

Fleur was at the kitchen counter making tea when Gabrielle shuffled down the stairs the next morning, still in her sleep shorts and a shirt she'd clearly slept in, her silvery hair a complete disaster. She dropped into a chair at the dining table and pulled one knee up to her chest, watching her sister's back patiently. She had a specific question and was deciding how to ask it.

Fleur poured the hot water without turning around. She could feel the stare.

"How was it?" Gabrielle finally said.

"Ze club?" Fleur said innocently. "Good. Ze music was nice."

"I didn't ask about ze music."

"Zere was an experienced bartender. Very good at mixing drinks."

"Fleur."

Fleur set the kettle down and turned around, leaning her hip against the counter and holding out the second mug. Gabrielle took it. Fleur watched her over the rim of her own as she drank, the small smirk firmly in place, and said nothing. Gabrielle lowered her mug.

"You're going to make me ask properly, aren't you."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Ze evening," Gabrielle said, with great patience. "Ze part after ze club. You came back at half past midnight and I heard you come in and I heard," she gestured expressively at nothing in particular, "ze rest of it. So. How was it."

Fleur considered this for a moment. Then she came around the counter and settled into the chair across from her sister, cradling her mug, and looked at Gabrielle with the calm, amused expression she'd been wearing since she woke up.

"Very good," she said.

Gabrielle waited. "Zat's all?"

"What would you like me to say?"

"I'd like you to say something more useful than 'very good', Fleur. You sound like you're reviewing a restaurant."

Fleur laughed. "Fine. What do you want to know?"

Gabrielle opened her mouth, closed it, opened it again. "Ze alley," she said. "I heard you say something about an alley when you came in."

"Did you."

"I wasn't eavesdropping. Ze walls, as I've mentioned, are thin."

"Mm." Fleur sipped her tea. "We went outside ze club. Into an alley alongside ze building. Eet was very dark. Very quiet."

Gabrielle's grip tightened slightly on her mug. "And."

"And," Fleur said, watching her, "he put me against ze wall and made me come with his hand before I'd even properly caught my breath from the club. And zen," she continued, her voice not changing at all, "he lifted me up and I wrapped my legs around him and we fucked up against ze wall until I came again. Twice." She paused. "Zat was ze alley."

The silence that followed was very, very brief.

"Oh," Gabrielle said.

Her voice came out completely even, which was an achievement, because her face had gone the deep, slow pink of someone whose imagination had just done something involuntary and thorough. She stared into her tea.

"Outside," she said.

"Outside," Fleur confirmed. "Where anyone could've walked past."

"And zat doesn't," Gabrielle cleared her throat, "bother you. Zat."

"Zat someone might've seen?" Fleur tilted her head. "Non. If anything," she said, her tone entirely matter-of-fact, "it makes it better. Knowing you're somewhere you could be caught at any moment. Something about it. Ze tension of it."

Gabrielle turned her mug in a slow circle on the table. She was doing an admirable job of appearing thoughtful. The pink in her cheeks was less admirable. "And for 'im? Does he like zat as well?"

"He's ze one who dragged me out there," Fleur said.

"Right." Gabrielle nodded slowly. "Right, okay."

Fleur watched her with bright eyes. "You asked," she said.

"I know I asked." Gabrielle cleared her throat again. "I'm just," she waved her hand, "absorbing ze information."

"Absorbing it," Fleur repeated, amused.

"For educational purposes."

"Of course." Fleur set her mug down, propped her chin on her hand, and looked at her sister with a patient expression on her face. She had nowhere to be and was enjoying herself. "You want to know more."

"I want," Gabrielle said carefully, "to understand things better. So I'm not a disaster. Like we discussed."

"We discussed zat you wouldn't be a disaster."

"And I've decided to take ze preparation more seriously. So." Gabrielle straightened slightly. "Tell me zings. Useful zings."

