

The Sign

by jmlane57

Overactive teenage hormones abound when it is learned that 4th to 7th year students deemed the best looking will be chosen to appear in two new calendars, sales of which are designed to raise money for the Hogwarts school: and three guesses which two end up the top vote-getters!

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Chapter 1 of 1

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ATTENTION BEEFCAKE/CHEESECAKE CALENDARS TO BE MADE TO RAISE MONEY FOR SCHOOL

This notice is directed only to fourth-year students and above. This calendar is for the year 1997. For Beefcake calendar, voting is open to girls only. Maximum of five votes per person. For Cheesecake calendar, voting is open to boys only. Again, a maximum of five votes per person. Anyone interested in voting for a given person, contact your Head of House and prepare to give the person's name, which House they are in and how many votes you wish to cast. Voting ends December 15th, 1996.

ELIGIBLE BOYS:

Seth Collins Hufflepuff, 6th year

Michael Corner Ravenclaw, 6th year

Justin Finch-Fletchley Hufflepuff, 6th year

Seamus Finnigan Gryffindor, 6th year

Anthony Goldstein Ravenclaw, 6th year

Lee Jordan Gryffindor, 6th year

Neville Longbottom Gryffindor, 6th year

Draco Malfoy Slytherin, 6th year

Harry Potter Gryffindor, 6th year

Dean Thomas Gryffindor, 6th year

Ron Weasley Gryffindor, 6th year

Blaise Zabini Slytherin, 6th year

ELIGIBLE GIRLS:

Susan Bones Hufflepuff, 5th year

Lavender Brown Gryffindor, 5th year

Cho Chang Ravenclaw, 7th year

Virginia Donaldson Hufflepuff, 5th year

Hermione Granger Gryffindor, 6th year

Amanda Kingsley Ravenclaw, 7th year

Luna Lovegood Ravenclaw, 5th year

Pansy Parkinson Slytherin, 6th year

Padma Patil Ravenclaw, 6th year

Parvati Patil Gryffindor, 6th year

Maria Elena Velasquez Hufflepuff, 6th year

Ginny Weasley Gryffindor, 5th year

DRESS CODE FOR CALENDAR:

Boys Swim trunks (boxer-type) with or without tank top, sandals if desired or dress robes and shoes

Girls One-piece swimsuits or clingy formal dresses, sandals and/or high heels if desired, with appropriate hairstyles

PLACES OF PHOTO SHOOTS TO BE DETERMINED AT LATER DATE.

SPECIAL ORDERS EXTRA.

TOP VOTE-GETTERS WILL HAVE PHOTOS TAKEN AND EACH REPRESENT A GIVEN MONTH OF THE YEAR, THEIR BIRTH MONTH IF POSSIBLE. THE TOP TWO VOTE-GETTERS OF EACH GENDER WILL HAVE "CENTERFOLDS" MADE, AVAILABLE BOTH WITH CALENDARS AND SEPARATELY. COST OF CALENDAR WILL BE ONE GALLEON. COST OF CENTERFOLD ALONE WILL BE 20 SICKLES. TOP VOTE-GETTER OF EACH GENDER WILL BE ON CALENDAR COVER. CENTERFOLDS MADE WITH SWIMSUITS ONLY.

ANY QUESTIONS ANYONE MAY HAVE MAY BE DIRECTED TO THEIR HEAD OF HOUSE.

(Signed)

Minerva McGonagall

Assistant Headmistress

Random Reactions to Notice ...

"Has she gone totally mental?" Justin Finch-Fletchley

"Never! Never in a million years!" Ron Weasley

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! Can't she come up with a better way to raise money?" Hermione Granger

THOUGHT: "I'd love to have a centerfold of Harry ..." Ginny Weasley

THOUGHT: "I wonder what colour swim trunks and tank top would look best with my hair and colouring ..." Draco Malfoy

"How can I possibly be eligible? I'm not good-looking like the other blokes." Neville Longbottom, murmuring to himself

"How can I be eligible? I'm not good-looking like the other girls." Luna Lovegood, basically echoing him

OUT LOUD: "The last thing I need is more publicity." THOUGHT: "On the other hand, I'd love to have a centerfold of Ginny ..." Harry Potter

THOUGHTS: "I wonder what Cedric would have thought of me being in a calendar." OR "I'd have loved to see Cedric in a calendar." Cho Chang

THOUGHT: "I wonder if I can get them to agree to use my sister and me together." Parvati Patil

"I wonder if they'll do couples shots ..." Amanda Kingsley, new Ravenclaw seventh-year transfer student

Of course, the sign had not only been posted in all the common rooms of the four Houses, it had been posted prominently in the Great Hall. At first, a large crowd of students had been gathered around the large sign, but after a time, they began to disperse, until finally there were only a rough handful left, mostly the new transfers, among them Seth Collins, a sixth-year Hufflepuff recently arrived from another British school of magic, and three others, all girls.

First off, Maria Elena Velasquez, a pretty, petite and brown-eyed, black-haired Hispanic-looking girl who had also been Sorted into Hufflepuff; then Amanda Kingsley, a new seventh-year Ravenclaw, a statuesque, beautiful, hazel-eyed blonde; and Virginia (aka "Ginny") Donaldson, a fifth-year also in Hufflepuff, of medium height with a pixie-ish look about her and short, flaming-red hair, her eyes every bit as green as Harry's as far as Ginny Weasley could tell, anyway.

Once Ginny heard there was a new girl in her year with the same nickname as herself, she made it her business to try to befriend her, in fact coming up to her as the latter stood before the sign and asked her what she thought of it. "Oh, hi," Ginny #2 said to Ginny #1. "It's all right, I guess. What do you think?"

"The main reason I don't mind is that there's this ... one bloke I fancy and I'd like to see him in a centerfold," Ginny #1 confessed, unable to keep from blushing upon picturing Harry like that.

"What about you? What if you're chosen as the *girls'* centerfold?"

"Me? Nah. I'm not good-looking enough," Ginny #1 opined.

"Some blokes like girls with red hair and freckles," #2 pointed out. "Don't you think it's likely that this bloke you fancy would also like to see you in a centerfold?"

"Nice thought, but I doubt it," Ginny #1 dismissed. "Besides, I would think it just as likely that you would be chosen."

The tall, lanky and very British (not to mention quite handsome) Seth Collins, who had been listening to the conversation, turned his head in her direction and said, "I'd buy a centerfold of you."

Ginny #1 raised her head, wide-eyed. "Thank you ... uh ..."

"Collins. Seth Collins. I'm a sixth-year Hufflepuff and a recent transfer from a magic school in northern Britain."

"Ginny Weasley, fifth-year Gryffindor." She smiled; they shook hands.

"Weasley ... don't you have brothers also going here? That name sounds familiar."

"Yes. I have a brother, Ron, a year ahead of me, and twin brothers, Fred and George, in seventh year."

"Ron Weasley ... now I place that name! Isn't he a friend of Harry Potter?"

"Yes; they're close friends. Have been for some time," Ginny #1 confirmed.

"And Harry Potter ... isn't he the one who battled the Dark Lord a couple of years ago in the midst of the Triwizard Tournament?"

"Yes," Ginny #1 confirmed again.

"How did he ever get into the Tournament to begin with? Isn't it limited to students who are seventeen? If I remember correctly, he isn't."

"I'm not sure exactly. You'd have to ask Harry about that," she told him. "But let me warn you, he's not fond of talking about it ... especially since a fellow student died during the Tournament...and he's convinced that he's responsible for his death."

"How could he be responsible?"

"As I said, you'd have to ask Harry about that, although I wish you luck in getting anything out of him about it, for not even Ron, Fred or George has been able to and they've known him for years ... so it's unlikely that a virtual stranger would be able to."

"We'll see about that. I don't give up easily."

By this time Ginny #2 and the other transfers had excused themselves to go to their respective dorms, leaving Seth and Ginny #1 to talk.

"Which reminds me ... when is your lunch period?"

Ginny was stunned at the question. Was Seth Collins actually asking to see her again?

"Another couple of hours. Why?"

"Could I meet you and discuss this further?"

"There really isn't any more to discuss, although you can meet me if you like," she agreed.

"I'll be there," he told her. "Catch you then." With a smile and a wave, Seth vanished through the nearby door of the Great Hall. A moment later Ginny left as well, unable to fathom what had just happened, but at the same time, pleased to have something to look forward to ... especially something that included having some male company!

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When the time came, Ginny #1 was sitting with her new friend Ginny #2, not to mention Hermione, who had naturally heard what happened and decided to find out what she could.

"I understand you're meeting someone for lunch," she remarked.

"A new transfer from up north. Why?"

"Just curious," came the deceptively innocent reply, but her eyes widened as Seth came up and sat down next to Ginny, carrying a tray of food.

"Hi," he smiled in Hermione's direction; she blushed in spite of herself, but nodded and smiled in his direction. "I'm Seth Collins, sixth-year Hufflepuff."

"Hermione Granger, sixth-year Gryffindor."

"Nice to meet you. Just how is your name pronounced, by the way?"

"Her-my-oh-nee."

"Pretty name. I'll get back to you later. Meanwhile ... Good to see you again, Ginny. By the way, just what is that short for?"

"Ginevra, an Italian version of 'Guinevere,'" Ginny replied.

"I was wondering. It's usually short for 'Virginia' or something like that."

"I have a new friend with that name; she's also called Ginny."

"I'll have to keep that in mind. Maybe just call you Ginny #1 and your friend #2, so I don't get you confused. After all, if memory serves, you both have red hair."

"Yes; well, my hair is long, while my friend's is short. I also have brown eyes, while she has green eyes."

"I love brown eyes," Seth returned softly; the smile he gave her was disconcerting, and Ginny couldn't look into his eyes very long without having to look away ... just like Harry's. "Which reminds me, would you mind if I voted for you to be in the calendar?"

"Uh ... no. Why should I mind? But one set of votes isn't enough, in and of itself."

"Oh, I'm sure you'll get more votes," Seth returned. "You're too pretty not to."

Ginny blushed again and busied herself eating, even though she knew that both he and Hermione were looking at her intently, willing her to lift her head and look at them.

"If I remember correctly, you're eligible too," Hermione finally said in Seth's direction.

This made him look at *her* intently. "Does that mean you two would be willing to vote for me? Also, if memory serves, so are you." His gaze intensified, as if daring her to deny it.

"I am," Hermione reluctantly admitted, still thinking that McGonagall could have come up with a much better way of raising money than beef- and cheesecake calendars of the students. "As for voting for you ... I might," Hermione half-promised, somehow unable to deny him anything while he was looking at her like that. "Of course, there are others we'd like to vote for. At least two others come to mind, in fact."

