

The Road To Hell

by scarysnapey

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

Harry Potter is sick of that circular room in the heart of the Ministry building. He's sick of prisoners and prying eyes and Dementors. He's sick of Kingsley's booming voice.

Let the record show that this is the last time he'll ever have to set foot in this place.

"Ginevra Weasley Potter," Kingsley calls, and Harry's attention is drawn back to the center of the room, where his wife is picking at her bitten nails and shielding her face from view with that ratty nest of hair. "Let the record show that you have been charged with the murder of your only daughter in the summer of the sixth year following the end of the Second Wizarding War. How do you plead?"

Ginny looks up, slowly, because she doesn't like making eye contact. The room holds its breath when her blood shot eyes come into view, shadowed by a mess of dull red hair, and she smiles, and her mouth seems much too large for her face.

"Can someone turn up the heat?" she asks. "It's freezing in here."

"Mrs. Potter. How do you plead?" Kingsley repeats. Ginny dips her head again.

"Insanity," she rasps, and starts to laugh, daring anyone to challenge her on that fact. Nobody does.

"Let the record show that the defendant has pleaded insanity," Kingsley repeats as an aside to his secretary, who nods her perfectly sculpted, blond curls and jots it down. Harry wonders if she has any idea what she would do if her life fell apart.

Ginny raises her head again and bares her teeth. "Can someone turn up the heat?" she asks impatiently. "It's fucking freezing."

"Mrs. Potter," Kingsley continues, ignoring her request. She gives an angry growl and her leg starts shaking. "Can you please give your account of the events that led up to the murder of your daughter?"

"My *account*?" she repeats, and her leg abruptly stops moving. No one's ever asked for her side of the story before. Ginny tips her head back, smiling, and her matted hair truly falls away this time, revealing her face for all to see.

A woman in the back screams, but that just makes Ginny's smile widen.

"This kind of stuff only happens to people who have survived a war. You can't just start building your new life once the war is over, even though you want to. You have to clear away the wreckage first, or everything that happened is just sitting there, waiting for you to let your guard down."

Her head tips forward again, and her face falls into shadow. But she has everyone's attention. No one is going to stop her now. Harry doesn't want to be here. He's heard this story before. He's lived it.

Harry carries her over the threshold of their new home for the first time in 1999. They turn on an old record and dance around the empty living room together, still in their wedding clothes, amidst piles of boxes yet to be unpacked.

Their marriage begins, like so many do, with the promise of a new beginning, and when they fall into bed that night, they hold each other close.

Harry smiles into his beautiful wife's red hair and knows that the healing is just beginning.

Harry makes the suggestion in the months following their wedding, when the boxes are only partially unpacked and the weight of the dead is still pressing on their chests. He wants a baby, and Ginny smiles a bright smile as she tears up.

A family.

They've been trying for a month when they realize that this isn't going to work. Harry never finishes, even as Ginny writhes beneath him, flushed and warm and so in love. He rolls off, and the two fall asleep in each other's arms.

Ginny says that she's waited so long to have him all to herself that nothing can disappoint her.

"We'll keep trying," she says. "We'll find a way."

And they do.

Everyone in the room is staring at Ginny, who is hunched over in her seat, her body wracked by the power of her sobs.

The entire room seems to draw a breath with her. Harry knows what is coming next, and somewhere along the way he's lost the decency to be embarrassed.

"Could someone turn up the heat?" Ginny asks suddenly, and without waiting for confirmation, the secretary at Kingsley's side flicks her wand.

"Thanks," Ginny rasps, and the story continues.

"The first time it happened was by accident. I'd taken some Dreamless Sleep Potion in order to get to bed that night. I can't usually, without Harry there, and he was working late. I woke up when he was almost finished, but when I opened my eyes he lost it. And...um...he rolled off me and that's when we realized what we had to do."

Harry finds her like that, sprawled out unnaturally on the bed. For a moment his heart leaps into his throat as he assumes the worst, but then he takes in the empty vial on the desk and the negligee that she is wearing and the steady, nearly imperceptible rise and fall of her chest beneath the thin material.

