

Harry Potter

A Face With a View

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Summary: Harry has always had a face I can read.

The cheering of the crowd alerts me that the game has finally ended. One of the two Seekers—I can only hope that it's ours—has captured the Snitch and the seven hour game is over.

My arms ache from cradling the Quaffle, from throwing it through the hoops, and from holding onto the broom for so long. As much as I've trained, my body is not made for flying this long and it aches; sore in places I'm sure I'll only fully discover tomorrow morning.

But it was the last game of the season, and I'm grateful. We haven't made it to the playoffs, which is sad, but right now I'm too tired to be anything but thrilled that I get some holiday time. Although 'holiday' is a relative term when your mother is busy planning your rapidly approaching wedding.

Thoughts of the wedding, of making seating charts and staring at lace covered bits of fabric while Mum expounds on the virtues of white versus chocolate cake are quickly swept aside when I'm ordered to join my team in celebration. Gwenog is hovering near me, staring at me as if I've completely lost my mind.

"Are you injured?" she demands, peering at me. I've grown accustomed to her harsh voice over the past year she's been my captain, and I know she's not rude, just... very brief. She asks direct questions and expects quick, correct answers.

The first week I was on the team, I cried every night when I came home; something that Mum was quick to say meant I was definitely in the wrong line of work, but Harry understood as he let me climb into his lap and burrow into his embrace.

But I've gotten over that now. I understand Gwenog's intent, rather than dwelling on the way she barks commands and demands excellence.

"Just tired," I assure her as I toss the Quaffle her way and allow my broom to circle down to the pitch. What's left of the crowd after the marathon game has spilled out onto the green grass as well and they're surrounding most of the team.

For just a moment I contemplate slipping into the changing room and allowing the heat from a forever-long shower to ease the stiffness and fatigue from my bones, but a flash of familiar red convinces me that I'd better stay, at least for a few minutes.

The crowd jostles me side to side as I weave in and out, making my way toward the back of Ron's head, which I can just see. It feels a bit like being in the ocean—tossed back and forth by the current—as people pat me on the back, yell their amazement at my high number of goals and, congratulate me in general. I smile through it all, feeling a post-game numbness creep up and start to envelope me. My bed at home tantalizes me.

"There she is!" George crows as I finally managed to find their small group—an island in the undulating ocean of fans clad in dark green and gold. His heavy arm falls around my shoulder and I cling to him, using his robes to hold me up. "Brilliant game, Ginny!"

"Thanks," I mumble, taking a minute to breathe. The slight odor of something sour and gunpowder

that emanates from George's robes is enough to make me pull away. "I didn't think anyone would still be here." "Of course we're still here," my father assures me with a wink as he tugs me from George's grasp. His robes smell like homemade bread and Mrs. Scower's—like home—and the scent calms me. "Your Mum said to tell you she's sorry she missed the game, but Teddy was running a fever and Andromeda needed to run some errands.

"It's fine," I assure him. "Mum wouldn't have been able to sit still this long anyway."

He releases me and I turn on my heel, expecting Ron to swallow me in commentary about the match—his "expert" opinion on what I could have done better, what I did brilliantly, what the other team did wrong, and on and on—but he's standing, grinning at me, his hand casually resting on Harry's shoulder. "She's finally noticed us, mate," Ron grins at Harry, who gives a tight smile in return. Harry's face has always been like a picture to me; I can read his moods and tell when he has something on his mind by the way he smiles, the way his eyes crinkle up at the edges, or the way he tilts his head just slightly. A crooked grin means he's amused and happy, not weighed down with thoughts of the day or cares of the world. A tight smile, like the one he's wearing today, means he's preoccupied with thoughts but doesn't want to ruin everyone else's mood. Even when he scowls, I can usually read how serious his thoughts are. Harry's face has always had a view.

It may be selfish to completely forget that Ron is there, but for me it's rather unavoidable.

"I didn't think you'd make it," I say as I melt into Harry's embrace. The muscles in his back relax just a fraction when my hands wrap around him and he pulls me to him. We breathe in the scent of each other—him like fresh air and clean clothing and broom handle polish.

"I caught the last couple of hours," he murmurs into my ear, placing a small kiss there, as if he can't hold back any longer. I shiver in response and give him a little squeeze before pulling back.

This close, Harry's face definitely tells a story. His skin is pale and there are dark circles under his eyes, betraying just how few hours of sleep he's been allowed lately. The corners of his mouth are tight, held in place by his will not to display too much in public.

