

Tales From 6th Year: Revelations in the Potions Classroom

Introduction

This story is the second of my *Tales From 6th Year* . This one begins during the first Potions lesson of the year, where Slughorn has been quite impressed with Hermione's knowledge of potions, and compliments her accordingly. The story is canon compatible up to this point, but things now begin to drift away from JKR's storyline.

Passages in **Bold Font** are taken directly from Book 6 - Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.

-xox-XOX-XOX-xox-

Revelations in the Potions Classroom

“Can you possibly be related to Hector Dagworth-Granger, who founded the Most Extraordinary Society of Potioneers?”

“No, I don't think so sir. I'm Muggle-born, you see.”

Slughorn looked from Hermione to Harry, who was sitting next to her.

“Oho! ‘One of my best friends is Muggle-born, and she's the best in our year!’ I'm assuming this is the very friend of whom you spoke, Harry?”

“Yes, sir.” Said Harry.

“Well, well, take twenty well-earned points for Gryffindor, Miss Granger,” said Slughorn genially.

But, ignoring the points she'd just earned (considerably out of character for her), **Hermione turned to Harry with a radiant expression .**

“Did you really tell him I'm the best in the year? Oh, Harry!”

If they hadn't been in class she would likely have hugged him. In that moment Harry was taken aback by just how pretty Hermione was. It was the sort of thing he didn't often think about

regarding his best friend, but when she smiled like that her whole face just lit up. He also discovered that it gave him a funny feeling in his stomach.

Meanwhile, Slughorn was continuing his speculation about Hermione's heritage, claiming that she might still be related to Dagworth-Granger, as many Muggle-borns were actually descended from squibs who had left the wizarding world. This idea evidently took Hermione somewhat aback, as she was quiet for a minute or so, pondering the possibility. But soon her attention was recaptured by the potions lesson, which turned into a competition to see who could make the best sample of Draught of Living Death.

Things went downhill from there. Using a few tips written in the margin of his battered old second-hand copy of the text, Harry had brewed the best potion in the class, winning the prize. Hermione, who had the second best potion, was furious.

"How did you do that?" she demanded. Harry waited for the other students to clear the room, then pointed at the handwritten additions and corrections in his book. Hermione's eyes narrowed.

"Harry, that's cheating!" she exclaimed. "And besides that, it's not safe. Who knows what might have happened?"

"It worked though, didn't it?" Ron interjected. "And he still brewed the potion, just used different instructions to ours. Could've been a catastrophe, but it paid off." He continued by complaining good-naturedly that he could have ended up with that copy of the book, rather than the one he got. But Hermione was no longer listening, still irate about the situation.

Grabbing Harry's arm, she pulled him away from Ron, toward the front of the classroom. Ron shot Harry a sympathetic look, shrugged as if to say, 'tough luck, but better you than me', and left.

Slughorn had just finished putting away the cauldrons that had held the sample potions, and looked up, beaming at Harry as they approached.

"Yes, Harry, m'boy," he greeted them eagerly. "And Miss Granger, of course. What can I do for you?"

"Professor," she began curtly. "What do you think about changes to the potions instructions written in the margin of the book?" She took Harry's book from his hands and opened it for Slughorn's inspection.

"Oho, already making modifications, are we?" the portly professor nodded in approval, misunderstanding her question. "I thought I detected something slightly different about your potion, Harry. It's quite difficult to get that exact shade of lilac using the standard procedure." By this time Hermione's jaw had dropped in astonishment, and she was speechless. Slughorn didn't notice, however, as his attention was focussed solely on Harry and his textbook.

"As I said, your mother was a genius at potions, always doing that too," he continued. "She and her friend and rival Severus."

