

Friday Night

by HBAR

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: A heartfelt thanks belongs to my beta, Keppiehed, who has the utmost confidence in me. This is clearly a sign of insanity on her part, but it hasn't affected her editing skills, so there's no harm done.

Molly Weasley lay awake, staring at the ceiling. It was late, and Arthur was still out, God knows where. After having a full house for most of her adult life, she found that complete silence was more eerie than peaceful, and she wasn't comfortable with only her thoughts to keep her company. As she analyzed recent events, a pattern emerged which she found quite disturbing. Every Friday, Arthur would come home from work with a bottle of fancy wine, and they would drink it in front of the fireplace, snuggled together on the couch. When she was too sleepy to manage on her own, he would throw an arm around her shoulders and walk her to bed. He would tuck her in with a kiss, then leave the room. *Leave the house, really.* The most suspicious thing was that this all started when Ron left town to tour on the Quidditch circuit and Hermione began hanging around the house more in his absence.

I'm such a fool. Of course they are out together. Molly would be sound asleep by now if it hadn't been for her upset stomach earlier that evening. Determined not to spoil their time together, she pretended to sip her wine throughout the night, vanishing it a little at a time when he wasn't looking. *Maybe it was better when I didn't know.* She rolled over and decided the best thing to do was to get some sleep. She had six days to decide how to proceed, and she would begin planning first thing in the morning.

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One week later ...

"I adore you, Mollywobbles," Arthur whispered in his wife's ear. "This standing date each Friday is the only thing that gets me through the week sometimes." He ran his fingers up and down her arm in a manner which made her shiver despite the warmth from the fireplace.

"That's nice, dear," she said, smiling to hide her disgust. She yawned and stretched dramatically.

"I think it's time to get you upstairs before I lose you completely," Arthur said. He took the glass from her hand and set it on the table next to his own.

Molly nodded her assent and stood with his help. Once upstairs, she changed into her nightgown and crawled into bed. She rolled onto her side and closed her eyes. Arthur hadn't moved, so she made an effort to remain still while steadying her breathing.

Arthur pulled the blankets up a little higher and kissed her on the forehead before exiting the room.

Upon hearing the crack of Apparition, Molly jumped out of bed and began to get dressed.

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"Arthur!" Hermione called out, pushing back her bar stool to stand. She collected her purse and her drink and walked over to meet him.

"Our usual table?" he asked.

Hermione flashed him a smile, and with his hand on her lower back, Arthur guided her to the far side of the room.

With Hermione's drink only half gone, Arthur flagged down the waitress and ordered her another. The evening always progressed more smoothly if he got her tipsy early.

When a new song came on, Hermione looked at Arthur until his eyes met hers. "Every time I hear this song, I think of you," she said.

His cheeks flushed, and he looked down at the table.

"Don't be embarrassed," she said. "It's a good thing."

He busied his hands with a napkin and a pen Hermione had dug from her purse. He scratched a brief note and slid it over to her.

She read it, then looked up to find him watching her. "You want to do *this* tonight?" she asked.

"You said that I could pick this week and that you were open to anything."

"Of course," she said. "I'm just surprised; it's not your usual fare."

"Well, we can't have this old man getting stale, can we?"

"You aren't old," Hermione said, placing her hand on his arm.

"Maybe you should reserve judgment until the end of the night," Arthur said, laughing.

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Outside, Molly stood in the parking lot, fuming. She alternated between wanting to barge in and attack and thinking she should get her emotions under control before confronting her husband and daughter-in-law. Never in a million years did she think that she would need to use the tracking charm, which she had learned during Charlie's wild phase, on her husband.

Molly startled as a familiar voice behind her called out her name. She turned to see Tonks approaching.

"What are you doing here?" they asked simultaneously.

"I come here every Friday," Tonks said.

Oh. At least it's not Hermione. That would have been a double blow to the family.

"I am surprised that Arthur invited you," Tonks said. "I always encourage him to bring you along, but he insists that you wouldn't approve if you knew. But I say the more the merrier." Tonks grabbed Molly's arm to guide her inside.

"Hold on," Molly said, wrenching her arm away. "What is this place?"

Tonks giggled. "It's a Muggle karaoke bar."

"A what?"

"Karaoke. They play music, and people get on stage and sing. There's a contest every Friday. Your husband and daughter-in-law are fantastic, winning the duet competition nearly every week. The prize money is modest, so I think they do it for their fifteen minutes of fame."

So that is where he is getting the extra money for fancy wine. "Why does he keep it a secret from me?" Molly asked.

"I suppose it's because you give him such grief about his love of all things Muggle," Tonks replied.

Molly frowned at that.

"Don't feel bad. He *is* borderline obsessed, but Hermione loves Muggle things, as well. He's found a kindred spirit in her."

Tonks leaned in and gave Molly a hug. "There's nothing untoward going on if that's what you are thinking, but just between you and me, I believe it excites Arthur to sneak around like this. Lots of wizards have a mid-life crisis. At least your husband's is manifesting in a harmless manner. If you're having doubts, you should come in and see for yourself."

Molly thought about it for a moment. "No, of course not. I believe you," she said. "Just go and enjoy yourself and pretend you never saw me."

"Will do," Tonks said, turning toward the front door of the bar.

"Wait!" Molly said.

The younger girl turned around.

"Thank you."

"Any time," Tonks said with a smile, then disappeared inside.

Molly stood there, relief flooding her. She waited until she'd calmed down a bit before Apparating back to the Burrow.

Lying in bed, she replayed what Tonks had told her. *Hermione loves Muggle things as well. He's found a kindred spirit in her.* She got up and penned a quick note inviting Hermione to lunch the next day. Molly smiled as the owl flew off into the night. All was right with the world, and as an added bonus, she might have finally found a way out of playing the dreaded Saturday afternoon Xbox.