

The Last Dance

by beaweasley2

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The wedding of Bill and Fleur was beautiful. There were flowers entwined throughout the garden with hundreds of floating, glowing bubbles. The large canopy tent that covered the reception area was elaborately decorated with strings of flower garlands while roses in every possible color and vines twisted around the poles, and on several large candelabras were thousands of tiny fairy lights that gave the whole area a warm glow. Tall vases held draping bouquets of flowers resembling flowering trees on each of the tables and stood on shimmering silver tablecloths.

While a few people sat at the tables talking and sipping elf-made Liliaberry champagne, everyone else was dancing and enjoying the music that the band was playing. The music was fun and festive, easy to dance to, even for the older relatives who liked dancing the classical dance steps. Most of the dancers around Ginny were smiling, she noticed, except for Ginny, who was dancing with her dad and was too busy watching Harry to notice that she kept stepping on or kicking her poor father's toes.

Even Harry was out on the dance floor dancing, well, trying to mimic someone dancing, with Gabrielle. Hermione and Charlie were dancing in a square with Ron and Luna. Ron looked horribly awkward as he sort of bounced and bobbed, trying to keep up with Luna, who had hold of Ron's hand while she swayed and turned as if to her own tune but was amazingly not a bad dancer.

Mr. Weasley gently pulled her into a slow spin and then tried to maneuver her into a small dip, but Ginny lost her footing. His hands caught her just in time, and he held her until she was steady and gently tried to do the dance move again. That time Ginny paid attention to her dad and not to the fact that Harry was smiling at Gabrielle.

Fred and George were dancing with both Mrs. Weasley and Aimee, one of Fleur's flower girls. Actually, it would have been fairer to say that Fred was dancing with her mum and Aimee at the same time that George was. In true Fred and George style, they were spinning and trading their partners between them, making Mrs. Weasley dizzy and Aimee giggle. Ginny watched as Fred picked up Aimee and spun with her in his arms before he literally tossed the girl, squealing, over to George, who caught her, and then spun around with her. George mocked 'dropping' Aimee, eliciting another squeal as he set her on her feet. Mrs. Weasley had started to scold him, but Fred twirled her around and 'handed' her off to Neville, waltzing away with Neville's partner, one of Fleur's aunts.

Bill was dancing with Mrs. Delacour, who looked like she hadn't any idea how to dance to this kind of music, while Fleur was dancing gracefully with her father. Two of the older witches, whom Ginny didn't know, were twirling each other in random spins, neither witch actually leading, but apparently having a good time. Old Uncle Prewett was

trying to dance with a young French witch in a stylized dance and kept getting his steps fumbled up, making her laugh.

Yes, the dancing had been a free-for-all all night! Everybody dancing with everybody else, mixing partners, swapping partners all night. Fred and George would frequently exchange partners with one of their brothers even in the middle of a song, only to hand the laughing or amazed girl off to someone else in the middle of the next song. Occasionally either Fred or George would take the guy to dance with, leaving two very stunned girls together with surprised looks.

Frequently, dancing partners joined together, becoming squares or circles, even a few rows, just trying to keep up with Fred and George's antics. Bill, Charlie, Ron, Harry and Neville often found themselves with several partners at once! Bill, Charlie and Neville just laughed and danced with the girls in a ring; however, Harry and Ron would falter or stand there staring at the laughing girls, stunned because of it. Once Ron was surrounded with six girls during a slower song and ran blushing from the dance floor to go get drinks!

Unlike his wife, Mr. Delacour was having a great time dancing with all the girls throughout the night while Mrs. Delacour only danced the slower ones. She spent much time standing and fanning herself on the sidelines.

Ginny had danced with each of her brothers, uncles and cousins, as well as Neville, twice and Mr. Delacour three times. Actually, she didn't know if it counted as three times at all. Although, Mr. Delacour had asked her to dance, Fred had 'stolen' her from him only to have George pass her back the next song. So he had asked her to dance with him again later only to be 'stolen' by George. *So in all fairness*, Ginny mused, *it was really more like half of three songs. But Harry has not once asked me to dance; he's hardly even looked at me all night! He danced with almost every witch at the reception, everyone... except me.* Ginny felt her heart pound somewhere she thought her stomach should have been every time the music changed and she watched him walk around the dance floor, avoiding her.

Now Ginny just wanted to slip away. *Harry, who hates dancing, has been pulled out to the dance floor by every old witch, aunt, cousin, friend of the family, and has danced with her mom, Hermione, Fleur and now Gabrielle but not me! He's avoiding me completely!*

As the music trailed off and one more song began, Ginny excused herself from her father, left the dance floor, grabbed a flute of Liliberry champagne and slipped away from the party. She simply wanted to escape the noisy reception and now sought the quiet of the benches set outside in the garden paths. The night was full of stars, and the half moon made the garden dark compared to under the canopy tent. Ginny sat down on a stone bench, just out of sight of family and friends and sipped the refreshing drink, letting the bubbles lift her mood. *I've had so much of this champagne that these heeled slippers no longer hurt my feet, thankfully, but my nose feels almost numb* She felt light headed and melancholy. *I thought that champagne made you feel giddy,* Ginny mused, but she didn't feel giddy at all.