But I can't help myself from wanting to kiss those troubles away. His lips are soft and yielding against mine and his arms firm around me. We haven't seen each other more than a few hours lately because of his demanding work and the gauntlet of games I've been playing—and it shows.

His kiss is needy, draining what I pour into mine and I know we're getting carried away when Ron clears his throat.

The taste of butterbeer on his breath fills my mouth as we continue to kiss. For just a moment, the crowd melts away, my brothers and father disappear, and time slows. All motion slows to just the soft feel of Harry's mouth moving against mine, his tongue softly tracing my lip and then pulling back, his fingers brushing my sides. We're alone.

Ron's throat clearing had increased and my father sniggers as George makes vulgar comments about us. But it really doesn't matter. The world arrives again as I manage to pull back and press my forehead against Harry's, looking into his smudged, crooked glasses. His eyes are closed and I can feel the trembling in his body. He's close to losing control and needs to get away from this crowd.

"I need to shower," I whisper, splaying my hands along his back and watch as his face tightens and then he pulls back, his 'public face' back on.

"I'll wait for you."

"You don't have—"

"I want to," he assures me, his fingers coming up to trace my cheek softly before he pulls away completely. His cheeks flare pink when his eyes meet Ron's and he gives a small, one shoulder shrug that apologizes and tells his best mate to piss off all at the same time.

"That's gratitude for you," Ron huffs—although his attitude is betrayed by the bright smile he wears. "I come for the whole seven bloody hours, and I don't get a word of thanks. But you come for an hour or two, catch the end, and get greeted like that!"

"I could kiss you like that, Ronniekins," George offers, moving forward as if he's going to plant a huge, wet kiss on Ron.

"Urgh," Ron says, dodging behind Harry and peeking around us.

"Thank you all for coming," I say, clinging to Harry's hand, closed around mine like a vice. He's definitely worked up about something, but he's not going to let it show to anyone else in such a place. "I appreciate that you stayed."

"We enjoyed it," my father assures me, kissing my cheek and then holding out his hand for Harry to shake. "If you're not too tired, I'm sure your mother would love for you to come by."

My eyes dart to Harry's, but his face has now turned impassive as he stares around at the crowd, still moving like swirling waters around us. That means he's probably spotted a camera in the mass that surrounds us.

"I think we'll pass tonight," I say, giving a smile that I hope my father interprets correctly. From the way his eyebrows raise when I glance back at Harry, I think he understands. "I'm knackered."

"She'll understand," he says again, squeezing my shoulder and then Harry's in that fatherly way he has.

"We'll be off too," George says, wrapping his arm through Ron's as if they're a couple, and holding tight while Ron struggles to get away from him. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do," he warns with a waggle of his eyebrows. Ron finally manages to escape from George's arm with a disgusted growl and rolls his eyes at us. Harry chuckles, but I can still feel the tension in the way his hand holds mine, the tension in his arm and shoulder.

"I'll hang out with Harry while you shower," Ron offers. I look closely at him and can tell he's noticed Harry's odd mood as well.

"Thanks," I say automatically. Harry sighs out a breath and I raise my eyebrow in challenge, silently telling him that I know he hates having a minder, but he's not getting out of it. "I'll be quick."

The team has long since exhausted their supply of jokes about me rushing off to be with Harry, and they mostly leave me alone now. One of them will make an occasional comment about how tight Harry's arse is, or what it must be like to play Auror and the Naughty Quidditch Player, but it's rare. I'm not sure if they just grew tired of not getting a rise out of me, or if they've just fallen into a pattern of expecting Harry and me together.

But the silence is a welcome gift as I shower quickly, lathering and rinsing while my mind traces Harry's face. I honestly didn't think he'd be here today. He's been working almost around the clock on one of his cases over the past week, rarely sleeping and eating only when someone pushes a plate under his nose. He stayed over twice this week, but we really only had time for a quick shag before he began snoring. I was honestly fine with it—even though I worry about him working too much—because we've both had times in our relationship when we've not been able to give one hundred percent and the other has to give a bit more to compensate.

Neither of us is perfect, by any means. We've had our share of arguments and misunderstandings, but... I guess the best thing about Harry and I is that we've both seen what we are apart, and we've seen what we can have together. We prefer the 'together' so we work hard at it.