Now it was Harry's turn to be astounded into speechlessness. *Snape and his mother? Friends?!?* He found his thoughts involuntarily going back to the incident of the previous year, when he'd viewed Snape's memories of a confrontation with his mother and father in the pensieve. *But he'd called her a Mudblood!*

Slughorn took the book and examined it, and quickly realized that the modifications had been made by the previous owner, rather than by Harry. While somewhat disappointed that his initial surmise about Harry's initiative regarding potions modifications had been incorrect, he disguised it well. Flipping through a few pages and examining some other challenging procedures, he nodded approvingly. It also didn't take him long to identify the true author of the alterations.

"Aha. This is actually Severus's old text," he revealed. "I'd recognize that neat, precise handwriting anywhere." He handed the book back to Harry with a wink.

"I'm sure he wouldn't mind you using it," he declared. "Especially since he and Lily worked together on so many of them. I wouldn't doubt that half of the improvements were originally her discoveries."

Harry accepted the book numbly, deciding not to correct his professor about the reality of his and Snape's relationship. There was no need for Slughorn to know that they actually hated each other with a passion! He nudged Hermione, who was finally regaining the functions of speech and mobility, and the two of them took their leave.

As they walked through the now empty corridors back to Gryffindor Tower, Hermione suddenly shook her head, as if to clear her mind of the topic she'd been dwelling on (likely her shock at the idea of writing *corrections* in a book) in order to switch to a different thought.

"So, what did you smell in the Amortentia?" she inquired. Harry cocked his head as he recalled the beginning of class.

"Treacle tart ... (Hermione nodded; that was Harry's favorite dessert) ... the smell of a broomstick handle ... (she nodded again, this one was even more obvious) ... and something flowery that reminded me of the Burrow," he concluded. This elicited a thoughtful expression from Hermione.

"The Burrow, you say?" she mused. "Can you describe it?"

Harry shrugged. "Some kind of flower. Definitely not roses, though." He'd plenty of experience with those, having spent so many summers cultivating Aunt Petunia's rose bushes that he was quite familiar with their fragrance.

"Hmm ... the Weasleys don't have that many flowers around their house," Hermione noted.

Harry thought about it some more. "I don't necessarily associate it with the outdoors," he decided.

"Well, it's certainly true that you're fond of that place," she acknowledged. "But let me check on

something when we get back to the dorm.”

“What was the third thing *you* smelled?” he asked in return, recalling that she’d mentioned freshly mown grass and new parchment before abruptly breaking off her description.

She turned pink again. “I ... I’d rather not say,” she demurred. Harry grinned, deducing that it might be related to a guy she fancied.

“Something quidditch related?” he guessed.

“How did you ... I mean ... what makes you think that?” she stammered.

Harry smirked, pleased with himself at having obviously guessed correctly.

“Krum.”

Hermione shot him an incredulous glance, then shook her head and forced a weak laugh. “No, no, Viktor and I are just friends,” she claimed. “It was never going to be any more than that, despite what the rumors might have said.”

“OK, then who?” Harry persisted. But Hermione only reddened further, and shook her head with finality, indicating that she would say no more.

Harry, though he didn’t press her, nevertheless wondered at her behavior. There was definitely someone ... someone who she didn’t want to tell him about ... someone he must know.

Could it be Harry himself?

He almost came to a stop right there in the corridor, but didn’t want to alert Hermione to his thought process, so continued walking normally. It did fit the evidence – someone he must know, and associated with quidditch. And she had been rather friendly toward him of late. There was the dazzling smile during Potions when she’d learned that he’d bragged about her. And even how upset she was about the book. It all fit.

By now they were inside the Gryffindor common room, and Hermione told him to stay put while she ran up to the dorm for a minute. When she reappeared, she walked up to him with her wrist held out. He shot her a puzzled look.

“Smell it,” she instructed. He complied, and his eyes widened.

“That’s it!” he confirmed. “That’s what I smelled.” His jaw suddenly dropped at the implication, but before he could say anything more, Hermione broke in.

“This is Ginny’s perfume,” she explained. “She started using it during the summer ... well, actually, we both used it then but I stopped when we came back to Hogwarts.”

Harry’s mind was awchirl with the possibilities. “So ... so that means that ... either you or Ginny

..."

