

Betrayal

by *jmlane57*

Harry returns home to Ginny after the Second Wizarding War carrying a unpleasant secret which will affect not only them but all those around them for a long time to come.

Harry's Confession

Chapter 1 of 11

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A/N: Set six months after Deathly Hallows, but takes place before the events of the 19 years prior to the Epilogue, so Ginny is definitely of age (seventeen) here. No DH spoilers, but most definitely AU. H/Hr at first, but ends up being Harry/Ginny and R/Hr.

1 - Harry's Confession

Ginny was stunned, her face virtually devoid of colour as they sat by the pond at the Burrow, Harry's shocking revelation just beginning to sink in. "You're *what*?"

"I'm going to be a ... father," he quietly confessed. "'Mione ... she got pregnant while we were out searching for Horcruxes."

Ginny recalled that Harry had broken up with her shortly before the Trio had left on their quest, and so...at least technically...didn't have to answer to her for his conduct. But that was beside the point. The point was, she'd never stopped loving him and had always assumed he would return and resume their relationship, because their breakup had (supposedly) been simply to keep her safe: or so he'd said. But now ... Knowing how insufferably noble Harry was, he would likely decide to "make an honest woman" of Hermione since they had not been married at the time she had become pregnant.

"But ... what about Ron? I thought he and 'Mione were ..."

"They had another fight, she came to me for comfort, and it ... just got totally out of hand. I'm sorry, Gin ... but you know what I have to do."

"Oh, yes, I know," she returned bitterly. "For all I know, you've wanted to shag her all along and were just using me until you could manage to *get* her alone long enough." Ginny's pain and bitterness was palpable, and in spite of himself Harry felt shame and regret at how much this was hurting her...but it was best that she get the news straight from him or else she'd be hurt even more.

"I'm truly sorry to have to hurt you, Gin," he returned quietly, his heart aching for her pain but knowing there was little he could do to ease it, especially since he had been the one to cause it in the first place. "And for your information, I *never* used you. I cared deeply for you; you have to know that. Those weeks with you were like something out of another life, like literally living the most beautiful dream ever. You made me the happiest I'd ever been, and I'll never forget what we've shared--not for as long as I live. What I told you about my feelings was true, every word of it. I couldn't let Voldemort get hold of you, couldn't let you accompany us, because he would have used you against me, just as surely as the sun rises and sets. And I'll never stop caring for you. *Never.*" His last word had special emphasis, and she knew he meant it.

Even at that, his words couldn't take away her pain. Not now, not ever. They had never gone all the way, simply held several passionate snogging sessions, and she had

felt his arousal many times as he held her...but somehow, for some unexplainable reason, Harry couldn't bring himself to take that final step with her ... and yet, he had managed to do so with Hermione, even if it had supposedly been unintentional. Well, unintentional or not, it was done now...and everyone concerned had to live with the consequences, as painful as they would surely be, especially for her.

"But you're marrying *her*. You managed to go all the way with her and never did with me. What's more, despite your claims, you couldn't have wanted to stop it, at least not consciously, or else you'd have found a way to do it." She turned away from him, her arms crossed and her hands clutching tightly, her throat aching from the tears she was holding back. "Didn't you think of me *at all* while you were shagging her? Did you think for *even one moment* of how I might feel if I found out what you did?" she bit out, her voice quiet but full of anguish. "Obviously not. Your bloody hormones got the best of you, and all you were thinking about was shagging, not the potential heartbreak your actions might cause."

"For Merlin's sake, Gin, surely you know I didn't cold-bloodedly *plan* this. It was an accident, pure and simple. Even Contraceptive Charms aren't 100% foolproof."

"Especially when you don't bother to use them," Ginny returned ruefully, remembering Hermione's own shocking revelation and profuse apology even as she forced out an equally bitter laugh. "I can imagine how Ron must have felt when he heard." She sighed sadly. "Well, I suppose I can't stop you. But don't expect me to like the idea...and most importantly, don't expect me to be a part of it. It would hurt too much, knowing you belong to someone else. Especially *her*. Hermione Granger the brain, who always got everything I ever wanted...and now she's getting the man I love as well."

She began to walk away, every swallow painful even as her eyes brimmed with tears. For so many years she had hoped, dreamed, prayed that Harry would belong to her one day ... but in the end, the one she loved most had betrayed her. She supposed she couldn't blame him, but that knowledge didn't make it hurt any less. "Oh well, I suppose I should have expected this at some point, since the two of you have always spent so much time together. Nor could I have retained any respect for your integrity if you *didn't* take responsibility for the child."

"Gin, please, don't let it end this way. If I had a choice, I'd take it back in a minute," Harry insisted.

Ginny whirled on him. "No, you wouldn't. You wouldn't do anything to hurt Hermione. Not your *friend*. Your bloody *friend* who's going to have your baby! Never mind your best friend's tagalong little sister's silly crush on you that turned into love. That's no longer important ... if it ever truly was. Goodbye, Harry. I wish you every happiness. You deserve it. I just wish that it could be me giving you that happiness." That was as much as Ginny could force out before the tears started coming thick and fast, and she had to get away from him but quick before she made a total arse of herself. With that, she fled before she could do anything else, soon leaving him behind, just as he had once left *her* behind. "I've got to go now, get on with the rest of my life...or more precisely, what's left of it."

"Gin! No! Come back! *Gin!*" She forced herself to ignore the pleading in his voice and dashed into the house, then up to her room, the astonished faces of her family mere blurs as she ran past, blinded by tears that just wouldn't stop and pain that seemed unceasing. Once inside her room, she warded the door shut and placed a Silencing Charm on it so she could be alone in her misery, and no one would disturb her...least of all, Harry sodding Potter!

Ginny then threw herself on her bed and allowed her terrible grief--the horrendous, almost unbearable pain inside her almost literally tearing her apart--to take possession of her, the tears soaking her pillow even as she was unsure if she would ever leave her room again, much less have any kind of life after this. As soon as she could manage to think clearly again, she would start making plans for the rest of her life ... a life without her heart, no, her very soul. A life...no, an *existence*...without Harry.

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Even as he ran after Ginny, Harry knew he'd just been the biggest, most unthinking and insensitive prat who had ever lived. Gin had needed to know what he'd told her, but he didn't have to just blurt it out like that. He should have done it more diplomatically, but frankly didn't see any way he could have. Just the same, he couldn't let it end like this, with bad feelings between himself and Ginny. They had shared far too much together for that.

And come to think of it, *why hadn't* they ever gone all the way? Certainly not for lack of wanting to! But instead, his first time had been with the girl his best mate loved, the one he had always thought of as the sister he'd never had ... at least until three months ago. Even at that, there was more he needed to say...and couldn't take No for an answer. Harry pressed a note into Molly's hand: *Molly, I must speak privately with Ginny. Please see that we're not disturbed.* She opened and read it, then smiled. With that, he followed Ginny upstairs to the third floor landing where her room was.

He realised the charms she'd placed on her door and couldn't let them stop him. Besides, he knew how to counteract them. She'd obviously forgotten that. After doing so, he entered the room and Ginny all but screamed, "Get out, you bloody bastard!"

"Not until you listen to me," Harry shot back.

"I don't care to listen to anything you have to say," she raged through her tears. "So if you value your ruddy bits, you'll make yourself scarce and never darken my door again!"

"Then I'll Apparate," Harry returned calmly. "You didn't let me finish before."

"I think you've made yourself all too clear, Harry. Now I strongly suggest you leave before you get a Bat-Bogey Hex between the eyes!"

"I'll take my chances. I intend to get through to you, whatever I have to do." With that, he warded the door himself so no one could interfere, then cast a Silencing Charm of his own before returning his attention to Ginny. He then moved to pin her to the bed with his hands and body, making sure that she would be unable to hit him in a vulnerable spot before continuing.

"Let me up, damn you!" she spat, wanting nothing more than to wipe that insufferably confident look off his face by raking her nails across it.

Harry simply moved further on top of her, licking, nipping and kissing every bit of bare skin he could reach. "Dear Godric, Gin, you're so sweet. Just good enough to eat. And now that you mention it, you're right. We never *did* go all the way. But you know something? It wasn't for lack of wanting to ... so why don't we, while I'm still single?"

"No!"

"Why not? You're sexy, you're gorgeous ..."

"And you're randy," she retorted, squirming beneath him, doing her utmost (and failing) to avoid his eager lips and hungry body. "Besides, you've forgotten *ohh* you're supposed to be getting married soon. You should be with your fiancée, not me. Harry, no, please don't *oh, gods* ... And what makes you think she won't *moan* hex you into next year for hitting on me? In addition, you make one *louder moan* Harry, *stop* ... wrong move and my brothers and parents will be on you like a storm of locusts!"

"I doubt it," her antagonist returned confidently even as he continued to move sensuously against her. He felt light-headed upon nuzzling her neck and inhaling her flowery scent, her sweet body moving beneath him, her moans and movements inflaming him almost beyond control. "I already told your mum what I intended to do, you see. She'll keep everyone away until we're finished."

"Finished? Doing what? After the stunt you've pulled, I'm not *kiss* doing a *moan* bloody thing with you!"

