

Girls Just Want to Have Fun

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~ Girls Just Want to Have Fun ~

Hermione took a lick of her giant lollipop, the orange and pumpkin flavours dissolving pleasingly in her mouth. She glanced down at the absurdly oversized pinwheel of candy, slowly shaking her head in disbelief for the third time that afternoon. It was a colourful confection better suited to a child, of course. And she had altogether too many things on her mind to afford to spend a day gallivanting about a fair.

Nonetheless, Ginny's idea had been a good one. The village was bustling with musicians, magical rides, divination booths, artisans and games, and for the first time in weeks Hermione had been able to put her worries aside, even if just for a few hours.

It was a lovely early evening; the rainclouds that had threatened all morning were now a distant memory. The sun was starting to sink below the level of the tents and kiosks, bathing the clear sky in a smooth, lilac-to-pink hue. The air still carried the day's residual warmth, so that Hermione's vest lay crumpled on her knees, unused. The sounds of bustle and merriment carried all through the fair, and a fresh breeze would kick up briefly from time to time, playing with Hermione's brown locks. Yes, it was a good day after all.

"Are you sure this is where Harry said to meet?"

Hermione turned to her friend. Seated to her right on the painted wooden bench, the redhead clutched a large half-eaten cotton candy, the area all around her mouth a bright pink from enthusiastic indulgence. Hermione felt a sudden urge to laugh.

"What?"

"Nothing," replied Hermione quickly, deciding to wait until the boys' arrival to watch their reactions. "no, this is the place, he said by the mystic's tent. They're probably just lost again."

Ginny nodded and nudged Hermione with her elbow, indicating their mutual friend, seated on the extreme left of the bench.

"Stumped, Luna?"

The blonde girl nodded slowly, the overhanging brim of the large and outrageously garish sombrero she'd won at a kiosk swaying slightly. She was staring intently at the magazine splayed open across her lap while sucking pensively on a long licorice wand. Hermione glanced down at the facing page; a half completed crossword puzzle was evidently the object of the Ravenclaw's attention at the moment.

"Need any help?"

"The language of romance," breathed Luna, drawing out her black and red striped candy just long enough to utter the clue.

"Italian," answered Ginny immediately. "That's easy."

"French," countered Hermione just as quickly, looking severely at the redhead in a passable imitation of Professor McGonagall's severe classroom gaze.

But Ginny was undeterred, leaning over Hermione's lap closer to the Ravenclaw. "It's Italian, Luna," she said firmly.

"It's French!" exclaimed Hermione in disbelief, playfully pushing Ginny back with a shove.

"You sure it's not Bulgarian?" prodded Ginny, though her knowing expression was one of friendly ribbing.

"Oh stop it," laughed Hermione, memories of a certain Bulgarian Quidditch star springing up in her head. "No really, French has always been the language of romance. It's a well-known fact."

"Oh really?" jabbed Ginny, shifting her legs so as to better face her friend. "If it's so well-known, then why are the Italians renowned for romance?"

"So are the French!"

"It's not Italian," intoned Luna dreamily, interrupting the argument. "There's only six letters."

"Ha!" exclaimed Hermione triumphantly.

Ginny gave her an exaggerated pout. Hermione licked her lollipop for good measure.

"It's not French either," continued Luna in between sucks of her licorice wand. "It starts with 'G'."

"It's – what??" blurted Hermione, nearly dropping her candy. Ginny looked just as surprised.

Luna took no notice. She took the pencil tucked behind her ear and began to scribble. "I'll put German."

Hermione and Ginny looked at each other.

"*German??*"

Luna deftly tucked her pencil behind her ear and resumed sucking on her candy, her eyes riveted to the paper and seemingly oblivious to her friends' consternation.

"It's definitely not German, Luna," intoned Hermione once she realized Luna wasn't going to erase her answer.

Luna finally turned her gaze to Hermione's, her huge silver eyes twinkling. She said nothing, apparently content to stare at the older girl while sublimely sucking on her sugar quill.

Ginny giggled. "I have to agree with Hermione on this one, Luna," she said mirthfully, leaning forward so she could see past Hermione. "Germans might be renowned for lots of things, but I wouldn't say romance is one of them."

Luna continued to stare at both girls, her face devoid of expression as she rotated the slowly melting wand in her mouth.

Hermione raised a quizzical eyebrow as she turned to Ginny. The latter, for her part, was having trouble keeping a straight face, choosing to conceal her bubbling amusement behind her cotton candy. Hermione rolled her eyes and turned her attention back to the Ravenclaw.

"Luna, are you listening?" she asked, her lollipop now quite forgotten. "The answer's most definitely French. There's just no way it's German."

"*You're* a Germanophobe," proclaimed Luna matter-of-factly in between sucks of her licorice.

Hermione gaped at her. "I am not!" she blurted indignantly as Ginny fell back against the bench in a fit of laughter. "Luna Lovegood, you take that back! I am most certainly NOT a Germano – "

She paused, thinking.

" – phobe," completed Luna helpfully.