"May I ask which ones?"

"Sorry, no, if only to keep them from possibly overhearing," Hermione explained.

Seth seemed to accept this, although he still intended to find out the other choices if he could, before returning his attention to Ginny. "As to what we were discussing earlier ... do you think you could ... introduce me to either your brother Ron or ... Harry Potter?"

"That depends on whether or not I can catch them," Ginny returned. "And that's not always possible, even though they're usually together. But it does help if you share classes with them."

Seth recited the classes he had and asked if either Ron or Harry shared them. "You're in the same year they are, so you probably do, at least to a degree. Of course, the classes are on different days many times, not to mention different hours ... but from what you've said, I think you share at least two classes the same day and hour...Herbology and, uh, Transfiguration, if memory serves."

"Would both of them be in the class?"

"They usually are," Ginny recalled. "But as I said, Harry can be quite tight-lipped when he wants to be. Ron, too, so don't get your hopes up too high."

"I'm not too worried. I can be quite persuasive when I want to be," Seth returned confidently. "In fact my mum thinks I should become a diplomat instead of a wizard."

"You obviously don't agree with her ... at least not completely, since you're here," Hermione put in.

"I personally think I could be both, given the chance," he replied, once again giving her his disconcerting, not to mention disturbingly attractive, smile. Hermione frankly couldn't blame Ginny for not wanting to look at him overlong, if only for that reason.

Just then the five-minute warning bell rang. "Gotta go. Hope to see you pretty birds around again soon," Seth remarked as he got up and then turned to leave.

Once he was gone and the girls were alone, Ginny dared to speak again. "Whew! He's a handful, isn't he?"

"To say the least...but at the same time, a very *charming* handful," Hermione found herself saying. "More than I can say for Ron, lots of times." She was horrified at the disloyal thought, if only for a moment. "Why do you think he's so interested in talking to him and Harry? Any ideas?"

"I happened to mention something about Harry being in the Triwizard Tournament. That's the only thing I can think of," Ginny replied.

"Ron should enjoy that," Hermione returned dryly, recalling how he had acted at that time ... like not only a total prat but completely immature and insensitive to both her and Harry's feelings. She supposed it was natural to think Harry had actually put his name in the Goblet of Fire, at least at first, but he should not have been the first to think so. After all, he had known Harry for years; he should have known better than to automatically think that. Anyone who acted like that shouldn't have the right to call themselves the person's friend; in fact, Fred and George had treated Harry better than Ron had.

"Oh, I'm sure he will. Not to mention Harry," Ginny replied, equally deadpan. "We'd better get to class now." With that, the girls separated for their respective Ancient Runes and Charms classes.

* * * * *

"Who the bloody hell is that sitting with Hermione and Ginny?" Ron Weasley wondered as he searched for a seat at the Gryffindor table with his long-time friend Harry Potter, each of them carrying a tray of food.

"No idea, Ron. He must be new," Harry observed, at the same time not fond of the all-too-obvious attention the bloke was paying to both girls, especially Ginny. But it was Ron that seemed to be staring daggers at the other bloke's back for smiling and flirting as he had with Hermione. Looked like a real Don Juan type; they'd better watch out for him ... and not only the girls!

"Ah. Here's some places," Ron said, setting his tray down on the table and Harry setting his down next to Ron's. They were down a ways from the girls but still within sight of them, if not earshot.

"Did you see that bloody sign? McGonagall must be going totally mental to think we'd ever go for anything like that, even if it's to raise money for the school!"

With a part of him, Harry couldn't blame his friend, but at the same time, was fairly sure that he could count on several girls' votes, not the least of which would be Ginny's, although he didn't mention this out loud. "I wouldn't worry too much, Ron. There are a lot of other blokes ahead of us, I'm sure."

"Ahead of me, maybe," Ron replied. "I've noticed quite a few girls noticing *you*, though, mate."

"Oh, go on. What would they want with a skinny, mop-haired, green-eyed refugee from a concentration camp who wears glasses?" Harry tried to dismiss the possibility.

"Not so skinny any more," Ron pointed out. "Mum wouldn't allow it, for one thing. Why do you think she keeps sending you those food packages? She's trying to make up for all the times you were all but starved at your relatives' house. As far as that goes, she's even thinking of possibly applying to be a foster parent ... or specifically, *your* foster parent."

"I don't think Dumbledore would go for that. He wants me to stay with my blood kin, although I personally wouldn't mind," Harry replied. "I'd certainly eat more regularly, that's for sure."

"Not to mention be spared a lot of abuse," Ron replied in between bites of his mince pie and swallows of pumpkin juice.

"I'm used to it by now," Harry dismissed, making sure to concentrate on his food as much as possible so he didn't have to say any more. Of course, sometimes the laughter and bits of conversation between the girls and the new bloke reached them, and Harry couldn't help wondering what he had said to either make them laugh and ... once or twice ... even blush!

"Although you can't enjoy it," Ron countered.

"Of course not," Harry had to agree. "But I'm a wizard and have five years of magic education under my belt. Generally all I have to do is wave my wand threateningly in their direction and they leave me alone. Most of the time, anyway. Just the same, I was thinking ..."

Just then the five-minute warning bell rang, cutting off what Harry had been about to say. "Better get going, mate. You know how McGonagall is if anyone's late to her class," Ron reminded him as he stood up and grabbed his tray, turning to leave.

"I'd rather deal with her than Snape," Harry countered as he followed suit. "At least she's not as likely to give out twelve-inch punishment essays!" With that, they disposed of the remains of their meals and left the Great Hall, hurrying to their next class...Transfiguration. A class, which by some strange coincidence, they would soon learn that they shared with the new bloke they were both wary of and curious about ... if only for their own individual reasons.

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Seth got to the class early so he could watch for Harry and Ron; fortunately he had remembered last thing to ask Ginny what they looked like so he would recognize them. He was sitting in his second-row chair near the front when they walked in. After he'd introduced himself and asked for a word with them after class, their response (or lack of same) made it hard for him to believe that Ginny had been exaggerating when she'd mentioned how tight-lipped they (or at least Ron) could be when they (or he) wanted to.

"Just how the bloody hell were you able to recognize us anyway?" Ron demanded, giving Seth a hard look as he and Harry took their places at their regular front-row desks.

"I met your sister earlier; she told me," he replied matter-of-factly.

"Ginny should keep her effing mouth shut," Ron snapped; his tone was such that even Harry was stunned at the coldness of it.

"Come on, Ron, he's not that bad," the latter tried to soothe him. "If Ginny likes him ..."

"She likes too bloody many people ... especially male people," he shot back.

"She likes *me*," Harry countered. "Am I included in that deal?"

"Of course not. I just don't like her pointing us out to strangers. You've got enough to contend with."

"Your concern is appreciated, mate, but after this, kindly let *me* make that determination," Harry returned quietly but firmly. "Now what did you want to know ... Seth?"

"I just have some questions about the Triwizard Tournament," he claimed. "But as I said, they can wait until after class." With that, he settled back in his seat, almost directly behind Harry and Ron, and the class began.

* * * * *

Ron still wasn't pleased that Harry had decided to speak with Seth, even for a little while; Harry couldn't help thinking that a lot of his animosity stemmed from having seen Seth flirting with Hermione earlier. Just the same, he was sure that she could handle herself with a bloke ... and certainly better than Ron could handle himself with girls! Even he was better with girls, come to think of it.

They went to sit under one of the large trees near the Black Lake in the mid-October sunshine; Harry and Seth seated themselves but Ron remained standing. "Aren't you going to sit down, Ron?"

"No. I'm going back to the dorm. If you want to find me, that's where I'll be."

"Suit yourself." Harry shrugged and then turned to his other companion, not watching as Ron stalked off. "What are your questions?"

"Well ... first off, how did you ever manage to get into the Triwizard Tournament? I didn't think students under seventeen could."

"Believe me, it was not my choice," Harry assured him. "Someone ... unfriendly ... put my name into the Goblet of Fire."

"How did you ever manage to get through the three tasks? I read what happened in the *Daily Prophet*."

"I had plenty of help," Harry returned simply, not elaborating, waiting for Seth to question him further.

"What kind of help?"

"Well ... in the first, I was told to use ... my strengths to beat the dragon."

"Strengths?"

"Aptitudes. Abilities. I'm a ... fair Quidditch player, so I Summoned my broom and it went from there."

"What about the second?"

"A ... friend of mine who's ... good at Herbology steered me toward gillyweed. Have you heard of it?"

"Not really. What is it?"

"It's a magical plant that gives whoever ingests it the power to breathe underwater for an hour. Specifically, it gives them gills, the means to obtain oxygen through the water, not to mention flippers and other fish-like characteristics. I had to ... rescue two people, Ron and one other person, in order to complete the task."

"What about the third?"

This was the question Harry had been dreading, and even as much as he wanted to elaborate, he found himself hesitant, even reluctant, to do so. "There was an ... enchanted maze. We, myself and the other three champions, were supposed to get through it and find the ... Triwizard Cup."

"And did you?"

"Yes," came the reply, so soft that it was almost inaudible. "Myself and one other student. We ... found the Cup. The other two ... left the maze, and that's when everything started to..." Harry abruptly broke off.

"Everything started to what?"

It was a long time before Harry could speak again; something told Seth not to try to push him to speak again before he was ready. "We ... learned the Cup was a ... Portkey. It ... took us to an ... old cemetery."

"Why would it do that?"

"It had been ... bewitched to do so," Harry made himself say. "By the ... time I realized why, my companion was ... dead."

"Did it have something to do with ... the Dark Lord?"

"Yes," came another almost inaudible reply. "His ... rebirth."

"What did he need you for?"

"So he could be ... reborn. Some of ... my blood was necessary for that."

"What happened once he was ... reborn?"

"We dueled ... and he subjected me to the Cruciatus...The Torture Curse. Fortunately I managed to escape, with some help ... from my ... parents."

"Your...parents? I thought you were an ... orphan."

"I am. It's a long, complicated story, one I ... don't care to go into here. What matters is that ... I survived. I escaped."

"I'm sorry if this is difficult for you to relate ... Harry. Ginny said it might be, because you felt responsible for the death of your ... fellow student. I'll understand if you don't want to talk about it any more."

"Thanks. I ... appreciate that. Is there anything else you're ... curious about?"

"Just your opinion of the calendars that are supposed to be made in order to raise money for the school."

"Basically, I feel as my friend Hermione does ... that there has to be a better way to raise money for the school but there isn't much we can do about it now."

"I assume you're aware that we're both on the eligible list," Seth pointed out.

"Believe me, I know. All I can hope for is that ... someone else will be top vote-getter. You, for instance. If I had to pose for a centerfold, it'd make me feel like a ... piece of meat on display in a butcher shop. Especially if I didn't have a lot of ... clothes on."