He gathers her into his arms, intent on getting some rest, and her head lolls back against his shoulder. Like she's dead.

Oh god, it's like she's dead. Harry can feel himself hardening against her limp thigh even before the thought is finished.

His hands find their way under her flimsy nightclothes, and before he knows it he's on top of her; he's inside her. He can't tear his eyes away from her face, the way she isn't moving, the way she doesn't respond at all. His hips flex almost of their own accord, even as his dizzy brain becomes more and more convinced that she's dead.

"Ginny," he's moaning before he knows it, caught between the pleasure building deep inside of him and the part of him that thinks she's gone.

"Don't die," he groans, thrusting even harder, as if that will bring her back.

It does.

She stirs suddenly, blinking open her eyes, smiling blearily up at him and wrapping her arms around his neck. And the second that she does, he wishes that she hadn't.

The moment is gone. Harry feels himself go soft inside her.

"Get some sleep," he mumbles as he rolls off of her.

Neither of them does.

"We weren't sure how to put me to sleep for long enough. I always woke up before the end, and I would be under him, and he would just be going too rough and screaming at me not to be dead. That I couldn't be fucking dead. I didn't blame him, though. I understood, and I would try to pretend that I wasn't awake, but he could tell, and he wouldn't...he wouldn't be able to finish.

"And when we realized how obvious it was, we felt stupid. Draught of Living Death. It was exactly, incredibly, what we needed. I don't..." Here she dissolves into a fit of coughing, doubling over in her seat. When she straightens up and wipes her hand on the leg of her pants, it smears blood everywhere. Harry swallows. He wants to run to her, but every time she glances in his direction, she simply stares straight through him.

"I don't remember any of it," she goes on. "Because I was asleep. But when I woke up he was crying and holding me and mumbling about how I couldn't be dead, and how he... he *needed* me not to be dead. How I was all he had. And when I rolled over he pulled me close, and said that it was wonderful and horrible and that it worked, and that I'd looked so good like that. And then a couple weeks later we realized that I was pregnant."

The first time he truly comes inside her is amazing, and he waits patiently, catching his breath, for her to awaken. It only takes a moment for him to worry that she won't. He holds onto her hand and waits, mumbling to himself all the while.

He can't lose her.

When she stirs he pulls her close to his chest, smiling like he hasn't smiled since the day they got married.

"Oh, Gin," he murmurs into her fiery red hair. "It was amazing. You looked so good, and I was so afraid, but you looked so fucking good." She doesn't even stiffen at the words, merely plants a kiss at the base of his throat and drifts off to sleep.

It is a couple weeks before she realizes that she's pregnant. The bouts of morning sickness are nearly crippling in their intensity.

"Are they supposed to happen this early?" she asks Harry, who has no idea.

"I guess so," he says, dragging her into his arms. "We're going to be a family."

"It was wonderful, at first. Everyone was lavishing congratulations, and Harry spent so much time just with his head on my lap, with his hands on my stomach, talking about our baby. I was glowing, everybody said. I was young and pregnant and I had my whole life ahead of me.

"Then at the end of the first trimester, I was much farther along than I should have been. The baby was already kicking. Hard. I had bruises all over my body, even places that the baby couldn't have possibly reached. Harry and I stopped having sex, just because we thought he was causing the bruises, and we didn't want the doctor to start asking questions.

"But that didn't stop the bruising. It started getting worse, to the point where my skin was splitting open in some places. I still have the scars."

Ginny lifts her shirt carefully, exposing her stomach and the bottoms of her ribs. Large, starburst shaped patterns of shiny scar tissue are splattered across the flesh.

"Harry!" Ginny is screaming, sobbing, pleading for him to come get her. He finds her in the bathroom, naked from the waist up.

"Hey, beautiful," he says, wrapping his arms around her waist, and then he realizes what's wrong.

