's chest. "Seems a bit unfair if I'm the one doing all the perving," she drawled lightly. "And it'd be a shame to waste time just *looking*."