

# Possession

*by darsynia*

Ginny goes to a Bachelorette auction and is won by the person she least suspects, but secretly hoped for. Postwar AU. Written Pre-DH.

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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"I can't *believe* I let you talk me into this!" Ginny Weasley looked at her friend Hermione Granger and angrily stamped her foot.

"Ohh, Ginny." Hermione looked at her almost-sister and began to fret. "I'm sorry, I thought it would be a good idea!" she said despairingly.

The Ministry of Magic Bachelorette Auction was a new thing just this year: a way of rallying everyone after their victory against Lord Voldemort and his supporters 18 months before. Both Ginny and Hermione had been there for the final battle, alongside Harry and Ron and the rest of the Order of the Phoenix, but in the end, it had come down to simply The Boy Who Lived, and the Dark Lord. Harry had come out as a victor, but the stress he and the rest of them had been under for so many years had taken their toll. The Boy Who Lived, Again...Hermione scowled, as she always did when she read that ridiculous moniker...had left not long afterwards for an extended holiday. They got postcards from him, periodically, and Hermione always searched Ginny's face for some sign of... But Ginny was as secretive as ever, and finally she and Ron had given up hope that his sister might be the one to make Harry forget the troubles of the war.

Still, Hermione suspected that there was someone that Ginny liked, although she hardly ever dated, and Ron said she never talked about anyone in particular. There was one night, however, after a night of firewhiskey and girlish confidences, that Ginny almost forgot herself and let the secret slip. They'd been giggling and sharing all sorts of wild stories when tipsy had turned into drunk, and a strange melancholic languor had gotten hold of her companion. Hermione had asked the younger girl what was wrong, and Ginny had said, with an angry toss of her head, that *clearly* she wasn't meant to be with anyone, because the only men she fell for were conquering heroes and creatures of the night! The words had apparently shocked her sober, and she'd said good night not long after, her blush a red stain on her face that mingled with her hair. Hermione's brain had been too fuddled by drink to make much sense of the words at the time, but since then she'd tried to put a face to the phrase 'creature of the night,' to no avail. The sound of her own name penetrated her musings, and Hermione looked up to see a very frustrated Ginny.

"The Muggle phrase 'third time's the charm' that dad always likes to say is clearly not true, because I've said 'Hermione' about *five* times, now!" She wasn't completely angry, her friend saw, for her eyes were twinkling.

"I'm sorry, Ginny," Hermione said...and she was. "I feel like I've rather selfishly dragged you into all this."

"It's all right," Ginny said, looking into the mirror with a sigh. "If not you, then Ron, if not Ron, then George..." she trailed off, meeting Hermione's eyes in the mirror. "At least *you* have a fairly good idea of who you'll end up with tonight," she said, winking meaningfully. Hermione blushed scarlet, and Ginny expressed her surprise at the unexpected reaction.

"Yes, well--" Hermione tucked a brown curl behind her ear nervously as she spoke, "I heard Charlie teasing Ron earlier that he'd better make sure his wallet was full up, as this might be one of his last chances to run off with me before Ron--" she broke off as Ginny squealed with laughter and glee.

"You know, I wouldn't put it past him!" she said, grinning broadly at Hermione who was now almost purple. "He teases Ron about you all the time, says he has had a crush on you ever since you stayed with us at The Burrow three summers ago."

"He wouldn't... *oh!*" said Hermione, sitting down on the bed and covering her face with her hands in mortification.

"Don't worry, love," Ginny said comfortingly, "he knows how both you and Ron feel...it's just a brother thing." She said this with a snort of laughter and disdain, and Hermione knew it was because her friend had spent her whole life on the outskirts of 'a brother thing.' Just then, Charlie and Ron paused at the doorway, Ron's knuckles grazing the door slightly to warn them of their presence.

"Not talking about me, are you?" joked Charlie. Hermione just squeaked beneath her fingers and fled, pushing past them in her haste to escape the embarrassing situation.

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"What is she on about?" Ron asked, looking confused. Ginny just laughed and pointed her wand threateningly at the older of the two.

"You shouldn't tease her, you know," she said, trying to keep herself from snickering at the shocked and innocent look Charlie gave her in response. "She got the impression from someone she heard talking, that *someone* was going to spirit her away tonight." At each 'someone,' she advanced a step, brandishing her wand. Both brothers backed into the hall; Ginny was more than a match for both of them, having grown up determined to hold her own in a houseful of boys. Ron turned scarlet.