Fleur studied her for a moment. Something shifted in her expression. The teasing was still there but something warmer moved underneath it, the older sister who had always known more and had never completely minded sharing.

"Alright," she said. "What do you want to know?"

Gabrielle blinked. "Really?"

"You're matured. You're going back to school in a few days and will be surrounded by boys who will absolutely notice you. It's probably better zat you know somezing." Fleur picked up her mug again. "Ask."

Gabrielle blinked.

"What does it feel like?" She asked. "For real, I mean. Not ze stuff you read in books. What does it actually feel like when he," she paused, choosing her words, "touches you. Down zere."

Fleur didn't look even slightly fazed. "His fingers or his mouth?"

Gabrielle's eyes widened a fraction. "Zere's a difference?"

"Very much so." Fleur settled back in her chair. "His fingers," she said, measuring her words the way someone does when they're being genuinely descriptive rather than provocative, "feel more direct. More controlled. He knows exactly where to press, how much pressure, and he can feel 'ow you're responding and adjust. When 'e slips one inside and curls it just right," she glanced at her sister's face and noted the slight parting of her lips, "you feel it all ze way up your stomach. It's sharp and deep all at once."

Gabrielle had gone very still.

"His mouth," Fleur continued, her voice calm, "is different because it's softer and wetter and ze pressure is less precise but more," she considered her words, "everywhere. And when he uses his tongue on ze right spot, ze one up at ze front, ze one zat matters," she watched Gabrielle's hand tighten slightly on the mug handle, "your legs just stop working. Zat's ze only way I can describe it. Zey just go."

"Right," Gabrielle said. The word came out slightly huskier than intended.

"Ze noises he makes while he does it," Fleur added, almost as an afterthought, "are also very helpful. He sounds like he's enjoying himself enormously, and zat goes straight to your head in a way zat makes ze whole thing twice as good."

Gabrielle was quiet for a moment. In her mind, entirely against her better judgment, a picture had assembled itself with extraordinary clarity and detail. Harry, on his knees in front of her. His hands on the backs of her thighs. His mouth on her pussy. The sounds he'd make. She felt warmth flood through her low and insistent, and she crossed her ankles under the table without thinking about it.

"And," she said, her voice commendably steady, "ze other way around. When you," she made a small gesture.

"When I use my mouth on him?" Fleur said.

"Oui."

"Ze sounds he makes," Fleur said simply, "are worth it entirely on zeir own. He doesn't hold back. When you take him deep and you look up at him," she held Gabrielle's gaze, "and he's watching you with that look on his face, like you're ze only thing in the world zat exists right now, it," she paused, searching for the right word, "does somezing to you. It makes you feel very powerful. And very wanted. Zose two zings together are quite remarkable."

The image that assembled in Gabrielle's head this time was even worse than the last one, or better, depending entirely on how one chose to think about it. Harry, looking down at her the way Fleur described. His hand in her hair. The sounds of him losing himself in her. She shifted in her seat.

"And when he," Gabrielle swallowed once, "when he's inside you. What does it actually feel like? Ze first time and, and also when it's been a while."

"Ze first time was," Fleur said carefully, "a lot. Overwhelming in every direction. It's fuller than you expect and zere's a moment where your whole body sort of holds its breath because ze sensation is so much. And zen," she smiled, and it was a genuine one, "once you adjust, and you look at each other, and he starts to move, and you feel how perfectly you fit together," she glanced at Gabrielle and found exactly what she expected, "it is very hard to imagine why you ever did anyzing else."

Gabrielle's fantasy had progressed without her permission to the moment Fleur had just described, and it was thorough. Harry above her, his weight, his warmth, the feeling she hadn't actually experienced but could suddenly imagine in vivid detail: the stretch, the overwhelming fullness of his cock, the look he'd give her. His hands on her hips. The way he'd start to move, slow and sure, and the sounds she'd make because she wouldn't be able to stop herself. The way her legs would lock around him and pull him closer because once wouldn't be enough of it.

