

Sim House Sims

Harry stepped into Weasley Wizard Wheezes, 93 Diagon Alley. Fortunately for the teen's rapidly fraying temper, Tonks, his Order guard for the day, decided to wait outside.

Once inside, Harry found the usual clutter of shelves, scorch marks, suspicious noises, odors, and flashes of light. Surprisingly, there were no customers in the store at that moment.

George looked up from the ledger he was studying behind the counter. His face lit up, and he bellowed, "Gred! Get your skinny arse up here. Our generous benefactor is gracing us with his presence."

Fred poked his head from the back room, a smear of soot over one eye, his forehead, and part of his hair. "Why, Forge, I didn't realize you spent so much time examining my skinny arse."

"He doesn't," Harry interjected with a grin. "He's spent so much time admiring his own body, and since you're identical twins . . ." he trailed off with a smirk, enjoying the teasing with the two.

George put a hand to his chest and threw his head back dramatically. "Alas! My complete self-absorption has been discovered! I am a disgrace to my family. I must now run away and change my name."

Fred turned to Harry. In a perfectly calm tone, he said, "Between being a disgrace and his narcissism, he sounds like a Malfoy, doesn't he?"

Harry snickered as George gave his twin a very rude gesture and a dirty look.

Fred smiled benignly at his brother before turning back to Harry. "So, what brings you to our humble shop? Did the Order finally let you out for a day?"

Harry shrugged, a little bitter. It had not been a good summer despite the time spent at the Burrow. "Yeah. I'm here to do my school shopping, too. Thought I'd stop in and see you guys first, though. Whatcha been up to?"

Fred waved him to the back of the store as the door made a rude noise to indicate customers entering.

George stepped forward to greet the student shoppers as Fred closed the door to the back room. He headed over to a table loaded down with bottles of various shapes and sizes. "Let me show you the Disorienting Drinks we've been working on. We still have a timing issue with it, though. It's effective for either five seconds or five hours, and we can't figure out how to make it five minutes instead. It HAS to be how long we're stewing the lacewings, but we can't determine -" He stopped as he realized that Harry wasn't even listening. Instead, the ebony-haired wizard was studying what at first glance appeared to be a muggle dollhouse.

Harry looked over Fred with a smirk. "You and your brother have a Barbie fetish I don't know about?"

Fred gave him a sour look. "Funny. No, that's the Sim House."

Harry looked at him blankly. "Sim House?"

Fred nodded. "We named it after some muggle clompuger game that Dad told us about." He walked over to the table and picked up a small figurine from next to the house.

Harry recognized it as Aidan Lynch, similar to the figurine of Victor Krum that Ron had purchased at the World Cup.

"This, of course, is a figurine," Fred continued. "In its mass-produced form, it looks like some famous witch or wizard and knows a handful of signature gestures."

Even as he spoke, the little figure flashed his famous grin and waved at Harry in the way that he'd seen the real Lynch do in nearly half the photographs he'd ever seen of the Irish seeker.

"Fine if you're a fan of the individual," Fred went on, "but that's all it is. However, it gave us an idea. Why can't we put more of a person's personality into a figurine? If we did that, why not put a group of individuals together and see how they interact?" He put down the Lynch figurine and opened the dollhouse on its hinges.

Eight figurines were in the various rooms of what Harry now realized was a VERY detailed replica. One of the little people even had a tiny book in hand and was apparently reading it.

As Harry examined the house, Fred continued his explanation, "So we figured out how to put a given personality into one of these toys, put a bunch of them into a house, and put a time compression spell on it. The spell pauses when the house is open so that the figures don't move around too fast to watch. The idea was to give them plenty of time to interact. Anyway, these are the first figurines we did. We can't hear them, but they can talk with each other. What do you think?"

Harry looked up from closely studying the house. "Cute little toy. Who are they?" he asked, waving at the eight people.

Fred gave him a wicked grin. "You and your Gryffindor classmates."

"WHAT?"

Fred chuckled. "George and I considered doing our class, but there are more in your year than ours. Besides, with you, Ron, and Hermione to help us with it, we figured the accuracy could be checked just as easily."

Shaking his head in both mystification and amusement, Harry looked more closely at the "people" instead of the structure. Now that he knew what he was looking for, it was clear that they were indeed the eight Gryffindors of Harry's year. Hermione was the one in the library, sitting on a squashy chair and reading a book. Parvati and Lavender were in one of the bedrooms, apparently giving each other makeovers. Seamus and Dean were in the recreation room, playing what looked like billiards while Neville watched. Harry and Ron were in the kitchen, talking about quidditch or something else that required extravagant arm movements by Ron.

Fred was looking at the group critically. He gave a nod and then looked toward Harry with a grin. "Watch this." He closed the house and pointed to a small clock embedded in the roof. "This clock shows the time as it would be for the people inside." With the house closed up, the minute hand was moving around at a speedy pace. "We've had this group going for nearly a year now in their time. They're not aging, of course, but it's interesting to see the relationships that have developed." He watched the clock until it indicated a time in the middle of the night, and then he opened the house back up.

