

“It’s about time somebody else joined the ranks, I was getting sick of it being just the two of us. That gets old after eleven years, being the only married couple in your set,” Hermione said, leaning back against the wall of the chapel in Ottery St. Catchpole.

“I can’t believe my baby’s getting married,” Molly said, dabbing at her eyes with the handkerchief again.

“Mum, it’s not like I’m joining the Foreign Legion,” Ginny protested. “Please stop crying. I don’t want to start.”

“Not much difference, sometimes,” Hermione said flippantly.

“For *you*, maybe,” Ginny countered.

“I don’t care what anyone says, sometimes marriage is a ten mile death march. If you’re lucky, the marches are few and far between, but you still have them, or you’re not really married,” Hermione said with a laugh.

“Thank you, matron of honor, for those lovely words. I’m sure Viktor would be thrilled to hear you say that. Will you be including that little gem in your toast at the reception?” Ginny asked.

“I might. To the happy couple, may their marriage only be a nine mile death march, at worst. I think it has a nice ring to it,” Hermione teased. “I’m telling the truth, aren’t I, Molly?”

“Unfortunately, yes. Now, are you two going to actually get dressed, or wait until ten minutes before the ceremony?” Molly scolded. “I need to go see about the reception. If I’m supposed to help you get ready, we need to get started.”

“Come on, you two help me get into those fool robes and do something with this hair. I need all the help I can get,” Ginny sighed, stepping into the room set aside for her.

“Don’t complain to me about hair,” Hermione responded. “I haven’t even figured out what I’m going to attempt to do with mine,” she added, running her fingers through it.

“Do you know how many witches with stick-straight hair would strangle someone for hair like yours?” Ginny countered.

“Do you know how many witches with bushy mops would strangle someone for hair like yours? Never satisfied, are we?” Hermione said.

“Suppose not,” Ginny agreed, taking off her dressing gown and straightening the

straps of her slip.

“So, when is the photographer showing up?” Hermione asked.

“He’s supposed to be here in twenty minutes. He’s going to do all the pictures he can before the ceremony, the ones without the couple together. Bride, bride’s family, and groom. Both sets of attendants will probably wait until after the ceremony, though. Plenty of time,” Molly said soothingly. “Couple pictures after the ceremony.”

“So, you’ll be busy for a while, then,” Hermione mused. “Better loosen up your lips, you’ll be smiling until you feel like your face is going to crack. Your mouth will be tired by the end of the day.”

“Don’t remind me. I hate having my picture taken enough, already,” Ginny complained.

“Trust me, the pictures are worth it. You’ll cherish them forever and kick yourself at least once a year for not reorganizing them in the album and looking at them more often,” Hermione said, gathering up the white robe off the hanger, holding it open for Ginny to slip her arms and head into the sleeves and neck opening.

“Mmm. Hope they got this thing right after the last fitting,” Ginny said nervously, helping to pull the bodice of the robe down to its proper position around her waist.

“I’m sure it’s fine,” Molly said, fluffing the veil out, then setting it on the table near the full length mirror.

“It’s going to be absolutely lovely. And in a few years, you won’t care, anyway. You’ll barely remember what went right and what went wrong. Too busy doing new things that are right and wrong,” Hermione mused, starting to fasten the multitude of small pearl buttons on the back of the robe. “No one but the wedding party even notices anything isn’t going exactly according to plan, unless one of you sprouts purple horns.”

“Don’t give me ideas! Sprouting horns is about the only scenario I hadn’t considered,” Ginny sighed, smoothing her hands over the full skirt of the robe.

“You’ll be fine. Both of you. The wedding’s the easy part,” Hermione responded, squeezing Ginny’s shoulder. “I’ve got you all done up, back here. We’ve just got to get your train on,” she added.

“Let me go get the bouquets,” Molly said. “I’ll be right back.”

“Tell me the truth,” Ginny said, as soon as she heard the click of her mother’s

shoes fading down the hall, “how is it, really? Mum always gives me all ‘goodness and light’ answers. What’s it really like, being married?” she asked as she gathered up one corner of the train, which had been draped across the back of a chair.