He recoils, gaping, as she turns to face him. Her stomach bulges out, a perfect and healthy sign of a woman entering the final month of her pregnancy.

"It's only been three months," Ginny says quietly, and Harry lays his hand on her stomach, as if in a trance.

"Oh!" he cries, and takes a huge step backward. "It kicked me!"

"Really?" Ginny asks dryly. "I didn't feel a thing."

Harry sticks out his tongue and sweeps her into his arms. "I don't know much about pregnancy," he murmurs into her ear. "But I know I love you, and I know our baby is on the way."

They dance in the rain one night while lightning flashes in the sky above them. For the first time since they got married, Harry is more excited by the prospect of life than the prospect of death. He can feel their baby kick between them as they dance, and he smiles into his wife's pale neck, right where her pulse is pounding.

"I love you," he says, even though they both know that he'll need her to take the potion next time they have sex.

"I love you, too," she whispers, because it's the truth, no matter how damaged they are, inside and out.

"What's that?" Harry asks one lazy Sunday morning as Ginny is getting dressed.

"Hmm?" she replies, pinning her hair up in loose, trembling curls.

"You've got a bruise right there," he indicates the spot beneath his own collarbone.

"I can't see it," Ginny says, craning her neck in an odd direction. She moves her hands to the v-neck collar of her shirt and pulls it wider. "Oh!"

The bruises are scattered everywhere. "That's what you get for getting dressed in the dark," Harry jokes, but Ginny's knuckles have gone so white that he thinks she might rip the shirt.

"I...Um, did you do this? When you were..."

Harry's face goes ashen. "I don't know. Oh, Gin. I'm so sorry. It wa..."

"Don't," Ginny says suddenly, pulling on a turtleneck sweater over her other shirt. "Maybe we should just not...you know. Until the baby comes."

"Okay, Gin," Harry says and opens his arms. She rushes into them gratefully.

"You're bleeding," Harry says quietly, pointing to the red stain spreading through the fabric on Ginny's side.

She grabs the hem of her shirt, holding it in place. "It's nothing," she snaps, and Harry has to pull her hands away.

"Ginevra," he gasps, and she tenses. He only ever says her first name when he's mad.

The bruises are splattered everywhere. Some of them cover so much space that they bleed into the next. But what take Harry's breath away are the open wounds. Each

bare itself in a perfect starburst shaped splotch against Ginny's pale stomach.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Harry asks, his voice wavering. "I could have healed them for you."

"I healed them myself," Ginny snaps, color rising on her cheeks. She pushes him away and pulls her shirt back down.

"You didn't do a very good job," Harry retorts, and the tears well up in Ginny's eyes. He regrets it immediately.

"Gin," he says, opening his arms. She moves into them slowly, sobbing into the fabric of his sweater. "I think we should go see a doctor."

"No!" she hisses. "We can't!"

"Okay, Gin," he says, because he just wants to hold her again. She settles down against him and they cry.

They go anyway, a week later, because Harry's healing spells won't patch up the broken flesh any longer.

"We went back to St. Mungo's to talk to my doctor about them. He told me that I needed to terminate the pregnancy. That I might die if I didn't. And I could feel Harry's hand tighten on mine when he said that, and I don't know what scared him more, losing me or losing the baby, or I guess the sense of helplessness because he had to lose one of us.

"Harry told me that we could get by without the baby, but I...I wanted that baby so badly. I thought that having her would fix everything. Every step we'd taken so far, into this strange and messed up world, had made us a little more real, and if we had a daughter who wasn't a part of that, she would pull us out forever. So I told him that I was keeping the baby.

"We fought about it, and he stormed out. He said..." she gives a great choking laugh. "He asked if it had never occurred to me that he wouldn't want to raise a baby without me, if I died. And he slammed the door.

He carries her through the door, like he did two years ago in 1999. This time it's because she's in so much pain, not because the gesture is romantic. Harry deposits her on the couch and sits carefully beside her.

"Gin," he says after a moment, and lays his hand over her stomach. "I need you."