"The only one spiriting her anywhere is ME!" he blurted out indignantly.

"Good." The other two Weasleys said this at the same time, surprising each other into a grin.

"Hermione," Charlie called up the stairs, dancing away from Ginny's swatting hand, "you can come out now, Ron's staked his claim!" He laughed, making the mistake of standing still, and his sister's questing hand caught him right in the mouth. "*Ouch!*"

"Oh, Ginny, you can stop that," Hermione said, appearing at the top of the stairs to see what was going on. "You ready?" she asked, clearly ignoring Charlie and bestowing a glowing look at Ron.

"Yes," Ginny said, forcing herself not to brush at the skirt of her dress nervously.

"Oh, no, you're not!" protested Charlie. "That dress is..." she cut him off before he could continue.

"I don't think so, Charles Weasley," she said in indignation. "You can't seriously try to act like a caring older brother after what you were teasing Ron about." Privately though, she did question exactly what had made her choose to wear this dress in particular. It was low-cut, made mostly of gossamer, see-through material that covered her by way of gathers and folds rather than opacity. The deep green material looked well with her red hair and pale skin, though, and she rather liked the way the hemline varied with every movement she made. Charlie opened his mouth to protest loudly and then stopped; he knew his sister far too well to assume he'd win an argument like this one.

"Shall we?" He held out an arm for her, and she took it almost regally, immediately belying the image when she tickled him with the filmy wrap she was wearing to cover her shoulders. "Ron?" he said, looking over his shoulder at his brother as the four of them prepared to flee to the ministry. "Do you think Mum had a girl just to get some of her own back?" Ron laughed as Charlie hopped into the fireplace in just enough time to avoid being hexed.

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He wasn't sure why he'd come here. Well, that wasn't quite true...Moody had dragged him here on the pretext of 'solidarity and support' from the Order for the Ministry. The times of there being friction between the two organizations were gone, yes, but it never hurt to prove it, he supposed. Which was how he'd managed to be standing there in his best dress robes, nursing a whiskey, and trying to ignore the varying scents of the people around him.

It was really too close to the full moon for him to be out in public like this. The Wolfsbane potion was usually enough to curb the instincts and heightened awareness he had during the week before the full moon, but then again, he usually didn't allow himself to socialize in large groups during that week, either. When he was younger, he'd have considered it 'heady,' being surrounded by youth and exuberance and the tiny hint of the musk of arousal. Now, if he'd let himself be truthful, the experience just left him feeling empty and bitter and just a slight bit regretful.

He'd been, well... what he was, for so long that he'd never contemplated a relationship without seriously considering what being a werewolf would mean in the context of it. Always came to the same conclusion, as well. *Not worth the risk.* Only once had he almost let his defenses down, once, very long ago, while still a student. Before the potion, even, he mused. He'd forgotten about that, an icy chill dancing across his spine as he realized the implications of that. She was better off with James, anyway, he'd reasoned. *But had she been?*

Lupin took a deep draught from the whiskey in his glass, savoring the alternately burning and numbing sensation the drink gave him. He didn't want to think about whether Lily would have been safer with him than James. The curse of a werewolf versus the curse of the Dark Lord was far too deep a subject to dwell on when surrounded by friends and partygoers in the basement of the Ministry of Magic. He leaned against the back wall, watching the happy, flushed faces around him, and tried to wipe his thoughts clean of such things as love, death, and longing.

His mind, ever analytical even when assaulted with alcohol, resisted his efforts to clear it. One phrase kept bobbing to the surface. *Not worth the risk.* For a while now, it had had two meanings for him. The first, almost ancient meaning, not worth risking the life of someone else; it still applied, always applied. It was the new definition that troubled him, if he'd let himself admit it. *Not worth risking his own heart, his own soul, his..* He lifted his glass to his lips and finished the rest of the liquid in a vain attempt to direct his thoughts elsewhere. He didn't want to think of...his mind flirted with the word '*her*' and then settled on the more respectable...it, didn't want to think of how he'd somehow let his defenses down and started to care again. He didn't want to imagine how much more lonely he would be when (not if) he'd lose someone else.