"Hopefully you'll just need to worry about being the top vote-getter for your birth month," Seth tried to soothe him. "You have the option of wearing dress robes for the regular monthly photo."

"With my luck, I'll probably end up both on the cover *and* as a centerfold, in addition to being Mr. July," Harry grouched.

"And I'll likely be Mr. April...at the very least. Well, look at the bright side. At least we get to choose what girls will be on the Cheesecake calendar. Your friend Ginny and ... her friend Hermione, they're *hot*. I'd vote for them in a minute. I even told them so!"

Now Harry had some idea of what had made the girls laugh and blush, but didn't voice his opinion. Just the same, he didn't like the idea of Seth having his eye on either of the girls, especially Ginny ... and was sure that Ron wouldn't like it any more than he did.

"By the way, have you any idea who you're voting for yet? Remember, we have a limit of five votes. Used all for one girl or five girls at one vote each."

"Not yet ... although I'll probably be making a decision soon," Harry returned evasively, not wanting to confess that he had pretty much *ready* decided to give his votes to three girls...Ginny, Hermione and Cho ... and Ginny would get three of the five votes! He then recalled how much he would like to see her in a centerfold, but couldn't count on it. The only way that would happen was if she was the top female vote-getter for the school, and there were a total of eighty votes maximum from the fourth- through seventh-years of each gender in each House that any one person could get.

From what Harry could see, the eligible boys were virtually all sixth-years, although not all from one House. At least two from each, if memory served. As for the girls, it was more varied. Mostly sixth-years, but at least one seventh-year and a smattering of fifth-years, including Ginny. He was also surprised to note that there was another fifth-year girl whose nickname was also likely to be Ginny.

He made a mental note to meet her if he could and check her out, see if she also had red hair...not to mention the colour of her eyes. Were they brown, hazel, blue ... or even green, like his own? If he liked her enough, he might even give one of his votes to her, although Ginny #1 would still get the most.

The bell ringing brought them back to reality. "We'd better get back to the castle now."

Seth agreed silently, helping Harry up, and the two headed back to the castle, separating upon reaching the Great Hall. Harry then headed for the sixth-year Gryffindor dorm to find Ron and tell him what had happened during his conversation with Seth.

* * * * *

As it turned out, Harry got to see the other Ginny the very next day as she and Ginny #1 were sitting together eating. He had indeed been right; she also had red hair, but it was short as Ginny #1's hair was long. And if he wasn't mistaken, her eyes were every bit as green as his, although he couldn't be sure since he could only get so close without them noticing him. Finally, she was much better looking than he had expected, confirming his decision to give her at least one of his five votes for the Cheesecake calendar.

Of course, it was only a matter of time until he saw the other new girls ... and when he did, he was hard-pressed to keep his original vow to give the majority of his votes to Ginny #1. In fact, he was sure that Amanda Kingsley had to be part Veela; she had that kind of effect on him. Not to mention that Maria ... her long black hair and exotic look reminded him all too vividly of Cho. As far as he could tell, though, she wasn't nearly as emotional, for which he was thankful.

He was unaware of this, at least at this point in time, but the girls in question had also noticed him. Ginny #1 pointed Harry out to her friend Ginny #2. "Oooh, Ginny, he's *hot*. He'll definitely get at least one of *my* votes."

Maria and Amanda were nearby, enough so that they were able to follow Ginny #1's pointing finger to spot Harry, and had to agree with Ginny #2's sentiment, agreeing on the spot to do the same as the other girls when it came to voting. Of course, once they saw Seth, they would likely divide their votes between him and Harry, if not them and one other person. And by a strange coincidence, that very same person (Seth) came up to say hello to the girls a short time later.

"Hello, ladies," he smiled, captivating them instantly ... or at least the vast majority of them. Even at that, however, they had no intention of changing their intentions to vote for Harry...simply give another of their five votes to Seth. The only reason Ginny #1 wasn't more affected was because of her love for Harry...but even she wasn't entirely impervious. "May I join you?"

Before he left the table, and after an enjoyable lunch hour, he had made dates with at least two of the girls ... Amanda and Maria, although he had every intention of asking both Ginnys out at some point. Once he did, though, Amanda looked lingeringly after him. "He's hot too ... why have I never seen him before?"

"Maybe because he's new, just as you are," Ginny #1 pointed out. "Didn't you see him earlier? He was standing in front of the sign close by us."

"Afraid not ... but one thing's for sure, I'm not going to overlook him again," she declared feelingly.

All the same, they weren't the only ones who had seen Seth ... Cho Chang and Pansy Parkinson had too. In fact, Seth reminded Cho very much of Cedric and she fully intended to give him at least one of her five votes, as did Pansy, although she had no intention of letting on to Draco of her intentions, for she was sure he fully expected to get all five of her votes. But at best, he would get three, because she intended to give Seth and Harry at least one each, even if they weren't in Slytherin ... in fact, one was in Hufflepuff and Harry in Gryffindor.

When Harry finally reached the table where Ron was, he found him transfixed by something ... or more accurately, *someone*. Specifically, Amanda Kingsley. In fact, the

look on his face was reminiscent of the times he had seen the girls from Beauxbatons in fourth year. "Ron? ... Earth to Ron! Wake up, Ron!" Harry waved his hand in front of his friend's freckled face.

"Oh ... Harry. Sorry. I was ... preoccupied," Ron all but mumbled.

"Yeah, I noticed," Harry returned dryly as he took a seat next to him. "Can't say I blame you, mate. Which reminds me do you intend to vote for her?"

"Let's just say that she's *one* of the ones I intend to vote for. What about you?"

"Only if you don't breathe a word to the girls," Harry entreated.

"Word of honour," Ron promised.

"It'd better be. Otherwise I'll use a Levicorpus Spell on you and leave you dangling upside down for an hour! Well, to get to the voting ... Ginny, your sister, two votes, Cho one vote, and the new girls Amanda one vote and Ginny #2, one vote. May I ask if you've figured out the ones you're going to vote for yet? That is, other than one for Amanda."

"Some for Hermione, of course, not to mention Amanda ... and one for the other new girl Maria. Which reminds me, I need *your* word of honour as well."

"You've got it, mate." Harry was kind of surprised...at least for a time...that Ron didn't reserve at least one vote for his sister, but in the end understood why he didn't. It would look kind of strange for a brother to vote for his sister in a Cheesecake calendar. Just the same, Harry fully expected that several other blokes would vote for Ginny, although he wasn't sure if enough would so that she would win the top spot, both for her birth month and for the centerfold. That would take at least fifteen blokes using all their blocs of five votes for her, in addition to himself.

In the ensuing days Harry found himself privy to the speculations and decisions of other blokes in the school, even catching both Michael Corner and Dean Thomas declaring that Ginny, their former girlfriend, would get at least one of their votes, even though both were now dating others ... one of them Cho Chang. She would probably also get at least one of Michael's votes. He couldn't be sure if either of them had seen Amanda or Maria or the other Ginny; if they did, and decided to give them each one vote, that would take care of the five allotted to them.

Ginny #1 also found herself privy to the speculations and decisions of several of the other girls; as far as that went, she even knew which ones Hermione intended to vote for, although she had not told anyone else. Two for Ron, two for Seth, and one for Harry ... if only due to the fact he was her friend. She had even heard that Pansy Parkinson had decided to give at least some of her votes to Harry, sure that that would go over big with Draco if he ever got wind of it. Luna Lovegood had even confided to her that she was going to give at least two of her votes to Harry. The others would likely go to Seth, for he had managed to turn her head as well. Virtually every one of the female species past puberty attending Hogwarts, in fact ...

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The weeks went by seemingly with the speed of light; some girls had gone to vote in groups, like Cho and her friends; others went by twos, such as Hermione and Ginny #1, and still others by themselves. The guys did pretty much the same, at least as far as going in twos and threes was concerned. Certainly Harry and Ron went together and cast their votes, as did Michael Corner and Dean. In fact Harry and Ron had even passed them on the way out as they were going in.

Finally they'd all heard that voting was now closed, that anyone who hadn't taken the opportunity to vote was now out of luck. Now all anyone could do was wait for the final tally of each set of votes.

* * * * *

It was the week before Christmas and the school was decorated within an inch of its life for the holiday by the time the final results came out. There was a crowd in every common room as well as in the Great Hall to see who had made out the best ... and worst. But since there were a limited amount of eligible students, even they would likely make their way onto the calendar, if only for their given birth months.

Ginny saw the final results of the tally for the boys and was pleasantly surprised, both for herself and Harry, although she was sure that he wouldn't see it as anything to be proud of at least not for himself. Ginny #2 came up to her friend and noted the results with a smile, at least for the boys. "I notice your ... friend Harry is the top vote-getter," she observed. "And not only for his birth month, but overall. *Whoa!* Seventy-five votes. That must be some kind of record!"

"I noticed, believe me," Ginny replied, unable to stop smiling at the prospect of seeing Harry in a centerfold, not to mention (most likely) in dress robes as Mr. July. She also wasn't surprised at seeing Seth in second place with 65 votes. After that, the amount gradually went down, usually by five to ten votes but sometimes as much as twenty, although Ginny saw that even Ron had gotten at least 20 votes from somewhere, although she could only account for a fraction of them, since Hermione was the only one that she knew of who had voted for him. Even if the boys had been allowed to vote for the Beefcake calendar, that still wouldn't have accounted for the total.

"Bloody hell!" was Ron's reaction upon seeing the results...and not only for himself. He could also well imagine what Harry's reaction would be to see that his greatest fear had come true ... aside from Voldemort, that is.

"Something wrong?" Seth came up to him and asked, concerned.

Ron gave Seth a wary look but said, "Not for me ... but Harry's not going to be pleased, to put it mildly."

"Why wouldn't he be? He's top vote-getter. Even I'm just in *second* place."

"Harry's not one to seek publicity ... mainly because he's had publicity follow him all his life and this is simply more of the same. He likes to lead as quiet a life as possible, but this is going to dog his steps for Merlin knows how long."

"Believe me, if I could, I would switch places with him ... but even if he doesn't like it, the voters have spoken."

"That's not going to stop him from reacting," Ron threw back. "And even if he is my best mate, I don't care to be around him when he's angry."

* * * * *

Harry turned pale upon noticing the final results, knowing what it would mean for him, unconsciously clenching his fists, wishing he had his wand so he could zap that bloody list clean out of existence. Even though it wouldn't have changed the total, it would have made him feel better, if only temporarily. He had already heard Seth bragging about his second-place showing and couldn't help marveling at the other's colossal ego, wishing more than anything that he could have switched places with him. He *wanted* the attention, the adulation, the publicity ... whereas Harry would have preferred to avoid it altogether.

