

Murder at the Burrow

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It was a quiet, lazy, late summer afternoon; twelve years after Voldemort's final defeat, and three of the usual suspects were lounging about outside the Burrow. They sat around the garden table, sipping from bottles of chilled butterbeer, watching the garden gnomes scurry about. All the while two members of the trio tried to convince their 'partner in crime' to help them commit a murder.

Maybe even two or three, if they were convincing enough.

"Magic," declared the one. "It has to be done by magic. We are wizards, after all."

"I don't know, it seems rather... passé," countered the young man they had sequestered for this.

"It's not like we're going to use a Killing Curse or anything as common as that," defended the second.

"Yeah," agreed the first. "Everyone uses that one."

"Give us some credit for having a better imagination than that, mate," the second said indignantly, following close on the heels of his brother's preceding statement.

"I do," the young man told them both. "I just don't think you should use magic."

"Why ever not?" demanded the twins.

"Because it would be too easy for someone to solve," explain the young man, adjusting his glasses as he leaned against the backrest of the garden chair he was seated on. "For one thing, a simple *Priori Incantatem* on everyone's wand will narrow down the field of suspects almost immediate. And that's just for starters... imagine how many ideas Hermione would have to ferret you out!"

Fred Weasley pursed his lips and regarded his twin, "You see George," he said, "This is why getting Harry involved was the best idea we've had this week."

"Right you are, brother mine," George readily agreed. He pointed to their companion with his butterbeer. "Who better to help us plan the perfect murder but Harry Potter, Dark Lord Slayer Extraordinaire?!"

"Please don't call me that," pleaded Harry. He absolutely abhorred the latest name given to him by the wizarding press, namely *Witch Weekly*. It was almost, he thought, as bad as being called The-Boy-Who-Lived.

"Sorry," the twins apologised, utterly unsympathetic.

Sighing in resignation, Harry suggested, "Why don't we arrange to do it the Muggle way?"

Fred and George exchanged a startled look that quickly shifted to one of eager anticipation. Turning back to Harry, it was George that asked, "What d'you have in mind?"

Harry hummed and hawed for a minute, thinking it over. "Well, you could use a knife - it's certainly one of the most traditional murder weapons..."

"Too much blood," complained Fred.

"Spills everywhere and stains the furniture," agreed George.

"Besides," added Fred, "the old pure-blood families use knives a lot, so it's not really a purely Muggle thing."

"Okay, a gun then," proposed Harry readily.

George shook his head. "Same problem as with the knife - blood all over the place."

Fred nodded, "Yeah, guns make a terrible mess."

"How would you know?" Harry asked, curious.

"Saw it on the telly at Lee's place," replied Fred blithely, before continuing to dismiss Muggle firearms as a suitable tool for the murder they were planning. "Besides, the noise they make..."

"Not exactly discrete," concluded George.

"You could always try to mask the noise," suggested Harry, thinking back to a Muggle film he had seen as a child. "Maybe using a fireworks display or something similar."

"Hmm, hadn't thought of that," said George.

"Corking idea," agreed Fred. He picked up the quill that he had discarded earlier and said, "Let me write that down."

"Are you sure you want to make a list of this?" asked Harry. "If anyone found it, you'd be in a tight spot."

"No worries," Fred assured him. "Now come on man, more ideas!"

Harry shrugged in acceptance and considered the other options he could think of. "There's always poison," he said, "but I don't know if that's a good idea."

"Why not?" asked George, as Fred continued to take notes. "Besides the obvious fact that Muggle poisons aren't all that different from Magic ones?"

"It's not very precise." Harry explained his reasoning, "In a crowded house, people coming and going, there's a chance you might administer it to the wrong person."

"Wouldn't want that," agreed Fred without looking up.

"That would only happen if we slip it in the food or drinks," said George. "We could try a more direct method."

"Speaking of direct," said Harry, "why not do it the old fashioned way and use your bare hands?"

"Bare hands?" repeated George incredulously.

"You mean... strangle the poor sod?" asked Fred.

"Sure, why not?"

"Well... it's just..."

"Seems rather personal, don't you think?" said George.

"True," Harry agreed, his own thoughts turning back to his confrontation with Severus Snape, during his hunt for the horuxes. It had been towards the middle of what should have been his seventh-year at Hogwarts, and Harry had latched onto the Death Eater's throat with insane fury - barely able to stop himself before Snape dropped dead from suffocation.

"Besides," piped up Fred, snapping Harry out of his introspection, "strangling the life out of someone takes a while, a couple of minutes if you want to be absolutely sure of yourself. That's a lot of time for something to go wrong."

"Someone could walk in," pointed out George.

"And that would ruin everyone's weekend right quick, wouldn't it?" asked Fred rhetorically.

Harry nodded in agreement.

George rubbed thoughtfully at his chin and suggested, "How about we hang them? From the rafters?"

"No," Harry objected simply.

"Far too depressing," agreed Fred. After a moment he added, "Besides, I think it would be in bad taste."

"Why?"

"Remember how Fudge went?"

"Ah, good point."

They were referring to former Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge. After resigning from his position, once it was revealed that he had ignored Voldemort's return for the better part of a year, Fudge had been relegated to jobs and tasks usually reserved for entry-level Ministry clerks. Such a fall from grace had been hard on the weak-willed man and eventually he sank into a bout of alcohol-fuelled manic depression that ended in suicide.

