

## **The Little White Bumblebee**

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Hogwarts loomed in the heavy twilight on the last day of August. Harry and Ginny followed a newly etched path in the grass from the entrance to the large white sepulcher that marked Dumbledore's tomb. The still night air seemed to add to the painful weight pressing on Harry's chest as he approached his old Headmaster's final resting place for the first time since the funeral.

He crushed the note in his hand one more time in silent frustration. It had come two nights ago and directed that he visit Dumbledore's tomb on this night, alone or with Ginny. Why Ginny? Harry had asked himself a hundred times since then. He wasn't sure about his feelings for her quite yet, even though she had given him all the space he had asked for and more. Still, he wondered if the ache in his heart had more to do with her than the fact that memories of Dumbledore were so close to the surface.

It had been over a year since Dumbledore's death – a year spent chasing Horcruxes until every last bit of Voldemort's soul had been eradicated, including the one inhabiting the snake-like body he'd fashioned four years ago.

Limping back from the scorched battlefield, Fawkes had appeared before Harry, bearing this strange message. It seemed that just as the burden of saving the world was receding, another, much larger burden was looming over him and fate was determined that he take up the challenge.

"Here we are," Ginny said softly, her eyes flitting over the white marble that fairly shone in the receding light on the western horizon. Her hair was glowing, too, pulled away from her pale face into a pony tail that trailed down her back.

"So now we wait?" Harry asked no one in particular.

Ginny nodded and smoothed bits of dead leaves from a spot on the low shelf that made up the perimeter of the tomb. "That's what the note said." She sat down.

Harry snorted. "If it hadn't been Fawkes that brought it..." He didn't need to add that they would have never come – especially not without Ron and Hermione.

There was no breeze, only the sound of the crickets from the distant forest stirring in the night. Harry found his thoughts once again drawn to the girl in front of him and he tried desperately to understand where they stood with each other. He had always assumed that when the war was over, they would just go back to the way it was before. But it had been too long and everyone had been changed by the deaths and the fights and the release from the threat of death and destruction.

The sinking sun slipped between two peaks, sending a beam of bright red light onto the tomb, making it look like it had been lit on fire. The effect was vaguely reminiscent of the actual funeral, when fire had erupted around Dumbledore's body and enveloped him in the very structure they were sitting against.

Suddenly, Ginny looked up at him and their eyes locked.

"Have you figured it out yet?"

"Sorry?" he asked, taken aback by the swift change in mood.

"Have you figured out if there's going to be room in your life now that Voldemort is dead?"

"Er..." he managed. "Room for -- ?"

She stood, then and approached him. In the absence of a breeze, he could feel her skin radiating heat between them. "For me."

Harry's stomach dropped as she leaned even closer, her eyes focusing on his neck. She reached up and pinched his collar between her fingers, tugging on it as if examining it for a stain. Then she caught his gaze again and her arms snaked around his back, hanging loosely, as if to give him the option to walk away if he felt the least bit smothered.

He didn't.

His hands found her shoulders, and then her back. He held her and closed his eyes.

"Yes," he said. "I think I just might."

They stood that way for several minutes, neither willing to break the moment that had brought about a welcome, if not more confusing change in their relationship. Harry wondered if he'd ever understand girls.

There was a sudden rustle of fabric and Harry found himself staring into the eyes of the one man, now that Voldemort was gone, that he most wanted to see dead.

"A touching display, Potter," simpered Snape, his wand already pointing at Ginny's back. "You never could keep your hands off of her, could you?"

Ginny tensed in his grip, but made no effort to turn around. Instead, her hand snuck down to Harry's back pocket, where he usually kept his wand. As soon as her hand made contact with the fat end, Snape's wand flicked and Harry felt himself freeze in the clench of *Petrificus Totalis*. Ginny was caught in the spell, too, and because they were standing together, their four legs kept them from toppling over.

"No tricks for you, Miss Weasley," Snape said silkily. "I didn't come here to hurl hexes."

Harry's mind was reeling. How could Snape have duped Fawkes into delivering that note? How did Snape get past McGonagall's new wards? Had Snape intercepted the person that was actually supposed to meet them?

Snape sneered at them and walked slowly to the front of the tomb. "The late Headmaster asked me to give you something."

Harry's mind raged. After everything he's done, Snape has the gall to come to the place where his murder victim was buried and claim he's doing it for *Dumbledore*?

"As hard as it may be for your small mind to grasp the concept, Potter, I am the one who wrote the note Fawkes delivered and I am the one that was given this task by Dumbledore himself."

*Murderer!* Harry's mind screamed.