Ginny reached her hand up into the elaborate coiffure of curls and pulled out the few bobby pins that had been stabbing her head all day. It seemed like there were at least a hundred of them holding her hair in place. She dropped the offending pins on the ground, relieved to feel loosened curls fall down on her neck and one cascade down near her cheek.

Ginny set her glass down, and immediately, a house-elf appeared to refill it. "You is wanting more, miss?" the small voice asked. Its tea towel wrap had a black stripe, and the elf wore a bowtie around its little neck. The house-elf carried a towel on its arm like a proper little waiter, and proudly carried a full, chilled bottle of champagne wrapped in a napkin in its hands.

Ginny almost laughed at the expectant expression of the happy little face. "Sure I'd like more!" she exclaimed and handed the elf her glass. "It's very nice of you to come out here to refill my glass."

"I is very happy to serve you, miss," the house-elf replied. "Is you wanting anything else?"

"Oh, Hermione fussed over having house-elves serving us tonight!" Ginny said, laughing. "Do you know her? She thinks you should all have freedoms, salaries and benefits!" The little elf froze with a look of horror in its eyes. "I guess I sometimes feel like she's right you deserve to be treated well, with laws that make sure you are all treated fairly, that you're treated right!" She looked down at the astounded house-elf, studying his reaction as his smile faded to horror, then concern. "You are, aren't you?" She added, "Being treated all right and all?"

The elf looked Ginny in the eyes. "But, miss, I *is* treated right?" the elf said, confused. "I don't need monies and ben-i-fits... Whatever that is... I don't want them, miss. *I* like being a house-elf, really I do."

"Are you happy though? I mean..." She stumbled on what she wanted to ask. "I'm sorry. I guess I just wonder if you're happy that's all"

The house-elf looked at her as if considering her. "I *is* very happy, miss, *really* I is. I am a good house-elf, and I be happy in serving duties as my Mistress tells me to do."

"I'm happy to hear that," Ginny said, lifting her glass to toast the elf. "That all house-elves everywhere be happy and are treated nicely," and emptied her glass in one gulp. The little elf smiled at her, topped off her glass, and then skipped away, searching for other glasses to fill.

Ginny could hear the band clearly from her perch as it ended another dance tune, a jazzy upbeat one her heart didn't feel as she sipped her champagne. The next song was a slow rhythmic waltz, the very kind she had wanted to dance with Harry to all evening. The soft, lazy music made her heart in her chest feel like a stone. "I don't even care that he won't ask me to dance... or that he won't talk to me... or that he's avoiding me. He doesn't even notice me anymore anyway! It's so nice that he's all through with us and all. But it's like I'm not even here, even if I'm right in front of his face. It's like I have completely vanished! Like none of it was real." She twirled the champagne in her glass, watching the tiny bubbles, and then leaned back to gaze at the moon. "Why do I care so much anyway? Why do I let it hurt so? It's like he said. It's because of this stupid... war. Why should he care he broke my heart!" She poured her heart out to the half moon above her. It hung there quietly in the velvety sky full of stars. "It is such a perfect sky; you'd think Bill had done it with magic."

"He may have," came a soft response, barely a whisper, from somewhere beside her.

Ginny spun around, thinking it may have been the elf or another one come to top off her glass again. She didn't see anyone in the dark garden or in the shadows around her. "*He* isn't afraid to let Fleur love him. He's even getting *married!* And fighting in the Ord...well, fighting... and Ron isn't afraid to love Hermione, and Fred's staying with Angelina!" Ginny stammered to the shadows. "Neville isn't afraid to care for Christine. Remus has gotten with Tonks, and they are all fighting Vo Vol... demort." Ginny choked on the name, the Liliberries champagne loosening her words, letting her just speak her mind. Ginny turned her head to try and see who was there, but felt a little dizzy by the quick movement.

"So, you're calling him by his name now?" the soft, whispering voice said to her left. It held the hint of surprise in it.

"My new motto fear of his name only increases fear of the man himself I'm not going to be afraid to say his name any longer!" Ginny said with her chin raised. "Besides, he's already cost me the one I love most, have always loved, and will always love. All because he has to face him, and I stay home worrying and wondering if I'm ever going to see him, and he won't even talk to me or dance with me. He avoids me and... and I ..." Ginny held back tears, took a deep breath, and steadied her composure. "He doesn't love me anymore," she said, dropping her head. The strand of curled hair rolled across her cheek, held in place by a falling tear.

There was a pause of silence and a deep sigh before she heard the soft voice reply, "I think well, there are reasons. It's not easy it's nothing to do with... loving you."