Whatever was bothering Harry, and I was fairly positive it was work related, would come out when we were alone and had some time to just spend together. It usually did.

"Can we go somewhere?" he asks the moment Ron Disapparates from the pitch, leaving us the only two there still.

Now that we are alone, Harry lets the smile slip from his face, showing how truly tired and frustrated he is.

"Can we just... go anywhere for a few days?" He pleads, pressing kisses to my face enthusiastically while his hands wind into my t-shirt. If he wasn't quite so frantic about the suggestion, I might agree immediately.

"What's wrong, Harry?" I ask, reaching up to hold his face in my hands. His eyes slip closed and he presses his forehead to mine.

"I just... I just want to get away." Suddenly, his eyes open wide and his face spreads in a grin. "Let's elope... go somewhere and get married, just the two of us."

"Harry," I laugh, "that's insane."

"It is," he agrees, wrapping his arms around my waist as we spin in the middle of the field. "That's why it makes perfect sense. Think about it—

we leave now, we can have the whole weekend to spend together."

"Until Mum tracks us down and kills us for doing this without the family," I point out, ending his brilliant plan.

He sighs and stops spinning, setting me down and taking my hands in his. "I know," he concedes. "I just—"

"That doesn't mean," I interrupt, "that I don't think getting away would be wonderful."

"Really?" his face lights up in the first genuine smile I've seen him have all afternoon. "You think—"

"I think," I say carefully, letting my finger trace the line of his nose, over his lips, and down to his chin, "that having a few nights to ourselves is a great idea. We'll just drop by our flats, pack a few things and send off an owl to Ron and Hermione, so that someone knows where we'll be."

"You're being entirely too logical," he scolds, and I know he's giving in. "And you're taking all the fun out of this eloping idea." His lips find mine and I giggle against him.

"I'm sure I can think of another kind of fun we can have," I promise, threading my fingers through his hair and making a shiver run down his back.

He's quiet for a minute, and then nods. "Okay, let's go." His face is now filled with a bit more hope than it was earlier.

Whether it's the coolness of the place next to me in bed, or the absence of the clock next to the bed making its soothing tick-tick-tick, missing the fourth and fifth beat, and catching up again on the sixth and seventh, I can't say. It has always had the same pattern, as far back as I can remember, anyway. Percy once told me that Charlie had thrown the clock at Bill, evidenced by the dent in the side, right near the number seven.

But the familiar sound is missing tonight in the silence of our hotel room.

"I didn't mean to wake you."

Harry's face is bathed in what light floats in from the waxing crescent moon, long shadows making unearthly shapes on the unfamiliar room. In his glasses I can see the reflection of the window, obscuring his eyes.

I sit up, resting on my elbows and stare at him. His chest is bare and the pyjama bottoms he's taken to keeping tucked away in my drawer for nights when he stays over are worn low on his hips, his knees brought up in front of him, arms curling around them.

"I've missed you lately," I say softly, my voice cracking from sleep.

He smiles tightly, but it slides off his face almost as quick as it came, moving back into the stoic, heavy look. "Sorry." His apology is whispered and seems to take forever to float from where he sits on the window seat and stares out at the window.

Harry didn't want to talk about what was bothering him while we were traveling, at dinner, or even after we spent several hours in bed,

remembering all our favorite places on each other's bodies. And I understand he needs some time to

wrap his mind around everything before he talks about it.

"S'alright," I say as I sit up fully and rub the sleep from my face. "I understand. You'll be finished with this case soon enough and—"

"I'm finished now."

What I was going to say melts in the back of my throat and I really study him for a minute. His eyes find mine and he stares at me, but I can't read his expression.

"Harry," I scold softly. "I can't read your mind."

"Sometimes I wish you could," he sighs. He hooks his finger under the arm of his glasses and tugs them off, sets them on the window sill and rubs harshly at his eyes. "It would make things easier."

"Come here," I urge, waving my hand to signal him to join me back in bed.

Harry stares, not moving.

"Come on," I say, tilting my head to the side. "You look like you could use a cuddle."

Harry turns his face toward the window and I can see the dark circles under his eyes then—like the crescent moon outside—pasting weariness on his face. I swear silently and begin clambering down to the edge of the bed to pull him in with me when he stands slowly.

He melts into the large bed with me, as if it's made for only one person, his arms wrapping vine-like around me until he is pressed there fully, his head buried in my neck.