Hermione picked up the other corner. “Fine time to ask! Not two hours before you’re due to walk down the aisle. It’s not all goodness and light, but it’s well worth the aggravation, provided you’re marrying the right person. There’s something comforting about going to sleep and waking up beside someone and knowing they’re legally obligated to be there because they stood up in front of everyone and swore they were willing to spend the rest of their life with you. Seriously, it’s a wonderful thing, having someone to share things with. I know that sounds horribly syrupy, but there’s something about having someone to share the good things with that makes them even sweeter, and the bad things a little less dark. And never underestimate the joys of having someone you know you can treat worse than anyone else on the planet, and knowing they just have to take it, because they do the same to you, sometimes,” Hermione added, smoothing the train after buttoning her side into place. She stepped to the other side and took the other corner from Ginny’s hand, then set to buttoning it into position. “You’ll do things to your spouse that you would be ashamed to even consider doing to anyone else. Fantastic thing about marriage is, after a while, there’s no shame. You can love shamelessly and fight shamelessly and lean on one another shamelessly, and it doesn’t matter, because it all comes out just about even, in the end, because you’ll also do things *for* your spouse that you wouldn’t even consider doing for someone else. There, now, that looks stunning,” she commented, buttoning the last small pearl through its loop.

“Thank you,” Ginny said. “And I don’t mean the buttons or the compliment.”

“Don’t expect all that overnight,” Hermione cautioned.

“Oh, I won’t. Got to get to the altar, first,” Ginny said with a breathless laugh.

“It may sound ridiculous, but I can honestly say that one of the nicest things Viktor’s ever done for me, in the entire time we’ve been together, is the way he put up with Crookshanks without complaining. I know that sounds like complete and total madness, considering everything else we’ve been through together, but, somehow, the way he put up with that cat impresses me more than anything. He never had the heart to tell me he generally hated cats. Ekaterina accidentally let it slip to me before she knew I had one. I never told him,” Hermione said, starting to brush Ginny’s hair.

“Did he ever once complain about that cat?” Ginny asked.

“No. Not to me, anyway. I suspect he might have said a few choice words to Crookshanks, once or twice, but not to me. Not when there was ginger hair

everywhere, not when Crookshanks decided he liked making a bed of Viktor's lap and had to 'make it up' with his claws, first, then flop on the bit of the paper Viktor was trying to read. Not even when he used one of those brooms in the rack as a scratching post. He never even complained when Crookshanks got so old that he couldn't jump. Instead, he would just sit there and howl until you picked him up and put him where he wanted to go. He got so he liked sleeping on the bed, when he could get into the bedroom, because it was soft. Easier on his joints, I suppose. All of a sudden, toward the end, every morning when I wake up, he's down there at the foot of the bed, tucked somewhere around our feet, snoring away, like cats do. I figured he was coming in after we got to sleep and jumping up there by himself. Turns out he couldn't get onto the bed by himself for a good six months before I knew about it. He would come in and lick Viktor's hand or smack at it with a paw if it was hanging off the bed, and Viktor would pick him up and put him at the foot of the bed. Maybe I never would have found out if it hadn't been for the fact that one night when Crookshanks came in, Viktor's hand wasn't dangling off where Crookshanks could get at it. So I wake up to this ungodly yowling at three in the morning and Viktor hanging half off the bed, groping around, trying to find this screaming cat in the dark. Anyone else would have been telling me to keep the cat off the furniture in the first place, not cater to an old, cantankerous, caterwauling cat. I still miss that cat," Hermione said, biting her lip and gathering Ginny's hair back. "And I don't have to tell you what he put up with from me after my parents... Not many men would stick around to pick you up and help you put yourself back together when you break into a million pieces. He had to make me get out of bed and put one foot in front of the other an inch at a time, some days. If it hadn't been for him, sometimes I think I would have curled up and died, too. And that was before we married. It's definitely worth it to have someone to do that. Someone to catch you when you fall... Did you want your hair in a twist or a bun?"

"Twist, I think. If you can make my hair cooperate," Ginny said, looking into the mirror.

"Shouldn't be a problem," Hermione said, smoothing a few stray strands into the ponytail she held in her hand. When she was satisfied that they were all gathered up, she began to twist the mass of hair at the nape of Ginny's neck.

"Here are the flowers," Molly announced, stepping through the door. "Oh, dearie, you look so beautiful," she said, her voice cracking.

"Mum, please, you really have to stop that, or I'll be weeping hysterically in the aisle and not be able to get to the front. Dad will have to pack me," Ginny said with a grin.

"There, now," Hermione said, flicking her wand at Ginny's hair to add one last pin. "Hand me the veil and I'll pin it to your hair." Molly rounded the two of them, fluffing and rearranging the skirt and train while Hermione secured the veil.

“Could... could you do my makeup, too, Hermione? I don't think I could hold the wand straight right now to curl my own eyelashes. Probably put my eye out,” Ginny pleaded, biting her lip.