Hermione reddened so much this time that her face practically glowed.

"No! ... I mean, no, not necessarily," she protested. "It ... it could be Ginny, of course." She paused and gave him a significant look, which only confused him further. "Or even me, I suppose," she conceded. "But it could also be like you originally said – the Burrow. You've always loved the place. You know, like you love treacle tart and quidditch."

Harry stared at her for several seconds. She was hesitating and stammering the way she often did when she was making up a story on the spot. There was definitely something she was trying to hide from him.

"Come on, we're late for dinner," she announced as she grabbed his arm and headed for the portrait hole.

Harry couldn't dismiss his thoughts that easily, however. There was no doubt that he found Hermione somewhat attractive – he'd just been reminded of that fact in class a few hours ago. And what Pansy had said on the train about Ginny was right – she had blossomed into a *very* good looking young woman. But Hermione had told him last year that Ginny had given up on him, and she was dating Dean right now, so ...

"So ..." Harry began tentatively. "What would you think of the idea of you and me ... you know ..."

Hermione stopped and stared at him. "Whaaat?" she asked slowly. "You mean ...?"

Harry swallowed hard and nodded. "I mean, we could give it a try, you know. Dating, that is," he added hastily as it occurred to him that she might be misinterpreting his suggestion. "Just to see ..." He shrugged as if to suggest that it was no big deal either way, as Hermione was now slowly shaking her head back and forth.

"I ... I don't think so," she responded, clearly uncomfortable with the idea. "It's not that I don't like you enough ... I mean, I really enjoy being with you ... but ... well, I'm worried about risking our friendship. Look at how you and Cho are avoiding each other now." Harry nodded that he understood, and reached out to give her hand a squeeze. They turned and resumed their journey down to the Great Hall.

But Hermione's mind was evidently still processing his suggestion. After a few minutes she turned to him again.

"So, what I guess I'm saying is, if you and I dated it couldn't be casual," she declared.

Now Harry fully understood the point she was trying to make. Looking over at her, he noted her anxious demeanor. In a way, it made him feel good inside that she was so concerned about maintaining their friendship. He nodded and shot her a smile. It had only been an idea anyway,

and now the seed had been planted, in case they wanted to consider it further sometime.

By this time they had reached the Great Hall, and made their way over to where Ron was already sitting at the Gryffindor table. He glanced up at them, a questioning look in his eye, which turned to one of relief when he saw that the argument over the book had evidently been resolved. For his part, Harry glanced around to see where Ginny was seated, and found her several places nearer along the table sitting next to Dean. As surreptitiously as he could manage, he leaned close to her as he passed by and took a deep breath.

He did indeed catch a waft of the same scent, and he suddenly felt a funny sensation in his stomach, which led to a feeling of resentment over her proximity to Dean. Shaking his head to clear such thoughts, he joined Hermione as she seated herself next to Ron. *Now what?* he wondered to himself. *I'm attracted to Ginny, I suppose. No surprise, there, anyone can see that she's turned into an attractive girl .*

These musings were interrupted as Hermione passed him some potatoes, and he once more caught the lingering fragrance of the perfume on her wrist.

Throughout dinner he pondered what he had learned. He was attracted to Ginny, but she was dating Dean. There really wasn't anything he could do about that just then, so he resolved to ignore whatever feelings he had for the petite redhead. Added to that was the fact that last year he'd been quite smitten with Cho Chang, and that hadn't gone well at all. He could also name a half dozen other girls in the castle that he found attractive, a list that now included his best friend. So the best thing to do, he finally concluded, was just wait and see how everything played out.

-ooOoo-

Harry was astonished by the number of students who'd put their names down for the Gryffindor quidditch team tryouts. **"I dunno why the team's this popular all of a sudden,"** he mused.

"Oh, come on, Harry," Hermione pointed out impatiently. "It's not *quidditch* that's popular, it's you! You've never been more interesting, and frankly, you've never been more fanciable."