"I notice you saw the results, Harry," Ron observed upon coming up to his friend and standing beside him.

"Don't talk to me," Harry bit out. "I'm not good company right now."

"If you say so," Ron replied understandingly. "But if you need to unload, you know where to find me. Just the same, look on the bright side...Ginny was the top girls' vote-getter ... and Hermione is third!" With that, Ron took his leave, leaving Harry standing in front of the large sign in the Great Hall, the final voting results tacked up onto it with a Sticking Charm.

That brought Harry's head up with a jerk, and he quickly searched for what Ron had mentioned, unable to help smiling, if only briefly, at the sight of Ginny's name at the top of the list of female vote-getters. He was also not surprised at seeing Amanda's name in second place, knowing his votes had helped to put them there. It wouldn't be fun to be put on display like a piece of meat in a butcher shop, but at least he had something to look forward to and could spend time speculating on how she would look in the girls' centerfold ... not to mention on the calendar cover and as Miss August. Hermione would be Miss September and Amanda Miss June.

Something else occurred to him, and he frankly hoped he would not run into Draco Malfoy, at least not any time soon, for he would never let Harry live it down for having been the top male vote-getter ... and not just for his own House but the entire school. Draco was down in fifth place, with 45 votes. No doubt he had either bribed or arm-twisted his way even there, since only Pansy seemed able to countenance him as far as feminine companionship went. Either that or he had Pansy do the bribing and arm-twisting; either way Draco couldn't have gotten it on his own. Come to think of it, if Cedric were still alive and going here, it was likely that he would have taken the top spot and he, Harry, would have been in Seth's place at best.

For the time being, he would have to do his best to occupy his mind with other things so he didn't dwell too much on what he would likely be in for once word got around...and what was likely to happen once he had to schedule photo shoots for the regular monthly picture, the cover and worst of all, the centerfold. Who knew how many girls would buy it up and drool over it?

The news might even get to not only the *Daily Prophet*, but the *Quibbler* and *TeenWitch Monthly*, a *Playgirl*-like publication that regularly featured beefcake pictures of the most attractive and well-built young wizards, not to mention centerfolds each month. With his luck, the July 1997 issue would be devoted to a layout of Harry and Seth, the top two beefcake vote-getters at Hogwarts ... and another centerfold of both of them, perhaps even side-by-side.

He was also sure that *TeenWizard Monthly*, a *Playboy*-like publication for teen wizards, would have cheesecake shots of all the young witches in the upcoming calendar ... starting with Miss January, Luna Lovegood, and going through Miss December, Padma Patil. (The only issues Harry *might* be interested in would be the April, June and August ones, and perhaps the July and November ones as well, with layouts of Cho, Amanda, Ginny #1, Ginny #2 and Maria respectively.)

The only one he wouldn't mind drooling over him would be Ginny, but would likely have to endure hearing or perhaps ever~~see~~*seeing* others do it. All the same, he would likely get the Cheesecake calendar for his dorm-mates, but the centerfold of Ginny would be for himself alone ... and whenever he happened to be alone or awake with everyone else asleep, he could get it out and (if only figuratively) drool over it. Then if he became aroused, as he usually did in a situation like that, he would have a chance to wank off before they could notice.

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Within the next three days, two more new notices had been tacked up on the large sign, the original announcement of the intent to sell Beef- and Cheesecake calendars of the fourth- through seventh-year best-looking Hogwarts students to raise money for the school. One listed the birth months of the boys and girls, where their photos would likely appear in the calendar; the other basically giving information to the top two vote-getters of each gender, when and where to report to arrange the necessary photo sessions at the earliest convenient time.

The first notice looked something like this:

(where possible)

BIRTH MONTH (BOYS)

Seamus Finnigan January
Anthony Goldstein February
Ron Weasley March
Seth Collins April
Michael Corner May
Draco Malfoy June
Harry Potter July
Neville Longbottom August
Blaise Zabini September
Dean Thomas October
Justin Finch-Fletchley November
Lee Jordan December

(where possible)

BIRTH MONTH (GIRLS)

Luna Lovegood January
Lavender Brown February
Susan Bones March
Cho Chang April
Pansy Parkinson May
Amanda Kingsley June
Virginia Donaldson July
Ginny Weasley August
Hermione Granger September
Parvati Patil October
Maria Elena Velasquez November

Padma Patil December

The second:

FINAL RESULTS VOTING FOR CALENDARS

BOYS (out of 80 possible points)

Harry Potter 75 points

Seth Collins 65 points

Michael Corner 60 points

Anthony Goldstein 55 points

Draco Malfoy 45 points

Dean Thomas 40 points

Blaise Zabini 35 points

Justin Finch-Fletchley 30 points

Lee Jordan 28 points

Neville Longbottom 25 points

Ron Weasley 20 points

Seamus Finnigan 20 points

GIRLS (out of 80 possible points)

Ginny Weasley 70 points

Amanda Kingsley 65 points

Hermione Granger 60 points

Cho Chang 55 points

Parvati Patil 50 points

Padma Patil 50 points

Virginia Donaldson 45 points

Pansy Parkinson 40 points

Maria Elena Velasquez 40 points

Susan Bones 35 points

Lavender Brown 30 points

Luna Lovegood 30 points

TOP VOTE-GETTERS FOR EACH GENDER PLEASE REPORT TO THEIR HEAD OF HOUSE AT THE FOLLOWING TIMES AND ON THESE DATES:

HARRY POTTER DECEMBER 17, 1996, 2:30 PM

GINNY WEASLEY DECEMBER 18, 1996, 3:00 PM

TIMES AND DATES OF PHOTO SESSIONS WILL BE DECIDED UPON THEN. ALL OTHERS WILL BE SCHEDULED NEXT WEEK, AFTER CHRISTMAS, AT A DESIGNATED TIME CONVENIENT FOR THEM. ANYONE UNABLE TO MAKE THEIR APPOINTMENT IS URGED TO CONTACT THEIR HEAD OF HOUSE TO RESCHEDULE.

THE JANUARY 1997 PAGE OF THE CALENDAR MUST BE READY FOR DISTRIBUTION BY DECEMBER 31, 1996. COMPLETE CALENDARS WILL BE AVAILABLE AS SOON AS THE COVER AND PAGES ARE READY.

(Signed)

Minerva McGonagall

Assistant Headmistress

When Ginny saw the dates and times, she vowed to do all she could to eavesdrop, via Extendable Ears if necessary, and even if she had to borrow an Invisibility Cloak such as Harry's by recruiting Ron to fetch it for her (provided he was willing to do so), so she could learn when and where his photo sessions would take place ... particularly the one for the centerfold, never imagining that Harry might be planning to do the same when it came to learning when and where her photo sessions would take place. All she was thinking about at the moment was being able to feast her eyes on his incredible body without his being aware of it ... and for that, it was necessary for her to know when to go and where to be in order to accomplish that end.

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As she expected, it wasn't easy to get Ron to agree to it, especially when she suggested that he tell Harry if he asked that Ron himself wanted to use it to find out when certain other girls' photo sessions would be scheduled, such as Amanda's or Hermione's. "Which I'm sure you do," she pointed out.

"Maybe so, but that doesn't mean I'm necessarily willing to help you spy on my best mate, even if you do fancy him," Ron retorted.

"Also, how do you know that Harry doesn't plan on doing the same thing to me?" she threw back.

"As far as I know, he doesn't," Ron told her.

"He wouldn't tell you if he did, I'm sure," Ginny remarked confidently. "After all, what brother would want to hear about another bloke spying on his sister while cheesecake photos were being taken of her?"

"You have a point there," Ron reluctantly admitted.

"Damn bloody right I do. Now will you fetch the cloak for me?"

"All right, all right," Ron conceded. "But if you don't get it back to me when you promised ..." his voice trailed off ominously.

"I know, I know. You'll tell Harry. Don't worry, I have every intention of getting it back to you on time. Now I need it tonight, since Harry's appointment is at 2:30 p.m. in McGonagall's office tomorrow. I'll meet you in the common room at midnight. Be ready for me."

"As long as you're ready for me by midnight on the 17th."

"Don't worry, I will be. See you tonight."

* * * * *

Just the same, Harry missed the cloak by the middle of the day and asked Ron if he knew anything regarding its disappearance. After all, he was understandably very protective of it, since it was one of the few things he had of his late parents ... and Ron was one of the few people who knew that Harry kept it in a special place in his personal trunk at the foot of his dormitory bed. Not to mention the fact that it was mainly for that reason that Harry generally kept said trunk locked. Luckily Ron also knew where the trunk key was kept and how to remove the Sticking Charm Harry had placed on it. The cloak wasn't in the trunk now, so it stood to reason that if anybody knew where it was, it would be Ron.

"Don't worry, mate, I've got it. I want to borrow it."

"Why?"

"I was told that Amanda and Hermione are going to McGonagall to schedule their photo sessions at one o'clock this afternoon. I want to know when and where they'll be, but I don't want anyone to see me while I listen in."

Harry gave him a skeptical look but said, "All right, mate, as long as I know you have it. It's just that I'll need it back by tonight, since I plan to use it tomorrow afternoon. By the way, you've got some Extendable Ears, don't you?"

Ron did his best not to react to that, a virtual admission of what Ginny had told him might happen. "Yeah. Fred and George gave me some the last time I saw them. As for returning the cloak, no problem," he assured his friend.

"It better not be. I can't simply replace it, you know. It used to belong to my dad, and I don't have that many things from my parents."

"Don't worry, mate. It'll be back in your trunk in plenty of time." That is, if Ginny was prompt ... and Ron had never known her not to be. Now he would have to make sure that he was out of the dorm for at least an hour and that no one saw him either ... the only way he could cover both her tracks and his own. He wasn't sure if Gin had any Extendable Ears, so he intended to give her one of the pairs he had gotten from Fred and George in the event she didn't. Now all either of them could do was hope that McGonagall didn't place a Silencing Charm on the door so no one could listen in.

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It was also fortuitous that Harry happened to go to bed early that night (at least early for him, around ten), so much so that Ron could have sworn that one of his drinks had been spiked with Felix Felicis or something. Harry had a habit of late-night wanderings, but that wasn't the case tonight. Ron had no idea just why, but it really didn't matter as long as he would be able to sneak out of the dorm and down to the common room where Ginny would be waiting.

He lay in bed, waiting for the clock to strike midnight. By the time it did, Ron was so tense and nervous that once midnight arrived and the clock struck, he nearly went through the roof. Once he calmed down, though, he donned his robe and slippers, silently slipped out of the dorm and headed down to the common room. He found Ginny sitting by the fire in nightdress, slippers and dressing-gown, waiting for him.