“Be glad to,” Hermione said, taking Ginny's chin in her palm to tilt her face up, “since I don't really need to primp. Mine's already seen me half awake at four in the morning looking like a hag. And funnily enough, he's never run away screaming. The rest of you need to get him to the altar before the dew's completely off the lily,” Hermione teased. “That's the other benefit of marriage I forgot to mention. All the ‘I must be at my best around this person at all times’ awkwardness goes away. You don't always have to look your best, either. No more dating pressure. No more people asking you when you're going to finally get married. And you never have to worry about going anywhere alone. He goes with you, or he doesn't, but you're not dateless.”

“Oh, come on, now. I bet Viktor's never once seen you looking anything less than goddesslike,” Hannah said, stepping into the room and hastily shutting the door behind Susan, who had slipped in with her. “We're all dressed. These bridesmaid robes are divine,” she added, twirling around slightly.

“If he hasn't, he needs his eyes checked,” Hermione murmured, finishing Ginny's eyelashes.

“Well, then, I bet he hasn't once *thought* you looked anything less than goddesslike,” Susan countered.

“And that's what I love about him so much. He's delusional where it counts,” Hermione said firmly, using her finger to dab just a touch of gloss onto Ginny's lips. “There, now, how's that?”

Ginny turned to the mirror and contemplated her reflection. “It's wonderful. Thank you, Hermione,” Ginny said, slipping her arms around Hermione's neck. “For everything.”

“It was nothing. Enjoy being an old married lady with me, Ginny. Speaking of which, if this old married lady is going to be in your wedding, she had better be getting dressed, hadn't she?” Hermione said, giving Ginny's shoulder a soft pat. Just then, a knock sounded at the door and Molly opened it a crack, to see who was there.

“Photographer's here!” she said, swinging open the door to reveal a short wizard wearing a flamboyant wizard's hat that was half as tall as he was, covered in silver spangles. His solid black robes gave him a formal air, and he seemed to be draped in photographic equipment from every angle.

“Perfect! This is absolutely perfect! We’ll do it in front of that perfectly divine little window over there, and that fantastic light. Bride, please! Chop, chop, over here. We’ll get the rest of you lovely ladies after the ceremony. Don’t mind me, go on doing your faces and your hair and whatever else might be in need of doing! Maybe I’ll get the mother, but attendants after the ceremony,” he enthused, plunking down a small object that telescoped into a freestanding background with all the snapping ferocity of a tight-sprung automatic umbrella. “Well, come on, love, we don’t have all day,” he beckoned to Ginny when she hesitated.

“Where are you going to change, then?” Molly whispered urgently to Hermione.

“It’s alright, Molly. Let Susan and Hannah finish up their hair and makeup in here, by the mirror. I’ll go find somewhere else to change. Lots of rooms in here, surely I can find one to use. Getting a bit crowded, anyway. I’ll come back well before the ceremony. Try to keep hold of yourself, Molly,” Hermione chided gently, giving her a kiss on the cheek before gathering up the garment bag containing her robes and a bag with her shoes and other supplies. She stepped out into the hall, and decided to take a quick peek at the chapel itself, since they had still been in the process of decorating when she and Viktor had headed home the prior evening. Hermione opened the door toward the front of the main chapel, stepped through it and shut it quietly behind her. She gazed upward at the swags of netting secured with periwinkle blue ribbons and bows, then let her eye trail down to the large vases of flowers flanking the altar, carnations and lilies spilling over the edges of the vases and filling the chapel with their sweet smell. She was just about to step back out when she let her gaze sweep toward the back of the chapel, where it fell on a very familiar figure dressed in crisp black robes, leaning against one of the pews, back to her.

Hermione smiled softly to herself as she walked toward the back of the chapel. As she got closer, she could pick out the way his black hair curled up slightly, starting at the collar, the long, tapered fingers wrapped over the back of the pew, the prominent knuckles. The thick wedding band composed of three intertwined bands of different golds that matched her own. When she was a few feet away, he turned to glance over his shoulder, so she could see the distinctive profile. “And just what do you think you’re doing, hanging about over here?” Hermione asked.

“Same thing you are, I imagine. Being eternally grateful that we never have to do this again. Why aren’t you dressed, by the way?” Viktor responded, stepping out from between the pews.

“Got put out of the dressing room. Too crowded. Got any ideas about where I can put on this getup?” Hermione said, holding up the garment bag.