"Oh, yes, you are," came the crooning reply. "One other thing. Has anyone ever told you that you talk entirely too much? There are much better things we can do with our lips." He cut her off with a kiss, not letting her speak again for a long time, even as he pushed her legs apart with one knee to lie between them.

"Damn you, Harry!" Ginny once again moaned with pleasure in spite of herself as he held her wrists in one hand and found her nearest breast after finally releasing her lips, then vanishing her blouse and bra. "Isn't ... Hermione enough for you? Why must you keep hitting on me?"

"That's not important right now. All that matters is us. Now shut up and kiss me."

"One last question."

"Yeah?"

"Do you intend to do this after you get married?"

"You'll find out," Harry growled seductively. "Now quiet. We're wasting time." With that, his kisses and caresses deepened, soon becoming intimate even as Ginny damned herself to the ninth circle of Wizarding Hell for her weakness where Harry was concerned before giving herself to him completely and unreservedly after he had vanished the rest of her clothes, knickers and all, as well as his own.

Harry and Hermione Marry

Chapter 2 of 11

Harry and Hermione marry. Ron and Ginny attend them but one can imagine the feelings roiling beneath the surface.

2 - Harry and Hermione Marry

While this little interlude was going on, Hermione was explaining the situation to Molly with Ron standing by, listening, still scarcely able to believe it was really happening and unable to speak when his mother looked at him for further explanation. "If Harry's going to marry you, why is he so intent on going after Ginny? After all, he gave me a note to that effect."

"Maybe he's doing all he can to make sure she understands just why he's doing it," was all Hermione could say. Probably the most inane thing she'd ever said, but it was all she could think of.

"Are you going to allow him to cheat on you? That's not what marriage is all about. Husbands and wives are supposed to devote themselves to each other, not have outside lovers."

"You know that Harry generally does what he wants to do, regardless of what anyone else thinks, just like his father did. I have no doubt he'll take good care of me, be loving and attentive and all that, but at the same time..."

Molly held up a hand. "If he still has romantic feelings for Ginny, the two of you shouldn't get married. Not until those are resolved, anyway."

"Oh, I doubt those will ever be resolved. Besides, I think he wants to have something to fall back on in case the marriage falls through. He's mainly doing this to give the child legitimacy and a name. Technically he doesn't need to do it, but you know his insufferable nobility. I'm carrying his child, so he feels a moral obligation to 'make an honest woman' of me. Whatever happens, I feel sure that Harry will be discreet, so I'm not too worried about that."

"But you're pregnant. How is all this going to look to your child once they're old enough?"

"We've already agreed to concern ourselves with that when the time comes ... and that time isn't now. What we need to do now is start making plans for the wedding. Here's what I think we should do ..."

* * * * *

And so it happened...and Ginny found herself wrapped up in the plans for the wedding against her will. Hermione wouldn't have anyone else as her maid of honour, and they even chose the kind of dress each would wear, the kind which would accommodate the bride-to-be's growing pregnancy (by the time of the wedding, Hermione was just beginning to show). They chose pale blue, lacy, Empire-waisted, scoop-necked and sleeveless dresses, their bouquets with white roses, which Hermione had charmed to look blue. She and Ginny would carry them both in their bouquets, along with white lilies. They would also each wear a circlet of the same flowers around their heads, Hermione in lieu of a veil. If it had been her, Ginny would have wanted both a circlet of flowers and a veil, but what she would have done was immaterial. This was Hermione's wedding, not hers ... and at this rate, it would never be hers.

Harry had naturally chosen Ron as his best man, despite the fact that it was likely to hurt him because he still loved Hermione, even though he understood--at least intellectually--why Harry was doing this. Just the same, Ginny knew her brother had to be hurting just as much as she was ... and for the same reason: the ones they loved were marrying each other, not them. Molly still believed it was wrong for them to do it when they still had strong feelings for other people, but she knew how strong-willed each of the young people concerned were, and they wouldn't have it any other way.

They were doing this for their coming child. Not that Harry didn't have great affection for Hermione; it just wasn't the kind of affection one should feel for one's intended wife. And technically it had been wrong for him to go after Ginny on the eve of his wedding, but he had felt too strongly to resist her ... and what's more, she had been unable to resist him, either. She could only hope that she herself wouldn't become pregnant because of that night, because she had not expected to shag him and had therefore had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to cast one of the popular Contraceptive Charms. So far she felt all right, the fluttering in her stomach no more than the usual jitters...but just when she thought she might eventually learn to endure, that was when her eyes would meet Harry's and they would be filled with equal parts apology, regret, and great longing.

He had done his best not to do it where Hermione could see him, but she was smart enough to know what both her friend and intended husband had to be feeling for each other, despite his plans to marry her for the sake of giving their child legitimacy and a name, both of them fully prepared to sacrifice their happiness in favour of the baby's. Harry would look after her, protect her and the child, provide for them as best he could ... but at the same time, Hermione knew where his heart truly lay.

She would especially know after he had made love to her. She might be the one in his arms, in his bed, but Ginny was the one in his mind and heart. Harry had gone through all the motions of being an attentive fiancé, at least publicly, but now, as he heard the wedding music begin, had to get through the public façade of a wedding. This hadn't been the kind of wedding he had envisioned, and certainly not the bride he had envisioned, but he had a moral obligation to take responsibility for her care and the care of the coming child.

He would do everything he could to make her as happy as possible, but being a bad liar, how long he could keep up the pretense was a matter for debate. Unfortunately,

they both had to make the best of it and do all they could to stick it out until after the child was born and Hermione recovered from her pregnancy. Of course it was possible that his feelings (and hers) could change, that they could actually fall in love with each other, but even as they stood before the Head of the Wizengamot, who had the authority to perform Wizarding marriages, both of them knew that that was extremely unlikely. However, stranger things had happened, so they couldn't rule it out.

Ginny did her best to wish them both happiness even as tears filled her eyes at their farewell just before going off on the honeymoon. Her and Harry's eyes once again met with a mixture of apology, regret and great longing. As they embraced, he whispered, "I'm sorry, Gin. I'll always love you ... but 'Mione is my wife now, and I must devote myself to her and my child."

She felt too much to reply; she just held him tightly and he held her, their eyes meeting one last time before Hermione called him to join her for the honeymoon trip, their gazes telling each other everything they dared not say, especially now, knowing that this was likely to be one of the last times they would hold each other, one of the last times that either would feel the other's warmth and closeness. "Every happiness to you, Harry. As I said before, you deserve it. But you'd better go now. Hermione's waiting for you."

She forced herself to release him after touching his cheek for a moment; he closed his eyes in a mixture of pain and pleasure at her touch, then tore himself away and went to join his wife, who had been released a short time before from the embrace of the best man. The next thing she knew, the engine of Harry's new Muggle automobile started up. That was when everyone called out best wishes and threw rice, which has happened at weddings, both Muggle and Wizarding, for time immemorial, both upon leaving the place of marriage and when leaving for the honeymoon. There was even a sign saying "Just Married" on the back of the car, placed there with a Sticking Charm. Their bags had even been packed before the wedding and placed in the boot of the car.

Her and Harry's eyes met one last time as she blew him a kiss of farewell, then she turned and fled, mercifully missing the look of pain he sent after her, watching her as long as he dared before he had to leave. Molly's eyes took in the whole thing, seeing the heartbreak in her baby girl's eyes even as she wished her friend and Harry happiness. Then she turned and went back into the house. Ginny's eyes met those of her mother for a moment, and she smiled bravely as she said, "I want to be alone for a while, Mum. Please see that I'm not disturbed."

"Of course, darling," Molly returned, smiling as reassuringly as she could, her heart aching for both her youngest child and the nobility of the one she loved, nobility which had made him break both their hearts yet again in order to fulfill his duty to the mother of his child. She understood why he had done it, but that didn't make it any easier for her to see it going on or endure the suffering both were going through because of it. But it was what Harry had chosen to do, and his decision had to be accepted as the right one, however much they might disagree with it.

Neither did it help matters that Ginny and Harry weren't the only ones suffering. Molly had seen the same pain in her youngest son's eyes as he had stood by helplessly while Harry had kissed the girl he, Ron, loved, the kiss which had made them husband and wife. And sure enough, shortly after Ginny had gone inside the house, Ron followed suit, meeting his mother's eyes but saying nothing even though she knew he wanted the same thing...to be left alone to figure out what he was going to do next. What could they expect their lives to be like after this? That was a question with no answer ... not for any of them. All she could do was simply wait it out and see what turned up, just like everyone else.

Five Months Later

Chapter 3 of 11

Harry contacts those at the Burrow to tell them of the birth of his and Hermione's child...and what happens when he and Ginny see each other again is predictable.

3 - Five Months Later

Ginny was in the kitchen of the Burrow when Hedwig flew in the window with an envelope in her beak. She plucked it out and opened it, pulling out the single sheet of parchment after patting the bird on the head and giving her some treats from the can of same they kept on the kitchen windowsill. Her heart gave a painful lurch upon recognising the handwriting.

To everyone at the Burrow ...

Meet me at St. Mungo's. Hermione just had her baby. It's a boy. I'm going to need moral support.

Harry

Ginny grabbed some parchment and scribbled a return note, then handed it to Hedwig and sent her on her way.

Harry ...

We're on our way. Congratulations on your new son. Can hardly wait to see him.

Ginny

"Mum, we've got an owl post!" she called.