"I know," she says, and he can tell that she hasn't caught his meaning. He looks up at her with big, green, pleading eyes.

"I mean that I choose you. Instead of the baby." He moves his hand slowly up to cup her face. "I choose you."

Ginny leans away from the touch. "I'm not giving up my baby. I want this child. I deserve to have her!"

Harry smiles a slow, sad smile and stands. He grabs his traveling cloak and walks to the door without a word.

He turns at the last second, with the open door behind him, and looks back at his wife. Her hair is messy and her eyes have dark circles underneath. A bruise creeps up the side of her neck, and tears are streaming down her face. He remembers the day they came home, and he danced with her in her wedding dress. They were supposed to heal, together.

"Did it ever occur to you," he spits, "that I don't want to raise a child without you?"

The door slams behind him. Ginny sleeps on the couch, with the lights on, because there is no one to help her to bed.

"I didn't see him for a week, but when the baby came he met me at the hospital, and he told me he was sorry and that he loved me and that everything would be alright. But if the pregnancy didn't kill me, I was sure that the delivery would.

"It was pain beyond anything that I'd ever experienced, even though they tried all the usual charms to prevent it. My skin burned, my vision went black, my throat closed up, and all the while Harry sat there and held my hand and told me that I better not fucking die on him, because he wouldn't ever let me go."

Ginny crosses her arms, holding on to each bicep so tightly that her knuckles turn white.

"The baby was stillborn," she continues. "They let me see her, hold her, and she was a sickly sort of grey color. 'Dead,' they said, but then she opened her big green eyes and smiled at me. It was the most wonderful and horrible thing I'd ever seen before, because it wasn't normal. Babies don't smile like that."

Ginny stares at the enchanted windows of her room in St. Mungo's. Her blank eyes don't really see a thing. She knows it's raining, and she knows that Harry is holding on tight to her limp hand.

"Mrs. Potter, Mr. Potter," the nurse is standing in the doorway, a bundle in her arms. Harry and Ginny turn around, waiting for the words they know are coming. "Your daughter was stillborn," the nurse continues. "There was nothing we could do."

"Can I hold her?" Ginny asks, and the nurse hesitates awkwardly. "Please?"

His wife's shriek is what draws Harry back into the room. He didn't want to see the baby. He didn't want to know what he almost had. What death took from him once again.

Ginny's lying on the bed, holding the baby at arm's length. The sickly grey skin glows in the fluorescent light of the room, but Harry isn't imagining the way the baby's limbs are wriggling.

His heart takes a mighty leap. "Our daughter!" he cries, and his voice is full of unrestrained joy. His face falls, though, when he sees that Ginny is registering only horror.

"Gin," he says quietly, confused, as his wife slowly turns the baby around.

Harry meets his daughter's big green eyes for the first time in the room at St. Mungo's. His baby smiles up at him, with a mouth full of sharp little teeth.

"Ginny," he repeats, and his wife just bursts into sobs.

"We named her Vereia, some convoluted spin on the Latin word for 'to fear.' We were going to name her Hope, but it just didn't seem to fit anymore. We brought her home, and it was sort of nice."

"A year went by and she already looked like she was five years old; she was helping me with the cooking, and the cleaning, and it was nice, sort of, but it was more unsettling than anything else. But Merlin, I loved her. And Harry loved her too. And again we settled for good enough, when we should have been asking someone else for help."

Ginny pulls her legs up so that they're folded beneath her and curls up on the chair. He wants to brush the hair back from her face and kiss her. He wants to pull her close and hold her tight and let her cry in his arms.

"She started performing magic without even meaning to. That's not exactly weird, but she was two years old, and she wasn't causing harmless things like spoons disappearing or hair growing overnight. We had an owl, a snowy owl, in memory of Harry's. And one morning Vereia came into our room crying."

Ginny draws a deep breath before she continues.

"The owl was hanging from the ceiling of her room, dead. Just dead, tied up with the colored yarn I'd bought her. For her knitting."

"Daddy!" Vereia is prodding him in the ribs.