The desperate gulps of alcohol coursed through his system, dulling his senses until he realized that he wasn't *just imagining* her scent. Lupin almost groaned at the sight of her...of course she'd be here, how could he have forgotten? Unwillingly, his eyes traced her; the characteristic red hair was unadorned and free, brushing teasingly against the dark green filmy thing she had draped on her shoulders. It was just his luck, he thought, to have the alcohol kick in now, faced with the sight of Ginny in his favorite color. The dress she was wearing reminded him that he needn't feel guilty, that she was definitely not his student, hadn't been for years...

In a quick, angry gesture, he turned away from the image of the three Weasleys and Hermione and cast a sobering spell on himself. It did him no good to be maudlin, dwelling on things he'd long since told himself were off-limits. Something in him...the wolf, perhaps...made him stay, though. He wanted to see who would bid for her.

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The crowd quieted...almost out of long-standing habit...as Minerva McGonagall stood on the little stage at the back and held up her hands.

"I've been asked," she said, her voice amplified by magic to reach the whole room, "to be the spokeswoman and announcer tonight." The look on her face told the assembled throng just how pleased she was for the 'honor.' "I think it was meant to be a joke," she said tartly, sending Alastor Moody a look of veiled disgust, "but nonetheless, I welcome you all to our First Annual Bachelorette Auction!" The applause following this announcement was thunderous, after which the slightly blushing Hogwarts professor started the proceedings.

Knowing that 'Weasley' and 'Granger' would not be called on for a while yet, Ginny made her way to the back of the room and got herself a glass of wine. As she took a sip and closed her eyes to enjoy the rich flavor, she felt a curious prickling feeling on the back of her neck. Quite proud of herself for not whirling around to confront whatever

or whoever was causing the sensation, she casually turned to study the faces behind her. All of a sudden, she realized who it was, who it *had* to be. Remus Lupin. She could feel her face flush and was angry at herself for having shown such restraint a second before but being unable to hold back a reaction now. She thought about why he would be here, and the room went hot and then cold as she contemplated his bidding for one of the women there.

Ginny hated herself for it, this foolish crush of hers. She'd always liked him, thought he was a brilliant teacher and a brave, kind man. The infatuation would go away, she had reasoned...such things always did. Hers hadn't, though. As she'd grown older and joined the ranks of the Order of the Phoenix as had all her family, she'd gotten a chance to observe him in a more relaxed setting than a classroom. The way he'd listen, *truly* listen, when others spoke. His gentle but firm way of resolving conflicts, so subtle at times and so commanding at others. Her scrutiny had gradually turned more and more personal, noticing the precise way he made tea in the afternoons, placing everything back just so; the way his hazel eyes lit up telling stories to Harry about his father; the tension in him before the full moon, and the release of it to be replaced by weariness just after.

"Hermione Granger," said a voice, and Ginny cursed herself slightly for allowing her mind to wander like that *here*, of all places. She drifted back to stand next to the knot of her family members, noting the teasing banter focused on Ron, who had a look of grim determination on his face. Just as predicted, Charlie upped his brother's offer a few times, causing laughter in the crowd and a blush in both her friend and her brother. Finally, Ron won her with a bid of 12 Galleons, the highest bid on anyone so far.

His sister smiled as Ron went up to claim Hermione, the two of them clearly having eyes only for each other. She became profoundly grateful that the auction for her friend had just completed as a side door opened to admit Draco Malfoy, of all people. Ginny shivered; she'd always disliked Malfoy for his coldness and bigotry, even more so after there had been insufficient evidence to warrant his being incarcerated with his parents and their fellow Death Eaters. Frankly, she wondered at his nerve in coming here. Surely, he wouldn't bother to associate with a bunch of blood traitors and Mudbloods, as he would surely call the assembled throng. His cold grey eyes surveyed the room, pausing with a sneer on certain members of the crowd. When he looked in her direction, Ginny was careful to show in her expression just how much she despised him. To her surprise, he didn't favor her with the same look of contempt he had bestowed to most of the people there; he actually smiled at her...if you could call it a smile. The effect was infinitely more chilling.

Before she could look away, he nodded his head at her, managing to convey a look of promise that confused her, repelled her. She felt a sharp stab of fear and tried to tell herself she was being ridiculous. What could Draco Malfoy do here?