"That's not even a word!"

"Oh yes it is!"

"*Hem hem*," interrupted Ginny, her imitation of Umbridge distinctly less convincing than usual, punctuated as it was by residual giggles. But it nonetheless had the desired effect.

"Okay, look," said Hermione a bit more tactfully, "no use both of us getting worked up, it's just a crossword, after all. But German is definitely not the language of romance, Luna, that I'm sure of." But Luna was undeterred. "Germans can be romantic too, you know," she said.

Hermione felt the handle of her lollipop bend slightly. She forced herself to relax her tightening grip.

"I'm not saying they can't be," she explained with enforced patience, "it's just that they don't really have that stereotype about them. It's like the Japanese and cameras, if you like."

"Observe," said Ginny as she slid off the bench. She knelt down on one knee before Hermione in a mock suitor's pose, taking Hermione's free hand in hers and gesticulating in grandiose fashion.

"*Je t'aime, ma chérie, mon amour*," she pronounced in heavily accented French, holding a hand over her heart. "*Tu es le soleil de mon coeur*."

Hermione stared wide-eyed at the younger Gryffindor, feeling decidedly silly with the odd glances they were drawing from passers-by.

"I didn't know you could speak French," observed Luna.

"I can't, not really," explained Ginny, smiling. "That's from a movie I saw...anyway, and now for the German version."

She drew a deep breath. When she spoke again, her voice had adopted a slightly shrill and decidedly commanding tone.

"*Acthung! Ein ist der schnitzelgruber, herr fraulein!*" she fairly barked. "*Spraaken zie dorff kubelwagen!!*"

Both Luna and Hermione burst out laughing, the former letting go a shriek of mirth that drew even more attention onto themselves than

Ginny's antics, several passers-by glancing at them with odd expressions. Hermione tried hiding behind her lollipop, suddenly grateful for its ridiculously oversized proportions.

Ginny scrambled back to the bench, giggling mischievously. "See?"

"Do more!" prodded Luna enthusiastically, her huge silvery eyes aglow in merriment.

"Are you kidding?" laughed Hermione in mock horror. "You should've seen the way people were looking at us!"

Ginny was rubbing her eyes, wiping the tears away. "That was pretty much all the German I know, anyway," she giggled.

"Something tells me that wasn't an exact translation, either," said Hermione, feeling suddenly better than she had in days. She turned to Luna and smiled. "But anyway...convinced?"

"Well, that didn't sound very romantic to me," conceded Luna. "But then, I've never been serenaded by a German. Maybe that's just how it goes."

"Point is," continued Hermione, "that German isn't a language typically associated with romance. I think Ginny illustrated that convincingly enough, don't you?"

"But the word fits," countered Luna.

"There's lots of six-letter words – "

"And it starts with a 'G'," said the Ravenclaw, unperturbed.

Hermione sighed. "Okay, look," she said, "obviously whatever word you put that intersects at the 'G' is wrong. Here, let me see that – "

She snatched the magazine from Luna's lap and drew her finger down the list of clues until she found the one she was looking for. She gasped in disbelief as she read the answer Luna had jotted down.

She shook her head critically at the Ravenclaw.

"You're upset again," observed Luna serenely. "I can tell."

"The national symbol of the United States is the Bald Eagle!" exclaimed Hermione in exasperation. "NOT the *Orangutan!*"

Ginny almost choked on a mouthful of cotton candy, her legs kicking in spasmodic reflex.

"I know," said Luna, shrugging. "But it had to start with an 'O', and Orangutan was a nice fit."

Hermione quickly read down the list of clues and Luna's corresponding answers. "None of these are right!" she said in astonishment. She felt Ginny tug slightly on her sleeve but ignored her, glaring instead at Luna.

"School doesn't start for another week," remarked Luna calmly. "The marks don't matter here."

"Why bother doing a crossword if you don't care about getting the answers right?" asked Hermione in irritation. "That's the whole point!"

"No," said Luna as she snatched back her magazine and resolutely spread it out on her lap once more, "the point is to have fun."

"Now look – "

Hermione stopped, open-mouthed, quite unable to come up with an appropriate retort. She turned to Ginny, who shrugged almost apologetically.

"She's got you there," said the redhead.

Hermione leaned back against the bench. "You're right," she admitted to Luna candidly. "My mistake. Point to you."

Ginny chuckled.

"What?" asked Hermione.

Ginny had a quirky half-smile, the sort she wore whenever she felt distinctly incredulous. "Don't tell me you two keep score," she said mockingly.

"We don't," breathed Luna in between sucks of her sugar quill, having turned her attention once more to her crossword puzzle.

Hermione stared straight ahead and felt her body tense uneasily. Though she couldn't see herself, she could sense her cheeks flushing.

Not to mention Ginny's critical gaze. Luna, too, had noticed Hermione's conspicuous silence and turned her silvery eyes on the older girl.

Several long moments passed, during which Hermione stared up at the deep fushia-hued skies overhead and fidgeted uncomfortably.

"Do we?" asked Luna.