He quietly called to her; her head lifted and she smiled. "I was beginning to wonder about you. You've got the cloak?"

"Had to make sure that Harry was asleep. Yeah, I've got it. I also got some Extendable Ears just in case you need any."

"I have a pair, but haven't used them in a while, so I don't know if the charm Fred and George placed on them is still good."

"Better take these, then." Ron handed her the folded cloak, the Extendable Ears sitting on top of it. "By the way, I told Harry that I wanted the cloak to eavesdrop myself without being seen. That way he didn't question my having it. Just the same, he said he needed it back tonight because he planned to use it tomorrow afternoon."

Ginny smiled knowingly, but simply said, "As I said, no problem. Meet me here tonight at midnight and I'll return it to you."

"I'll be here."

* * * * *

This time it was Ginny who was wound up as tight as the proverbial spring by the time it came time to go to listen in at McGonagall's door while she was talking with Harry. It usually took about fifteen minutes to reach the headmistress's office from the Gryffindor fifth-year girls' dorm, so she left around two-fifteen, having the Extendable Ears in her jeans pocket and the silvery cloak ready to throw over herself once she neared the office. Just the same, she had no intention of allowing anyone to see her anywhere near it, so it might be a good idea to put it on as early as possible. She even saw Harry heading for the office and quickly ducked out of sight so he didn't see her before throwing on the cloak and following him.

She waited for the door to click closed behind him before she dared move close and squat down to slip the narrow business end of the Ears beneath the gap under the door, then stick the other end in her left ear. She had tested her own set and found that the charm on them had been exhausted, so she had brought the set Ron had given her, which were fairly new and therefore worked fine. To her delight, she didn't have to wait long before McGonagall mentioned the date and time Harry was to report for his photo sessions.

As it turned out, the first was going to be a long one, done mostly in one day to save time, and therefore they had to do their best to make sure the sun would be out, and there were windows in the Prefects' Bathroom, where it could shine in. The rest could be taken in a place of Harry's own choosing, maybe even in the boys' dorm ... but most of them would have to be taken in the bathroom in order for it to be the proper setting for the swimwear he was supposed to put on for both the Beefcake calendar cover and the centerfold.

Best of all, it had turned out to be scheduled for two days from now, on the 20th of December, at 10 a.m. and would go until 2 p.m. She couldn't be sure that she would be able to get the cloak again without making Harry suspicious and perhaps get Ron in trouble, something he would be unlikely to forgive her for, at least not immediately, so she would have to take a chance on being seen, even though she intended to do everything she possibly could to see that she wasn't.

Too bad she didn't know anyone else who had an Invisibility Cloak and didn't have the Galleons to buy one of her own ... She could only do her best to slip in without being noticed when the password was given and the doors were opened, then stay in the shadows as much as possible.

It was roughly an hour later that the door opened and Harry came out, his face expressionless. She knew from experience that that no-expression expression usually concealed anger almost beyond his control, so it was best she keep out of his way. Of course, she had made sure to pull the Ears back out from under the door and quickly move to one side as the doorknob was turned.

She followed him, still under the cloak, until he reached the door which led to the sixth-year boys' dorm, then went on to her own, only slipping the cloak off in the safety of the shadows near the door before stuffing it in her jacket pocket and heading up, satisfied that her mission had been accomplished. As she went up the stairs, she made a mental note to check for the flesh-coloured string that indicated the end of the Extendable Ears during her appointment tomorrow afternoon; that way she would know that Harry was beneath his cloak and listening for when *her* photo sessions were due to take place ...

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It wasn't easy to wait until time to return the cloak, but Ginny managed; this time it was Ron waiting for her when she arrived in the common room, in pretty much the same spot she had. No conversation was exchanged, merely smiles and nods, then brother and sister went their separate ways. Ron made his way back upstairs to the boys' dorm, quietly opening Harry's trunk and placing the cloak on top of the other items so he could easily find it.

Ron also noted that Ginny had kept the Extendable Ears; obviously the ones she'd had hadn't worked. That was okay, though; he had his own. In fact, Harry might even ask to borrow them for his own eavesdropping purposes. For the time being, though, he had best get back into bed and get some sleep.

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This time their roles were reversed; Harry watched under cover of the cloak as Ginny went into McGonagall's office. He waited until the door clicked shut, then knelt down and slipped the business end of the Extendable Ears he'd borrowed from Ron beneath the door, his smile widening when he learned that her main photo session would take place in the same place as his, only two days later, almost literally to the minute ... December 22nd from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Prefects' Bathroom.

With the cloak, he intended to slip in without being noticed and feast his eyes on Ginny in a bathing suit, maybe even lying on her belly and propped up on her elbows, if not on her side, head propped up on one hand, her hips curving provocatively as she smiled into the camera, not to mention her bare arms and lovely legs ... and perhaps even smiling and posing as she assumed he would like.

He was naturally unaware that she had noticed the end of the Extendable Ears during her appointment and smiled wickedly, knowingly, upon spotting them. (Obviously she wasn't the only one suffering from overactive teenage hormones ...)

Harry forced himself back to reality; the interview was almost over. He had to move but quick! After pulling the flesh-coloured string out from under the door, he flattened himself against the wall as the door opened and Ginny walked by him, so close he could smell her perfume. He watched her walk away, loving the sight of her sweetly rounded backside in her tight jeans. Once she had turned the corner, he headed back to the boys' dorm and attempted to prepare himself for his own upcoming photo session, both physically and mentally. One of the ways would be to pretend that Ginny was watching him; that should make it easier for him to smile for the camera, not to mention pose as he believed she would like.

The thoughts he'd been having prompted an almost painful tightening of his groin; in fact, his trousers were constricting him most uncomfortably in a very sensitive spot. In fact, he wasn't even sure if he would be able to make it back to the dorm without taking a detour into the boys' loo and "unloading," as it were. As it was, he couldn't be sure how long his relief would last.

But what mattered was that he knew when and where to go to find Ginny in a bathing suit ... and could hardly wait until December 22nd. Which reminded him, the sixth-year Christmas Ball was coming up. Who would he ask this time? Amanda? Maria? Ginny #1 or Ginny #2? He'd better make up his mind soon; after all, how did he know that Seth hadn't already moved in on at least one of the girls, especially Ginny #1?

It wasn't until he was nearly to the dorm (with a thankfully brief detour to the loo) before he felt safe removing the cloak and heading upstairs after stuffing it into his jacket pocket, only to find Ron's face thunderous, hands clenched into fists and ready to take apart anyone foolish enough to approach him first and ask questions later. Consequently Harry told himself that discretion was the better part of valour and gave Ron as wide a berth as possible. He replaced his cloak in its customary spot and locked the trunk again, then seated himself cross-legged on his bed, hands in his lap, waiting for Ron to open up...which didn't take long.

"The bloody bastard! I should hex him into the middle of the next century! And why was she stupid enough to say yes?"

"May I ask which 'she' you're referring to, mate?" Harry asked carefully, hoping it wasn't Ginny #1, but at the same time, afraid it was.

"Hermione," Ron almost spat.

"Who asked her out?"

"Who do you think? That bloody berk, Collins! He asked her to the Yule Ball just when I was all ready to do it!"

"You've got to move fast, mate. I learned that the hard way in fourth year."

"Yeah? If it's so bloody easy, may I ask whether or not *you've* asked someone?"

"Getting ready to," Harry returned evasively, not wanting Ron to know that he was in the same boat as his friend.

"Then you'd better 'move fast', as you say...or as my illustrious brothers Fred and George once said, 'Get a move on or all the good ones will have gone.'"

"I'm well aware of that, mate. It's too late to do it now. I'll do it tomorrow."

"Who have you decided on?"

"Let's just say I've narrowed it down. Probably either Maria or one of the two Ginnys."

"Not Amanda? I thought you fancied her as much as I do."

"That's aiming a little high, I think. Maria and the two Ginnys are more within reach."

"Are you daft, mate? If she'd go with anyone, she'd go with you. You're man of the hour, remember?"

"Please, don't remind me. For one thing, she's older than I am. For another, she's taller. I'd feel like I was standing in a hole next to her, as I usually do with Hagrid, especially if she wore high heels."

"All right already," Ron conceded, holding up his hands in a gesture of surrender. "How about this? You go with Maria and I go with Ginny #2, the one who isn't my sister?"

"Of course, this is always assuming they haven't already been asked," Harry pointed out. "We'd be better off figuring an alternate choice, if not two. If I remember correctly, the Patil twins are already dated up."

"Can't say I blame them. We weren't exactly attentive escorts, you know. Even at that, it's not such a big deal for me to go, but I think you should."

"Why? For publicity? No, thank you. I'm going to be inundated as it is without inviting more."

"No, I mean you should go, even if you go stag, in order to dance with as many girls as possible, maybe even Ginny, the one who's my sister. Besides, you know I'm not the dancing type."

Harry figured that Ron would mention her sooner or later and didn't want him to know the feelings he was fast developing for her, especially not the erotic ones, until and unless he decided to spring them.

"I'll consider it. Now let's get to bed so we can get an early start on asking our targets."

With that, the two young men got into their respective beds...and shortly thereafter, Harry began to dream. Not a bad one, fortunately; quite the contrary. In fact, this one even involved a girl...specifically, one Ginevra Molly Weasley ...

Harry was about ready to climb the wall. He had ordered the Cheesecake calendar a month ago and it still hadn't arrived. More importantly, he had also ordered the centerfold of Ginny, which was what he was most impatient to see. Watching her picture being taken was one thing; actually seeing it in print was another. But if she looked even half as delicious in print as she had in person, he'd be lucky not to need a cold shower every night for the next week ... at the very least!

Just then he heard a tapping at his window, finding one of the school owls holding a large, square but fairly thin package by the string tied around it; he caught his name written on it in McGonagall's copperplate hand. He carefully extricated the string from the owl's beak and it flew off once relieved of its burden. Thank Merlin, the calendar (and hopefully the centerfold) had finally arrived!

Best of all, he was the only one in the dorm at the moment; no one would disturb him and he could feast his eyes on Ginny in privacy. After removing the outer wrapping, he stole a quick look at Ginny's Miss August page; she was wearing a strapless, glittery-gold mini-dress with matching glittery-gold hose and high-heeled dress (and also gold) slippers. Also, her glorious red-gold hair was tightly curled almost all the way up to her head and she wore a small gold tiara.

She also wore eye makeup, a mixture of blue and gold eyeshadow with some dark mascara, but as far as he could tell, that was the only makeup she wore other than a touch of coral lipstick. But what really got him was the way she was smiling into the camera; had she pretended that he was watching (as far as he knew, she had been unaware that he had actually been there), and smiled accordingly? Harry would almost swear that that had been the case from the looks of this ...