She could feel the ache between her own legs now, real and insistent, and she was aware of it in a way she couldn't talk herself out of.

"Gabby."

She blinked.

Fleur was watching her with an expression that was three-quarters amusement and one-quarter genuine warmth, her head tilted at an angle, her lips pressed together against a smile.

"You were someplace else just now," Fleur said.

"I was listening," Gabrielle said immediately.

"You were absolutely not listening."

"I was," Gabrielle said, with great dignity, "processing."

"You were sitting zere with your thighs pressed together and your face ze color of a tomato," Fleur said pleasantly. "I could practically see ze film running in your head."

"You cannot."

"Gabby." Fleur's voice was fond, not cruel. "It's alright. You asked me questions with detailed answers and you are a freshly matured veela. It would've been strange if you weren't," she gestured delicately, "affected."

Gabrielle stared at her sister for exactly two seconds. Then she stood up from the table with what she hoped was casual ease, picked up her mug, and looked somewhere else.

"I'm going to go study," she said.

"Of course," Fleur said, the perfect picture of serenity.

"Ze Transfiguration notes aren't going to," Gabrielle began moving toward the door, "sort zemselves."

"Naturally."

"So." Gabrielle cleared her throat. "Merci for ze... ze information."

"Anytime," Fleur said warmly.

Gabrielle did not run. She walked with considerable speed and complete dignity up the stairs, and Fleur watched her go with a wicked, affectionate smile on her face, feeling oddly satisfied with herself. It'd gone exactly how she'd intended.

The smile on her face was still there when she heard the sound of Gabrielle's bedroom door click shut above.

She picked up both mugs and carried them to the sink, humming something under her breath. Really, her sister had asked. There was nothing irresponsible about answering honestly. These were things Gabrielle needed to know. It was practically a kindness.

She was still in this entirely self-satisfied frame of mind when she felt two hands slide around her from behind, coming to rest on her chest, and a warm, solid, distinctly masculine body pressed up close against her back.

"Morning," Harry said, low at her ear.

"You were listening," Fleur said, not particularly surprised.

"I woke up and you weren't there and I came downstairs and Gabrielle was asking you what it feels like when I use my mouth on her." A pause. "You, I mean. On you."

"Mm." Fleur leaned back against him, her hands coming up to rest over his. "And?"

"And," Harry said, his chin at her shoulder, his thumbs moving in a slow, teasing arc, "you're a menace."

"She asked," Fleur said. "I answered."

"In detail."

"She needed details. She'll be terrible otherwise. She's going back to Hogwarts full of veela magic and no practical knowledge. I'm helping."

"That's one way to describe what you just did," Harry said.

"It's the accurate way."

Harry laughed quietly against the side of her neck, his mouth finding the skin just below her jaw. She tilted her head to give him better access. His thumbs moved, slow and sensual, over the front of her dress, and she exhaled.

"You are such a dirty girl," he said against her throat.

Fleur's breath caught. Her fingers tightened over his hands. "Am I," she said.

"Sitting zere describing everything in vivid detail." He said it with a French accent, a loose imitation of hers, his lips moving against her skin as he talked. "His fingers do zis, his mouth feels like zat. Did you enjoy giving her all of it?"

"Don't start," she said, and her voice was already losing its edges.

"You were watching her face while you talked," he said, and it was not a question. "You were watching her react to every word."

Fleur said nothing for a moment. Then, very quietly, she uttered, "Oui."

His hands moved, calmly, over the thin fabric of her sundress. "She's going to be upstairs right now," he said, "in her room, thinking about everything you just told her."

"I know," Fleur said.

"And you're fine with that."

"I'm fine with zat," she said. Her pulse was already picking up.

One of his hands slid from her chest to her waist, then lower, gathering the fabric of her dress at her thigh. His fingers found the hem and moved underneath it.

"'Arry," she said quietly.

"Mm?"

"She might come back down."

