

The Gift is in the Giving

Author: Beren (Beren@dtwins.co.uk) (beren_writes at LJ)

Website: <http://www.plotbunny.co.uk>

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Warnings: EWE

Summary: It's Valentine's day and Harry has decided to act on his crush. Back at school to redo his seventh year he is enjoying the fact that no one is trying to kill him.

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Harry looked at himself in the mirror and wondered if his hair looked like a rats nest or if it looked like he'd spent ages trying to arrange it. He was not very good at telling yet and it didn't seem to make a lot of difference if he had spent hours or not, but Ginny assured him it was worth the effort. They weren't a couple, having decided that they made better friends than significant others, but Ginny had made it her business to turn him into the most eligible bachelor around. He wasn't sure it was working.

Well he knew that lots of people wanted a piece of him, but that had more to do with his name than what he looked like. Harry was after something real, which was tougher than it sounded.

It felt strange being back at school after the chaos of the previous year, but it was also very restful. The stresses of going to lessons, catching up on everything he had missed and doing homework were so small in comparison with what had been happening during the war that Harry was breezing through everything. It seemed it helped him to grasp a subject when he wasn't worried about it. That didn't stop the whole idea of dating being stressful though. In his madder moments Harry thought he might prefer facing off against Voldemort again.

It was February. That wonderful month that contained Valentine's day and all the joyously annoying traditions of the day. Harry fully expected to be fending off fluffy pink things and hearts all day, because he had to fend off ridiculous things like marriage proposals on a normal day. The fact that he was the Boy Who Lived and he'd done it twice meant he had quite a following, the fact that it turned out he was loaded meant he had an even bigger one.

Looking at his new glasses, he pulled them off as he realised they were covered in dirt and hastily cleaned them on his jumper. His glasses had been old and scratched for so long that he didn't notice when his new designer ones were covered in stuff and Hermione and Ginny were always telling him to clean them.

His glasses went with his new clothes that Ginny and Hermione and Lavender had made him buy when they found out he could afford it. It seemed that the vaults from his parents that he had seen was only a trust fund of sorts and everything else had been held in investments until he was eighteen, very good investments as it turned out. He'd also found out that Sirius had been sitting on quite a bit of the Black family fortune because of certain ancient laws and since Sirius had no

offspring of his own, Harry was deemed the closest thing to an heir; when he had turned eighteen that had transferred to him as well.

He didn't really know what to do with a lot of money, since he didn't need much and he'd bought a few presents for friends, but that was about it. Then Ginny had decided his wardrobe was hideous and the rest of his female friends had agreed and that had been that. Ever since a picture of his new look had hit the Prophet he'd had even more marriage proposals, some from witches old enough to be his grandmother.

Turning to the side, he made sure he was presentable. Normally he didn't bother that much, but he had his eye on someone and that certain someone was always impeccably turned out. Harry had decided he had to put in some effort if he was going to attract the certain someone's attention.

One good thing that had come out of the marriage proposals was that he'd discovered something about himself he'd never really considered before. It had been a little bit of a shock when some of the proposals had come from wizards rather than witches and it was only then that he'd found out that the Wizarding world was way ahead of the Muggle in that same-sex marriage had been legal for centuries. One proposal had been from a very nice looking man of about thirty five, whose photo had winked and smiled at him and when he was alone, had promptly stripped off and shown him literally, everything the wizard had. Harry had found it more than a little arousing.

That had been two month previously and after a long chat with Hermione he had come to accept that maybe he wasn't just in to girls; hence why his current crush was not of the female persuasion. Giving his hair one last tweak, he decided he was ready and headed out of the dorm room.

"Ooh, Harry," Lavender said as soon as he made it down to the common room, "what's her name, or should that be his name?"

Harry blushed to the root of his hair; he was not very good with the whole relationships thing. The fact he liked boys had come out after a rather ill-advised snog with Seamus when they'd both had one too many just before Christmas, but at least he was mostly comfortable with that now.

"Wouldn't you like to know," he said, trying to be cool about it, but hurried out of the portrait hole to the sound of girlish giggles.

It felt very silly, but he had actually made the object of his affections a valentine. It had taken him a long time, but Ginny had explained how hand made things were always seen as a greater gift than even hideously expensive bought things, because you had to put some of your own magic into them. He wasn't sure if this was girly advice or real advice, but he'd gone with it anyway. He'd fall back on the hideously expensive idea if he was noticed.

Ron sniggered at him when he sat down at breakfast.

"What?" he asked, thinking that he'd already done something to wreck his outfit.