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Something was wrong, Lupin realized. Something had changed. Mixed in with the normal scents associated with a party had come a new one, a tang that raised his hackles, made him look around for signs of danger. *Fear*. That emotion had no business at a party; it was not a fear of rejection, either, or of anything less than the raw gnawing tension of a life-or-death situation. Remus straightened up and started to look for the source of the fear. It suddenly struck him as an imperative, and when he'd pursued the trail to its source, he knew why. It was Ginny. A primal urge started him forward, clenched his fists. It was the wolf, of course. The part of him he tried to hold in check...not *tried*, damnit...the part he chastised with a whip-crack of a thought.

He followed her gaze to Draco Malfoy, noted the look on the young man's face, and didn't like it. He had no business here, this pitiful copy of his father, more cunning and less loyal. There was only one reason for a Malfoy to appear at a Ministry event...to cause trouble. And that trouble had better *not* include one Ginny Weasley.

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She'd finally forced herself to look away, allowing herself to blush now that the vile man had looked away from her. Something in her made her search the room for Lupin, hoping she'd feel more grounded simply by looking at his familiar face. When she finally caught sight of him, though, her heart made a hopeful kind of twist within her. He was positively glaring at Malfoy. The look in his eyes was almost *feral*, and it made her shiver in an entirely different way. It was the look of secret, wicked nightmare/daydreams, where he went back through time and ravaged all her foes, eliminated all her demons. The kind of dreams you had on hot summer nights after reading about vampires and werewolves and a love that transcended time and space.

She was doing it again. It must be the dress, she thought, it must be the wine... or maybe the knowledge that she was going home with someone tonight, but not knowing who. Probably Neville, she thought, a laugh bubbling up to clear away her strange, tempting thoughts. Although, not Neville...she vaguely remembered seeing him bid for Luna not long after Hermione went away with Ron. The realization comforted her as well as scared her...it had happened while she had been staring at Malfoy. Which meant that he hadn't had really frightened her all that much, she reasoned, or she wouldn't have remembered it. But then, who...?

"Ginny Weasley?"

Flushing slightly, Ginny hoped to Merlin she hadn't been staring at Remus daydreaming while McGonagall had had to repeat her name. She moved swiftly through the crowd to the small platform, smoothing her dress nervously and smiling wanly at her former head of house.

"Who will start the bidding?" Minerva called out briskly, and Ginny positioned herself serenely under the magical spotlight, her chin coming up ever so slightly as one of her brothers called out 'One Knut!' to tease her.

"One Galleon!" It was Oliver Wood, she saw with a start...and he winked at her.

"Five." A cold voice from the back. Ginny did NOT allow her face to show the chill of absolute terror that coursed through her veins as she realized who it was. Malfoy. A mutter traveled through the crowd, as most craned their necks to see the speaker. She met his eyes, bravely, not faltering even as he mouthed a single word to her before the bulk of the crowd had turned to face him.

"*Revenge*."

Suddenly, it hit her. She was a pureblood, like him. She alone of the group of women participating tonight was of as long a line of wizarding blood as he was. The same family of 'blood traitors' that had fought long and hard against Voldemort and won. Her own father had been among those to condemn his father. Ginny held herself steady as her mind raced, barely noticing as Oliver and Malfoy bid in ever increasing increments, as George and Angelina, whom he'd won against Fred not 15 minutes before, whispered frantically with Charlie, a handful of Galleons between them.

"Twenty-five," said Draco, still in the same coldly indifferent voice as his first bid. Oliver looked stricken and wouldn't meet her eyes, and Charlie was staring dumbstruck at the stack of Galleons he'd scraped up with the rest of the family. He shook his head at her apologetically...it wasn't enough.

"T-twenty-five," faltered McGonagall, who was as horrified as the rest of them.

"Fifty."

The crowd was so quiet that they heard the low, growling bid from the very back corner of the room. Ginny's heart leapt into her throat where it seemed to stay there, making it difficult for her to breathe. Draco Malfoy looked as if he'd been made to swallow a particularly bitter potion, and he swept out of the room in a furl of robes, leaving the door humming behind him.

She felt so small, standing there alone on the platform with Remus Lupin walking toward her, his face inscrutable, and the room so filled with tension that it seemed that any noise might make the building collapse. Minerva McGonagall seemed to sense it too, setting the gavel down gently to mark the completion of the bid instead of banging it as she had done for all previous ones.

Ginny turned and walked from the platform, waiting at the bottom next to a flower arrangement that she pretended to find fascinating and nearly missing the grateful hand-clasp between the two former colleagues.