Only five of the ten bedrooms were being used. Harry blinked and leaned in to see who was with whom. It appeared that Ron and Hermione, Seamus and Lavender, and Dean and Parvati were paired up. That left Harry and Neville each in their own rooms.

Fred nodded in satisfaction. "Does that make sense?"

Harry nodded. "You know Ron's crushed on Hermione since the Yule Ball. The other two couples are dating already."

"What about you and Neville?" Fred asked in a neutral tone.

Harry shrugged. "Neville's not interested in any of those three. He's had his eye on Eloise Midgen."

Fred's mouth twitched. "And you?"

Harry blanched and refused to look up at Fred. "Nope, I'm not all that interested in dating any of my classmates."

Fred's hand, holding a static replica of Ginny, came into Harry's line of sight. "What do you think would happen if I put this in there with them?" he asked mildly.

Harry swallowed thickly. "I don't know."

Fred put Ginny outside the front door and opened it. He then tapped the figurine with his wand and muttered something too low for Harry to catch. The little Ginny suddenly stepped into the house and looked around for a moment. Fred closed the house's door, prompting Ginny go pull out her wand and apparently cast the Light Charm as she now had a light source. She poked around the front room for a moment before apparently calling out. Harry, Neville, Ron, and Hermione, the only four on the lower level, all woke up at the same time and came out to investigate.

Fred closed the house. "I think we've finally got the personalities right. The early trials had some . . . odd results."

"Like what?" Harry asked, trying to take his mind off of what might or might not be playing out in the time-compressed little world on the worktable in front of him.

"Well, this is the fourth try. The first time, it ended up with Hermione as some sort of dictator. Lavender and Parvati were her enforcers, and all you boys were abused slaves to the girls. Kind of amusing, really, especially considering the whips and leather uniforms, but clearly not accurate. The next time, Lavender and Neville acted as some kind of benevolent king and queen. The third try was the funniest. You and Hermione were a couple."

"That's funny?" Harry bristled, unaccountably defensive over the thought.

Fred shrugged. "Not all that weird to us, but the rest of them were what was amusing. Ron and Dean were sharing a bed."

Harry made a face.

"And the other four were all sharing one bed," Fred added the capper to the situation.

Harry laughed. "Neville, Seamus, Parvati, and Lavender were all in the SAME bed?"

Fred nodded. "Cuddled up VERY cozy, too, if you know what I mean."

Harry thought about that for a moment before grinning broadly. "Well, damn."

"If we market this thing, we'll probably sell them with four modifiable figurines and have a whole group of pre-set ones that they can buy separately. Aidan Lynch, Oliver Wood, who's become quite the popular keeper with the witches apparently, Celestina Warbeck, Fleur Delacour, who's become a fashion model if you hadn't heard, and people like that. Popular figures from the eighteen to twenty-five crowd." He gave Harry a truly wicked grin. "George and I figure that 'Teen Witch Weekly' will pay us handsomely to produce a 'Shirtless Harry Potter' that they can give away in a special edition."

Harry flushed scarlet and glared at the older wizard. "You wouldn't dare."

Fred shrugged and smiled enigmatically.

Harry sighed and rubbed a hand over his eyes, muttering a few choice threats under his breath.

Fred completely ignored Harry's mood and waved at the house. "According to the counter, Ginny's been in there for two days. Shall we see how they're doing?"

Harry's eyes snapped up. "Uh, okay." He sounded very unsure.

Fred opened the house back up and looked in. His face immediately formed a satisfied smile.

Almost afraid to look, Harry finally screwed up enough courage to look into the house.

All of the previous couples were in their beds, as was Neville. Harry and Ginny were both curled up on the couch in the living room in front of a fire, apparently asleep in each other's arms. Even in miniature form, it was clear they were deeply in love with each other.

Fred studied the awed and wistful expression on Harry's face for a moment before giving a sharp nod.

Moments later, Harry's attention was drawn away from the little scene by the flash of a camera. Fred placed the camera to the side and turned toward Harry. "You have until that picture gets developed to tell her the truth, Harry. That'll probably happen tomorrow. If you don't tell her, we will."

Harry's expression vacillated between hopeful and scared before settling on stunned.

Fred threw a companionable arm over Harry's shoulder and steered him back toward the front of the store. "You two deserve each other, mate. And I mean that in the nicest possible way." He paused as he opened the door. In a serious voice, he concluded, "Go and talk to her, Harry."

Still in a slight daze, Harry left the store.

Feeling very satisfied with the results, Fred joined his twin back at the register.

George looked up from the ledger. "You showed him what happened when you added Ginny to the house?"

Fred nodded. "Yep."

"How'd he take it?"

"Shock. You saw how he was when he walked out of here."

George looked thoughtful for a moment. "Today or tomorrow, do you figure?"

"Today," Fred stated definitively. "He looked downright jealous of little Harry."

George nodded and smiled. "We'll just pop by headquarters tomorrow night and see how everyone's doing."

"Good idea. Back to business: I had a thought about the lacewings. What if we were to . . ."