"Mate," Ron said with a grin, "you're trying too hard."

"Shut up, Ron," Hermione said in a long suffering tone, "Harry looks lovely. Just because you didn't put any effort in today, doesn't mean others didn't."

Harry looked between his friends and decided he didn't want to know. The pair were a firm couple, but it was a rather volatile relationship and he had learned to stay well out of it. Luckily for him the post chose then to arrive, or at least, lucky that it distracted Ron, not so lucky for him. The first two owls dropped cards in front of him, the third let loose a whole sack of rose petals that fell in a lovely clump and landed right on his head. Ron managed to keep a straight face for about ten seconds and then burst out laughing.

"Bollocks," was Harry's opinion on the matter and he looked mournfully down at where he had once had a bowl of porridge.

Hermione managed to not laugh for a little longer.

"Are you okay, Harry?" she asked, doing a grand job of trying not to dissolve, but she lost it when Harry just stuck his lip out, blew upwards and sent a cascade of rose petals falling off his glasses.

So much for the cool and sophisticated look he had been going for.

"Been fighting with Professor Sprout's wild roses, Potter?" a familiar voice drawled from across the table and made his heartbeat speed up.

The fact that he had a crush on his one time worst enemy was quite ironic, but didn't stop it being true and he carefully schooled his features before he turned to look.

"Haven't you heard, Malfoy," he replied, keeping his tone very nonchalant, "we're doing a school play this year; Snow White and Rose Red; I was thinking of auditioning."

Many of the Slytherins had not returned to redo their seventh year, but Draco Malfoy was one of the few who had and he had changed a great deal. Malfoy's family's involvement with Voldemort was still under review, but Harry had not forgotten who had given him the opportunity to end the war and he had had words. Lucius was not going to get off scott free, but Narcissa and Draco were not being prosecuted. The end of the war had done a lot for Malfoy; gone was the skinny wreck of a boy and in his place was a very nice looking, almost pleasant young man, although Harry might have been a little biased.

Malfoy was not nice; that was not the Slytherin way, but neither was he vicious and nasty. In fact, Draco seemed to be the public image of the Malfoy name now and he appeared to be taking it very seriously. There had even been a few good deeds. Without the pressure of Voldemort, Malfoy was a different person.

Harry's quip might not have been the best, but he did see the hint of a smile flicker on the other wizard's face just for a moment. It was about the greatest reaction anyone ever got out of Malfoy these days and Harry was pleased by it. Quiet dignity was how Harry thought of Malfoy's attitude these days, Ron called it being snooty. The only person Malfoy traded insults with now was Harry and the first time that had happened Malfoy had almost looked shocked at himself. Harry thought it was more habit than anything else and their insults had no depth anymore, it was just a game.

Harry shook the petals out of his hair and did his best to clear a space so he could eat something, but the owls were still coming and he eventually went for a piece of dry toast because something dropping on that couldn't cause that much mess.

If it hadn't been for the fact that he wanted to see his gift delivered he would have given it up as a bad lot and left.

When the old school owl he had borrowed swooped in and dropped the small package in front of Malfoy he looked over and tried to pretend he was just curious, like the rest of the school. Malfoy appeared momentarily startled and then a little unsure. There had been some people who thought Malfoy should pay for his involvement with Voldemort at the beginning of the year and there had been some nasty pranks until Harry had put a stop to it. He'd given all the seventh years a stern talking to about putting the past away and how they had all been children wrapped up in their parents' war. Attacks against Slytherins had stopped after that as the message went around.

Malfoy looked up and checked around the room to see if anyone was taking a specific interest and Harry reached over for another piece of toast to cover his interest. When he looked back up, Malfoy seemed to be satisfied that the parcel was not going to bite him and pushed his used plate away and began to open it carefully. Harry did his very best not to look as if he was staring and busied himself opening some of his own mail so he didn't appear too interested.

"Looks like Malfoy has a secret admirer," Ron said, giving him another excuse to look up.

At least he could count on Ron to give him the odd excuse. He hadn't really figured out what he was going to do if he did actually manage to get what he so wanted, because Ron was going to explode.

"Wonder what's in the parcel," he said, sounding as casual as he could.

The way Ginny and Hermione both looked at him gave him a good idea that his closest female friends were not in the least bit fooled. If the truth was told, he didn't really expect them to have been.

"Something nice, I hope," Ginny said, giving her brother a little reprimand for his continued stance about Slytherins.