She was lovely, of course, but what he most wanted to see was still to come. He set the calendar aside and opened the centerfold. One shot was a close-up of her smiling face, her delectable lips and lovely brown eyes seeming to glow. Harry's heart began to pound and he unconsciously began licking his lips, his eyes devouring her face, particularly her lips, and he felt his groin beginning to tighten dangerously, particularly when he began to peruse her full-length photo, the pose where her curves were accented, his favourite.

Gods, how he wished he could taste those lips right now, run his hands over that delicious body, bury his face in her glorious hair, breathing in its honeysuckle scent ... His jeans became more uncomfortable with every passing moment, and he knew he would have to do something about it soon before awkward questions were asked that he could not answer. An unexpected voice brought his head up with a jerk.

"Mate, you could have the real thing if you'd just ask her out."

Harry's face flamed as he hastily dropped the centerfold in an attempt to conceal his arousal, finding Ron standing beside his bed with a knowing, almost sly, look on his face. "How long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough," Ron returned ambiguously. "You've had your eyes fixed on Ginny's lips like you wanted to devour them, not to mention the way your breathing sped up when you began to peruse the actual centerfold. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if your heart is pounding a mile a minute even now."

"Bugger off, Ron. Even if it is, it's none of your bloody business. Besides, it's the last thing I ever expected to hear from you."

"I make it my business when my best mate develops 'the hots' for my sister," Ron returned baldly. "Just the same, I'd say it even if she weren't my sister. Besides, you know she's always fancied you. What would be so wrong in telling her that you fancy her as well?"

"What would be the point? She's going with Seth now."

"That doesn't mean she doesn't still fancy you. Do you seriously think that she'd stay with him if you gave any indication whatsoever that you wanted her?"

"You'd do well to take your own advice, mate," Harry shot back. "Tell you what...I'll ask Ginny out if you ask Hermione out. For that matter, we could even go on a double date."

There was dead silence for a while, then Ron spoke again. "Is that a challenge?"

"Take it as you will," Harry retorted.

"Then I ... accept your challenge. We'll ask them tomorrow. Meanwhile, we'd better at least try to get some sleep so we'll be fresh for the task ahead. Good night, mate."

"Good night." Just the same, even as Harry got beneath the covers after having put away the calendar and centerfold, having been totally unaware of the passage of time during his lustful perusal of Ginny, he suddenly heard the clock strike ten and decided to do his utmost to fall asleep ... but couldn't, not a wink, not with his mind filled with tantalizing visions of Ginny's lovely eyes at one point, her delectable lips at another, her sweet body in yet another, as well as a vision of her running toward him in a tight red jumper and snug gold slacks, his arms outstretched to receive her; a moment later she was in his arms and he was in hers, kissing her deeply, passionately, never wanting to stop ...

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But their luck was running bad that day. They asked every girl in question as they ran across her, but they were all dated up. It looked like they would both go stag after all. On the bright side, Harry tried to keep in mind that going stag didn't tie him down to just one girl ... he could dance with whomever he wished, and if he could manage a dance with the girl of his dreams, all the better. (Especially if he could manage to manoeuvre her under the nearest sprig of mistletoe for a quick snog ...)

It was eight o'clock that evening, the 19th (the Christmas Ball was only held on Christmas Eve during the Triwizard Tournament; otherwise it was held the week before Christmas), when he and Ron headed for the Great Hall where the Ball was to be held, ignoring the stares of those they passed, as if they couldn't believe that Harry Potter, the 16-year-old Gryffindor/Hogwarts heartthrob, had actually been unable to get a date.

At this point virtually every eligible girl in the school would have given her eyeteeth to be his date, yet here he was, going stag with his best friend, who had obviously been unable to get one either. Just the same, Ron had every intention of cutting in on Hermione and Collins, if only for a token dance just to prove he could do it if called upon to do so.

Even at that, it didn't stop various girls from commenting on Harry's physical attributes ... and they just *started* with his eyes. "Those beautiful emerald eyes ... that lovely hair ... those delectable lips ... and his shoulders are to die for!" were just a handful of comments heard as Harry and Ron passed them. But it seemed that only Ron heard.

"How could a bloke who looks like him not be able to get a date?" one wondered.

"I wouldn't mind snogging him silly, that's for sure!" another sniggered, smiling wickedly. "In fact, I even intend to do everything I can to manoeuvre him under the mistletoe!"

"I'd like to do more than that," another more adventurous type put in with a sly wink at the friends surrounding her.

Ginny #1 heard everything, naturally, and with a part of her couldn't blame them. At the same time, she knew that ~~she~~ *he* was the one Harry fancied ... and that suited her just fine, whichever ones he ended up dancing with this evening. If at all possible, she intended to be one of them, but even if she wasn't, it would be worth it if she could but get him under the mistletoe and snog him silly, if only to give him something to dream about.

Again, she had come with Neville Longbottom; she noted too that Hermione was on Seth Collins' arm. That should go over big with Ron, that was for sure! She could just imagine how he must have reacted when he'd first found out. As Fred and George had said, in essence: one had to move fast or all the good ones get snapped up first.

This time she wore a long blue linen dress with an elasticised ruffle at the top and a two-inch ruffle at the bottom with her favourite white dress slippers. Neville had even bought her a nosegay of white roses to wear at her waist. Just the same, she was able to note how attractive Seth looked, more attractive than he ever had. Dress robes became him magnificently! Hermione was in an outfit and hairstyle reminiscent of the ones she'd worn in fourth-year; Ginny noted that she also had a nosegay of pale pink blooms on her right wrist.

But ironically it was Draco Malfoy who managed to find Harry and Ron first.

"I want a word with you, Potter," he bit out, fists clenched as if trying not to punch both of them out as he stood facing them, his fair skin almost the same colour as his white-blond hair in his fury.

"What is it, Malfoy?" Harry all but snapped back. "I have better things to do than listen to you."

"Oh yes, I forgot," Draco sneered. "The school heartthrob! I swear, just what is this bloody power you have over women, Potter? Even Pansy voted for you! What's more, all I've heard from her lately is 'Harry said this' and 'Harry did that!'"

Harry had been only half-listening, but his ears perked up at this. "Really? How flattering. You must thank her for me. Sounds like she's finally developing some taste!"

"Watch it, Potter," Malfoy returned threateningly, his nemesis's words like a cold slap in the face.

"I wouldn't worry if I were you, Draco. You probably still got the majority of her votes. She should get back to normal once this calendar business all blows over," Harry tried to assure him. "Now, if you'll excuse me ..." And with that parting shot, Harry and Ron moved off toward the refreshment table to get themselves some punch and look over the girls. (At least until they saw an opportunity to grab a dance, that is.)

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The best thing that could be said for this year's Ball was that the students were all two years older and (in most cases) two years more mature ... Harry and Ron among them. Ron's eyes followed Hermione and Seth virtually the whole time, and this time he headed in her direction without hesitation, albeit with a gentle push from Harry in the right direction. Particularly once Seth had ostensibly gone off to get drinks for them.

"Hermione," he made himself say as he approached her.

"Ron. You look ... very handsome," she had to admit.

"Thanks. You ... look very nice too. Uh ... would you like to ... dance?"

Hermione seemed stunned speechless for a moment; this couldn't really be happening. *Ron*, of all people, asking her to dance? What had happened to him that could possibly have provoked this behaviour? Just the same, she told herself not to question it, simply enjoy it ... and the sensation of feeling herself in Ron's arms, where she had wanted to be for as long as she could remember.

As for Ron, once in the presence of the long-time object of his affections, he had almost literally forgotten anything or anyone else existed but the two of them. Suddenly it didn't matter that he didn't know the first thing about dancing; all that mattered to him now was finally having Hermione in his arms ... and if he could manage it, keeping her there! Strange as it may seem, he had even forgotten about Harry, albeit temporarily.

All the same, Harry wasn't alone for long. Barely five minutes after Ron had left, he had spotted Maria standing by herself in a burgundy-red strapless gown, red roses in her raven hair, which hung to her waist and down her half-bare back, accompanied by a *faux* ruby necklace, and went over to ask her to dance, most appreciative of her beauty and exotic perfume. She looked up, surprised, then smiled. "Yes. I would ... very much enjoy that, Harry. Thank you for asking me."

Harry simply nodded and smiled in her direction as they began to dance ... but this was only his first dance of the night.

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As it turned out, Maria's original date, who had claimed he would meet her at the dance, never showed up, so she had been effectively stood up. However, she had forgotten all about him when Harry had approached her. Once the dance was over, however, he politely excused himself and looked for someone else to dance with.

She was somewhat disappointed but at the same time, had been given a memory she would never forget. After all, how many girls could say that they had actually danced with Harry Potter? She knew that Parvati Patil had been his original date in the fourth-year Christmas dance, and had also gotten just one dance as well. She had even led him on the dance floor, if memory served, but this time Harry had done the leading ... and quite well too.

The next person he found, strangely enough, was Amanda. She wore a white Greek-style gown and hairstyle with gold accessories, and as Harry expected, high heels. He may not have had the nerve to openly ask her out, but what was stopping him from dancing with her? It was only that

if he were going to do it, she would have to take her shoes off; that way they were at least *fairly* equal in height. She smiled and nodded in agreement, and another dance began.

His third partner of the night was Ginny #2, who wore a form-fitting green sheath-like gown with a lacy, pale green short-sleeve jacket. She had given him a radiant smile upon accepting his offer to dance, but even as enjoyable as it been...at least for her...he didn't stay upon the dance finishing; instead, he had again politely excused himself and looked for another partner ... this time, the one he really wanted.

After about a ten-minute search he found her, a blue wreath of flowers around her head, a touch of coral lipstick and blue eyeshadow, wearing a long ruffly blue dress with a white nosegay at her waist and drinking some punch. No doubt from her original date, whom he didn't see anywhere, at least not at the moment. "Don't worry, Harry. Neville's not going to hex you for simply wanting to dance with me," Ginny assured him. "He just went off to get a drink for himself."

"I wasn't worried about that," her companion assured her.

"Then what *were* you concerned about?" Ginny countered.

"Your possibly ... turning me down. After all, I've not ... treated you very well lately."

To *put it mildly*, Ginny thought, scarcely able to believe this was really happening, that she was truly about to dance with Harry, but didn't voice it. "What matters is that you're willing to dance with me now."

"Then let's get started," he smiled ... and they did.