His fingers reached the inside of her thigh, moving upward. "Isn't zat what you want?" He said it the same way she had, the accent again, easy and teasing.

She pressed back against him and laughed, and it came out low and warm and not at all like she objected. "You are terrible," she said.

"I learned from you," he said, and she laughed again. His fingers reached the fabric of her knickers and pressed, and the laugh stopped abruptly.

"Oh," she said.

"Yeah?" His fingers slowly traced along her through the thin fabric, and she felt the particular aching satisfaction of someone who had been talking about this for twenty minutes and was now experiencing the entirely predictable consequences.

"You are so smug," she managed.

"You're soaking through your knickers," he said, at her ear, conversational as anything. "From sitting at the kitchen table talking to your sister."

"I was not —"

"I can feel it, Fleur."

She pressed her lips together. His fingers kept moving and her hips moved with them, seeking more pressure, because there was no point in pretending otherwise.

"The thought of her hearing us," he continued, his voice still low and easy, working the fabric aside now so it was just his fingers on her lower lips, direct and warm and knowing exactly where to go, "turns you on this much. Doesn't it?"

"Maybe," Fleur said, and the word broke slightly at the end because he had found the right spot and was being very coy about it.

"Fleur," he said with mirth.

"Yes," she said. "Alright. Yes. Is zat what you wanted to hear?"

"It's what I already knew," he said, sounding entirely too pleased with himself. She reached behind her and found the waistband of his boxers, pushed her hand inside, and wrapped her fingers around his length. He went quiet.

"Oh," she said, satisfied. "Now who's smug?"

He was already hardening in her grip, and the sound he made against her neck when she began to stroke him slowly was the exact sound she had just described to her sister mere minutes ago. Which was, frankly, not helping her maintain any sort of composure.

"Fleur," he said, his voice rougher now.

"Mm?" She stroked him again, base to tip, her thumb brushing over the top, and he pushed against her hand with an involuntary shift of his hips.

"Table," he said huskily.

"What about it?"

"Sit on it."

She turned in his arms instead, facing him, one hand still inside his boxers and the other going to his jaw. She looked at him for a moment. His eyes were already dark, his hair a catastrophe, still warm from sleep, and he was looking at her with the specific expression that meant thinking was becoming optional.

She kissed him. It went from soft to not soft in the span of about four seconds, his hands moving to her waist and then down, gripping the backs of her thighs and lifting her so she went up and landed on the edge of the table without entirely meaning to. She wrapped her legs around him and pulled him in, her hands in his hair.

He kissed down her jaw to her throat, his hands pushing at the thin straps of her sundress, sliding them off her shoulders. The fabric dropped, pooling at her waist. He pulled back to look at her, and the expression on his face was the one she had seen hundreds of times in their years together.

"Hi," she said.

"Hi," he said, and bent his head, his mouth finding the swell of her breast, and she made a sound that was probably audible upstairs.

Upstairs, in fact, Gabrielle had heard it.

She was sitting on her bed with her Transfiguration notes spread around her and absolutely no intention of reading them, one knee drawn up, very carefully not thinking about the conversation she'd just had. This was going well right up until the sound came through the floor, which was not a sound that could have any innocent interpretation.

She should put those muggle head things on that Harry had got her for listening to music. She should cast a silencing charm. She should absolutely not sit here and listen.

She did not move.

Another sound, this one Harry's voice, too low to make out words. A laugh from Fleur, brief and breathless. Then quiet for a moment, the kind of quiet that means people have found a better use for their mouths.

Then not quiet.

Gabrielle sat completely still on her bed and listened, her hands folded in her lap, and whatever composure she had managed to hold onto during breakfast dissolved completely. The sounds from downstairs told a clear story. She knew the story. Fleur had just described it to her in detail twenty minutes ago, including what Harry sounded like and what he did with his hands and his mouth, and her body had not stopped responding to any of that information since the moment Fleur started talking.

