

“Because we four are of course, utterly allergic to the very *concept* of reading,” George continued dryly. “Oi, Harry, can I borrow this one?” He held up a book from the ‘sneak out’ pile, on the potions use of contraband creature products. Harry snorted.

“If you can keep it hidden from your mum, sure,” he agreed. George winked at him, shrinking the book down and pocketing it. Both twins already had a small collection of books in their pockets that they had promised to look after, and Bill had a stack of his own, too. Harry didn’t mind; as long as the books were kept out of the hands of Dumbledore and his ilk, he was happy for his friends to raid the library as much as they wanted. He also got a vindictive sort of glee when he thought of how disappointed Hermione would be with only the ‘appropriate’ remains of the vast collection.

Of course, she’d had access to the library for the whole summer before he’d showed up, so perhaps she’d already had her fill.

He snorted to himself; as if that were possible, with Hermione Granger.

The five of them continued their work quite happily, up until the point Sirius knocked on the door, calling them down for lunch. Ron and Hermione were already in the kitchen when they arrived — they had been paired with Remus to try and clear out one of the upstairs drawing rooms, and didn’t look nearly as happy about the assignment as the library crew.

Harry ignored the perpetually-empty seat at Ron’s side, heading down the other end of the table to sit between Ginny and Bill. Mrs Weasley clucked her tongue at the space between Harry and the other two-thirds of the ‘golden trio’ — then something in her gaze softened, and she smiled.

“I’m glad this summer is giving you and Ginny plenty of time together, Harry dear, but be careful you don’t neglect your friends,” she said, giving Harry a conspiratorial wink, while he stared at her in utter confusion. Beside him, Ginny groaned quietly.

“Mum, I’ve told you a thousand times, it’s not like that,” she insisted. Mrs Weasley chuckled, patting her daughter’s head as she set plates down in front of them.

“I’m just saying; a first romance is exciting, and I know what it’s like to want to spend all your time with them, but friendships are important too.”

Harry, who had just taken a sip of water, choked. “I’m sorry, what??” Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Sirius bite his lip to stop himself laughing, while Remus sighed in exasperation.

“I told you,” Ginny said, rolling her eyes. “Mum reads *Witch Weekly*, but not the *Quibbler*.”

Harry blinked. “Mrs Weasley, Ginny and I aren’t dating,” he said. That only made her smile wider.

“You don’t need to keep secrets from me, dear — Arthur and I are delighted. As long as you take good care of our little girl,” she added with a giggle. Ginny blushed as red as her hair.