“I’m sure we can find you someplace. Already put mine on, the rest of them are still milling around,” Viktor said. “I can’t believe I beat you to getting dressed.”

“I was busy pulling attendant duty. Or old married lady duty. I think Molly was making her nervous, so I helped her finish getting dressed, did her hair, and her makeup. She looks gorgeous,” Hermione said.

“Was there ever an ugly bride?” Viktor asked, slipping an arm around her waist and steering her back down the aisle. “Come on, we’ll see if we can’t find an empty room. Nervous? This is the first wedding you’ve been in since ours, you know.”

“Oh, I can handle being in them if I’m not the bride,” Hermione protested, opening the door on the other side of the chapel and heading for the back passageway. “Why can’t I just change wherever you did?”

“Well,” Viktor said, checking his watch, “you can if you don’t take more than twenty minutes. Harry told me was supposed to have Ron and Neville back here to get dressed by then, at the very latest. Could be sooner. And you have to wade through three sets of robes, to boot.”

“What about Arthur?” Hermione asked, as they paused in front of the room set aside for the groomsmen.

“What about him?” Viktor countered, opening a door and finding only a small cleaning cupboard. “That won’t do.”

“Where is he getting dressed?” Hermione pressed.

“Oh, he’s been dressed for hours. I think he might have slept in them. If he slept. He’s a bigger wreck than Molly,” Viktor said, dismissing the next small room, which was full of curtainless windows. He turned and tested the knob in the room next to the one set aside for the groomsmen. “Nothing but spare tables back here. What about this? No mirror, but I suppose it would do.”

“I’ll trust you to tell me how the robes look, and I have a small mirror for my face and hair. Beggars can’t be choosers, so I’ll take it. Come on in with me and do up the buttons. I’m not a contortionist,” Hermione protested.

“So, how nervous is she?” Viktor asked, stepping in after her and closing the door.

“Not as bad as I was, just the usual nerves. I gave her the big ‘what marriage is really like’ speech,” Hermione said, laying out the robes on one of the tables.

“The truth or the weekend brochure edition?” Viktor asked with a grin.

“The condensed truth. Often a rose garden, but the roses still have thorns,”

Hermione replied.

“And she didn’t run away screaming?”

“No. Still determined to go through with it. They never listen,” Hermione said with a shake of her head. “Neville okay?”

“Seemed to be. Saw him for all of three seconds, earlier.”

“I’m going to ask a silly question,” Hermione said, turning around to face him. “Why did you never tell me you hated cats?” she asked on a whim.

“I... I didn’t *hate* cats...” Viktor stammered.

“You did, too. Ekaterina said so before she knew I had one. Seriously, did you put up with a cat you hated for more than ten years?”

“I didn’t hate him, I-”

“You’re a terrible liar, Viktor, so stop trying to do it,” Hermione said with a laugh.

Viktor gave her a sheepish grin. “Okay, maybe I hated him at first. Well, more like I hated the idea of having a cat underfoot all the time. But after a while, I tolerated him, and then I actually became fond of him, the rotten little furball. What brought this up, anyway?”

“Telling Ginny about how positively soft you were over him by the time he got old. Don’t tell me you couldn’t have shut the door to the bedroom every night, rather than waking up at all hours to put a fat, old ginger cat at the foot of the bed whenever he took the notion to come to bed. And don’t tell me you didn’t see red when he used that old Nimbus of yours as a scratching post and took a chunk out of it. Harry told me that was a limited edition classic model, so I doubt very much that you didn’t care about ‘that old thing’ having a big sliver missing from the handle.”

“You were crazy about him,” Viktor said simply, giving a shrug. “What good would kicking the cat do when the damage was already done, anyway?”

“So, you admit you wanted to kick the cat?” Hermione said, giving him a pointed look.

“For all of ten seconds. We had something in common, though, Crookshanks and I,” Viktor explained.

“And what was that?” Hermione said, raising her eyebrows.

“We were both insanely fond of the mistress of the house, so how could I fault him anything else?” he asked lightly, giving her a kiss on the cheek. “And I put him in the bed just to keep him from yowling at us from out in the hall.”

“Likely story,” Hermione said incredulously, pulling off her casual shoes and tossing them into the bag with her things.

“I *did*,” he protested. “What exactly did you tell Ginny, anyway? Besides cat stories which seem to have no bearing at all on wedding day jitters,” Viktor added.

“What a fantastically perfect husband you are. By the way, she’s decided she would rather marry you than Neville,” Hermione teased, stripping off her robes and tossing them into the bag.