"Yes," Snape said, staring Harry in the eye. "I killed Albus Dumbledore."

There was a pause, while Harry breathed as hard as he could in his cursed state. He wanted to rage at Snape, to rip his head off and toss it into a nest of Acromantulas. In all his travels, Harry hadn't come across the ex-Potions master before now and all at once, the long-buried fire of revenge consumed him.

Snape walked around them so that he was behind Harry, where he couldn't see him, but where he could see Ginny's eyes. Don't look at him, Harry's mind cried. He'll try to pry into your head. He'll try to use you against me.

The silence lingered and Harry could hear Ginny's breath quicken and her heart pound against his chest. If only he could break the spell. If only he could...

Then suddenly, he was free. He made to turn around, but Ginny's arms had clamped around him so hard, his breath left him with a *whoosh*. "Don't," was all she said. "Just wait before you do anything, Harry."

Harry knew that Snape must have been controlling her somehow, but he waited just the same, if only to get Ginny to let go so he could make his move.

Ginny's grip did not slacken. "We're here for a reason, Harry." Her voice was calm, considering the effort she was putting into restraining him. "Let's see what it is."

Harry heard Snape move off to his right and then reappear in his peripheral vision. Harry didn't move while Snape did something with his wand to the side of the tomb. There was a sucking noise and then the sound of stone grinding on itself. Snape stepped away, re-covering himself with his Invisibility Cloak.

"Harry?" Ginny asked. "Will you go inside with me without trying to kill Snape?"

He stared at the last place Snape had been and tried to master himself. At length, he nodded and Ginny's arms relaxed. Instead of going to the tomb immediately, however, she went up on her tip toes and planted a kiss on his cheek. "Thank you."

When she pulled away, he was surprised to see tears in her eyes. "I'm only doing this for you, Ginny. Not for Snape."

She wiped her face with the back of her sleeve. "I know."

Ginny led them to the lip of the opening in the tomb. There was a small room that seemed to be carved into the whole of the inside. A sconce flared to life on the wall, casting much needed light on the interior. And then, without any warning, a great ball of fire erupted on the large slab of granite that Harry knew held the shrouded body of his former Headmaster. The fire died away, leaving a mound of ash.

Then, he heard the last sound he expected to hear that night. The unmistakable cry of a baby rent the air. In the midst of the ashes lay a baby, sooty and squirming. Ginny let go of Harry's hand and moved to scoop him up.

"Oh, isn't he adorable?" she cooed, all traces of her recent tears completely vanished. Ginny shucked off her jumper to wrap the naked boy with. After a quick Cleaning Charm, she swathed the infant in the blanket and began to gently rock him.

The baby gurgled as his cries dissolved into a few, scattered hiccoughs. He grasped at her hair with a shaky hand. When he finally grabbed a handful, he smiled and caught Ginny's eye. "His hair is the same colour as mine," she said. "And... did his eyes just... twinkle?"

Harry did a double take and agreed that yes, the baby did have very deep, blue, twinkling eyes. In fact, it almost seemed as though the baby had been expecting them.

Ginny bounced the baby a couple more times in her arms and began to hum a tune Harry didn't recognize. On a shelf opposite the bier was an envelope. "Hello, what's this?" Harry asked and retrieved the paper.

Still bouncing the quite contented baby, Ginny peeked over Harry's shoulder as he read.

*Dear Harry and (hopefully) Ginny,*

*I know my death has been hard on many people; most of all yourselves, so I hope that the infant you now hold in your arms will bring some sort of solace to you. It seems as though life has its way of teaching us hard lessons regardless of our intentions or past experience. The two of you have faced Voldemort, and proved that you are both good, loving people. You now have the responsibility to care for this child, as I have named you his guardians. Do not ask yourselves too many questions about him yet, for all will be revealed within a year of your receipt of this letter.*

*You needn't feel obligated to marry, as I know that there are no rightful means that can influence that decision. If you do not, however, you will have to work out another arrangement for the child's care. And yet, I chose the two of you for a very good reason (least of all being the lack of anyone more suitable), chiefly the very special way in which I have seen you regard each other. It is my wish that this child be raised by two such people.*

*Again, the questions you have swirling around your minds now will be answered in the space of one year. Please make sure that you keep the details of finding this baby a close secret to the two of you and your family.*

*Yours, faithfully,*

*Albus Dumbledore.*

*P.S. Remember what I said to you about Professor Snape. I trust him with my life. I also trust him with this child and would have given the child to him raise as a second choice.*

Harry folded the letter and shoved it in his pocket, trying not to blush at the very intimate and very maddening nature of the letter. A second envelope appeared on the shelf with a quiet "pop." This envelope was of the type used by the Ministry. It contained a magical birth certificate, listing today as the child's date of birth and his name as "Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore Potter" and his parents as himself and Ginny.