She lay back on the bed, staring at the ceiling, and tried to think about Transfiguration. This lasted approximately eight seconds. From below, she heard Fleur say something urgent and wordless that had nothing to do with Transfiguration, and that was the end of it.

Her hand moved without any formal decision on her part. She pulled her knee up, and let herself stop pretending she wasn't going to do this.

The fantasy assembled itself immediately, because it had been half-built since breakfast. It wasn't Fleur she was imagining. She'd given up feeling guilty about that some time ago. It was Harry. His hands where Fleur had described them. His voice, low and husky, the things he'd say. The way Fleur had described his expression when he looked at you, like you were the only thing in the world, and that expression was directed at her now, in the version that played in her head.

She pressed her lips together against a sound. Her fingers found their way, sure and practiced, and she moved with the sounds filtering up from downstairs, matching them, following the rhythm of what was happening below her.

Her other hand twisted in the sheets.

In her head, the picture was vivid and entirely without apology. His weight. His warmth. His voice at her ear saying things she had now heard him say to her sister and had memorized without meaning to. Her name, not Fleur's. Her back arching up to meet him. The full, overwhelming feeling Fleur had described with such unself-conscious honesty that Gabrielle had felt it like a physical thing.

She bit down on her lower lip and let the sounds from below carry her the rest of the way.

Downstairs, Harry had Fleur on the table and Fleur had one hand braced behind her and the other in his hair, and she was not being quiet. He had his mouth on her neck, his hands sliding up her sides, pushing the straps of her dress down, and when he got his mouth on her skin, she grabbed the edge of the table with both hands and forgot what she'd intended to say next.

He moved from her neck to her collarbone, from her collarbone down, his mouth warm and wet, and she arched into him and made the kind of sounds she had completely stopped trying to moderate. He had one hand flat on the table beside her and the other moving between her thighs with the practiced certainty of someone who knows exactly where to be, and she said his name in a way that had nothing to do with asking him to stop.

"Ze table is going to be a problem when we eat dinner on it later," she said, somewhat breathlessly.

"Clean it," he said, and then did something that erased any further thoughts about dinner.

She grabbed his hair. "Mon dieu," she said, moaning out loud.

She got her hands on his shoulders and pushed him down, and he went, which she had always appreciated about him, the complete absence of ego about it. His mouth found its way to her lower lips, to exactly the place that made her legs stop working, and she fell back on the table with her forearm over her eyes and let him get on with it.

The sounds she made were the sounds Gabrielle had just heard described in detail, but hearing about them and hearing them in person were different things, and upstairs Gabrielle was discovering this with some feeling.

Fleur came with Harry's name and both hands gripping the table edge, hard.

She reached for him, pulled him in, and they ended up as they generally did, with her face down over the table and his hands on her hips and the very direct and satisfying communication of two people who have been together long enough to skip past any remaining formality.

He pushed into her slowly, and Fleur exhaled hard against the table surface, fingers curling against the wood. There was no more buildup required, and Fleur relished the grounding pressure of him filling her and the low sound she made was half relief and half demand for more.

"Don't stop," she said.

He didn't.

He set a slow, steady rhythm, his hands firm on her hips, pulling her back to meet each thrust. The table shifted slightly under the weight of it. Fleur pressed her palms flat against the surface and pushed back against him, and the rhythm between them became more mutual, with her meeting him and him driving forward, the wet sound of their bodies together loud in the quiet kitchen.

"Harder," she hissed, and it was not a request.

He tightened his grip on her hips, his fingers pressing into the soft flesh there, and gave her what she asked for. The pace picked up. The table scraped an inch across the floor. Fleur made a sound that was not remotely quiet, a sharp, broken exhale that caught in her throat and came out something between a moan and a curse in French.

"There." She shifted her angle slightly, tilting her hips up, and whatever that adjustment did, it made her breath stutter. "Right there — don't move, just—"

He kept the angle. Kept the pace. His thumb pressed into the small of her back and she arched into it like a reflex.