"We could always bludgeon them to death," said Harry after a moment's consideration. "Rather like how Colonel Mustard did it in the observatory, with the candlestick." Seeing that Fred and George were staring blankly at him, not understanding the reference, he explained, "That's how the Muggles would describe it."

"We could use one of our old Beater's bats," said George. "Instead of the candlestick."

Dunno," admitted Fred. "Bashing someone's skull in... messy again..."

"If you're so worried about a mess," said Harry, starting to grow impatient, "then let's stick to either the poison or strangulation. It's a good thing we have loads of time, or by the time you two settled on something, it'd be too late."

"Actually..." began Fred.

"...We only have two weeks," finished George.

"What? That soon?" asked Harry in surprise. "Don't you think that's rushing it a bit?"

"Of course not. Not at all."

"Anyway, it can't be changed now."

"Why not?" demanded Harry, suddenly suspicious.

"It's too late," said Fred.

"We've already put in the advertisement," confirmed George.

"Advert-- What advertisement?"

"In the *Prophet*, of course."

"'Murder at Potter Manor'," Fred proudly announced.

"POTTER MANOR?!" screeched Harry indignantly. "I HAVEN'T BLOODY GOT A MANOR! AND NOBODY SAID ANYTHING ABOUT HOLDING THIS - THIS - THIS ROLL-PLAYING GAME OF YOURS AT MY HOUSE!"

"We're not," placated Fred, holding up both hands.

"We're having it here," said George.

"At the Burrow," they chorused.

His sputtering fury abruptly appeased, Harry settled back down in his seat. He took a long drink from his butterbeer, regarding the twins with a narrow gaze as he did so. "Here?" he finally asked. "You have a better chance of holding this murder weekend at my cottage than at the Burrow. Your mum would have a fit if you even suggested it."

Fred grinned idly and said, "That's why we're not going to tell her."

"Eh?" was all Harry could manage.

"Mum and Dad's second honeymoon," explained George.

Harry blinked and then nodded as understanding dawned.

Twelve years ago, immediately following Lord Voldemort's defeat, the wizarding world had thrown a string of celebrations and parties that beggared even those took place when a baby Harry Potter defeated the Dark Lord for the first time. Suffice to say, a liberal amount of liquor had been flowing about and it had not taken long for a flushed Arthur to lead his giggling wife up to their bedroom.

Almost exactly nine months to the day later, Molly Weasley (to the dumbstruck awe of her husband and utter shock of her other children) had given birth to a healthy baby boy.

At this point in time almost half of those male children being born in the magical world were being named Harry, after the much acclaimed Chosen One. Most of the other boys ended up called Albus, after the departed Professor Dumbledore. It had taken Harry a considerable amount of time and effort to talk the matron of the Weasley clan from naming the child after him. Harry Albus Weasley, he claimed, had absolutely no ring to it.

And so it was that now, eleven years later, Robert Jacob Weasley, the eighth of the Weasley children, seventh son of Arthur Weasley, was preparing to head off to begin his magical education at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Arthur and Molly, already exhausted after raising their first seven children, were very much in need of a well-deserved holiday - which had been duly arranged for them, courtesy of their eldest, Bill, and his wife Fleur.

"Molly will kill you when she finds out," Harry finally said.

"If she finds out, Harry, *if* she finds out," corrected George.

"She'll find out," Harry said with conviction, "and then she'll kill you. And probably me as well, for helping you."

"Nah," Fred gave a dismissive wave. "She likes you too much to do that."

"I am not reassured."

"Come on, mate, nothing bad will happen."

"Where'd your sense of adventure go, Harry?"

"It died of old age, twelve or so years ago," replied Harry dryly.

Before either of the twins could retort, a familiar rush of air sounded within the house, diverting their attention away from the conversation at hand. Harry turned, already knowing who it was that had flooded in through the fireplace. Leaving his chair, he entered the Burrow through the kitchen.

Passing through the kitchen and into the living room, Harry arrived in time to see his wife of seven years standing at the foot of the staircase, calling in search of him.

"Harry? Where are you?"

"Ginny!" exclaimed Harry happily. "Thank Merlin you're back!"

"Why? What's wrong?" she asked in concern.

"Look who stopped by for a visit and to torture me all afternoon," he said, gesturing to the twin.

"Fred! George!" Ginny exclaimed, rushing past him to be engulfed in Fred's welcoming arms. "What are you two doing here instead of at the shop? You're always so busy during the last couple of weeks of summer holidays."

"Just running an idea passed Harry," said Fred, handing her over to George for another hug.

"Your man's one of the best sounding boards we've ever had," agreed George, squeezing Ginny tight and lifting her into the air for a quick spin.

Harry watched fondly as the three siblings bantered for a short bit, before Ginny was finally released and crossed back to him, slipping an arm around his waist.

"Where are Ron and Hermione?" she asked, looking about for her brother and sister-in-law.

"Hermione suddenly remembered a book she'd left at the office," related Harry with amusement. "Ron tagged along, for whatever reason."

"Probably hoping he and Hermione will make a quick stop at their flat before coming back," mused Fred.

"And that Hermy-poo will reward him for keeping her company," elaborated George.

"Randy chap, our ickle Ronniekins," Fred concluded sagely.

Ginny groaned and covered her eyes with her free hand. "Oh, I did not hear you say that. I did not. I know they've been married for years, and I know they must have done... that... before but, oh, I did not need to hear that."

Harry, who felt much the same, suggested, "How about something to take your mind off it, then?"

"Please!"

"How d'you feel about helping us plan a murder?"

"What?!"

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Author's Note: Just something that came to me one day.