"Shall we?" His voice was cool, and he took her arm and led her into the next room before she'd even processed the fact that he'd spoken to her.

"Y...you don't have to..." she started, cursing herself for her weakness. The fervency of his answer touched a fire from the place where he was holding her arm.

"Yes, I do."

He led her to the table where they signed the registry confirming the 'sale,' his hand never leaving her arm. The feeling made her both excited and anxious; she could sense a conflict in him, something that made his action tonight something a little more than kindness. Guiding her to a spot near the doorway, he stopped and took her other hand. Ginny tried to calm the leaping of her pulse, knowing with a sinking feeling how close it was to the full moon, how perceptive he was to the changes of body chemistry. She hoped he would associate her excitement and subsequent reactions to fear of what had almost happened to her.

"Hold on," he said to her, and then Apparated them both, without warning, to his flat.

"Oh!" she said, nearly stumbling against him in surprise. His arms went around her for a moment, steadying her, and she looked up at him. She saw a flicker of something in his eyes, the hazel lightening almost to a tawny before his hands left her and he moved away to stand by the fireplace. "I'm sorry," she said, meaning that she hadn't expected him to Apparate; she'd never experienced 'Side-Along Apparition' before, and it was a unique experience.

"You should be," he said, and the anger in his voice was unmistakable. Instantly she went from mildly apologetic to furiously angry. She hadn't *asked* him to help her! She was profoundly grateful, but he needn't make her feel like *this*. Ginny had never been one to back down from a challenge, and for all that she felt for this man, she wasn't going to let him treat her like a doormat.

"I *beg* your pardon?" she said, in a voice that did not. He still did not look at her.

"You should never have put yourself in that position," he said, and she saw with shock that his hand was shaking as he placed it on the mantelpiece.

"I... what?"

"He could have... you almost..." Lupin's normally controlled voice was shaking like his hand now, and Ginny started to feel a tiny bit of fear mixed with her rage. Who did he think he was, treating her like this? Her own father wouldn't have chastised her so vehemently, and yet, he seemed to think he'd just saved her from a fate worse than death.

"Oh, Remus," she said, deliberately using his given name, trying to remind him that she was twenty years old and not his student anymore. "It was only pretend..." she blanched at her own choice of words, correcting herself, "a *fake*. I would have been fine..."

"You think so?" Finally he turned to her, more in control now, a gentle smile with steel behind it on his face. She allowed her anger to show, mixed with confusion at his strange behavior; she nodded at him firmly. He seemed to be waiting for her to speak, arms crossed, leaning back in the easygoing position he often assumed when mediating between two of his colleagues. She opened her mouth.

"Silence," he said, not cruelly.

She gasped soundlessly...try as she might, she was unable to make a sound. The fear was on her in full, now, and he knew *had* to know...how she felt. Remus waved his wand and said, "You may speak." He moved to stand next to her, reaching out and holding her by her shoulders as if he wanted to shake her if she didn't listen to him.

"This auction isn't like the one that gave your father the idea," he said, urgently. "That register we signed...it bound you to me for a period of 5 hours." She stared at him, not quite comprehending the meaning of what he was telling her. Their eyes met, the contact feeling for Ginny almost more physical than his hands on her shoulders. His gaze drew her in, mesmerized her, enslaved her. He could feel it, she could tell. With a muttered oath that was very unlike him, he dragged his eyes from hers and stepped back, his hands tangling in the diaphanous length of fabric that still rested on her shoulders. She reached out and held him still as she gently unwound the fragile thing from his arm, feeling the way his pulse was racing under her fingertips and hoping it wasn't because he was angry. The fabric finally released, she stood there uncertainly, not wanting to let go of him and nearly terrified that he'd guess how she felt.

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It had been a long time since Remus had been this angry. He wasn't entirely sure where to direct his fury...Ginny had been naïve, but as connected as she was to the developers of the event, it would have given a very bad impression had she not chosen to participate. Lupin wondered what the younger Malfoy had been thinking...but his companion looked to be a little too overcome by their current situation to ask her opinion about it.