Harry watched out of the corner of his eye as Malfoy revealed the small trinket he had made. He'd copied the underlying design from a book, but all the embellishments were his own and he hoped Malfoy liked it. It was a tiny gryphon made of glass and silver and as Malfoy touched it, it stretched, flared its wings and launched itself to land on the surprised Slytherin's shoulder. There it curled up, made itself comfortable and fastened itself to his robes. Harry had made sure it was easy to take off, all Malfoy had to do was stroke it for it the wake up and come of in his hand.

The creation had some complicated magic in it, but for once Harry had enjoyed researching everything he needed to know. It made a change that his research was not about staying alive, but something creative instead and Professor McGonagall had been happy to help him when he had had questions. The Headmistress would know exactly who had given the gryphon to Malfoy, since she was the one person who had seen it before, but he was sure she wouldn't give him away.

He wanted Malfoy to figure out who had sent it eventually, hence the not so subtle use of the gryphon, but he also wanted to give Malfoy a way to pretend he didn't know if necessary, hence using the anonymous tradition. Forcing down the

smile that threatened as he saw Malfoy touch the gryphon, find it came off in his hand and then put it back was difficult, but he just about managed it.

"Wow," was Ron's, thankfully, not scathing, comment, "someone's serious."

"Why?" Harry asked, as casually as he could, since he was a little surprised by Ron's reaction.

He had been expecting more scoffing than respect.

"Well there's handmade and then there's handmade, Harry," Ginny said, since Ron just gave him a blank look. "That's obviously handmade, no offence to the maker, but one of the wings is slightly wonky."

Harry had noticed that, but he hadn't had time to fix it if he'd wanted to get the animation spell working properly.

"But an awful lot of work went into it," Ginny continued and he knew that she knew he'd made it, but she continued the charade anyway. "That's a lot more than a pink heart with a poem written on it."

He hadn't really thought of it like that and he did his best to swallow his toast around the lump that had suddenly appeared in his throat. It seemed that maybe he had gone a little over the top, but he'd wanted to impress Malfoy and let him know he was serious. It appeared he'd definitely done that.

"Oh, right," he said as if the answer didn't overly interest him.

There was a nasty suspicion growing at the back of his mind that if he didn't sort himself out the whole school was going to know who sent the gryphon by tea time. Maybe subtle just wasn't in his vocabulary.

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By lunch time Harry was all but ready to burn anything heart shaped on sight. There was only so much romance any one man should be asked to bear and he had reached his limit. That was why he decided to take a trip to the kitchen for lunch rather than brave the great hall and why he found himself accosted in one of the back corridors.

"Potter," Malfoy said, blocking his way.

"Malfoy," he replied and did his best to pretend his heart hadn't just leapt into his throat.

And that was the total of the conversation for a while as Malfoy just looked at him.

"You're about as subtle as a bludger," Malfoy said eventually, "but what I'm trying to work out is whether you meant what you seemed to mean or whether you're just blundering in where you don't understand."

Harry swallowed hard as he realised that Malfoy knew. What he did find significant was that the little gryphon was still curled up on Malfoy's school robe.

"How did you know?" he asked, because it was easier than any of the other things in his brain.

Neither of them seemed to really know how to work the conversation and Harry suspected it was that which made Malfoy answer him even though he saw annoyance cross the Slytherin's face at being answered with a question.

"You had my wand for some time," Malfoy said eventually, "it faintly picked up your magical signature and I recognised it when I touched the gryphon."

Well so much for being anonymous; Harry had had no idea that it was possible to pick up on someone's magical aura like that. It probably had something to do with why a wand was such a personal thing.

"I meant it," he said, falling back on Gryffindor courage. "I didn't quite know how much I meant it until Ginny explained I'd gone rather over the top, but that's just me missing the obvious."

He wasn't sure what Malfoy thought of that because the Slytherin's face remained blank.

"Why me?" Malfoy asked after a few moments of awkward silence.

"You're asking me to be logical?" Harry replied, not sure how to really answer that one. "Remember who you're talking to here."

The little joke didn't seem to go down very well.

"Have you looked in the mirror lately?" Harry tried again.

That settled Malfoy's ruffled feathers a little, but he could tell it wasn't what the Slytherin had really been after.

"You've never struck me as the type who looks at the surface," was Malfoy's counter statement.

Harry really hadn't intended to be having deep conversations in an empty corridor, but he finally accepted that that was what was happening.

"Okay," he said in defeat, "you intrigue me. Coming back here this year took real courage. You could have finished your education by correspondence course, but you didn't and you've taken everything that has happened this year with calm dignity. I've been impressed and I'm attracted to you and I would like to get to know you. And before you ask, I was probably more surprised when I worked it out than you were."