"What?" he mutters sleepily, opening his eyes and staring up at his daughter. In the year since they'd brought her home, her skin has never lost that greyish tinge.

"Mommy told me to tell you that we needed to leave the house," she says quickly, and Harry realizes that she is crying.

"Vereia," he mutters, using one big thumb to wipe the tears from her eyes. She looks and sounds so old that it takes some remembering that she's just his little baby. "Let me get dressed, and then I'll take you for ice cream."

She smiles the same toothy smile that she smiled the day he first met her, the toothy smile that he knows so well. The one that still makes his stomach do a somersault, because it isn't natural. Nothing about his baby is natural.

Harry pulls on a pair of trousers and buttons his shirt. He doesn't even bother to comb his hair. When he passes Vereia's room on his way down the hall, he can see Ginny inside, scrubbing frantically at something that he cannot see.

"Hey, Gin," he says, still groggy. "I'm taking Vereia for ic..."

He stops dead in the middle of the floor. Ginny hears him pause and turns to stare at him with wide, frightened eyes.

Harry realizes what's going on all at once, when he sees the blood on the Ginny's clothes and covering the wall and his lovely, noble owl lying stiff and still on the floor with pink yarn wound all around it.

"Oh my god, Ginny," he says quietly, as his wife drops the sponge onto the floor. "What did she do?"

"Just go," Ginny hisses. "Please, take her and let me clean it up."

Harry does.

"She was always getting caught in things," Ginny says, and Harry's chest tightens, because the end of the story is coming. It is painfully unavoidable. "She would get her ankle caught under the couch, or her pinky finger shut in the door to the Ford Anglia. One time I found her in the cabinet beneath the sink, just humming in the darkness. When I asked her about it, she said that she found her way in, but couldn't find her way out.

"I had to start moving things out of her room because she'd wake up in the middle of the night screaming, and I'd rush in to find her trapped under the bed or being smothered by the covers. And all the while she seemed to have no idea she was causing it. I didn't know if she was causing it.

"It was terrifying, most of all, to realize that the dirty, nasty things we'd done to try and rebuild our lives might have come to nothing. I moved out of our bedroom, not because of Harry, but because I needed to be closer to Vereia.

"One morning I woke up, on the floor in her room, and Harry's body was curled around me, holding me close. I wasn't sleeping well anymore; I had dark circles under my eyes, and I was barely finding time to shower. I was with Vereia constantly, and no one could tell me what to do. I shut us up inside the house because I didn't want to have to answer questions. I didn't want to admit that I had no answers."

The two ladies in his life are sleeping in the other room. Harry stares at the ceiling and swears that he can hear their breathing through the walls.

Somehow he finds himself out in the hallway, with moonlight pouring through the window into his daughter's room. Ginny's lying on the floor, curled up in a little ball. She looks so peaceful, though Harry knows she hasn't slept in days.

"Ginny," he gasps quietly, speaking to no one in particular.

He settles down on the floor behind her, pulling her close to his chest. Their bodies fit together perfectly.

Harry heaves a great sigh and for the first night in weeks gets a good night's rest.

This is where he belongs.

*"Then one night..." Ginny has to pause to wipe the tears that are streaming down her cheeks. "One night I woke to her screaming, but I couldn't see her. 'Mommy!' she was screaming, and there was this horrible pounding and I realized where she was. She was *inside the walls*. I ran and I got a frying pan from the kitchen because I was so*

beyond using magic right then.

"And I beat my way through the wall to get to her, and there she was, inside, with sawdust in her hair and her fingers bloody and broken from clawing at the woodwork. Her skin was that same pale grey that it had been the day she was born. That sickly grey of death.

"I didn't let her sleep in that room anymore. She slept in between Harry and me, which should have been fine since she was only four, but she was tall and skinny and looked so much older. Her dreams woke us up in the middle of the night, her spasms, and shaking and shuddering breathing, and those same words over and over. 'Mommy! Help me, Mommy, I'm trapped!'"