"Then why? Why would he dump me just because Vol Vo demort came back? We were happy! *know* he was happy we were happy together. We fought together, we studied together, and he dumped me!" Ginny wiped another tear from her cheek and took a long sip of her champagne. "I'm miserable without him," she confessed to the soft voice in the dark.

Ginny sipped her drink again from the fluted glass. The long silence was filled with the soft sounds of the wedding reception. "He ignores me completely now; he won't even dance with me. It's like I... like we never shared anything at all. Like the best part of our school year never happened or that it was a... a mistake." Twin tears slid down

her cheeks, and Ginny wiped them away. She drained her glass and held it balanced on her knee.

Another tiny elf came skipping up dressed like the first and filled her glass and skipped away happily. Her heart fell. "I wish I could be a house-elf, happily content with my lot in life."

Ginny was about to drink some of her refilled champagne when a firm hand caught her wrist, pulling her to her feet and another took her glass. It was Harry standing in front of her, pulling her into his arms to dance. "I'm lousy at this. You may not have any toes left!" he said, and he began to move slowly, holding her tight.

Ginny's head spun, her breath caught, her heart pounded, and she leaned into his chest for support, taking in his scent, borrowing his strength. She tried to match her breathing to his, but his was erratic, deep and unsteady, as he breathed in the fragrance of her hair. Even as the song changed, he didn't move away.

Ginny lost track as two, maybe four, songs played and ended before he released her. Harry placed his hand under her chin and looked into her eyes. Ginny couldn't have hidden the love, hurt, confusion, pain, desire and torment that she felt even if she had wanted to. Even if he wanted to use Legilimency on her, he wouldn't have needed to. Her feelings were all right there on her face for him to see.

"Ginny, I love you, but I can't give you any promises until this is all over. I can't even begin to imagine a future," Harry said, his voice cracking. "I have to face Voldemort you know that. *I'm* the one... chosen to face him. You know that. *I* lost my parents because of what *I* must do. *I* lost Sirius because of this, and it almost tore me to pieces. *I* lost Dumbledore, and I felt like my I feel like a grandfather was stolen from me. If I lost you I... I couldn't handle that. I wouldn't want to *live*."

Ginny caught her breath and was about to respond, but Harry cut her off. "No, hear me out please. Voldemort is strong... and accomplished at Legilimency. If he sees you in my head... if he could see what you mean to me... he'd come after you to use you against me. You know that, too. If he tries to read my mind, I want him to know we broke up that you're out of my life, that *I* lost you. Then he won't... I'm hoping come after you, to use you against me like he used you before. I couldn't face it if he did that again. If he uses you again Ginny, he'll kill you. He's vile, cruel, and evil. He tortures and kills for pleasure... I couldn't imagine how he'd be with you I don't want to. I'd never forgive myself for putting you in harm. It would... tear me up too much."

Harry moved the loose curl from her cheek, smearing another tear away. "But I love you, Ginny... I love you."

Ginny wasn't sure if she moved to kiss him or if he leaned to kiss her, but their lips locked in a desperate kiss. Harry pulled her to him, crushing her as if he needed to meld with her. Ginny swam in his kiss, her head felt too light, her stomach felt like pixies had moved in, and her knees weakened, her legs vanishing below her.

When Harry finally broke away, he looked into her eyes, and she could see mirrored there regret, love, pain, desire, torment, fear, determination, resolve, and, yes, loss. It was all there for her to see, exactly as hers had shown him.

"Harry?" Hermione said from the shadows.

"You said you wanted to go... um before the last dance, mate," Ron said softly, obviously embarrassed.

"Yea. Right..." Harry's voice sounded heavy with the emotions he was fighting. "I have to go..." he said, never taking his eyes off Ginny's face.

Ginny finally understood. Finally, after a long pause, she leaned into Harry's cheek and kissed him gently. "I love you," she whispered in his ear and kissed his cheek again.

Ginny stood back and stared directly at Harry, trying to look as fierce and determined as she could muster. "Then ~~lock~~*this* in your mind, Harry Potter. *We are through. We are history.* If *you* can't make up *your* mind about *us*, don't expect me to just wait on you," Ginny said with fierce resolution. Both Ron and Hermione froze in shocked disbelief. "You have *lost* me. It's *over* and I *never* want to *see you again!* You got that? *WE are over!*" Ginny stood with her arms crossed, trying desperately to look angry at him, as Harry stared at her. Then Ginny turned around and walked away.

Harry stood frozen, watching her walk away. He closed his eyes, trying to breathe deep, controlled breaths as he held onto her declaration, and then turned and grinned at his two best friends. "Okay then, right, shall we go?" he said cheerfully as he walked away from the wedding.

Ginny watched from the soft lights of the reception as the band announced the last dance and Harry, Ron, and Hermione vanished into the dark. Smiling, she went to look for her father to ask him to dance the last dance with her, to make up for the one before, feeling quite a bit lighter.

Author's Notes:

I want to give credit where credit is so rightfully due. Thank you, Southern_Witch_69, for reading this and catching my many mistakes. You've made my little story presentable for reading.