Something about Malfoy's stance relaxed somewhat and Harry hoped he had said the right thing. It wasn't as if he'd cry himself to sleep if Malfoy told him to push off, but he really wanted to give it a chance.

"You do realise," Malfoy said slowly, "that if we were to try this, we will be front page news."

"At least it'll give them something else to print other than my taste in underwear," he replied.

The public were so interested in him that the Prophet liked to print articles as often as possible, but he thought they really had been scraping the barrel when

they'd had someone go through his smalls. Malfoy actually gave a short laugh at that comment and Harry could feel the tension draining out of the situation.

"You should laugh more often," he said before his brain caught up with his mouth.

Malfoy gave him a raised eyebrow for that.

"I don't always have a lot to laugh about," was the surprisingly honest response.

"Maybe I could help change that?" Harry suggested hopefully.

That made Malfoy laugh again.

"You're such a sap, Potter," was Malfoy's response.

"Blame it on the date," he replied with a small smile.

Malfoy smiled for a while, but soon became more serious again and gave him a rather thorough once over with his eyes.

"You're not a bad specimen, Potter," Malfoy said, which pleased him rather more than it should have, "but are you sure you want the baggage that this will come with?"

"I'm willing if you are," Harry replied, because he was; he'd already thought it all through, even if Malfoy probably didn't think he had.

When Malfoy stepped towards him he felt his pulse speed up again and he suddenly felt as if he had lost all control of the situation.

"Well," Malfoy said, all but standing in his personal space, "there is one way to see if it might be worth the trouble."

Harry was not one to back down and he just stood there to find out what Malfoy meant, which Malfoy appeared to take as agreement because the Slytherin moved in closer. It wasn't that Harry wasn't expecting the kiss when it came, he just didn't have all that much experience, so at first he froze, but Malfoy seemed to expect that. Once his brain and body came back under his control, he kissed back and, when he opened his mouth, Malfoy took advantage. That was the point when Harry needed something to hold on to and he wound his arms around Malfoy without thinking about it, bringing them even closer as he did his best to give as good as he was getting.

It wasn't the greatest kiss ever; they didn't know each other well enough to understand the nuances of the other, but Harry felt the passion of it right to the tip of his toes. His body reacted as teenage male bodies were wont to in such situations and it made him a little lightheaded as they stumbled against the wall, still kissing. The stone was cold against his back, but it did nothing to cool his ardour and he wanted more, but Malfoy broke the kiss, pulling away, but not stepping away.

"Hmmm," Malfoy said, breathing just a little harder than normal, which was gratifying, "I think this deserves some more investigation. You weren't hungry were you, Potter?"

"Not for food," Harry said, since lunch was the furthest thing from his mind.

Malfoy smiled and then leant back in.

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Passion was not something Harry thought he and Draco would ever have trouble with and he knew he was going to get the third degree as soon as one of his friends spotted the huge hicky under his collar, but that didn't stop him spending the afternoon on cloud nine. Not even an exploding cauldron in Potions could dampen his mood and he was still smiling when he walked into dinner. He and Draco, he really liked the sound of Malfoy's first name in his head, didn't have any firm plans, they were playing it by ear, but neither of them were the type to quit for no reason.

It was after he sat down that one of the school owls swooped down on him and dropped a small package in front of him. As soon as he touched it, the gauzy material, protecting whatever it was, dissolved into white mist and left the most beautiful rose. It was such a dark red that it was almost black and, as he watched, it opened and released a wonderful scent. At least Harry thought it was wonderful; it was Malfoy's aftershave, which he had commented on at lunch, and he had it perfectly memorised. Three words appeared above the bloom and Harry smiled.

"Sit with me?" was the question.

Picking up the rose, he placed it on his robe with a whispered sticking spell and then he stood up. No doubt there was about to be a lot of noise and a lot of questions, but he really didn't care. Ron looked at him questioning, but he just smiled and loosened his tie a little so his collar slipped open a little.

"Harry, you dark horse," Ginny said from the other side of the table.

There would be fallout; when it came to him there always was, but he relished a challenge. Stepping over the bench, he walked to the end of the table, knowing that many eyes had spotted that he was on the move, and then he calmly walked over to the Slytherin table. Draco was sitting on the end in his usual place, a bubble of space around him, and he looked up as Harry stood there, before smiling and patting the bench next to him. Harry smiled back taking the offered seat and ignoring the explosion of sound that accompanied the simple action. He could imagine that Dumbledore would have been twinkling madly had he been there to see it and he hoped his mentor would have been proud.

The End