Remus supposed that focusing on his anger was better than any other emotion he might have been feeling just now. His instinct to protect and defend was still quite strong, and the girl at his side was shaking slightly as she held his arm. The fabric that had twisted around his hand now hung straight, lying against Ginny's body, her gentle curves accentuated by the delicate material. Neither of them spoke as his eyes traced the line of the shawl almost against his will, noting that it seemed to shiver with her every labored breath. He wasn't imagining the sense of attraction he was getting from her...it wasn't merely a reflection of how he felt. This knowledge coupled with the truth that she was, in fact, bound to him for a few more hours was a temptation that was difficult to ignore.

"You should get some sleep," he finally said, stepping away from her with a reluctance he hoped she wouldn't detect. Her thick lashes swept up as she stared at him in surprise.

"You think I can *sleep* at a time like this?"

Remus turned away from her; most women of his acquaintance were shrill, harsh when they were angry...but not Ginny. Her voice dropped to an almost sultry level, as though she'd learned that in a household full of manic activity, the still and quiet voice held the most power.

"I think it would be..." he searched for the most innocuous term to explain to her. "Safer."

"Safer for you, or safer for me, I wonder," Ginny commented in a low voice.

Lupin's fist clenched so tightly that his knuckles turned white, but that was the least of the tension he held in response to her astute observation.

"Both, I think," she whispered. He could feel the rustle of the soft fabric of her dress as she moved closer, wondering with a frisson of excitement that he tried to suppress just what she meant to accomplish by coming so close to him after what they'd just agreed. She was so close that he could smell her hair...

"Good night, Remus," Ginny said softly, kissing his shoulder and holding her lips there for a second longer than was proper. He had just decided that any consequences would be worth the price of wheeling about to crush her into his arms, teaching her not to play with fire...when she moved away, consciously or unconsciously leaving the diaphanous shoulder wrap at his feet on the floor.

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Ginny called herself a coward as she moved away from the stationary man with his back to her. He hadn't even moved to see where she was headed in his apartment, something that struck her as very telling for a man of such privacy. Her heart was racing; she wanted him...he almost certainly knew that, so close to the full moon...and she didn't care. The fact that he was allowing her to find a place to sleep unaided in his private space; *that* said more of his regard for her even than his successful rescue of her not an hour before. Ginny didn't allow herself to think about the delightful ramifications of why he hadn't objected to her exploration...the two most obvious reasons were exciting enough. Either he cared about and trusted her enough to feel comfortable with her intrusion...or he felt the same unyielding attraction that she did and refused

to succumb to it.

Ginny didn't think she would be able to sleep, even if he had the most comfortable bed in all of Britain.

That was the other thing that preoccupied her. Remus Lupin was not the richest of men (her heart ached with the knowledge of how much he must have spent in his rash decision to save her from Draco), and his small apartment didn't include a second bedroom. She would be sleeping in his bed.

Ginny would have gladly offered to rest on the couch in his sparse living room, but it would have taken more courage than she had in her body to walk out into that room to suggest it.

The next challenge was to figure out what to sleep in...her dress was far too flimsy to survive her typical sleeping style; she would need to find a shirt or some other article of clothing to sleep in. Ginny recalled the rules she'd skimmed over before signing beside Lupin's name; they included a provision that the following five hours must be spent in a certain proximity to the other person. It explained why she wasn't able to simply Apparate home (and why Remus had chosen to Apparate them together). It also meant that whatever Malfoy had planned for her would have lasted for...

Ginny didn't allow herself to finish that thought, focusing instead on an old worn-out Gryffindor shirt hanging in Remus' closet. She ran her hands lightly across the few other inhabitants hanging there before lifting the gold-colored shirt from its hanger and closing the door.

Ginny dressed quickly, carefully laying her green dress on the worn cushion of an ancient armchair that guarded the window. The shirt was more than enough to cover her, reaching below her elbows and halfway to her knees, although the neckline gravitated to her shoulder no matter how much she pulled at it. There was no mirror, and Ginny didn't need one...watching herself pull the well-loved quilt back from Lupin's pillow would have been a surreal experience anyway. As she settled into his bed, the faint scent of him filled her senses and lulled her to sleep, even as she told herself it would be impossible to relax knowing whose bed it was she rested in.

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The couch was uncomfortable, and it wasn't all that was keeping Lupin awake. He had told himself it was just the situation, gratitude for his having saved her...but Ginny Weasley had definitely felt the same attraction as he did, the signs were unmistakable. He hadn't been able to shake the feelings of desire, not even after he'd told himself cruelly that he just saw her as a substitute for Lily, rather than the person she really was.