Harry thanked everyone for coming, even though it was only Molly, Arthur and Ginny. Ron had claimed he couldn't get off work, but all knew the real reason he hadn't wanted to go. Just the same, they also knew that he couldn't avoid the issue forever. Ginny understood how he felt, but sooner or later the situation would have to be dealt with ... and she felt better being in the thick of things anyway, even if it hurt. She found it was easier if she remembered that Harry and Hermione were still her friends, if nothing else, and it was her duty to show friendship.

She carefully avoided Harry's eyes, however, at least for a time, since he could read what was in them better than almost anyone except her mother. However, she sat beside Hermione as she rested in her hospital bed, holding the baby with Harry's hair and, if they were lucky, his eyes as well. Which reminded her ...

"Do you know what colour eyes the baby has, 'Mione?" she asked. "He looks so much like Harry that I wouldn't be surprised if he had his eyes as well."

"No, I don't know yet," Hermione confessed. "The eye colour is a distinct possibility, of course, but it's just as likely that he'll have my eyes ... or even those of my father. He has blue eyes. It's Mum who has brown eyes, and I got them from her."

"When did you start your labour?"

"About three-thirty this morning. I felt bad about it too because I had to wake Harry from a sound sleep, but once he realised that the baby was coming, he ..." Hermione seemed to remember who she was talking to and decided not to speak anymore. Merlin knew this was hard enough for Ginny to endure without her rhapsodising about how happy she was to be a mother.

However, Ginny seemed to sense this and said, "Don't worry, 'Mione. You have a right to be happy. Not every day one becomes a mother. I'd feel the same way in your shoes." Her voice seemed to lower with every word, and Hermione could guess why even as her eyes lowered, Ginny's no longer able to meet those of her friend who was married to the man she herself still loved.

Ginny's actions were not lost on Hermione. "Something wrong, Gin?"

"No, 'Mione. I'm just so ... happy. The baby is ... beautiful. So ..." Ginny couldn't talk anymore over the lump in her throat.

Fortunately she was able to flee when Hermione's parents, new grandparents, came in and joined them, oohing and ahing over their new grandson. But Molly, surrogate mother for Harry, noticed her departure, as well as Harry himself. He got up from his place on the other side of Hermione, released her hand and gave her a kiss on the cheek, their eyes meeting with a mixture of knowledge and sadness before meeting Molly's eyes, shaking his head at her and following Ginny out. This was something he had to do alone, without an audience.

He found her walking alone in the waiting room a short distance away, hands clutching her arms and head bowed ... and if his eyes weren't deceiving him, her shoulders were shaking. Harry knew why they were shaking and had to at least try to ease her pain, if only a little, speaking in a soft, tender voice.

"Gin ..." he called softly.

"Leave me alone, Harry. You've done enough."

"I'm sorry, Gin."

"That and twenty Sickles will get me a cup of coffee," she returned bitterly. "Or better yet, a shot of Firewhisky—if not a whole bottle, which would set me back a Galleon or two. I'd like to have something to make me forget this waking nightmare."

"I know how you must feel, Gin," Harry tried to say in a soothing voice as he reached for her shoulder to turn her around to face him.

She threw off his hand. "You don't have any idea whatsoever how I feel!" she snapped, keeping her back to him even as tears brimmed in her eyes and her throat ached from trying to hold them back. It was likely that her arms would have bruises on them by the end of this, but at least that pain she could stand. The pain of knowing that Harry was married with a family was something else again. And married to someone else to boot! "You have no idea whatsoever how much I wish it were me in that bed, holding that black-haired baby boy, bearing your name, wearing your ring! But that's immaterial now. You should be with your wife and child, not out here with me."

"What if I want to be here?" He tried to put his arms around her, but Ginny moved away.

"No. You belong to another. What we had is in the past."

"Legally, not emotionally," he informed her. "I still love you, and 'Mione knows it."

"So you intend to cheat on her after only five months of marriage?"

"It's not a matter of cheating. Just following my heart. You know how long I denied it. Well, I've decided not to deny it anymore." And before she could stop him, he pulled her close and kissed her passionately, his strong but gentle arms locking around her waist. It was a long time before he was able to let go of her lips, then moved his to the pulse point in her throat even as his hands pulled her tightly against him, and he moved sensuously against her, moaning softly. "You don't know how much I've missed you, Gin. You're all I dream about every night. Don't tell me you don't dream of me every night. I won't believe it. We shared too much for that—and if I have my way, we'll share even more."

"Harry, no, please ..." But it was as if Ginny hadn't spoken at all, his hungry lips and hands roaming over every possible inch of bare skin he could reach. Finally, she simply gave up to the avalanche of feeling inside her and stroked the back of his neck, unable to think any more as she moaned softly against his lips when he pressed her even closer.

"Is there a bathroom or broom closet close by? I don't know how much longer I can wait," he growled. "These last five months have been the longest of my life!"

"A couple of corridors over, I think," she murmured before he silenced her with his lips again. Once they found it, they both ducked inside. Harry thought a nonverbal Locking and Silencing Charm in the direction of the door, then both lovers made up for lost time with the proverbial vengeance.

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When the pair finally rejoined the others, Molly was able to tell that more than just simple comforting had gone on, even though that was what Harry said he had done. But their suspiciously bright eyes and Christmas-morning smiles told an entirely different story. Her mother's intuition told her that Ginny had never stopped loving Harry and likely never would, even though he was at least technically married. Maybe this was what Hermione had been referring to when she said she doubted his feelings for Ginny would ever be resolved.

Just the same, it wasn't right to cheat on one's spouse, whatever the circumstances of the marriage and even if Hermione had gone into it expecting Harry to do it at some point. And she was right. Before she had gone for the evening, Harry had slipped her another note asking if he could be with Ginny that night since Hermione was going to be in the hospital for the next several days. She found herself nodding (albeit with misgivings) but if it made him and Ginny happy, who was she to deny them?

Confrontations

Chapter 4 of 11

Hermione confronts Ginny about her liaison with Harry, just as Ginny confronts him with the news that she is pregnant.

4: Confrontations

Even after Hermione and the baby were home, Ginny found herself helping out as much as she could, but always made sure to leave before Harry returned from work. Otherwise neither of them would ever be able to hide what they had been doing from Hermione. The latest time she had done so and prepared to Floo back to the Burrow, Hermione stopped her with a hand on her shoulder.

"Ginny, I know you and Harry are seeing each other on the side. Don't worry, though. I expected it at some point. Just the same, I expect you both to be discreet."

"I don't mean to encourage him to cheat on you," she returned regretfully. "But I just can't stay away from him."

"I know. I can't blame you ... but don't try to fool me anymore. I know both of you too well. I see what's in your hearts when I look into your eyes and whenever the two of you speak of each other, and even when you don't. Harry still loves you, and you still love him. Not even his marriage to me has changed that. I don't think anything can."

"But he married *you*," Ginny pointed out.

"For the sake of our child. You're the one he thinks about, dreams about, and speaks about in his sleep."

"I can imagine how that makes you feel. To have his name and his baby, yet know that someone else has his heart."

"It hurts a bit, I admit, but usually I'm too busy thinking about Ron. I'm close to Harry's heart, sure, but you're closer." Hermione gave her friend a knowing smile. "So that makes us even. Which reminds me ... I'm so sorry to hurt Ron like this. I wish I could tell him how I truly feel, but he's been avoiding me ever since the wedding, and it's gotten worse since the baby's been born."

"Well, you know that Ron's not one to go after a married woman. Especially not one married to his best friend."

"But surely he knows why we did it. This is ridiculous!"

"Of course he knows, but he can't shake his lifelong training ... so I doubt he'll approach you again until and unless you and Harry split up." Ginny gave her a hopeful look, not daring to voice her unspoken wish, but Hermione knew nonetheless.

"It's possible, but just the same, don't push it. If it's meant to be, it'll happen."

Ginny knew that Hermione was referring to more than just their secret wishes. If Harry chose to stay married to Hermione, again for the sake of the child, yet keep Ginny as a side dish, both she and Ron would have to accept it, and his pride would keep him a respectful distance from Hermione despite his lingering feelings for her. In fact, Ginny wouldn't blame him if he eventually married someone else.

Ginny also was surprised that her mother was going along with her affair with Harry. It might even be that one puppydog look from him and Molly melted just like Ginny herself did. Well, maybe not precisely like Ginny herself did, but enough so that she overlooked things she would ordinarily *never* overlook, such as adultery. Of course, Harry was *extraordinary*, so maybe that had something to do with it. At any rate, the best any of them could do was go with the flow and live with the status quo until and if circumstances changed.

Which they did...but not for the better. It was about a month after Hermione gave birth to Harry's son, whom they had named Solomon Harrison. Harry wasn't too fond of the boy's first name, at least at first, but relented when Hermione told him that it meant "wise" and pointed out the likelihood that the boy would end up inheriting her brains anyway. But unfortunately, he had bigger problems to worry about at the moment, other than being married to someone he only loved as a friend and loving someone he could treat only as a friend ... at least in public.