Harry felt his face heating up, but then shot her a curious look, and made a comment that brought her up short from her follow-up explanation of precisely why he was now so fanciable.

"Really? *You* think so?"

Realizing what she'd just implied, Hermione blushed furiously. But she was saved from having to respond by Ron, who felt the need to butt in and point out some of his own good features.

Harry, however, discovered to his amusement that for the rest of the morning he could make her blush again just by catching her eye and cocking an eyebrow at her. It made him wonder, though, and all the way out to the quidditch tryouts he pondered her 'fanciable' comment, and contemplated how his thoughts about her had been changing.

The tryouts themselves were in turns annoying, arduous, and satisfying. Harry was pleased with the beaters he selected, Jimmy Peakes and Ritchie Coote, who were a distinct upgrade over the pair who'd replaced Fred and George the previous year. He was very happy with the Chasers, which included the veteran Katie Bell, Ginny, who'd outflown everyone else at the tryout, and a surprisingly good newcomer, Demelza Robins. It had been touch and go for the keepers, which to his relief ended with Ron barely winning a shootout with the egotistical Cormac McLaggen when the large boy shot off in completely the wrong direction on his final shot.

Harry had thought that quite odd, and his suspicions were further heightened when Ron, unable to resist boasting at his performance, commented that his rival had missed the save so badly that he appeared to have been Confunded. They were confirmed an instant later when Hermione's face turned pink before she hastily looked away.

He got his opportunity to confront her as they were returning to the castle after a visit to Hagrid. As Ron single-mindedly made for the Great Hall and dinner, Harry caught Hermione's arm and held her back. Once he laid out the facts and made his accusation, she admitted that she'd done it, claiming that he wouldn't have wanted the overlarge braggart on the team in any case.

But Harry wondered if there was an additional reason for her intervention. "Do you fancy Ron?" he challenged.

"No!" Hermione blurted out, almost before Harry had finished asking the question. "No ... that's not it at all," she protested.

Harry wasn't convinced that she was being totally honest with him, but pressed ahead. "All right, then." He took a deep breath, and confessed, "That's good, because I think I might fancy you."

Hermione's eyes widened in shock. "You don't really mean that, do you?" she gasped. He nodded slowly. "But why me? There are so many other girls," she objected.

Harry snorted. "You mean like those fangirls at tryouts?" he countered sarcastically. "Not bloody likely." An awkward silence settled over them, as neither knew what they should say next.

Finally Harry took a step back and shook his head in surrender. "Well ... don't worry about it then. It's OK if you're not interested – we're still best friends, right?"

Seeing how uncomfortable he was, and appreciating how much courage he'd shown by taking this step, Hermione relented. "Of course we are," she said with a warm smile, reaching out to give his arm an affectionate squeeze. "And ... I'll think about it, OK?"

-ooOoo-

Harry was miffed. He'd just witnessed Hermione ask Ron to be her date to Slughorn's Christmas party during Herbology class. He'd taken out most of his ire by pounding on the Snargaluff pods with his trowel, and as a result was able to use a reasonably collected and civil voice when he managed to confront her later.

“Thought you said you didn’t fancy Ron,” he remarked calmly while standing next to her in the library stacks.

“I ... I don’t, she stammered. “Not exactly.”

“Your face was pretty red when you asked him out,” Harry pointed out. Rather like it is now, he continued to himself. “Not exactly what one would expect if you were just asking him to go as a friend.”

“Well ... I suppose I do, a little,” she conceded, turning away from him. “I thought I’d give it a try, you know, see if we could make a go of it.” She squared her shoulders and turned back toward Harry, and only then noticed the annoyed look on his face, and realized what he was getting at.

“What would you have me do then?” she snapped back, now becoming irritated at his implied criticism. “I’m expected to go the party, and I would have felt foolish going by myself. It seems like a good opportunity to me to see how things might work out with Ron.”

“You could have asked me,” he replied quietly.