Hermione shut her eyes tightly and grimaced.

"I...might've..." she squeaked in a tiny voice

"If I hadn't heard it I wouldn't have believed it," said Ginny seriously.

"You of all people, Hermione...if Ron did something like that you'd be all over him like – "

"Okay! I know!" exclaimed Hermione painfully, throwing up her hands in surrender. "I shouldn't have, it was wrong...*I* was wrong..."

She looked pleadingly to Luna, who was gazing at her with an unfathomable expression –

Luna turned back to her magazine without a word. But Hermione has gleaned a very slight change in her friend's silvery eyes; so subtle was it that it would have been undetectable to almost anyone else. But Hermione had come to know Luna better than most.

Hermione bit her lip. The situation needed rectifying, and immediately. She took a deep breath and steeled herself; she'd intended her next statement for a few months hence, on Luna's birthday, but the situation she'd put herself in required emergency action.

"Luna," she began slowly, "There's something I've been meaning to tell you..."

Ginny stopped chewing her cotton candy and froze.

"I'll admit...considering all the evidence..."

Luna raised her head slightly.

"...the Crumple-Horned Snorkack.....might exist..."

Luna spun around so fast her sombrero fell off her head, flopping to the ground behind the bench. Her huge eyes were even wider than usual, though now they were filled with something altogether different than the disappointment Hermione had witnessed earlier.

"I mean...it's possible..."

Both Luna and Ginny were staring at her in shock, mouths agape, though in the former's case it lasted but a moment.

"I knew it!" exclaimed Luna happily, wrapping her arms around a surprised Hermione and squeezing enthusiastically. "I just *knew* you'd come around after the July issue!"

"Group hug!" blurted Ginny, throwing aside the remnant of her cotton candy and joining in the warm embrace.

"Okay, okay!" said Hermione hastily, blushing slightly as she was squeezed in between her two companions. "It's really sweet, really it's...okay, you two...people are looking..."

"This is nice," declared Luna wistfully, resting her head on Hermione's shoulder and showing no signs of wanting to move.

A shadow fell across them. Hermione took a sharp inhalation. Harry, Ron and Neville were standing before the bench, all three staring at the scene before them in bewilderment.

"Um...bad time?" asked Harry awkwardly.

"What's going on?" queried Ron.

Ginny giggled. "Haven't you guys ever seen a Love Sandwich before?"

Hermione turned an even redder hue, taking to examining the clouds high above.

"Er..."

"You should try it," suggested Luna dreamily, closing her eyes and looking for all the world like she might soon drift off, "it really is quite soothing, you know."

Harry, Ron and Neville all looked at each other uncomfortably. Ron looked particularly aghast. A few tense moments passed.

"Nahhh," they finally said in unison, shaking their heads.

"Want to try that other Chamber of Horrors thing?" suggested Harry. "No spiders this time, I promise."

"Yeah, let's," agreed Ron, giving a crimson-faced Hermione one last bemused glance before setting off with his companions. Neville shrugged innocently at Ginny before following.

"Hee hee," giggled Ginny against Hermione's shoulder, "did you see their faces – "

Hermione jumped up from the bench, freeing herself from her companions's clutches. She whirled around, pointing her lollipop at the two girls who'd banged their heads together following their friend's sudden departure. "Okay, you two," she said, her attempted seriousness betrayed by a slight mirthfulness in her voice, "I know you're trying to cheer me up but – "

"Is it working?" asked Luna, suddenly wide-eyed again.

"I..."

Hermione trailed off, suddenly finding herself at a loss to explain her heavy-heartedness of the last few days.

"Well, yes, it is, actually," she said softly.

Ginny got to her feet. "Well good," she pronounced, indicating the direction the boys had gone. "Anyway, looks like we're on our own. Anyone up for a ride? That one with the spinning wheel looks like fun, or we can try the one with the upside down – "

Luna closed her magazine and retrieved her sombrero.

"I can't believe you want to try another one of those," said Hermione incredulously. "You almost got sick on the last one!"

"They're fun!" declared Ginny as Luna gave her hat a few good whacks.

"But...what if...I mean..."

"Oh, come on," urged Ginny, tugging on Hermione's arm. "Live a little. You'll like it, you'll see."

Hermione shook her head in disbelief. "You know," she said, rubbing her temples, "you two can drive a girl to drink – "

Luna whirled around. "Cherry juice!" she voiced merrily, misty eyes wide in eager anticipation.

"Oh no you don't!" countered Ginny. "You're not getting drunk on MY watch! Once was enough!"

Luna shot her a nasty look. "That was a trick played by your brothers, as you well know," said the Ravenclaw stately as she carefully replaced the sombrero atop her head. "I meant *real* cherry juice."

Hermione smiled as she recalled a very peculiar event the previous summer; it had marked the first, and last, time the Weasley twins ever attempted to pull a prank on Luna. Sighing to the evening air, she made her decision.

"Right, well, come on then," said Hermione, nodding towards the busiest part of the fair. "There's bound to be a food kiosk that serves cherry juice near the rides..."