“Now I know you’re full of it,” Viktor scolded. “Seriously, what did you tell her?”

Hermione slipped into the inner robe, then tossed on the outer robe, straightening it hastily. “Just reassured her. Told her about some of the joys of having a spouse. The things that make putting up with the aggravation worthwhile.”

“Oh. The ‘best friend with benefits’ tack, hmm?” he asked, stepping forward and putting his arms around her. He pulled her toward him gently, until their bodies touched.

“Something like that,” Hermione allowed, sliding her arms around his waist and looking up at him. “Why don’t you do me a favor and do up the buttons?”

“Why don’t you do me a favor and leave them open, for right now?” he responded, running his hands beneath the outer robe and over her bare back, bending to kiss her and working his fingers beneath the band of her bra and undoing the fastenings.

“We don’t have all day,” she murmured, when he pulled back for a moment.

“Benefit of being married so long. We can cram into fifteen minutes what used to take a lot longer. We know where everything’s located and how it works, by now,” he said, laughing low into the shell of her ear, then kissing and sucking her earlobe.

“Still plenty of time to get ready,” Hermione said, almost as though justifying it to herself. She trailed a hand down his torso, down the tailored front of the shorter outer robe, beneath the hem, brushing her hand lightly over his crotch on the way to hooking her fingers into the waistband of the black trousers. She paused there while their lips met again, his mouth cupping hers, warm and soft.

Hermione arched her pelvis forward, feeling him, pressing hard against the soft flesh of her belly. "Inside me. Hurry," she urged breathlessly.

Wordlessly, he boosted her onto the edge of the table, seating her there. She put her other hand at his waist, unbuttoning the trousers, moving them aside, out of the way. Working her fingers into the opening, she shucked his boxers low on his hips, freeing him. His fingertips traced up the side of her calves and thighs, then her hips, as he pushed his hands beneath the skirt of her robes. She obligingly put her palms against the tabletop, lifting her bottom to allow him room to peel her knickers downward, letting them slide from her knees to hang around her bare ankles. She didn't even bother to slip her feet free, instead parting her knees and letting him step between them. Hermione arched back, weight on her palms, opening herself to him.

His big hands braced her hips, and she threw her head back, breathing deep. When he entered her, she reflexively clamped her knees together, feeling his prominent hipbones pressing against her inner thighs, clutching at him as though trying to draw him deeper into her. He thrust inside her, rhythmic and relentless, hands tucked against the small of her back, cradling her, supporting her. After a few moments, his left hand found the hem of her robe and slipped beneath, roaming up her body, brushing and cupping her breasts in turn.

He bent over her, tasting her mouth, kisses trailing over her chin, their low moans blending in their ears. They were so wrapped up in one another, they didn't even hear the soft click of the door, or the panicked scuffling before the door clicked shut once again. Out in the hall, Harry looked wide-eyed at Ron and Neville, who had backed up against the other wall. "Obviously not that door," Harry said after a moment of stunned silence. "Next door must be where we're supposed to change," he said, jerking his head back the way they had come. He closed his eyes and shook his head, trying to get the image out of his head.

"Were they doing," Ron said slowly, "what I think they were?"

"Well, her knickers were in the vicinity of her ankles... not that I was looking! I don't think he was just doing up her buttons. Not moaning like that. And his hand was up her robe. And I don't even want to *think* about where her other hand might have been. Thank Heaven they just had everything... rearranged. I mean, I knew they... I know they... but this close to the wedding ceremony!? Are we going to have to hose them down to get them down the aisle?" Harry said incredulously, checking his watch.

"My. Aren't weddings romantic?" Neville said, sounding dazed. After a beat of silence, both Ron and Harry exploded in fits of laughter, and Neville soon followed.

"Shhhhh! They'll hear!" Harry gasped between gales of laughter.

“Oh, no they won’t! Too busy going at one another! Lord, I hope when Susan and I marry, we’re still panting after one another that much, after being married a decade and more! Oh my!” Ron wheezed, wiping at the tears streaming from the corners of his eyes. “Think you and Hannah will be boffing one another before other people’s weddings ten years from now, Harry?”

“Shhh! Shut up, Ron! Get in the other room and get your robes on!” Harry hissed, shooing them both back down the hall and following after them. The air of authority was rather ruined when he let out a poorly suppressed snort of laughter.