Ginny had been showing more temper than usual and looking as pale as a ghost, Molly having reported that she hadn't eaten more than absolutely necessary for several days. He recalled that Ginny had not had the chance to use any Contraceptive Charms any of the times they had shagged, even just since the baby had been born (and there had been several), so there was a distinct possibility that she was pregnant. Just what he needed to know when trying to establish himself as an Auror after the vanquishing of Voldemort.

Harry couldn't be sure how Molly and the other Weasleys would end up treating him if it was confirmed that Ginny was pregnant with his child. For that matter, how could he be sure how Ginny herself would treat him once her pregnancy had been confirmed? The last thing she would want was to be reminded of the fact that she had given in to him, albeit against her better judgment. If he did that, she was likely to hex him...and not just the Bat-Bogey thing, either. In that event, maybe he had best learn a nonverbal Shield Charm to protect himself if she tried to blame him for it all and he found himself obliged to remind her that it had taken both of them to put her in the present situation.

He had every intention of acknowledging the child as his own, of course; that had never been in doubt ... but privately, so as not to embarrass Hermione. He was still debating on how to explain Ginny being pregnant and unmarried; one option was to claim that she was a surrogate mother, that she was carrying another child for him and Hermione since it had been determined she couldn't have any more without risking her life and had thus been sterilised.

Not true, of course, but better than the truth of his adultery becoming public. Also, his willingness to acknowledge the child and support both it and Ginny was likely to be the only thing keeping the male members of Ginny's family, among others, from hexing his bits off. This problem aside, Harry knew that he wanted as many children as possible, if only to make up for his having been not only an only child but an orphan, so he couldn't allow that to happen.

He had even made Ginny promise to see a Healer and let him know the details of what she found out...and pressed his point that he would take financial responsibility from the get-go, starting from the initial diagnosis of her pregnancy. Neither could anyone be sure that Hermione didn't already know of the pregnancy, having been pregnant herself and thus able to recognise the symptoms, even if they had tried to keep it from her. Neither could it improve Ginny's disposition if Harry decided to make love to his wife once the traditional six weeks without sex so Hermione could heal from her pregnancy was up.

Marrying someone to legitimise an unintentional pregnancy was one thing; intentionally resuming sexual relations after the pregnancy was over and one had recovered from it was something else again. Harry was sure that it would prove once and for all that his feelings for Hermione had changed from friendly love to romantic love ... or at least that would be her likely attitude, and he couldn't be sure that she wouldn't be expecting him to at least make the attempt or that she herself wouldn't approach him on the subject.

He had to admit Hermione was a beautiful woman, and he couldn't help but be attracted to her, but romantically speaking, the first person he thought of was Ginny. Harry didn't want to insult Hermione, but didn't know if he could manage to refuse her without doing just that. The situation in which Hermione had originally become pregnant had been a fluke, and if he forced himself, she would likely be smart enough to tell due to the lack of spontaneity, and that would insult her just as much as it would if he refused outright to resume sexual relations with her.

It was a real dilemma...and a dilemma Harry had never dreamed would ever happen to him ... but here he was, right in the middle of it. And on top of that, he had gotten his ... well, mistress was the most accurate word ... pregnant as well. It was really too bad that he couldn't get Ron to go after Hermione, but there were two problems with that scenario. Ron wasn't one to go after another man's wife...or more specifically, his best friend's wife ... nor would Harry ordinarily even consider encouraging another man to go after his wife. But then, Harry had never pictured himself being married to a woman he only loved as a friend, not someone he loved romantically, as had always been his intention when and if he got married.

His own "stupid nobility" had gotten him into this; after all, as had been pointed out to him time and again, he could simply have acknowledged paternity as he was doing in the present situation and supported his child without having to marry the girl in question. Unfortunately the deed had already been done, so he had to think of a way to get

through this with both relationships intact ... if he could. Otherwise he might have to let Hermione go and dissolve the marriage, but arrange to continue the child support and alimony for her until and if she found work and/or remarried.

One scenario would be that he would be able to marry the one he truly loved. On the other hand, if she ended up refusing him (he preferred not to think of that possibility, but it was one he had to keep in mind), he would have no choice but to give her child support and request visitation rights from both mothers of his children. There was also no guarantee he would get it, of course, even though technically he should. In the event of a worst-case scenario and both women going to work, maybe he could offer to be a "Mr. Mom" and look after the babies while Hermione and Ginny went to their jobs ... use his inheritance to live on until the children became school-age, then he could consider going back to work.

He knew that Ginny had once mentioned wanting to become a Healer and Hermione a teacher; well, he would gladly support them in both pursuits and knew they both would be excellent at them. He hoped for the best, naturally, but in the event of a worst-case scenario, he would have to keep that as an option. For the time being, however, all he could do was do his best by both ladies...and to do that, he would need to acknowledge paternity of both children and give Hermione and Ginny the proper financial support.

* * * * *

When Ginny owed him a couple of days later, Harry suspected that he knew what she wanted to see him about...and they made arrangements to meet in a secluded yet more-or-less public place so they would have to control themselves, at least for a time. The Leaky Cauldron, for instance ... or more specifically, one of the more out-of-the-way booths. She was already there when he Apparated in and slid in across from her, a butterbeer sitting at each of their places.

"Well, what's the verdict?" he asked without preamble.

"It's positive," she returned quietly. "Harry, what are we...what am I...going to do? I'm pregnant and not married!"

"Don't worry, Gin, I'll take care of things," he assured her, reaching to take her hands in his.

"You already have a wife and child to think about," she pointed out. "How do you plan to keep this under wraps?" Her eyes pierced him like daggers for a moment even as her hands tightened on his. "Especially from Hermione?"

"She already knows," he reminded her. "And what's more, she's willing to let me go if you and I both wish it. However, I don't think it would be a good idea to instigate divorce proceedings when she's not fully recovered from her pregnancy yet."

"How long is that supposed to take?"

"The Healer said at least three months, if all goes well, but if any complications develop, it may be longer. I also think it best if you stay near your parents and keep in touch with St. Mungo's, if only for safety's sake."

"You know how far along I'll be if it's six months before 'Mione is fully recovered," Ginny pointed out. "After that, I won't be able to go out in public without some kind of cover story."

"I'm working on that," came the reply. "We should be able to think of something in time, with any luck." This time his hands tightened on hers. "*You would* still like to marry me, wouldn't you?"

"Of course, but I can't...at least not right now...for obvious reasons. Even if we can't do it immediately, though, I assume you're going to take full responsibility for both my and our child's financial well-being, so my parents won't have to shoulder the burden."

"As I said, I'll take care of things. I have plenty of money."

"May I also assume that you intend to give the child your name even if you can't give it to me right away?"

The look Harry gave his companion told her everything she needed to know. "But what if I decided not to marry you, or if you decided to stay with Hermione?"

"Possible, but unlikely," he opined. "Of course, in the event of a worst-case scenario, I could offer to look after the babies while you and 'Mione work...or have Molly help me."

"Not necessary, love, although I'm sure 'Mione would appreciate the offer, just as I do. Even at that, some people are likely to think if you were truly responsible, you'd have used a Contraceptive Charm from the get-go, and none of us would have to go through this."

"It's none of their bloody business whether or not we used a Contraceptive Charm. We don't tell them how to live; they shouldn't butt into our lives. What matters is that I *am* taking responsibility for your...*our*...child."

"It's not going to stop them from having an opinion," Ginny pointed out.

"I know, but that doesn't mean we have to agree with it." Harry lifted her hands to his lips. "I can hardly wait to see our child."

"I might have more than one," she reminded him. "Remember the tendency toward multiple birth in my family."

"All the better," he assured her. "I've always wanted a big family anyway."

"How is 'Mione right now? And your son?"

"Fine, as far as I know. Why do you ask?"

"Just curious," Ginny returned ambiguously. "What do you want to do now?"

When Harry looked up at her, his green eyes had darkened with desire and that told Ginny more than any words what he wanted to do next. "Then we had best Apparate to the closest possible place where we can be alone."

"No sooner said than done." With that, he put her in one of the customary positions for Side-Along Apparition; they materialised in one of the rooms of the Leaky Cauldron. After Harry put both a Locking and Silencing Charm on the door, it was only a matter of time until the lovers came together ... in more ways than one.

Life Goes On

Chapter 5 of 11

Harry's marriage--and liaison with Ginny--continues. Eventually the elder Weasleys find out about her pregnancy and face the task of telling Ginny's brothers about it. Ginny also goes to see a Healer to find out the sex of her unborn child.

5 - Life Goes On

It was for certain that Molly and Arthur were not pleased to learn of their daughter's pregnancy, even at the prospect of having a new grandchild. It was the circumstances of said pregnancy which concerned them, even though Ginny had assured them that Harry intended to take care of her and their child from the get-go. A proper young witch didn't get pregnant outside of marriage if she could help it ... at least that was what Molly Prewett Weasley had always been taught.

Well, there were obviously exceptions to every rule...but the last thing she had expected was that her only daughter would be one, especially after the way she had been brought up. Of course, where young love was concerned, one shouldn't count on the rules being followed ... at least not 100% of the time. And if anyone knew how much Ginny loved Harry and vice versa, despite the fact of his marriage, it was her. So the best she and Arthur could do was support her in every way possible outside of financially; that was under Harry's jurisdiction.