"I can't do this," he whispers, his voice making the skin on my neck hum.

I bury my fingers in his hair and scratch his scalp lightly, ruffling the dark strands. I know, without making him elaborate, what he is talking about. This isn't about the wedding, or the fame, or anything more than who he is.

The case he's been working the past months is consuming and he has, more than once, expressed a desire to walk away from it, although he never would have, I know.

"I thought your face had a view today," I say softly. My lips press to his ear and I wind our legs together, wincing when his cold toes slid against the warm skin of my bare calves.

Harry doesn't answer, but I can tell by the way his chest rises and falls that he is still struggling with the thoughts.

"You can do this, Harry." He doesn't answer more than to rub his fingertips on my back restlessly. "You're a ruddy brilliant Auror."

"You remember I told you we thought there might be a child?"

I nod, remembering Harry's intense passion for this case, even though he could tell me very little about what was actually going on. What I do know is probably next to nothing, I suspect.

Kingsley assigned Harry, along with a few other more seasoned Aurors, to track down suspected Death Eaters who had either supported Voldemort financially or behind the scenes—the ones that had gotten away. And they've been very successful, bringing in half a dozen men and women who were now awaiting trial.

But one particular individual they've been tracking has been stubbornly persistent. She was the wife of a known Death Eater, who had sympathized with her husband's fanatical friends. Although she never took a mark herself it was rumored that her arm had been kept clean simply because she held a position of authority at St. Mungo's.

"A little boy," Harry says, his words muffled by the pillow and my neck.

When the Aurors finally brought the woman in, she refused to tell them if there were any children by the marriage. In fact, she remained completely silent on every subject they asked her about.

I have a feeling I know where this story is going and close my eyes tightly, trying to push away the images. If Harry is this worked up over something... it must be bad.

He rolls onto his back, pillowing my head on his chest as he stares up at the ceiling. My fingers rub the hair around his navel this way and that,

gently forcing it to go where I want.

"She left him in this house, Gin. No one knew he was even bloody there!" His chest hitches and I hear him swallow with a choking sound.

I press my forehead right above his heart and wait for him to finish. I'd rather not know the details, but Harry needs someone to confide in. He needs to be able to come to me and talk about everything and nothing.

My fingers still on his belly and I glance down at the small sparkle of the diamond ring Harry gave me. It may have been silently, but the moment Harry slid that ring on my finger, I promised to be there for him—my own soundless vows, until we speak them aloud.

"By the time we found him... it was too late."

His voice is gruff and I cling to him, my own eyes fill with tears as we lay together.

"I'm so sorry, Harry."

His eyes are squeezed shut and I know that if he opens them, they'll be full of tears. Just for a minute, I want him to break down completely. I want to be the one to swoop in and save him, like he's done for me so many times; more times than I can count.

I want to be the one to see his face light in hope and love, instead of being painted with darkness and despair.

But he manages to hold the emotion in, despite the way his body shakes in my embrace. Knowing words aren't what he needs right now, I kiss his eyes lightly and then rest my lips on his, content to

stay there until he responds.

Finally, his lips move slowly and he sighs, rumbling low in his chest.

"I just... I just can't handle the kids."

"I'm sorry," I apologize, knowing he would be saying the same thing were we in different places. "I know how much it hurts when things don't turn out right. But..." My eyes meet his, bright in what little light there is in the room. "But those kids need you, Harry. This one might not have worked out, but the others have. And what about the ones after that? This is who you are, Harry Potter. It's in your very blood, and being, and magic. Not helping people would be like... like not breathing."

He snorts and tries to gather me to him, but I resist, knowing he needs to hear these words and not pass them off as just my silly musings.

"And I wouldn't love you nearly as much if you were different," I whisper, leaning down and nuzzling my face against his chest. "You're a hero—

but more importantly... you're my hero, Harry."

Harry pulls me up roughly against him, his lips claiming mine. "You rescue me," he protests, the words melting against my skin, "every single day. You're my hero."

The view on his face is different now. Gone is the empty look, and the mask that makes him seem unapproachable. That look is for other people.

But I have my Harry now; my loving, wonderful Harry whose eyes light up when he sees me and sparkle with mischief when we're teasing.

"It's a good thing you kept me around then," I tease, sliding my hands down his sides and tucking them into his trousers. His whole body shivers and he kisses me again, soft and tender.

"I'll always keep you around."