But this was one time Harry didn't leave immediately after the dance was over. Instead, he kept hold of her hand and began actively searching for mistletoe. He had no idea she was doing the same thing, albeit discreetly, but preferred to allow him to spot it, so he couldn't accuse her later of being too aggressive. Finally he froze in his tracks, then grinned widely and began to lead her toward the other side of the room, where she knew a doorway was ... but it was in darkness, and Ginny knew there was mistletoe there. Dear gods, was she actually going to get snogged by the boy of her dreams?

"I noticed you made the top of the list for the girls," he remarked as they headed for the dark doorway.

"As you did for the blokes," she replied. "And I bet you weren't expecting it any more than I was."

"To put it mildly! Oh well, I guess all we can do now is grin and bear it, as it were. Oh, here we are."

They had reached the doorway and ducked into the shadows; he was so close that Ginny smelled his Muggle-type aftershave *English Leather*. Gods, it smelled good ... and it was intoxicating just being near him. He was even still holding her hand; it felt so warm and strong, yet infinitely gentle. She had imagined countless times how his lips might feel, but with luck, would now experience the real thing.

"Gin ... you look very beautiful this evening."

"Just as you look very handsome, Harry. Dress robes suit you right down to the ground."

"Thanks. Just the same, I prefer jeans and a jumper or sweatshirt jacket and tee shirt outside of class." She wanted to say that he looked good in anything, but didn't want to seem like she was gushing, so she simply smiled.

For a long time he was silent, and she was both anticipating and dreading what he might say next. Just when she was ready to give up on his doing anything, he lifted her face to his with one hand so their eyes met. Dear gods, his eyes were beautiful ... but his lips were what she was curious about. How would they feel on hers? How long would the kiss last? Would he hold her in his arms as he did it or what? Would he try to "French kiss" her? Not that she'd particularly mind that, but it would be just a *bit* premature, especially for a first kiss.

"Ginny ..." he whispered almost inaudibly, scarcely able to believe she was actually this close to him. A moment more, though, and she would be in his arms ... that is, if he played his cards right. *Kiss her, you bloody fool*, the voice of his conscience ordered him. *You know you want to. If you don't do it now, you may never get another chance.*

"Yes?"

"May I ... kiss you?"

Words seemed to fail Ginny; all she could do was reach up, stroke his lips with a finger and smile again ... but it seemed to be enough. She then felt him draw her close to the firm, scented warmth of his body and hold her securely; then ... it happened!

Gods, how could anyone's lips taste so warm, so sweet, so ... *delicious*? It could be debated that this opinion could have come from either one of them, and indeed it could have, but in this case, it came from Harry. How could he possibly have held her off for so long? And as if he didn't find it difficult enough to sleep already, now he would be dreaming about this moment, this kiss, the feel of her in his arms, the feel of her lips beneath his, the smell of her perfume, the silkiness of her hair, for days to come, if not weeks. It was also extremely likely that he would need a cold shower by the time this evening was over ... if not sooner! Already he was sure she could feel how aroused he was, even through the dress robes, but what mattered was that she didn't remind him of the fact.

Not long afterward he reluctantly released her; Ginny keenly felt the absence of Harry's warmth and sweetness, but couldn't complain, at least not openly. What mattered was that he had finally kissed her and danced with her! Now it was only a matter of time until their ... new relationship became official, if her instincts were right...and they usually were. Now all she had to do was figure a way to slip into the Prefects' Bathroom the following afternoon to watch his photo shoot.

Maybe the Invisibility Charm ... She had only tried it on objects before, having no idea if it would work on people. Or perhaps the Disillusionment Charm, which would make her blend in with the background of the given area ... She would have to decide before going there, that's all.

As they stepped out into the light again, both looked around and smiled knowingly upon seeing Hermione with her arms locked around Ron's neck and his cheek pressed against her hair, both arms tightly around her. Most importantly, there was no light between them! "Looks like my dear brother's finally wised up," Ginny observed knowingly.

"It would seem," Harry replied. *And with any luck, so have I* he finished in his mind. Now that he had finally danced with, then held and kissed Ginny, he didn't ever want to stop. "Which reminds me, there's something I want to ask you. I'll ... understand if you refuse, but I'd ... really like you to come."

Ginny's heart began to pound in spite of itself. Was he about to ask her for a date?

"Yes?"

"I'm ... having my photo session tomorrow, and it would be ... much easier to endure if you would be ... willing to come and watch."

Ginny could hardly believe her ears, sure that the punch had been spiked, not simply with firewhiskey, although that had been known to happen, but Felix Felicis. Truly her luck was running *extremely* good tonight for something like *this* to happen.

"I would be ... honoured, Harry. I just ... never expected you to ask. When is it?"

"Ten o'clock tomorrow morning at the Prefects' Bathroom on the fifth floor," he informed her.

"I'll be there," she returned happily. Maybe now that he had actually asked her to come to his photo shoot, maybe she could actually invite him to hers ... She'd have to think on that for a while...but not for long.

"See you then." With that, he lifted her hand to his lips and then kissed it. Afterward he walked her to the door which led to the fifth-year girls' dorm, but didn't kiss her again, simply put his hand to her cheek and smiled. She tentatively covered his hand with hers for a moment, then dropped it. He blushed endearingly but smiled again and said, "Do that again, lady, and I can't be held accountable for my actions." Gods, how very much he wanted to snog her silly ...

"I'll see you tomorrow, Harry."

This time he merely nodded and smiled, then left, heading in the general direction of the sixth-year boys' dorm. Once he was out of sight, Ginny opened the door and headed upstairs, although she didn't remember feeling the floor beneath her feet at any time. Maybe she had actually *float*ed up or something. Harry wasn't the only one

who was going to have tantalizing dreams tonight ...

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As it turned out, though, Ginny could hardly sleep a wink for her excitement at actually being an invited guest to Harry's photo session; she wouldn't need any Invisibility or Disillusionment Charms after all. Just the same, this calendar was a fairly new thing, so there might be a problem in regards to her presence, even if it was at Harry's request. She couldn't be sure until and if she actually got there. Maybe Harry would actually need to declare that he had invited her and that her presence would relax him. If they forced her to leave, so would he. If they wanted him to cooperate, they would have to allow her in.

She showered and perfumed, dressing in her nicest casual slacks and blouse with sandals with just a touch of makeup on her eyes and lips. As she approached the Prefects' Bathroom, she saw Harry leaning against the wall; obviously the photographers hadn't arrived yet. He looked up and smiled when she called to him.

"Photographers not here yet?" She couldn't help noting that he was in a bathrobe and slippers, which likely meant that he was already in the designated swimming attire.

"No. Probably delayed or something."

"Do you think they'll ... object to my being here?"

"No reason why they should," he assured her. "I'll simply tell them that your presence will help relax me. If they force the issue, I'll leave, so if they expect me to cooperate with them, they'll have to allow your presence."

"I don't want to cause any problems for you, Harry."

"This whole calendar thing is a problem for me," he threw back. "If they object to something that will make it easier for me to do, then my walking out will be their fault, not mine."

Just then they heard a commotion at the other end of the hallway and noted the approach of several people, some of whom were carrying photography equipment. Fortunately there wasn't any real objection to Ginny's presence, just some surprised eyebrows. It took a while to set up everything, but finally the session began. Because of the time of year, late December, and consequently the cold, snowy weather, artificial backgrounds had to be conjured up that simulated summer...including a small artificial sun. There was also a beach blanket for Harry to sit or lie on next to the bath, which was full of water, along with some sunscreen, dark glasses and sandals ... not to mention a book. In Harry's case, it would likely be about Quidditch, his favourite sport.

Harry sighed exasperatedly. "When are we going to get started? I'd like to get this over with."

"Sorry," came the apologetic reply. "Get on the blanket and lie down on it on your stomach, pretending to read your book, dark glasses...don't worry, they've been charmed so that you'll be able to see with them...roughly halfway down your nose."

Harry sighed again but didn't argue, removing his bathrobe (revealing a red and gold tank top and red swim trunks) and handing it to Ginny, then his regular glasses upon lying down as instructed and placing the dark glasses halfway down his nose, pretending to read the book; Ginny moved so that she was out of the way but so that Harry could still see her. "Great. Hold that pose, now."

That pose went well enough, as far as Ginny could tell, but this was still just the beginning. What would they expect him to do next? The next one, they wanted him to turn on one side, propping his head on one hand and laying the other arm on the upper side. "Perfect. Now smile, please."

Harry stole a quick glance in Ginny's direction and that seemed to give him the strength to smile as they wanted ... although she couldn't help thinking that he was smiling as much for her as for them. Something else happened to him when she returned the smile, something that might be a problem if he wasn't careful; not even the loose trunks would hide it if it got much larger. Maybe it hadn't been such a smart idea to have invited her, considering the way she had been affecting him lately; just the same, he wouldn't distress her by saying so.

Another pose had him sitting in a beach chair, requesting him to put one leg up while the other was down, fingers laced and holding it in place, again while smiling. He was still feeling rather het up, especially after Ginny had smiled at him again, hoping it didn't show in the photos; otherwise he'd never hear the end of it...and Draco's being after him would likely be only the beginning.

Of course, they didn't take just one picture of a given pose, they took several, and usually from varying angles. The longer it went on, the tougher it got for Harry, even with Ginny being there, but she definitely helped make it easier and he was grateful for her presence, even as much as her mere smile aroused him ... in more ways than one. It seemed a literal eternity before the session was finally over, and the last shot seemed to be the toughest one of all, the one they said would appear on the calendar cover.

At the same time, it was also the one which required him to wear the least amount of clothing. Harry again looked in Ginny's direction and obtained the strength to not only give a 'come-hither' look over his glasses but a correspondingly provocative smile. What's more, he was supposed to remove his tank top and go shirtless! Gods, if he got through this, he could get through anything ... and would have Ginny to thank for it. He was able to pull it off by pretending, at least to himself, that he was looking at *her* with both a provocative look and smile.

Even at that, Ginny was hard-pressed not to audibly gasp at the handsomeness of Harry's bare chest. How very much she wanted to stroke, kiss and caress it ... and that would be just the beginning! She forced herself back to reality and visibly pulled herself together as she at last heard the head photographer say that the session was finally over...and what's more, she could have sworn she heard Harry mutter under his breath, "Thank Merlin!" as he made his way over to her to retrieve his bathrobe and put it back on upon picking up the tank top and slipping it back on.

"Well, you made it," she stage-whispered.

"Through this much, at least," he returned. "It still remains to be seen how I'll manage the repercussions. Just the same, I couldn't have gotten through it without you."

"Glad to help," she smiled, blushing in spite of herself. "Which reminds me ... since you invited me to watch your photo session, the least I can do is invite you to watch mine."

Harry couldn't believe his ears. Was Ginny really asking what he thought she was? If so, this was worth everything he'd had to endure today and then some! "That's ... nice of you, Gin, but you don't have to."