Molly was also sure that Ginny's brothers would support her too...that is, once they got over the initial shock of the illicit pregnancy and their desire to hex Harry's bits off. And one thing was for sure ... they had to keep this quiet, or else no one in their circle would ever live it down, especially the two most concerned...and Harry had gone through enough without putting him through that ordeal as well. If only he wasn't married; then they could do that and it could be said that they got married beforehand instead of after...especially if Ginny wasn't showing yet...and thankfully, she wasn't. But that wouldn't be the case forever. Right now, the best they could hope for was that circumstances would change sufficiently so that Ginny's pregnancy could be covered up until and if they could manage to come up with a believable cover story ... if not get her safely married, preferably to Harry.

With a part of her, Molly wished that Harry and Hermione would split up, because she knew that Ron still loved her. However, she also knew that he wouldn't approach her until and unless she was single. He simply kept a respectful distance, knowing that she was not only married but married to his best friend. Even at that, Molly wasn't sure if she should tell him that his sister was carrying his best friend's child. The other, older brothers were all living away from home, so they wouldn't be as likely to confront him or Ginny on the subject; it was Ron who was not only closest to her in age, but emotionally as well. If anyone would notice something amiss with her other than Molly herself, it would be him. Maybe she wouldn't need to tell him after all; he could just as easily discover it on his own.

Neither did it help matters that Molly also had great affection for Hermione as well as the beautiful little boy she had borne Harry. It made things all the more difficult whenever they visited, and the desire to both have her adopted son's wife and child in the fold as well as her daughter and son happy with the ones they loved (currently married to each other) warred constantly in her mind and heart. Truly, it was one of the most difficult dilemmas the older woman had ever experienced. For the time being, though, all anyone could do was go with the flow until and if circumstances changed.

Ginny was a little over three months along when her Healer told her she would be able to find out what gender her child was; she Apparated to St. Mungo's for her appointment and the special procedure which would tell her whether she would have a boy, girl or even twins, which were a distinct possibility, as she had told Harry, because of the tendency toward multiple births in her family. After the Healer had touched her wand to her belly and said a special incantation, the end of the Healer's wand glowed pink for roughly a minute.

With pregnancies such as Ginny's (or any witch's, for that matter), it was necessary for the Healer to touch his or her wand to the belly of the pregnant witch, then say a special incantation to make the end of the wand glow accordingly. If it glowed a sky blue, the baby was a boy; if it glowed pink, it was a girl. For male twins, it would be kind of a royal blue; for female twins, a deep rose colour. For fraternal twins, the end of the wand would turn one colour for one gender for a minute, then the other colour for the other gender.

There was silence for so long that Ginny was hard-pressed not to scream, if only to break the maddening silence. "Well, what's the verdict?" she finally said.

"You are ... fourteen weeks pregnant with a baby girl," came the reply.

"May I have some idea when I may expect to deliver?" was the mother-to-be's next question.

"Well, it's October now. You obviously got pregnant sometime in July, so nine months from then should give you your approximate due date."

"So that would be around April, maybe even about Easter time," Ginny remarked.

"Approximately," came the acknowledgment. "Have you been eating and exercising properly?"

"As much as I can. It's not easy eating when you're nauseated a good part of the time. Maybe you should give me a pregnancy-safe anti-nausea potion or something."

"Your mother is Molly Weasley, correct?"

"Yes. Why?"

"She knows all about that sort of thing. Why don't you ask her? That way you won't have to pay for another office visit or medication."

"That's an idea," Ginny acknowledged. "Meanwhile, I need to know how much this visit is going to cost so I can tell my caregiver how much money to send you."

"The office visit is thirty Galleons, and the special gender detection procedure is another twenty. So roughly fifty Galleons...and if you talk to your mother and find that you still want me to do that anti-nausea potion you mentioned, that will run another thirty-five Galleons for a sufficient amount to take until your morning sickness ends, which is usually around the fourth month."

"What if it goes longer than that?"

"If that happens, I'll give you a larger amount, but I'm betting that you'll be pretty much over your sickness within a month."

"Thank you, Healer. Is that all?"

"I believe so. If all goes well, I'll expect to see you in another three months, then every month after that as your pregnancy advances."

Ginny smiled and nodded, then got up from the table, dressed and left the room, Apparating back home once in the lobby.

* * * * *

Fortunately Harry was there when she arrived home; she looked around and didn't see Hermione or little Solomon. "Where's 'Mione and little Solomon?" she asked after she approached them and joined them at the table, sitting in her customary spot next to Harry. He took her hand, squeezed it and smiled.

"They're at home, having a nap. I would have brought them, but they looked so peaceful, I didn't have the heart to disturb them." He sounded sincere enough...he generally did...but at the same time, she suspected that he was glad for the excuse to get away from them, albeit temporarily, and forget he was married, if only for a little while, and be with the one he truly loved. "But enough of that. What happened at the Healer's?"

"She said I'm having a girl. I'm due next April, around Easter," Ginny informed them.

"Anything else?" he asked, lips brushing her ear while he believed Molly wasn't looking.

"She wanted me to make sure to continue to eat and exercise properly. I'm still feeling sick, so she suggested I mention to Mum regarding a pregnancy-safe anti-nausea potion. Of course, she says she's still willing to make me one if I want ... and by the way, *caregiver*," she teased with special emphasis on the last word. "It'll run you around fifty Galleons for the office visit and gender detection procedure."

"What about the anti-nausea potion?"

"If I decide to have her do it, it'll run about thirty-five Galleons for the necessary amount."

Molly offered to make the potion she had always used while pregnant to offset morning sickness, but said she would understand if it didn't work for Ginny the way it did for her. Ginny decided to try her mother's potion before making a final decision as to whether or not to get some from the Healer. It hardly seemed possible that time passed so fast, but the next thing they knew, two hours had passed, and Harry reluctantly stood up and said he had to leave. Ginny stood up with him, reluctant to release his hand.

"I've got to get back home now, Molly. I'll kiss 'Mione and the baby for you both," he promised. He then met Ginny's eyes, his green ones asking her to accompany him outside so they could have a moment alone. Molly nodded understandingly, and the younger pair went outside, making sure they couldn't be seen from inside. The lovers melted into each other's arms for a long, hungry kiss and passionate embrace, Harry's hands holding Ginny's lower body close to his obvious arousal. "When can I see you again, Gin? It's been ages."

"How about Wednesday? Mum and Dad are going to be busy with Order business all day."

"Did you want me to get a room at the Leaky Cauldron again?"

"That might be a good idea," she remarked, stroking his lips with a finger, which he promptly kissed. "I've missed you too. It might also be an idea for you to start thinking about what you want to name a daughter."

"How about we discuss it when I see you again?" he suggested, his look at her half-tender and half-lascivious.

"We never talk when we're together these days; you usually prefer to say what you need to say without words," she returned with a cheeky smile and sly wink.

"Well, we'll just have to make an exception," he declared. "It won't be easy, but most necessary things aren't. How does three o'clock Wednesday strike you? That's usually when 'Mione and the baby have their nap."

"Fine," Ginny pronounced. "Which reminds me...how is 'Mione doing? Do you think she's fully recovered from her pregnancy yet?"

"It's been six weeks, but she hasn't been to see her Healer yet for the six-week checkup, so I couldn't say for sure, although she seems to be getting stronger and more energetic."

"Has she indicated one way or another as to what she intends to do once she's given the all-clear?"

"Not to me. At least not yet. I'll let you know when she does. That way we can make a decision on whether or not to continue the marriage."

"Isn't there a minimum time that you have to be married before you can obtain a dissolution?"

"Six months, I think, and it's past that already, so if she and I both agree, it can be done as soon as we know for sure her health status."

"Would you give her alimony or anything?"

"Probably only until and if she gets a job. Enough talk now." He pulled her close for another hungry kiss. "I love you, Gin. Take care of yourself and our child until I can see you again. I've really got to go."

She raised his hand to her lips and kissed it, then put it on her cheek for a moment. The pair exchanged tender smiles, he touched a hand to her gently rounded belly, then Disapparated before he could do anything else. Ginny smiled at the thought of the upcoming tryst as she went into the house; Molly suspected what had happened upon seeing the Christmas-morning smile on her daughter's lips, but since she was of age, she couldn't tell her what to do.

"I'm going to have a nap, Mum. I'll be down for dinner later." With that, and after kissing her mother on the cheek, Ginny made her way upstairs, knowing that at some point she would be unable to climb stairs. In which case, she would need to move to a room on the ground floor.

"All right, dear. I'll call you when it's time." She hadn't mentioned this to Ginny, but despite the lovers' best efforts, Molly had not only heard their conversation but seen them in their passionate clinch and hungry kiss. Her heart ached for both of them, and she could only hope things would eventually work out for everyone's benefit. With that, she set to work making the potion Ginny needed. Once it was finished, she quietly let herself into Ginny's room and set it on her daughter's night table, smiling when she noted the smiling picture of Harry autographed, "To Ginny, with all my love, Harry," cradled in her arms as she slept.

Sweet dreams, darling, she mouthed as she quietly closed the door once again. I hope you can eventually have the one you love, that the two of you can be together as you should be. In the meantime, Daddy and I will be here for you.

Decision Time

Chapter 6 of 11

Harry and Hermione decide to terminate their marriage--albeit amicably--after several weeks of his avoiding her both verbally and in the bedroom.

