

# Harry's Neck

*by Fanny T*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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### Neck

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Where it meets his shoulders, the skin stretches across a bump that signals the beginning of his spine, only visible when he tilts his head forwards over his text books. It's the only thing that gives you any hint of how thin he is—when you watch him from behind—otherwise he looks quite healthy, the bulky school robes adding a few much-needed pounds. But that little bump, that knob of bone, gives the lie to the illusion as it breaks the otherwise smooth line of his shoulders, jutting out sharply.

The hair that covers the top of his neck is longer in places and uneven—inexpertly cut and unruly like the rest of it. There is one large tuft of hair that's been allowed to grow far too long, and the asymmetry of the hairline makes the artist in him wince. He would like to offer his help, or at least give the other boy the number to a good hair dresser, but he knows they are not close enough for that kind of personal attention. Instead, he has to settle for gritting his teeth every time he watches his class mate scratch his head and mess up that bloody annoying excuse for a hairdo even more.

Does he cut his hair *himself*, for crying out loud?

The skin of the neck is bronzed, much more tanned than the rest of his body. A typical Seeker tan. It's those long hours of sitting still on his broom or cruising slowly across the Quidditch pitch, always careful to keep his back to the sun, to avoid being blinded as he looks for the glimmer of gold that signals victory. A deceptive stillness, that; Dean has watched him during practises and noted the way his head turns this way and that, constantly searching.

There's another kind of heat on that neck, as well: the heat of a thousand stares, fixed upon one small expanse of skin. Dean might envy many things about Harry, but he does not envy the fame or the ridiculous expectations. They took a boy who had a horrible start in life—losing both his parents to death and terror—and raised him up and believed him to be the saviour of them all. The one destined to defeat a grown man—one who has already led one reign of terror and who has spent years learning how to inventively hurt people. Oh, yes, and who is immortal.

(Is he the only one who sees how absurd this is?)

There are two moles right below the hairline. One is quite small, but the other is larger and irregular in colour, and with the dark tan in mind, Dean wonders if it mightn't be a good idea for Madam Pomfrey to take a look at it. Skin cancer was a big scare in the Muggle community just a year or two back, and although he did think the warnings then were a little excessive, he is annoyed about the lack of information in the Wizarding World. That is something he misses, here—a general education for the public; widespread information about other things than the latest Quidditch results or where to buy the best robes.

There is a small scar a little below the right ear. He wonders how that came about.

It's amazing what you can see, once you start to really *look* at things. He learnt that when he started painting. Put together, however, what all these small details add up to is this: a quite ordinary neck.

Dean has watched it for a week now. He has watched it so intently he's sometimes thought that, at any moment now, his class mate will surely turn around and ask what is wrong with him. But maybe the intense stare doesn't register as it feels as though it must. It is a neck that is used to being watched after all.

He has watched it tense as Snape drops a nasty comment; watched the skin flush with the kind of heavy embarrassment that makes even the back of his head colour; watched the way it cocks his head towards Hermione when she speaks, but not towards Ron. He has given it more attention than he ever thought he would give any part of a boy's anatomy, waiting for some sort of revelation, a realisation of just how important this very neck is.

But no.

He really sees no reason why Ginny would watch it religiously every night in the common room.