Harry rolls over in the middle of the night, missing his wife.

"Ginny?" he groans, when his fingers brush something cold and stiff.

"Daddy?" his daughter replies, and he remembers why his side of the bed feels so small.

"Verea," he breathes. Verea squirms toward him, and he wraps his arms around her, even though it feels like she's much too old. "My little baby," he whispers.

His fingers brush Ginny's warm, sleeping hand, and he wonders why his little baby feels so cold.

"Mommy! Help me, Mommy, I'm trapped!"

His daughter's screams wake Harry in the middle of the night. She's tucked within his arms still, but her body is spasming, and it takes Harry less than a second to realize that he has no idea what to do.

"Ginny!" he screams, but she's already awake beside him, pulling Verea into her arms and calming her cries.

In a moment all is silent.

"Gin," Harry sobs, and the dam breaks. He cries and cries into his wife's red hair. Ginny holds his hand tightly in hers and holds their baby close to her chest. Together the three of them huddle close and try to make it through the night.

Harry draws a breath here, even though he knows what is coming. It breaks his heart every time he hears it.

Let the record show that he loves his wife more than anything in the world.

"I thought I was going crazy. I thought that maybe it was me. I wasn't sleeping or eating or showering or cooking or doing the laundry. I was just living from minute to minute, feeding Verea when she was hungry, casting Scourgify after Scourgify because I didn't have enough time for anything else.

"I kept finding her sitting alone in the crater that I'd created in her wall, trying to get her out that night. But she hadn't been trapped anywhere in months. She'd wake up in the night with terrors, screaming, with skin that was icy to the touch. And then..."

Ginny trails off, and the entire room leans forward, as if they're afraid of missing what's coming next. Harry squints his eyes shut, as if that will keep him from having to remember.

Ginny takes a deep breath.

"Gin," Harry calls, but she can't hear him. Her eyes are so achingly empty as she opens her mouth to speak.

"Then she got trapped inside me."

Harry's alone in the bed. He wakes up suddenly, with the unsettling feeling that something very specific woke him.

The floor is cool against his feet, and he wonders where his baby is. He hopes Ginny is with her, and that she hasn't wandered down to the lake in the night.

He'd thought a change of scenery would do them good, but that was a mistake. At home they were equipped to deal with anything. Here, they were anything but. The lake down the path, the woods surrounding the house, the creaking floors and leaking ceiling of the house. For a normal child, these are worrisome. For his baby, these could mean disaster.

Harry padded down the hall, bare feet scraping against the rough carpeting.

"Ginny?" he calls. "Verea?"

There is no answer, and as he rounds the corner, the noise that must have woken him sounds again.

It's a high keening shriek, and Harry spins on his heels. Ginny's standing in the hallway behind him. There's something unnatural in her posture. She's hunched over, bracing herself against the wall with one hand. Her neck is bent at an odd angle, and her eyes are rolled back in her head.

She starts stumbling toward him, moaning and whining deep in her throat. Harry scrambles backward when he sees that the hand she's dragging along the wall is trailing blood.

"Ginny?" He trips over the carpet, landing flat on his back. "Gin?"

She's only a foot away from him when she crumbles to the floor.

"Harry," she moans, clawing at the floor. "She's inside me."

The words chill him to the bone, and in the near total darkness of the night, all he can do is stammer a response. "Inside you?"

"Harrrrry," Ginny moans again, and this time her voice cracks at the end. Harry reaches out a hand to touch her face. She stiffens and cries out.

"Daddy?" *The voice isn't hers, even though Harry can see her mouth moving. "Daddy?" she asks again in the voice that is only Veree's.*

"Veree!" *Harry screams, grabbing Ginny by the shoulders and yelling into her mouth like it's the end of a telephone, and Veree's on the other end.*

"Daddy!" *she sighs in elation.*

"Come back to me, baby," he begs. "Come back."

He swears in that moment that his little girl crawls out of Ginny's mouth. He swears in that moment and for every single year after it that she climbs out, even though she's much too large. Veree climbs out, long limbs and everything, and collapses on the floor beside her parents.