"Oui. Oui, exactly zat."

The sound of their fucking filled the room, the rhythmic impact of his hips against hers, the slide of his cock pulling back before driving in again, and her voice going lower and more wrecked with each pass. Her silver hair was half out of its arrangement, spilling over the table, and he gathered it loosely in one hand and pulled,

nothing rough, just taut, and she made a noise that confirmed that was exactly the right call.

“You’re going to make me –” She didn’t finish. She didn’t need to.

He could feel it in the way she was tensing around him, her back arching further and her breathing going ragged and uneven. He kept his rhythm unrelenting, held her hips in place when she started moving erratically, and kept her there exactly where he wanted her.

“Arry –” His name in her mouth like that, half demand and half undone, was the only signal and then she was cumming, her whole body tightening around his cock, the sound she made low and involuntary and very French, her hips grinding back against him through every second of it.

“Right zere,” Fleur said, her voice coming apart. “Right zere,” Fleur said, her voice coming apart.

He gave her exactly what she asked for as she came, loudly and completely, and he followed her with his hands gripping hard enough that she would absolutely feel them tomorrow and not mind at all.

They stayed still for a moment, both breathing, the kitchen quiet around them. Fleur’s hair was entirely beyond saving. His shirt was on the floor somewhere. The table had shifted two inches from where it started and would need to be moved back before dinner, which was fine.

“Alright,” Harry said, after a moment.

“Mm,” Fleur agreed.

Upstairs, Gabrielle arrived at her own climax with her fist in the sheet and Harry’s name on her lips in a whisper she barely heard herself. She lay there in the warm, shaky aftermath, one arm over her eyes, her chest rising and falling fast. The sounds from below had gone quiet. The room around her was very still.

She’d think about the ethics of all of this later. For now, she stayed where she was and let her heartbeat find its way back to normal.

From the floor below, she heard Harry’s laugh, followed by Fleur’s light and amused voice, not the words, just the tone. And then, before Gabrielle could catch it, something slipped out of her. A small, involuntary pulse of warmth, the kind that a fully matured veela produces when the moment is right and she isn’t paying close enough attention to prevent it. It was brief. But it was unmistakable, at least to anyone who knew what they were looking for.

She clamped down on it immediately as she sat up, pressing both hands flat on the bed, and told herself firmly that it was fine and probably no one had felt anything.

Downstairs, Fleur’s head came up from Harry’s shoulder.

She went completely still in the way she did when she was reading the air, her veela senses sorting through something. Harry watched her face.

"What?" he said.

Fleur said nothing for a moment. Then, very slowly, she turned her head toward the ceiling. Toward the room above them. A smile spread across her face, full of satisfaction, as if she had just confirmed something she already suspected, wide and wicked and lit up with it.

"Oh, Gabby," she said, to no one in particular, in a voice full of affection and terrible amusement.

Harry followed her gaze to the ceiling. The expression on his face went through several stages: realization, then the particular resigned amusement, as if in retrospect, it was entirely predictable.

He looked at Fleur. She looked back at him, still smiling, completely delighted.

"She was up there the whole time," he said. "Listening."

"Looks like it," Fleur said.

"You knew for sure," he said. "Before."

Fleur's smile widened a fraction. She said nothing.

Harry stared at her. "Fleur."

"I suspected," she said. "I didn't know. Zere is a difference."

"There's really not."

"Zere genuinely is," she said, entirely unapologetically. "I suspected. Zen her veela magic confirmed it. Zose are two separate events." She tilted her head. "She had a good time, anyway. I don't see ze problem."

Harry shook his head slowly as he picked up his shirt from the floor. "You are completely unbelievable," he said, but the way he said it had no hint of a complaint in it.

"I know," she said happily, and kissed him.

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Dinner was simple. Roasted chicken, a salad, bread from the morning's loaf that was still good enough. Gabrielle had come downstairs four hours after the kitchen incident with her notes tucked under her arm and her expression arranged into its usual mild composure, and she had helped lay the table looking like she needed to keep her hands occupied.