But she wasn’t about to allow him to make her feel guilty about this. “It may have somehow slipped your mind, Harry Potter, but you’ve made it abundantly clear that you have absolutely no interest in going to any of Slughorn’s parties,” Hermione responded hotly. “And I needed a date. Who would *you* have preferred I’d asked, CormacMcLaggen?”

Harry winced, and shook his head vigorously. He realized that he *had* been a real prat about the whole thing, and now he was paying the price. There was only one thing he could do now.

“I’m sorry,” he apologized, taking her hand and giving it a squeeze to reinforce his words. “And ... I hope you have a good time at that party.”

-ooOoo-

Harry had a plan, and it did require either Hermione or Ron to notice that he appeared to be adding something to Ron’s pumpkin juice that morning, just before the match. But he hadn’t anticipated that Hermione would be so angry about what he seemed to have done. On the other hand, Ron had reacted exactly as he’d expected, defiantly tossing the juice down in one gulp. Of course, that had made Hermione even more livid.

Bending low so that only Harry could hear her, she hissed, “You should be expelled for that. I’d never have believed it of you, Harry!”

He only just managed to avoid a snarky reply about her own cheating when she’d ConfundedMcLaggen at the tryouts, but instead grabbed her by the elbow and pulled her away from the table. She resisted at first, but evidently all the years of her trusting him were not completely washed away just yet.

When they were alone in the Entrance Hall, he quickly pulled the bottle of *Felix Felicis* from his

pocket and showed her that it was still full of the golden potion, the cork tightly sealed with wax.

“But ... then what did you do to Ron’s drink?” she asked, now thoroughly puzzled.

“Nothing,” Harry replied with a smirk. “I only pretended to; I just wanted Ron to think I’d done it, so I faked it while you were looking.”

Hermione frowned as she processed this new information. “I don’t know, it still seems like cheating to me,” she persisted.

“No it’s not,” Harry countered. “It’s only a way to make Ron feel more confident, and he plays better when he’s confident – remember last year?”

Hermione grudgingly conceded that what he’d done might be OK, and he responded with a grin that she couldn’t help returning. She punched him on the shoulder and reminded him dryly that he *still* needed to catch the snitch.

-000-

While the match went nearly perfectly (Harry almost messed up by allowing the Slytherin seeker to get under his skin, and only just managed to catch the snitch), things didn’t go so well afterwards when Ron was informed that he hadn’t actually been given the good luck potion. He somehow managed to turn that information into an accusation that Harry and Hermione didn’t think he could manage on his own (ignoring the fact that he’d also believed exactly that) and left the locker room in a huff. Hermione, upset not only with this attitude but also with Ron’s recent overall surliness toward her, stormed off in a similarly bad mood.

At the postgame victory party, things went from bad to worse. Harry arrived to discover Ron, **in full view of the whole room, wrapped so closely around Lavender Brown that it was hard to tell whose hands were whose.**

After wincing at a biting, but accurate description of Ron’s actions from Ginny – *it looks like he’s eating her face* – Harry spotted a head of bushy brown hair disappear through the portrait hole.

Harry raced after her, and **found her in the first unlocked classroom he encountered. She was sitting on the teacher’s desk, surrounded by a small ring of twittering birds circling her head. He couldn’t help but admire the quality of her spellwork, even at a time like this.** Tentatively he approached, wanting to console her but not certain how to go about it.

Hermione shot a glance in his direction and her shoulders slumped. “Hello, Harry,” she greeted him bitterly. “Come to gloat, have you? Going to tell me how you were right and I was wrong?”

Harry stopped short. He’d not even considered doing that! “No, not at all,” he protested. “I just thought that my best friend was hurting and wanted to do whatever I could to comfort her.”

That was all it took for Hermione’s control to dissolve completely, and Harry darted forward and caught her up in his arms as she burst into tears. Never having been one who was comfortable with

crying girls, he patted her back awkwardly while she gradually regained her composure.

“I ... I just don't know what to say,” he finally blurted out. “I'm still not sure just what your feelings are for Ron.”