6 - Decision Time

As it turned out, the potion Molly made did the trick, which saved Harry a bit of money, although it wouldn't have mattered to him one way or the other. He was doing all he could for Ginny within the limits of their situation, and that's what mattered. It was roughly a week later that Hermione finally got her six-week checkup and got the all-clear from her Healer. However, she didn't tell Harry, at least not directly. Instead, she left the owl post stating the results for him to find, and he perused it while she was napping with the baby, little Solomon.

In spite of himself, he couldn't help feeling apprehensive; what would she do now? Would Hermione make overtures to him or expect him to make overtures to her? Even as well as he believed he knew her, Harry was very uncertain as to what to expect next. Until he knew one way or the other, he would make sure to feign sleep so she also wouldn't try to approach him. They were still manifestly sharing the same bed, but mostly for sleeping purposes. The baby was old enough by now to have his own room, but at the moment he was lying next to her on their bed, Hermione curled protectively around the child.

There were times that Harry stood in the doorway of the bedroom just watching his wife and child, feeling great affection for them both. Little Solomon had her nose and bone structure, but his eyes and lips. However, over the last six weeks, he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that his love for Hermione would never be anything but of the friendship variety. His heart, mind and body belonged to Ginny, now and for all time—and if Hermione didn't approach him soon, he would have to make the first move. It was becoming progressively more difficult to separate from Ginny after every tryst—and Harry was convinced that it was only a matter of time until he would be unable to. He just hoped it didn't happen until he was able to do something about his present dilemma.

* * * * *

It was another week before Hermione broached the subject. They were having breakfast, little Solomon in a levitating cradle next to her place at the table. "Harry, we've got to talk."

"About what?" he had to ask, although he was sure he knew what she was about to say.

"About us. Our marriage. We can't put it off any longer."

"Unfortunately, I have to agree with you, 'Mione. Have you come to any decision?"

"Yes—but I want to mention that I can tell you're trying to avoid me in bed, and I know why. I can't blame you, but this procrastinating can't go on. Something's got to be done."

"Like what?" Harry asked between bites of sausage and egg, then a swallow of pumpkin juice.

"You've done an admirable job, but I know how you really feel. Now, I'm willing to let you go as long as you give me custody of little Solomon. I'm also willing to grant you visitation rights, but until I can find work, I'm going to need child support and alimony. Lastly, it would be appreciated if you deeded this flat to me, so the baby and I won't be out on the street."

"I'd never do that to you, 'Mione," Harry assured her. "Both of you will be well taken care of."

"I know, Harry. I never had any doubt of that. I just think this marriage has served its purpose, and for the sake of everyone concerned, it's best that we end it now and resume our romances with the true objects of our affection."

"I'll always love you, 'Mione. It's just not the kind of love a husband should have for his wife."

"Just as you'll always be special to me, Harry," she assured him, reaching across the table to cover his nearest hand with hers. "It's just getting too hard on both of us to maintain this marriage when we're both in love with other people."

"So what do you think we should do first?"

"Keep it quiet until things are more set, for one thing," she remarked between bites of egg and sips of her own pumpkin juice and checking on the baby periodically. At the moment he was asleep, but how long that would last was a matter for debate.

"You should start looking for a flat of your own which you can share with Ginny. I noticed that she's beginning to show, and I'm sure you want to have her where you can keep an eye on her."

Harry couldn't argue with that, making a mental note to start owling the places in the immediate area which were likely to have vacancies, maybe even take Gin along with him if she felt up to it. She was also likely to be the only other person he would let in on the secret of his and Hermione's break-up until the proper time. At the same time, he was sure that once Ron found out, he would be making plans to start pursuing Hermione again—and Harry intended to make sure that his best mate knew that he would have his blessing.

* * * * *

Harry got together with Ginny a few days later, meeting her at a local pub for breakfast. She asked him why they couldn't have it at the Burrow. Harry said, "I need to talk to you about something I can't tell your folks about yet. As it is, I have to swear you to secrecy. You can't even tell Ron until I say it's all right."

"It's that important, huh?" Ginny guessed, taking a swig of her orange juice.

"It's very important," Harry assured her. "Gin ... Hermione and I have decided to ... split up."

The stunned silence on Ginny's part was almost palpable in the air, but she finally managed to find her voice. "Well, that's good to hear—at least for us and Ron. I'm not sure how the others will react, though."

"There's no way we can please everyone in a situation like this, Gin. We just have to please ourselves and hope for the best." Harry reached across the table and squeezed Ginny's nearest hand. "At least this way we can openly be together ... that is, once everything's set."

"And approximately how long will that take?"

"Three months or so, if all goes well. It would ordinarily take six, but Hermione intends to put it through quietly for our sake. I've agreed to not contest her claim of adultery, which should also shorten the time it takes to grant the divorce. Only we—she and I—and the Ministry's Head of Marriage and Children will know the true reason for the divorce ... and the papers will be specially sealed so only the Head could open them. I'll also give her custody of little Solomon, along with title to the flat we presently share, as well as alimony and child support ... and how long the alimony lasts is contingent on how long it takes her to find work."

"You'll still get visitation rights, I hope."

"Of course. We just haven't worked out the precise details yet."

"Knowing Hermione, she's probably doing that right now," Ginny remarked with a laugh. "And I can imagine how happy Ron's going to be once I'm finally able to tell him."

"I intend to make sure that he knows he has my blessing, don't worry. Which reminds me, how are you doing?"

"Physically, I'm feeling a lot better since I've been taking Mum's Anti-Nausea Potion, and my emotions have just been lifted a thousand percent with your news. It's just going to seem like an eternity until we can be together openly."

"Believe me, I know the feeling," Harry replied. "When do you intend to move downstairs?"

"Depends on how long it takes you to find a flat we can share," she returned with a provocative wink. "For the time being, though, let's just finish breakfast and celebrate this bit of good news in our own way."

"Why, you little vixen," Harry teased back with an equally provocative smile. "Don't worry, we will!" With that, he attacked his remaining breakfast with gusto, as did Ginny, and within the next half hour the lovers headed for the long-standing reserved room at the Leaky Cauldron which Harry had kept since the beginning of his liaison with Ginny—and within another hour, their own private celebration was well underway. But once the news got out, they wouldn't be the only ones.

Life Goes On, II

Chapter 7 of 11

Ginny's pregnancy increases even as Harry officially proposes to her and Hermione helps her move into a downstairs room, even taking into account her liaison with him as she plans for her own upcoming date with Ron.

7 - Life Goes On, II

One day, shortly after the dissolution had become official and Harry had moved into Grimmauld Place, he wasn't really surprised to find Ron at the door after he had answered the knock, charming the curtains over the portrait of Sirius's mother to stay closed so she didn't start shrieking racial epithets.

"I need to talk to you, mate," was all Ron said.

"I figured that," Harry replied and could well guess what about ... or more accurately, *who*.

He went into the kitchen, and while Kreacher got them some food and drink, Ron stated just what was on his mind, as was his habit. "I want to talk to you about Hermione."

"What about her?"

"Gin says the two of you have broken up."

"That's right. The dissolution became official last week, so 'Mione is free to go out with whomever she wishes."

"Including me?" Ron prompted.

"Including you," Harry confirmed. "In fact, I was kind of hoping you'd come by so I could tell you in person that you have my blessing to do so and that, if it makes you too uncomfortable to have little Solomon around, I'd be glad to take him temporarily while you're out with her...at least for a while."

"That might be a good idea, at least at first," Ron agreed. "It's going to take some time for me to get used to the idea of knowing that 'Mione is free again without having to deal with a child."

"But you'll have to, sooner or later, because I won't always be able to take him...nor will anyone else. It might be a good idea to start preparing yourself to meet and spend time with him because he's definitely a permanent fixture."

"What about you and Gin?"

"Oh, I plan on officially proposing to her in the not-too-distant future because I want us to be married before she has the baby if we can manage it. I'm also looking for a flat to accommodate all of us. Gin, myself and the baby, that is ... as well as a room for when Solomon visits. Molly is making the plans for the wedding, but we have told her to make sure to consult us because it *is* our wedding and we have the right to have some input."

"It'd be a good idea to remind her of that now and again because she tends to forget it," Ron cautioned. "Remember how Bill's wedding was."

"Oh, do I ever," Harry sighed after taking a drink of butterbeer and another bite of bacon and eggs. "If it wasn't for Fleur and ~~her~~ mother making sure they had input ..." His voice trailed off.

"Mum loves to be in charge of things, but you've got to watch her or else she'll take over completely...and trust me, you don't want that," Ron remarked in between bites of food and drink. "Oh, one other thing I wanted to ask ..."

"Yeah?"

"Has Gin been able to spend time with Solomon yet? If so, how do they get along?"

"Oh, I think she'll eventually get used to him and learn to love him, if only due to the fact that he's my child. However, she's still a bit standoffish at the moment. After all, it's going to take her longer than overnight to get used to the fact of both my former marriage and the child. For that matter, I'm not even sure if she's completely adjusted to the fact of what happened while we were out looking for the Horcruxes."

"Do you think she'll say yes to your proposal?"

"I can't be totally certain, but I believe so," Harry returned, finishing his butterbeer and food in one last bite.

Ron had finished some time before and was waiting for Harry to catch up.