Inside the room, Hermione arched back even further, letting him grind against her as he rocked in and out of her. She let out a low moan, her thighs clenching even harder as that familiar electric hum began between her legs. The throbbing intensified when he slipped the fingers that had been stroking her nipples between her thighs, rubbing and pressing in rhythm with his thrusts. “Harder,” she gasped, and he obliged, the edge of the table bumping the stone wall like a distant woodpecker. It took only a few strokes for the hum to become an explosion, and her muscles quivered and clenched reflexively, spasm after spasm, clamping down on him. His hand went back to her ribcage, arms bracing her, pulling her more upright, his lips going to her neck, nibbling along her jawline as he pushed inside her a few times more, before giving a low groan in her ear and spilling inside her. They remained locked together silently, her fingers twining in the hair that curled over his collar as she held him. “Oh... oh... oh! The time! I’ve got to get back! I told Molly I would be back!” she said, starting as she caught an accidental glimpse of her watch.

He stepped back and began rearranging his trousers, while she hurriedly refastened her bra and slid her knickers back over her hips. Viktor buttoned the back of her robes without prompting while she dragged a brush through her hair, opting finally to simply put it up in a high ponytail, adorned with a few quickly charmed flowered pins. A couple of simple glamour charms and she was satisfied with what she saw in the mirror. “Come back here! You’re forgetting something!” Viktor said in an urgent voice when she started toward the door.

“What?” she asked breathlessly.

“For a start, your shoes. And for another thing, kissing your husband goodbye. You don’t get out the door looking that beautiful without kissing me goodbye,” he said with a wry smile, stepping close and giving her a soft peck on the lips.

“Flatterer,” Hermione said, sounding flustered. She slipped her feet into the shoes that matched her robes after digging them from the bag. “Fastest way back?”

“Through the main chapel. Don’t see much way around it, unless you go outside. Just walk through like you’re supposed to be there,” Viktor advised. “Leave the bag here, with me, I’ll put it next door.”

“Okay. Love you, see you in a few minutes,” she blurted out, thrusting the bag into his hands.

“Love you, too. Don’t break your neck trying to get back!” he called after her as she sprinted out the door and down the hall. She forced herself to slow down to a stately walk as she crossed the chapel, head held high, as though she were supposed to be walking through. Most of the guests were already seated in the pews, but the music hadn’t started yet. Hermione broke into a sprint again the second she was out in the hall. She gave a warning knock on the door before stepping into the room, where Molly was proudly looking on as Ginny picked up her bridal bouquet.

“We were beginning to worry about you, love. You were gone an awfully long time,” Molly said, giving her cheek a pat.

“Sorry. I was getting ready. Hair wouldn’t cooperate,” Hermione said breathlessly.

“Well, you look fantastic. I love your hairpins. And I would kill to know your secret on getting your cheeks to look like that,” Susan said, picking up her own flowers and following Hannah out into the hall.

“Being happy,” Hermione said flippantly. “Oh, come on. I look thrown together next to the rest of you,” Hermione protested, smoothing the skirt of her robe.

“You do not,” Ginny argued. “Seriously, what makeup or charm did you use to get that beautiful glow and where can I get some of it?” Ginny said in a low, conspiratorial voice. Hermione just smiled and shook her head coyly. Outside, in the main chapel, the first strains of music started up.

“Oh! Places!” Molly said frantically, and Hermione stepped out into the hall, as well, making way for Arthur, who, frankly, looked even more frantic than Molly, to dash into the room. Hermione couldn’t help smiling to herself as they filed into the front entryway, in place to take their turns walking down the aisle, and she spotted Viktor across the way. By the time they stood next to each other, and he put out his arm for her, she was smiling so broadly that her cheeks hurt.

“Stop grinning like an insane pixie,” Viktor whispered in her ear. “Or I won’t be able to stop.”

“Can’t help it,” she whispered back.

“Whatever will people think?” Viktor said in a low voice, and she could see from the sidelong glance she gave him that he was losing the struggle to keep a straight face.

“Either that we’re an incredibly happy married couple, we’re tickled pink for our friends, or we’ve been at the punch, already. Or some combination,” she said, trying to suppress a laugh, since Arthur and Ginny had just stepped up behind them.

“I pick one and two, then,” Viktor said, giving her a fast kiss on the temple, “because I, for one, did not have time to do any boozing before the ceremony. Gah, down the aisle again,” he grouched good-naturedly, as Hannah and Harry set off and they stepped forward, the last couple to go before Arthur and Ginny.

“No one will be looking at us. We’re old married folks. We don’t do anything interesting, anymore. Not in public, anyway,” she said with a small laugh, stepping out of the foyer and toward the head of the aisle, holding on to Viktor’s arm.