They ate in relative quiet. Comfortable, as most of their meals were. The windows were open to the evening, the light going golden and slow, and the conversation drifted the way it did when no one had anywhere to be.

Fleur started it.

"I was thinking," she said, reaching for the bread, "zat the chicken came out better zan last time. I adjusted the temperature at the end. Lower, for longer."

"It's good," Harry said.

"It just needs," Fleur considered, breaking the bread thoughtfully, "ze right handling, you know? Too much heat too fast and you lose somezing. But take it slow, be patient, make sure you've got the technique right, and ze result is so much more satisfying."

Harry glanced at her sidelong. She was looking at the bread with every bit of sincerity.

Gabrielle ate her chicken.

"I was also reading earlier," Fleur continued, perfectly at ease, "about different approaches to, ah, preparation. Apparently ze preparation is ze most important part. Most people rush it and zan wonder why ze outcome isn't what zey hoped for. Ze foundation matters enormously."

"Makes sense," Harry said neutrally.

"It does. And ze more you practice, ze better your instincts become. Eventually you don't even have to zink about what to do. You just feel it." She picked up her fork. "It becomes very natural."

Gabrielle set down her own fork as she looked at her sister. Fleur looked back with blue, candid eyes.

"Ze chicken is very good," Gabrielle said.

"Merci," Fleur said pleasantly.

They ate. Harry reached for his water.

"I was also," Fleur said, after a short pause, "thinking about how much better somezing tastes when you're really hungry for it. You know? When you've wanted it for a long time and you finally get it. Ze anticipation makes ze whole experience richer."

"That's true of most things," Harry said.

"Oh, absolutely. But I zink some people wait too long and make zemselves unnecessarily frustrated." She speared a piece of chicken. "Zere's no virtue in denying yourself forever, zat's what I always say. Eventually you 'ave to just go for it. Commit. Otherwise you'll just be," she waved her fork, "hovering at ze edges your whole life."

Harry reached under the table and squeezed Fleur's thigh once, firmly. She ignored it with perfect serenity.

Gabrielle looked at her sister. Then at Harry, who was cutting his food. Then back at her sister.

"And sometimes," Gabrielle said, the picture of thoughtfulness, "when you finally do go for something you've been wanting for a long time, it's even better than you imagined. Because you've already done so much of ze," she paused, "preparation. In your head. You've thought about it so many times that when the moment finally comes, you're completely ready."

Fleur looked at her.

Gabrielle met her eyes and held them, very steady.

"Exactly right," Fleur said after a moment, her voice warm.

Harry put down his fork and looked between the two of them patiently. He understood the innuendo perfectly but decided to say nothing about any of it.

"More salad?" he said.

"Please," both sisters said together, and then looked at each other. Gabrielle's cheeks went pink as Fleur's mouth curved. Harry served the salad and said nothing further.

They ate. The evening light moved.

"Of course," Fleur said after a comfortable interval, "sometimes the best experiences are the unexpected ones. You think you know what to expect and then something surprises you entirely and you realize you 'ad no idea." Her eyes, for the briefest moment, went to Gabrielle's face before returning to her plate. "The best ones tend to stay with you."

Gabrielle's jaw tightened very slightly. She looked down at her plate, then up again, a flush crawling up her neck.

"I've heard that," she said.

"Ave you," Fleur said.

"In a manner of speaking," Gabrielle said.

Harry reached out and touched Fleur's thigh under the table once again. She glanced at him. He gave her a very small look.

She pressed her lips together, her lips curving upwards slightly, and turned back to her food.

They ate. The conversation moved on to other things. Gabrielle asked about Hogwarts, about whether Fleur thought they had updated the Transfiguration syllabus in the last two years. Harry talked about a new training program at the Auror Department.

Normal things. Easy things. The kind of dinner that three people have when they share a home and like each other.