"Here's the ring, in fact. Don't tell Gin about it, though. I want to surprise her with it next time I see her."

Harry pulled something in a dark blue velvet box from his pocket and pushed it across the table so Ron could look at it. Even Ron's untrained eye could tell that the centre stone had to be at least a carat with ten smaller diamonds surrounding it in a Tiffany setting and 24k yellow gold.

"Beautiful, mate. She should love it. Is it a family heirloom? It doesn't look new."

"It isn't. It's the ring Dad gave to Mum when he proposed to her. They left their rings to me. I officially acquired them when I became of age."

Ron sighed deeply and pushed the ring back across the table. "I'd better go now, mate. Just wanted to get a few things clear. Best of luck with Gin."

"Thanks. Same goes for you with Hermione. See you later."

"Later, mate." Ron patted Harry's nearest shoulder and left the room.

Not long afterward, Harry directed Kreacher to clean up and then went to clean up himself.

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Shortly after this, Hermione came by to help Ginny move downstairs, since Harry was still looking for a proper flat to accommodate her and the coming baby. She put little Solomon with Molly and deposited Ginny on the couch in the living room, admonishing her to stay there while she moved her things to a downstairs room, since she was now too large to safely go up and downstairs, especially alone. Harry was working and wouldn't be coming by until he got off. Hermione was looking for work, but meanwhile, she was depending on the alimony and child support Harry gave her for a means to live and care for herself and the child.

On the other hand, if she felt she had to get away from motherhood for a while, she called upon either Molly or her own mother to take little Solomon off her hands for a while so she could rest and relax. Also, to her delight, Ron had finally approached her and asked her out for that Saturday night, the one night he himself was off work ... They were going out to dinner at the Three Broomsticks. That was three days away, so she had that much time to figure out what she was going to wear and what she intended to do with her hair.

Ginny couldn't help thinking that Hermione was as fussy as her mother when it came to mollycoddling, but the look her friend gave her checked the protests on her lips. She looked like she would be willing to take her chances with even the Bat-Bogey Hex, and deep down Ginny knew she meant well. She just didn't like to be babied when she was perfectly capable of doing things herself. Less and less these days, of course, but that was beside the point. What she was able to do, she preferred to do herself.

Just the same, she preferred not to risk antagonising her, if only because of the instances both she and Harry recalled when Hermione's temper had manifested itself. Just knowing of them made Ginny realise that it could rival hers and Molly's any day in the week and twice on Sunday. Besides, it was kind of nice to lie back with her feet up and sip a cold butterbeer, her shoes off, a pillow beneath her feet and behind her back. She even had a book in her lap, which Hermione had brought with her, but wasn't inclined to read just yet.

It was well into the afternoon when Hermione came to get her, smiling when she noted that Ginny had fallen asleep, having moved one of the pillows on the couch beneath her head. She watched her for a while, hardly wanting to wake her, she looked so peaceful, but knew she would be more comfortable on a bed, so she made herself gently shake her shoulder.

"Gin, wake up. I'm finished fixing up your room and want to take you to see it."

Ginny reluctantly opened her eyes and groaned as Hermione helped her up, an arm around her waist as she brought her to her feet before steering her toward her new room. She would have to make sure to remind Molly to tell Harry of the new room so he'd know where to find Ginny when he came by.

Once they reached the room and stood in the doorway, Hermione asked, "Well, what do you think?"

Ginny looked around and was instantly enchanted. It was everything she could ever ask for, all her favourite things in her favourite colours, including a place for the baby when the time came. "It's lovely, 'Mione. Everything I could ask for. I don't think I'll ever want to leave here."

"Oh, one last thing ... I've utilised wizard space on the bed. It doesn't look big enough for more than one, but I assure you it is. Just in case Harry wants to stay with you." She gave her friend a sly wink.

Ginny's eyes filled with tears as she hugged her friend. "What would I do without a friend like you, 'Mione?"

"Well, you'd probably have been married to Harry long before now, if it hadn't been for me getting pregnant, but other than that ..." Her voice trailed off. "Glad you like it. Let me know what Harry thinks of it. Now I've got to go home and rest, put Solomon down and the two of us will take a nap together. Give my best to Harry ... and guess what, Ron's finally gotten the message, and we're going out Saturday. Dinner at the Three Broomsticks."

"What are you going to do with Solomon?"

"I'm still debating on who to leave him with ... my mum or maybe even Molly. They've both offered, so I've got to make up my mind between now and Saturday. I've got to go get him now, get back home and leave you to settle in. Oh, by the way, I've even put up Silencing Charms on your walls, but leave you to put them on your door, along with Locking Charms, if you feel the need." Hermione winked wickedly at her.

Ginny hugged her friend again; Hermione hugged her back, then left after Ginny told her to kiss little Solomon for her and thanked her for congratulating her on Harry's having officially proposed to her some days earlier.

Within moments, Ginny had settled herself on her bed and fell back to sleep. Not long afterward, Molly tiptoed in and waved her wand to make a nearby blanket settle over Ginny so she would be warm and comfortable...then she gave her daughter a gentle kiss on the forehead and left again.

* * * * *

Ginny awakened to Harry's gentle kiss. She opened her eyes to see his beloved face above hers, his lovely green eyes gazing tenderly into her own. "Welcome back, Sleeping Beauty."

"Harry. Did you have a good day?"

He shrugged and tightened his hold on her hand. "It went about as well as it ever does. Oh, well, I suppose I should be thankful I don't have to chase down any Dark wizards or witches anymore ... at least not at the moment." He looked around the room, marveling at how charming and appropriate it was for Ginny. "My compliments to your decorator."

"Mione came over and did it for me," Ginny informed him. "Mum told you where to find me, I assume."

"Obviously one of her many talents," Harry remarked. "And yes, she did."

"Oh, guess what. She even put a wizard space charm on the bed so we can share it if necessary."

Harry was unable to bring himself to be surprised at this, only able to say, "Very thoughtful of her."

"She even put Silencing Charms on the walls. However, she left it to me to put the appropriate charms on the door."

"She's really something else," Harry opined. "Oh, did you hear that Ron's finally asked her out?"

"Yeah, she told me. She's still debating who to leave Solomon with, in fact." The look on Harry's face made Ginny speak up again. "Don't you even think of offering to take him! We haven't had a chance to be alone for some time."

"But I want you to get to know him," Harry gently protested even as he joined her on the bed and put his arms around her, gently pressing her head down onto his chest.

"Plenty of time for that," Ginny reminded him as she slid her own arms around him. "Which reminds me ... have you found a flat for us yet?"

"Fraid not, in between visiting my son, working and looking after you."

"Well, you'd better get with it, Mister. After all, I'm just a few months away from giving birth."

"Oh, I'm pretty sure I'll find something in time," he assured her. "Of course, if nothing else, I'll conjure something up and put a Permanance Charm on it." He smiled and put a finger over her lips, which she promptly kissed. "But no more talking now. Just shut it and let me kiss you."

But kissing wasn't all they did. After a time, their kisses and touches turned intimate, and they made tenderly passionate love after Harry had put Locking and Silencing Charms on the door of Ginny's room. After that, the lovers simply slept the rest of the afternoon away. Not until Harry had taken off the Silencing Charm and Molly had called everyone to dinner did they wake up. He helped Ginny out to the dinner table, and they sat side-by-side, squeezing hands periodically. After dinner, he took Ginny back to her room and settled her back in bed, staying with her until she was asleep again, leaving her a note for her to find when she awakened and a candle burning so she wouldn't awaken in the dark.

Thoughts

Chapter 8 of 11

Thoughts of various people, but especially Ginny, during her pregnancy.

Thoughts

Of course, the initial reaction of the rest of the Weasley brothers to Ginny's unexpected pregnancy were readiness to hex the culprit into the next century, but they thought twice about it when they found out that it was Harry and that he was not only willing to take responsibility for her care and that of his child, he truly loved her and fully intended to marry her. That was likely to be the only thing which allowed Harry to keep his bits, although he was thankful for both Ginny and Ron's intervention in his behalf.

Of course, the elder brothers still thought privately that those most concerned were too close to the situation to be objective but, at the same time, were well aware of both their tempers and that of their redoubtable mother Molly ... so they accepted it, at least outwardly. After all, it could have been far worse—and Harry *had* had the decency to marry and care for Hermione, who had also had his child, even though he didn't love her the way he did Ginny. The point was, he had lived up to his responsibility ... and that was what mattered.

Ginny also decided to name the unborn child, which had been discovered to be a daughter, Rosalind Megan. She had done considerable research into both the most popular baby names in the UK and the name meanings, and was quite pleased with her choice. Now all she had to do was get it past Harry and the rest. Of course, she fully expected to compromise over the middle name, but was determined to have at least the first name be her own choice, whatever friends and family tried to do to convince her otherwise.

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As she expected, the various friends and relatives had their own suggestions, including Harry, but Ginny was adamant regarding what the first name of their unborn child would be. However, she was open to suggestions in regards to the middle name, although she naturally preferred her own choice. As her pregnancy progressed, Ginny found that her Healer had been proved right regarding the morning sickness. After her fourth month, it was virtually gone—her main problems after that were swollen feet and backaches ... and the most humungous appetite she'd ever experienced.