"I want to ... and I'm sure your presence will help relax me just as much as mine did you."

This time Harry was the one who turned pink. "I'll do my best."

"By the way, the session is going to be right here, two days from now, the 22nd, at the same time yours started today."

"I'll keep it in mind," he promised. "Now let's get out of here."

"Gladly," she smiled, her heart pounding when she saw how much Harry's beautiful green eyes were twinkling. How could any bloke be *so*ot and at the same time, be so nice? And if she thought the girls were uninhibited before, just wait until the calendar came out and they saw those pictures! At least the regular monthly picture could be taken in proper clothing, something for which she was sure that Harry was grateful.

She'd also better make sure they didn't actually try to pounce on or chase after him, whatever she had to do. And would she ever be popular, at least with some people, if

word got around that Harry had actually invited her to his photo session! At the same time, she could just imagine what Pansy Parkinson (among others) would say once she (and they) got wind of it. "Since when do you rate so highly with Harry, Weasley? What did you do, slip him a love potion or something?" would be the *niciest* thing she was likely to say ...

Just the same, she knew she would never forget this experience as long as she lived, and just knowing that Harry had actually wanted her there was worth every bit of teasing she was likely to endure. What's more, once word got around that Harry had actually been at *her* photo session, that would be a *real* feather in her cap ... to put it mildly!

But there were still two days to go before her session, and a lot of things could happen in two days, the most disheartening being the scenario where Harry decided not to come. *No, don't think that*, she admonished herself. *He'll come. He will come!* After all, one dance and kiss under the mistletoe did not a romance make ... although it could, and often did, *begin* one. All the same, she knew that the next two days were going to be the longest two days of her life, waiting to see if Harry showed up for her session.

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To Ginny's relief and delight, he was even waiting when she arrived; shortly after her arrival the photographers came and the session began once everything had been set up. They did basically the same type of pictures with her that they had done with Harry, but the cover one had her giving a 'come-hither' look over sunglasses. Just the same, Harry's favourite shot by far was the one with Ginny lying on her side in the brief sky-blue suit with low-cut top, half-bare back and French-cut legs, curves accented, and the same come-hither smile that seemed aimed directly at him. However, by the time the session was finally over, Harry was feeling acutely uncomfortable in a very sensitive spot and was hard-pressed to wait until he could find relief without offending her.

However, she told only Hermione, whom she could trust to keep her secrets, especially where Harry was concerned ... and she was very pleased to learn that things seemed to be going well between them, especially when she found out that Harry had actually danced with her at the sixth-year Yule Ball and even kissed her under the mistletoe! Even at that, the real test would be when they wouldn't *need* mistletoe ...

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It was around the end of December that the January 1997 page became available, featuring Luna Lovegood looking better than they'd ever expected she could, but what both Harry and Ginny (among others) were waiting for was the complete calendar. By this time they had both had their regular monthly photos done too, and done in the appropriate dormitory. All the same, Harry had a positive dread of what would happen once the calendar came out, especially once the cover content became known, much less the centerfold.

Fortunately Harry had a reprieve until mid-January, but just when he thought he was home free and could relax, the Beefcake calendar came out...and was sold out virtually overnight. The girls' reactions to both the cover shots of him and the centerfold, both with come-hither looks and provocative poses, provoked considerable debate as to which one made him look the hottest. Some, in fact, couldn't choose ... of which Ginny was one. She thought he looked positively *sizzling* in both of them!

She had to twist her father's arm, but managed to get the money for the Beefcake calendar, not to mention the centerfold of Harry, which she used in basically the same way that he would use the centerfold of her. The Cheesecake calendar came out shortly after the Beefcake one and sold out almost as fast. And as he'd intended, Harry basically donated the Cheesecake calendar to his dorm-mates (at least until the end of the school year), but kept the centerfold all to himself. All the same, as he'd promised earlier, Seth was one of the ones who'd also bought a centerfold of Ginny ... of course, that wasn't the only centerfold he'd gotten, but it seemed to be his favourite, which did not please Harry one bit once he heard. In fact it was all he could do not to warn him off, declaring, "Back off! She's mine!"

But even as much as he wished she was, they were not officially a couple, even though they saw each other at every opportunity, always carefully making sure they were alone before anything physical transpired. Even at that, it became progressively more difficult to keep the relationship on the Q.T. with the passage of time. All the same, the risk of discovery seemed to make their snogging sessions all the more exciting when they did manage to have them.

In public, though, they scarcely dared even look in each other's direction, much less smile or touch. Just the same, both were sure that it was only a matter of time before someone put two and two together and surmised the feelings they had for each other. Both could only hope that Draco and Pansy wouldn't be the first, for being Slytherins, they would have no hesitation in teasing them unmercifully about it, preferably in front of an audience.

The last straw came, however, when Seth approached Ginny one day in the Great Hall and asked her to go to Hogsmeade with him on the next weekend, coming up within the next week ... and all this in front of Harry and company! Harry didn't dare say anything (especially since he had also planned to ask Ginny to go to Hogsmeade), but he didn't need to ... the look on his face when he glared in their direction was sufficient.

"Something wrong, Harry?" Ginny asked innocently, although she knew very well what was bothering him.

"I don't want you to go with him," he bit out.

"With all due respect, Harry, you're not my keeper. I'll go out with whomever I bloody please. If we were a couple, *you* might have a say in the matter, but until and unless that happens, kindly butt out."

Both Ron and Hermione could see his blazing eyes and clenched fists, but he made no move to stop her as she walked off, arm-in-arm with Seth. At this point they definitely surmised that Harry had developed sufficient feelings for her that he intensely disliked any other blokes being around her, even briefly. Hermione could imagine how he must be feeling, but just the same, understood where Ginny was coming from. If she could make him jealous enough, he would take steps to make them an official couple. Until then, she was a free agent (at least technically) and didn't have to answer to him for anything.

Fortunately Hermione was not one to call attention to the troubles of anyone she considered a friend, and Harry was her friend. Her tone was sufficiently low so that only he could hear it. "Harry, are you in love with Ginny?"

He bent his head, face flaming, unable to meet her eyes, but managed to nod affirmatively.

"Have you told her that?"

Again, his face flamed, but he had to shake his head.

"Then you'd better do it, and quickly, before Seth gets his hooks into her. If he does, I feel sure that *you* will lose her."

One may be assured that Harry definitely intended to take that advice, just as soon as he could manage to get her alone again ... and make sure that she had no doubts whatsoever that she belonged to him. He would, reluctantly, allow the Hogsmeade date with Seth, but if any more were attempted, Harry would hex him into the middle of next week and enjoy doing it. There were other girls Seth could chase; Ginny was *his* ... and his alone!

It took some time, but he finally did get her alone ... and when he did, he all but threw caution to the winds and almost literally wrapped himself around her (and vice versa) while leaning against a tree near the Black Lake. "Gin, *don't* go out with Seth again. I love you, you're mine ... be my girl, now and always." Those were all the words he could say before resuming the passionate snogging session, literally unable to get enough of her lips.

"Yes, Harry ... yes!" was all she had time to say before he covered her lips with his and deliciously cut off further speech even as they sank to the ground and continued to snog, losing all sense of time and forgetting there was anything or anyone but each other anywhere near them.

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But it wasn't until mid-May 1997 and the week of the Quidditch Cup game that the relationship officially became public. Neither Harry nor Ginny were seen with anyone of the opposite sex, at least not romantically, but neither were they seen together very often. A lot of people suspected that they had feelings for each other but could never prove it ... not until after the game had been won and Ginny had ran toward him, his arms instinctively opening to receive her, then closing around her and pulling her close to snog her so completely and thoroughly that they literally forgot that fifty people were watching them.

All that mattered was the nearness of the other, the touch, the kiss, the embrace of the other. Neither did either one of them remember breathing for the duration and scarcely missed it. Probably the only reason they survived was because they shared each other's breaths while sharing a lingering lip-lock.

From that moment on they were officially a couple and could openly date each other, holding hands, having their arms around each other, even kissing at the doors to respective classes, but mostly snogging when and wherever they could get away with it. [By this time, Seth had definitely set his cap for Amanda ... and it didn't take long for them to start acting just like Harry and Ginny.]

Fortunately for them, only their friends managed to learn that they had invited each other to their respective photo sessions, both Harry and Ginny admonishing them to not speak of the sessions unless they were well away from other people. Even at that, they were right about the July 1997 issues of the *Daily Prophet*, *Quibbler* and *TeenWitch Monthly*, all of which had photo and text features involving Harry and Seth as the top two male vote-getters, selling out in record time.

Neither was Harry surprised that Ginny had copies of each and jealously guarded them, keeping them carefully locked away from prying eyes, reserving them for her own enjoyment. Just the same, he had also made sure to inform each of the above publications that he was spoken for, romantically speaking ... and most happily so at that. He also made a special point to emphasize with whom in order to warn off any others who might get ideas in her direction ... or his.

And by this time, the only issue of *TeenWizard Monthly* that Harry was interested in was the August 1997 issue featuring a layout of Ginny as Miss August. He naturally wasn't fond of the idea of other blokes ogling her but as long as he didn't have to see it going on (and as long as he made sure that she told them that she was also very much, and very happily, spoken for as well...and most importantly, by *whom*), he could at least tolerate it.

Just the same, the calendar sales almost literally swelled the school's coffers to overflowing, despite the students' initial objections to doing the calendars. Not too long after Seth's official declaration of love for Amanda, however, Harry had heard that he had special-ordered a centerfold of her for his own enjoyment. But most importantly, he even knew (although Ron had sworn him to secrecy) that he had bummed money off Harry so he could have a specially-ordered centerfold made of Hermione for himself, and promised that he wouldn't tease Harry about Ginny as long as Harry didn't tease him about Hermione.

What's more, Ron had asked his friend to get him the September issues of the aforementioned publications because they featured photo layouts and interviews with Miss September (and put them in his, Ron's, name). Not that Harry really expected her to remain a "Miss" for long, especially once they got out of school and Ron was in a position to ask Hermione to marry him. Neither did Harry intend to allow Ginny to remain a "Miss" for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Most surprising of all, however, was the fact that Harry and Ron had just recently found out that Neville of all people had specially-ordered a centerfold of Luna for himself. It seemed that virtually everyone they knew was pairing off, at least in the sixth and seventh years. They didn't concern themselves so much with the younger students, mainly because they didn't see them as often...nor would they, especially after they themselves graduated from Hogwarts and moved on with their lives. And who would have thought at the time that those bloody calendars would be the catalysts to prompt all the pairing off? Of course, they probably would have anyway, but what mattered was that they *had* paired off ... and if any of them had any say in the matter, would remain so for the rest of their natural lives!