"You don't suppose he was actually *born* today, do you?" Harry whispered, still unable to grasp everything that had happened.

"If he was, how did he get here, and where is his mother?" Ginny replied, sounding on the verge of finding a recipient for her Bat Bogey Hex.

"He was born just now," Snape said, advancing on them in the tiny space of the nook. Ginny and Harry backed into the stone slab. "Dumbledore's familiar was a Phoenix – this is his tomb. A flash of fire and then a new child emerging from the ashes." Snape curled his lip. "I always contended that you were slow, Potter, but surely even you could see it..."

"You murdered Dumbledore!" Harry spat. "If this is him, reborn again, why would he ask you to open the tomb? Why aren't you locked away in Azkaban?"

Snape didn't take the bait, however, and merely glared sourly at Harry. "The time will come when we shall speak of the events of that day in June, Potter, but tonight is not that time. I am here for one reason: to entrust this child into your care."

Harry saw his chance and flung his wand up to Snape's chest. The older man was a second slower, but just as Harry's wand began to glow with the magic of a non-verbal spell, a third flash of fire erupted in the tomb, directly between them. Fawkes' appearance spoiled Harry's aim.

With a flourish, Snape gathered his cloak and triggered what must have been a hidden Portkey.

Harry screamed in indignation and almost flung himself after Snape.

"Harry, stop!" Ginny shouted, bringing Harry's attention back to them. "We need to take care of Albie." She wasn't quite glaring at him, but he got the distinct impression that he ought to leave Snape alone for now.

Fawkes chirped at them and lit on the corner of the bier.

Harry, shook himself and brought his focus back to Ginny and the baby. "We need to secure him so we can Apparate back to the Burrow. You can tie him to your front like this..." Harry unwrapped the jumper, helping her position the baby across her middle. She held him with his face out as Harry wrapped him with the blanket, tying the ends around Ginny's shoulder and back. He made sure that the blanket wasn't too tight, but held Albie snug. "How's that?"

Ginny tested the baby's weight and re-adjusted it a few times before she nodded. "I think that might work. How'd you know to do that?"

Harry shrugged. "Just something that I saw on the telly once."

Careful of the new lump on her front, Ginny wrapped her arms around Harry and placed a kiss on his cheek. "I think you're going to make a wonderful father," she whispered in his ear.

"How are we going to feed him?" Harry asked.

Ginny smiled serenely, wrapping an arm around her bundle, tapping her left breast. "I'm a witch, Harry."

Fighting a blush, Harry followed her out. As they walked back into the night, the tomb closed itself and sealed with a hiss. Albie was gurgling from his position on Ginny's tummy and Harry reached out to find Ginny's hand.

Just before they walked between the gargoyles that marked the end of the wards and prepared to Apparate back to the Burrow, Harry pulled Ginny aside. "I reckon Albie needs a father and a mother."

Ginny gave him an appraising stare. "I reckon so."

Harry toed a rock in the dirt. "I reckon you and me are as good as any."

"Dumbledore said we didn't *have* to get married," Ginny replied, rubbing a hand on his shoulder.

"If we're going to be parents, we might as well be parents together and do it properly," he said at length.

Ginny lifted Harry's chin. "Are you asking me to marry you?"

Harry could only nod dumbly.

With a smirk, Ginny took his hand again and wrapped her free one around Albie. "I'll think about it."

They twirled on the spot and disappeared with a pair of *pops*.

\*

One year later, Mr. and Mrs. Potter had just finished getting little Albie ready for a visit to the play park when he said his first word. Technically, he said his first word and his first sentence at the same time.

"I was wondering," Albie said as Harry and Ginny gaped at him. "Should I call you Harry and Ginny, Mr. and Mrs. Potter, or just Mum and Dad?"

"A-Albie?" asked Ginny as if their now one-year-old boy had suddenly sprouted two heads.

Albie chuckled. "It's been such a terribly long year, waiting for my brain to catch up with my... well, brain. I've been waiting to tell you my most closely held secret all this time, and now... I can."

Harry and Ginny, by this point had sat down and faced their son with continued amazement. Ginny was heavily pregnant, ready to give birth to their second child any day and she fanned herself with a folded up *Daily Prophet*.

"My name is not insignificant. Indeed, you already know that I was born from the ashes of Albus Dumbledore, but I wonder if you ever really understood who I was."

"What are you saying, Albie?" asked Harry. "That you are *the* Albus Dumbeldore?"