It just wasn't true. His feelings for Ginny were based on her spirit, her intelligence, and the incredible will that had supported Harry and their other friends during the terrible battle, years before. He'd thought Harry had been a fool for letting her go...it had been clear to anyone with eyes that Ginny cared very deeply for Potter, but the scars of what the boy had had to do had been too great, too consuming for him to open up to her.

Remus shifted positions, frustrated with himself and his inability to drive the woman in the other room from his mind. He'd almost managed to get to sleep until the realization of where she almost certainly was...in his bed...had jolted him wide awake. The worst part was that although the spell's influence would expire in not too long, he knew he couldn't simply wake her and send her home. He would have to spend the entire night with the knowledge that the woman he wanted was asleep in his bed.

Suddenly, he heard a whimpering coming from the wall to his left, the one that separated his bedroom from the living room. Instantly he was on his feet, slippers forgotten as he raced to find out if she was all right.

Ginny was curled up in a ball, clutching one of his pillows and crying piteously. Remus approached her carefully, unwilling to frighten her further if she were still asleep, but she turned her head when the floorboard creaked and reached out for him with one hand. He moved swiftly; her fetal position left him plenty of space to sit, and he allowed her to grasp his hand and draw it to her chest as though the warmth of his touch could drive away her fears.

"I get... nightmares," she gasped out, clearly trying to calm herself but the terror from her latest dream was still too near. "Since... Tom." The confession seemed to wring the worst of it from her, and her body shook with what he could sense was fear, grief, and shame.

It was the last of these that caused him to lift her shivering body onto his lap, encasing her in his arms and murmuring comforting things in her ear. It made a difference; the strength of her emotions began to fade, and she was able to breathe normally again.

"Better?" he asked in the gentlest voice he could muster.

"Yes," she said, a little of her personality showing as she added, "Can you order me not to get those?"

Remus knew that she wasn't quite serious, but he still rested a hand on either side of her face and looked into her deep brown eyes with a sense of purpose.

"No more nightmares," he said softly. Ginny shut her eyes tightly, as though holding the compulsion as close as she could...and as she did so a single tear was released, coursing down her cheek and across his palm, following the contours of his hand until he felt the tingling presence of it on his wrist. It was one of the most intimate experiences of his life, and when she opened her eyes again, it was the reflection of his reaction to it that she saw in his eyes.

She looked at him, steadily and unafraid, and then turned her face to press a fervent kiss on his palm.

"Ginny," he said warningly.

"Order me not to," she suggested, lifting herself up with one arm, the action causing his old Gryffindor shirt to slip off of her shoulder. His hand left her face, reaching out to adjust the fabric to be less revealing, but instead his thumb brushed against the soft skin, caressing it as he'd wanted to do earlier in the evening. He was suddenly very aware that he was in his own bedroom, with Ginny Weasley on his lap in nothing but an old shirt...his old shirt. He groaned involuntarily, and she sat up, supported in part by the hand that had slipped around her, following the soft skin to the nape of her neck.

"Ginny," he said again, this time in a pleading voice.

"Yes, sir?" she asked in that low voice of hers, speaking softly as her head rested against his shoulder, her lips mere inches from his throat. Her tone reminded him of their prior relationship, reminded him that she was a woman now, reminded him that he had a power over her that he'd spent his entire bank account on just to save her from an unknown fate at the hands of their enemy.

Remus only had so much self-control, and it was all gone.

"Kiss me," he said, the words drawn from him as if it were painful, the sound of his voice both pleading and authoritative.

"Yes, sir," Ginny said, the heat of her breath teasing the hairs on his neck. She kissed the hollow of his throat, pausing to nuzzle his pulse, before moving up and capturing his earlobe.

Remus felt as though his whole body was on fire. In a fluid motion, he lifted her from his lap and lay her back on the bed, pinning her there roughly in a manner that left nothing to the imagination.

"Ginny," he said in a low growl, his voice muffled by the fact that he was kissing her throat in a mirror of her ministrations earlier. She merely sighed in response and arched her back, making him growl again. "I said, *kiss me!*" he ordered, knowing that the contract they'd signed compelled her to obey him. Ginny lifted her head and her lower body at once, maximizing their bodies' contact as she tipped her head to the side and parted her lips.

"It wore off," she whispered, a split second before she kissed him.