“That's only part of it,” she replied while wiping her eyes. “I'm upset for a lot of reasons, I suppose. I'm annoyed that Ron clearly prefers a girl like Lavender to me. I feel left out because all my friends have had boyfriends or girlfriends and been kissed except me. You and Cho, Ginny and Dean, and now Ron and Lavender.”

“Wait a minute,” Harry objected. “I thought you'd snogged Krum.” If Hermione weren't so unhappy right now, he would have found it amusing that at least part of the reason for Ron's current behavior had apparently never happened.

Hermione scowled. “He only kissed me on the cheek after the ball,” she huffed. “If you'll recall, Ron went off on me right after that in the common room. I *thought* that meant he had feelings of his own for me.”

Seeing that she was calming down, Harry risked a chuckle. Hermione raised her eyes to his in question. “Well, Cho kissed me, but it was only the one time. So I'm not exactly experienced either.”

Their heads were slowly moving closer together. Harry gathered up his courage and closed the gap, pressing a soft kiss to her lips as her eyes widened, then closed as she responded.

“And it seems to be just my luck that I only kiss girls after they've been crying,” he joked. First Cho, now you. As he'd hoped, this got a smile out of her and she tried to wipe away the rest of her tears. But before she could respond, the door behind them burst open, and to Harry's dismay Ron came in, laughing, pulling Lavender by the hand.

Each of the four made an awkward exclamation of surprise. Lavender showed more sense than Ron by quickly apologizing for interrupting them and backing out of the room. Ron looked like he wanted to say something about how close Harry and Hermione were to each other, but was cut off by a shout from the bushy haired witch.

“Oppugno !”

The little flock of birds who had still been fluttering around Hermione now took off like a stream of bullets straight toward Ron, who yelped and bolted for the door, covering his head with his hands. After a loud slam, the room was suddenly silent again.

“You *were* right, you know,” Hermione admitted in a small voice, while turning to look out the window. “At least partly right.” Harry stepped up behind her and put his hands on her waist, unsure of what she meant. To his relief she leaned back against him, allowing him to slide his arms the rest of the way around her.

“After the first potions lesson,” she clarified. “When you were trying to figure out what the things I smelled in the Amortentia meant, who I fancied. I had feelings for both of you, and I didn’t know what to do about it,” she confessed. “I finally decided that Ron was the safer choice. If it didn’t work out, it would be no big deal. But like I told you at the beginning of the year, if *you* and I dated, it couldn’t be casual. And you’d already been with Cho, and I was worried how I’d compare to her, and then there’s Ginny, and I thought you’d prefer her, and ...”

By now she’d turned around and was facing him, pressed against his chest, and their faces were close. Harry reached up and touched a finger to her lips.

“Sometimes,” he whispered, “you think too much.” And he kissed her again. Unlike the first time, this time it lingered for more than an instant.

When they pulled away, Hermione’s eyes remained closed. She took a deep breath and murmured, “What about Ginny? She’s been in love with you for years.”

Harry shook his head. “There’s a big difference between love and infatuation, not to mention hormonal teenagers. Ginny’s not in love with me, or she wouldn’t be snogging Dean. And Ron’s not in love with Lavender. But ... well, I’d like to think something might develop between you and me.”

Her jaw dropped in astonishment, but he merely shrugged. “It’s obvious that I love you and you love me – at least as friends. Maybe it could be more?”

Hermione was shaking her head slowly, and Harry could see that she still wasn’t sure. And this was a girl who’d always been more comfortable dealing with certainties. “But ... for now, I’d be willing to take it slow and find out,” he offered.

This time she smiled shyly and nodded her head.

“So,” he grinned. “As your previously arranged escort now seems otherwise occupied, do you think you’d be willing to go to Slughorn’s party with me?”

Her smile broadened. “Harry Potter, I must say you are nothing if not persistent,” she teased.

“Is that a yes then?”

“That’s a yes.”

-xox-XOX-XOX-xox-