"You saved me, Daddy," she says, smiling with those small, sharp teeth. *But Harry isn't paying attention to her. Harry is staring at Ginny, who isn't moving.*

"Gin?" he says quietly, as the silence of the night closes in around them. *He can't help but remember those few years ago when seeing her like this, limp and still in his arms, was the hottest thing in the world.*

And then in a shuddering moment she awakens, drawing in a heavy breath and opening her eyes.

"Ginny!" *Harry exclaims and kisses her, ignoring the blood and the dirt and the fact that the whole room reeks of death. Their daughter climbs between them and the three of them fall asleep on the floor, trembling in each other's arms.*

Ginny pulls on her hair. She only has one more story to tell.

"There is such a fine line between life and death," she begins. "A lot of people don't even realize it. Sometimes you feel like you're living, but you're already dead. There's no use to it. She was..." Ginny swallows a sob. "We couldn't live like that anymore."

The door opens and closes as a woman rushes out, sobbing.

"I killed her, I admit it. I killed her because there was nothing else I could do.

"We were down by the lake. Harry was asleep. Veree didn't know how to swim. We were sitting on the dock together, dangling our bloody feet in the water. We'd gotten so used to blood. And then she slipped in.

"She called out to me, 'Mommy!' but I didn't, I couldn't. I just got up and walked away."

When Harry wakes up, he's alone on the floor. There are bloodstains everywhere. He pulls himself up, aching all over.

His two ladies are down by the lake. Harry can hear them laughing. The sliding glass door opens easily at his touch, and for a moment the dark horror of the night is lost in the calming freshness of dawn.

His lovely ladies are on the dock; he can see them sitting there, kicking their feet.

It happens in slow motion. Harry sees his wife lean too far over and knock Veree into the water. His heart is racing, pounding, as his baby cries out, and Ginny turns her back and walks away.

Harry wants to say that he runs down to save her. That he pulls her out and stares at his wife in horror.

But instead he stands there and watches as the splashing dies away in the distance, and Ginny comes to bury herself in his arms.

'What have you become?' he should ask, but all he does is hold her close.

"Come on, Gin. Let's go home."

"I had no other choice!" Ginny shrieks, standing suddenly. Two men rush forward to restrain her, even as Harry steps toward her with his arms outstretched.

Kingsley's strong hand on his shoulder pulls him back, and the room starts spinning. He closes his eyes, and he can't hear his wife anymore, but a final memory besieges him as the rest of the world melts away.

The music tinkles, soft and sweet, as their bare feet slide along the smooth hardwood floor. Ginny leans her head against his dress robes, and he pulls her close, humming as her wedding dress flurries out around them.

They dance, calmly and quietly in the wide and open space that is their new home. Darkness falls outside, and still they dance.

"Harry James Potter?" she says quietly.

"Hmm?"

"I think I'm in love with you."

He kisses her softly, in their new house on the night of their wedding. "I should hope so."

And moments later, in the darkness of the world outside, their bedroom light puffs out.

Harry opens his eyes and finds himself in that nasty chair in that nasty room, staring up at the Minister of Magic.

"That is the record we have pulled of Mrs. Potter's trial two months prior to this date. Does her testimony summarize the events as you would have put them, Mr. Potter?"

Harry thinks of his memories, of all the little details he's recalled that Ginny never mentioned. "Yes," he says anyway, because Ginny's rambling words are enough.

"Harry James Potter, you are charged with the murder of your wife, Ginevra Weasley Potter, two months following her entrance into treatment at St. Mungo's. The Council of Magical Law hereby sentences you to life in Azkaban."

At the last second a woman in the back of the room stands, unable to contain her disgust. "I hope you rot in Hell," she shrieks.

Harry feels a pair of strong arms drag him up, and even then he does not regret his actions. He loved his wife so fucking much, and in the end, she was better off dead.

"You know what they say," Harry calls as he is dragged away. "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."