Albie smiled. "Well, I'm actually Albus *Potter* now, but before that, I was Dumbledore."

"But..." said Ginny, grasping her belly as a wave of false labour cramps set in.

"You are no doubt curious as to how this is possible?" They both nodded their agreement. "I have taken upon myself one of the properties of the Phoenix, specifically, when killed, I will be reborn from the ashes as an infant."

Ginny's contraction receded and Harry daubed the sweat that appeared on her forehead with a rag. "Y-You can't be killed?" she asked.

Albie giggled and it was hard for Harry to see both the aging former Headmaster and the young son he'd grown to love in the same person.

"Oh, I *can* be killed as any other wizard can, but I am reborn again like the Phoenix. Unlike the Phoenix, however, it takes some time for the spell to take effect. It was designed that way so a proper burial could take place with no questions asked. Once my appointed guardians entered the sepulcher, the spell consumed my old body and my new infant body appeared in its place."

Harry let out a low whistle. "I'm glad Voldemort didn't use that spell. I mean it would have been horrible to kill a baby Voldemort, but still necessary..."

"No, Harry – Dad," said Albie. "Voldemort could not have used this spell because it requires the sacrifice of an actual Phoenix to set it in place. Fawkes had a mother once who would still be alive today had she not suggested that I be the beneficiary of this spell. Furthermore, it can only be done seven times when a human is involved, and Voldemort would undoubtedly want more than that."

"Wait a tic," interrupted Ginny. "You can talk to Phoenixes?"

Albie shook his diminutive head. "No, but Phoenixes can communicate with humans. This particular one suggested that I undergo the spell to help transfer knowledge down through the generations."

"That's why you taught at Hogwarts," said Harry. "And that's how you knew so much about Horcruxes."

"Right on both counts, although with the latter, I didn't really have more to go on than Voldemort. Professor Slughorn taught me more about them than in any previous life."

Ginny's breath began to come in short bursts as she fought another contraction. "So exactly how many times have you been reborn?"

Albie gave a gaping yawn. "This will be the last. We shall speak more at another time, perhaps. Right now, I need my nap. And it looks as if my

sister will be arriving soon.”

With that, Albie drifted off to sleep and Ginny’s hand clamped down on Harry’s. “He’s right,” she said. “My water just burst; this baby’s on its way *now*.”

Harry sprang from the now drenched sofa, Apparated away to tell the Weasley’s and then popped back to pick up Ginny.

“Hermione’s going to watch Albie while I get you to St. Mungo’s.”

Ginny nodded and let Harry pull her to a standing position.

“Although, I think she knows more than she’s let on because she gave me the most peculiar look when I told her there was something we need to tell her about Albie.”

Ginny smirked and gave Harry a half-roll of her eyes. “Thick,” was all she managed through her heavy breathing.

There was a *pop* from the kitchen and Harry grabbed their overnight bag. Hermione strode into the room and completely ignored Harry and Ginny as she swooped Albie from his spot on the floor. “Off you go then,” she said with a wave. “I’ll check in after a while.”

They left and the noise seemed to arouse Albie. Hermione assumed her best stern look.

“Are they gone?” Albie asked, his eyes still mostly closed.

“Yes. Did you tell them?”

He sighed. “Mostly. I haven’t said anything about my previous lives yet, but I mean to.”

Hermione’s lips tightened into a thin line. “You’d better, Albus Potter. They’re your parents in every respect and you said yourself that you always regret not telling your past parents the truth.”

Another sigh, this one very weary and were it not for the high pitch, it could have come from a hundred and fifty year old man instead of a toddler. “I’m so very glad that I did not choose you and Mr. Weasley as my parents. I can already feel my hairs turning white.”

“Oh, very funny,” she replied. “Now are you ready to go to the play park or not?”

Albie mustered up his most convincing pout. “Library?”

“You’ve read everything in the library already. Six lives’ worth, if you recall.”

“Yes, well, the Muggles are always coming up with the most interesting things. Perhaps you could read me some technology periodicals? That would provide some refreshing diversion.”

Hermione huffed. “Very well. I need to return a few books any way.”

Albie allowed himself to be toted to the kitchen, where Hermione warmed a bottle of Ginny’s milk. The worst part of the Phoenix Spell, he decided, was baby food. Nursing was adequate, but the modern concoctions that followed nursing were awful, compared with his memories of ground up steak and kidney pie. Still, he’d downed worse potions before, so it was all as well enough.

They popped out of the Potter’s house and a few hundred miles away in the maternity ward of St. Mungo’s, his sister took her first breath.

“Well done, Mum, well done,” Albie murmured.