Gabrielle's gaze moved to Harry when he was talking, the same way it always did, that particular quality of attention she clearly thought she was better at hiding than she was. And Harry was, Fleur noticed with private amusement, being careful in a way he hadn't been before, glancing at Gabrielle and looking quickly away, something shifted in how he moved around her. An awareness that hadn't been there three weeks ago.

Fleur noted it and said nothing.

They finished dinner. Cleared up. Harry washed, Gabrielle dried, Fleur put away, which was the arrangement they'd fallen into without discussion. There was something domestic about it that made Gabrielle's chest ache in the quiet way it often did, the thought of not having this anymore once she went back to school.

The dishes were done. Harry dried his hands. Fleur refilled her wine glass and leaned against the counter, watching her sister and her boyfriend move around each other in the small kitchen, handing things across, stepping around each other without thinking about it, the comfortable automatic ease of people who've shared the same space long enough to stop noticing each other's physical presence. Except, she noted, not quite as not-noticing as three weeks ago. Harry passed Gabrielle a dish without looking and their fingers overlapped briefly on the edge of it and he moved away without comment and Gabrielle set it on the shelf and didn't look at him either. Both of them were very methodical about it.

Fleur sipped her wine.

"Right," Gabrielle said, hitching her notes under her arm. "I'm going to my room. Ze reading isn't going to do itself." She looked at them both with the particular weary firmness she reserved for this specific request. "And please," she said, "use ze silencing charms tonight. Proper ones. Both of you, together, cast zem yourselves. Not," she pointed at herself, "me, in my own room, alone, at half past midnight."

"Of course," Harry said.

"I mean it zis time," Gabrielle said. "I'd like to get a full night's sleep before I leave for school."

She turned and moved toward the hallway.

"Gabby."

Fleur's voice. Gabrielle stopped, and she slowly turned around with an eyebrow raised.

Fleur was standing at the kitchen counter with her wine glass, looking at her sister with an expression Gabrielle couldn't immediately read. There was something careful in it. Something that had been sitting with her all day, working its way to the surface.

Fleur glanced at Harry. He met her eyes. Something passed between them, a quick wordless exchange, and then Harry shrugged slightly, which was apparently an agreement.

Fleur turned back to Gabrielle and she took a breath.

"Ze next time you want to watch," she said, "you don't 'ave to hide."

The kitchen went very quiet.

Gabrielle stared at her.

"You can just," Fleur said, and her voice was still that same measured, direct tone it always was, "come in. Make yourself comfortable. You don't 'ave to be somewhere else pretending you're not."

Gabrielle opened her mouth. Thought of saying something. Abruptly closed it.

Fleur finished the wine and set the glass down. She took Harry's hand and turned toward the hallway.

"Bonne nuit, Gabby," she said.

She walked. Harry went with her. Their footsteps went up the stairs, slow, and then the landing, and then the sound of their bedroom door clicking shut drifted downstairs.

Gabrielle stood in the kitchen.

She stood there for a long moment, looking at the space where her sister had been. The empty wine glass was still on the counter. Her mouth was still slightly open. She closed it.

She stood there for another moment, entirely still, with the peculiar look on her face. It felt as if her whole understanding of the situation had just shifted two feet to the left and she needed a moment to check whether the ground was still solid.

It was. Mostly.

She let out a slow breath.

Then she looked toward the stairs, her lips pressed together, her cheeks warm, and her eyes slightly wider than usual.

She stood there a little while longer, looking at the stairs, looking at the empty kitchen, the wine glass Fleur had left on the counter and the faint warmth still in the air.

Then she pressed her lips together, let out a long, slow breath, and went to bed.

She did not study a single word of Transfiguration or Charms or Potions or DADA. Her notes sat untouched on the nightstand, looking at her with quiet reproach until she turned them face down and pulled the blanket up.

Her professors would never know. That seemed entirely fine.

To be continued...