Only her brothers seemed to have larger appetites than she—and when she asked her mother if there was something pregnancy-safe for appetite control, she was given a potion for some ... but only *after* being gently reminded that she was "eating for two now," and therefore should expect to have a larger appetite. Harry assured her he would love her, no matter how big she got; even as reassuring as that was, Ginny knew that he had to be at least a bit put off by some of her ... unusual food cravings which she had asked for at inopportune moments, especially when he had to be the one to obtain them for her.

The looks he must have gotten when he asked ... She couldn't help laughing upon picturing the expressions of either Madam Rosmerta, Madam Puddifoot or even the proprietor of the wizarding supermarket near the Burrow, which was where he usually went if he didn't go to Hogsmeade. Molly knew what to fix her if she happened to be at the Burrow and got the munchies unexpectedly, but even as she fixed them for her, admonished her daughter not to gain too much weight. Thirty to forty pounds was the maximum a pregnant witch should gain; any more than that was unhealthy for both mother and child, which both Molly and the Healer had told her.

What was more, Harry was *still* searching for a proper flat, and she was only about three months away from giving birth. It was looking more and more like he would have

to conjure something up for them to live in. Of course, it wouldn't hurt to ask if he had ever thought to look into the possibility of a place specifically for Potters ... an ancestral home or something. The wedding day was also getting closer with every passing day, and despite her and Harry's admonitions to consult them regarding their preferences, there were still occasions when she caught Molly doing things that she knew neither she nor Harry would go for.

Between that and her pregnancy, Ginny had all she could do to maintain her health and her temper. Every little thing seemed to set her off; she sometimes was even tempted to hex Harry, even though he usually had done nothing to deserve it. Ginny was even sure he had asked her parents just what they had done to get through Molly's numerous pregnancies with their marriage intact.

It also helped to have Hermione give advice on how to handle her pregnancy; of course, not all of it would apply to her, if only due to the differences in a given witch's body chemistry, particularly when carrying a child. She also made sure to be careful when casting spells or charms because pregnancy had been known to make a witch's magic go haywire at unexpected times. So far she hadn't had too many horrendous mishaps – but just the same, she didn't take any chances, making sure Harry or someone from her family was with her, if only for safety's sake.

One thing that definitely made her happy, however, was knowing that Ron was happy again, seeing Hermione virtually every moment that he wasn't working, eating or sleeping. In fact, Harry had even told her in confidence that Ron had confessed to him that he was seriously considering proposing to her. He had even managed to bond fairly well with little Solomon, as had Ginny, although Ginny's pregnancy-induced moods made Harry think twice about pressuring her to take things further regarding bonding with him. She had enough to worry about just getting through her own pregnancy, then adjusting to motherhood once their daughter had been born. It was for this reason that he had backed off and not mentioned anything as to taking him once in a while so Ron and Hermione could be alone and give Molly and Hermione's parents a break from babysitting. If Gin specifically asked, that would be one thing. Until then, he wouldn't pressure her.

Preparations for A New Life

Chapter 9 of 11

Harry decides to have a new home built for himself, Ginny and their children on his parents' land in Godric's Hollow...while all the while discussing everything connected with not only the building and decorating but their upcoming wedding.

9 - Preparations for a New Life

Harry ended up having to approach the top home-building company in the Ottery St. Catchpole area, Faber Construction, with specific, specially made blueprints of the type of house he wanted. He made an appointment to speak with the head of the company, Tignarius Faber, a noted carpenter but also a very clever wizard who reminded Harry of an older, heavier version of Sirius. He told him that he had some property in Godric's Hollow he wished to build on, if that was acceptable.

The man said it was a bit out of his jurisdiction, but for the right price he was sure they could arrange something mutually beneficial. To be on the safe side, Harry used a Disguising Charm to hide his scar, changed the colour of his eyes, lightened his hair a bit and gave his potential builder the name of Harrison Evans, even opening a separate account in Gringotts under that name to be on the safe side and informing the goblin bank officials of its purpose.

If the man knew who he really was, he'd likely be hounded to death, and all he wanted was peace and quiet with his wife-to-be and children. Harry also made a mental note to explain what he had done so his friends and family would understand and act accordingly.

After going over the blueprints, the master carpenter looked up and smiled, reaching to shake Harry's hand after Harry had signed the contract.

"Yes, I believe we have a deal, Mr. Evans. Two hundred thousand Galleons. Ten percent down and the rest payable upon completion. When would you like me to begin building?"

"As soon as possible. My ... wife is pregnant, and I would like us to be in residence in our new home in time for the baby."

"Well, with the size of the home you want, even with magic, it'll take considerable time, several months at least ... and that is if all goes well and I am able to get the materials I need when I need them without undue delay. Also, when the home is finished, would you like special protective wards placed on it? I can do that too, if you like. No extra charge."

I would hope not, Harry thought. *It's bloody well going to cost me enough as it is! But Gin and our children are worth it!* He merely smiled and shook his head. "Your offer is appreciated, sir, but I have friends I can call upon for that."

"If you say so. May we go out to the property in the near future so I may get some ideas for proper placement of the house?"

"Is Saturday acceptable? That's the one day I'm off work."

The other man smiled and nodded. "Just tell me when."

"I'll either owl you or Floo," Harry told him. "I've got to get back to where my ... wife and I are staying with her family because I don't like to leave her too long in her condition."

"I understand, sir. Is this your first child?"

"Second ... wife, second child," Harry said. "Gotta go now. Talk to you later." With that, he Disappeared.

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Over the next few weeks, Harry and company talked virtually endlessly about how their new home was going to look; he was offered virtually endless ideas about how to decorate it as well, not to mention the type of wards it was best to have. Finally it was tentatively agreed to have basically the same type of wards as the Burrow, especially since children would either be in residence or visiting the majority of the time.

He also warned them if they were approached by Mr. Faber or any member of his staff to remember what his "alias" was. Ginny definitely liked the idea of Harry's having told her she was his wife already, although it would literally be true by the time the house was complete.

Until then, she and the others could spend time figuring how they wanted to decorate each of the rooms, starting with the master bedroom and living rooms, which

Hermione would help her with, then Molly could help her decorate the kitchen and the baby's room ... not to mention the one which would be Solomon's while he was visiting. Harry definitely intended to decorate his personal study to his own taste and had decided early on that only he would have unrestricted access.

Everyone else—including Ginny and the children--once they were old enough, that is ... would need to knock and ask permission to enter. He had always longed for a place that would belong to him alone, where he didn't have to answer to anyone unless he chose to, yet still be close to his family. Also, the house would be big enough so that he and Ginny could have more-or-less separate bathrooms off their bedroom, decorated to their own taste.

However, there would be a private spot set precisely between said bathrooms which would be set aside for trysts when they were in the mood and didn't want to be heard or found immediately ... especially if they wanted to try something new.

They received periodic updates as to how construction was going and even visited once in a while to note the progress of the work, although Faber had warned Harry to notify him so he could *Muffliato* his workers so they weren't disturbed while he met with Harry and Ginny to discuss their latest doings. For the time being, he had made a replica of his mother's ring, and Ginny would use it so the carpenter didn't ask questions. However, the wedding day was getting closer all the time.

Harry and Ginny had already decided to have an intimate ceremony, with only their closest friends and immediate family present, whoever could make it. Molly and Hermione would help her, and Ron and Bill would help him. (Fleur was too pregnant—with their daughter Victoire, as it turned out—to accompany him at this point ... but firmly admonished him that she wanted a full report upon his return. Bill smiled with a mixture of amusement and apprehension as he recalled his wife's parting admonition, "My husband, promise me that you will tell me all about 'arry and Geenee's wedding when you get back, or else I will 'ex you into next year!")

Molly insisted on handling the catering, of course, and Arthur planned to reinforce the protective wards around the Burrow so only the ones authorised to attend the wedding could get in. No disguised Animagi or Polyjuiced types would be able to get past them, so it was virtually impossible for the likes of Rita Skeeter or any of her ilk to get in to disrupt things.

Harry and Ginny had agreed early on that only the two of them would know where they intended to go on their honeymoon. They hadn't even told their friends anything about it and wouldn't until after they had returned—and even then, wouldn't tell them everything. After all, everyone had a right to keep certain things private, especially regarding their honeymoon.

A New Birth

Chapter 10 of 11

Shortly after Harry and Ginny's marriage, their child is born—even as they wait for their new home to be finished.

10 - A New Birth

Harry kept Ginny informed of the progress of the building of their new home; it was going as well as anyone could have expected...at least for the time being. But considering the way Harry's luck usually ran, he fully expected something to go wrong at some point ... and most likely something significant which would delay the finished product several more weeks, at the very least.

Harry didn't want to impose on the Weasleys' generous hospitality any more than absolutely necessary, and even though he knew well that he had indeed imposed on them, he also knew that they would vehemently deny it. He was considered family...had been from day one...and to do things for family was no imposition. His marriage to Ginny would only make official what had always been unspoken and accepted from the moment he had met them.

The latest he had heard in regards to wedding procedures was Molly working with Ginny to see how she could get her wedding gown to fit her now very pregnant daughter. Harry had no doubt that they would figure something between them, if not call Hermione in for a consultation since they had had to come up with a maternity wedding dress then as well. Finally it was decided that Molly charm it so it automatically adjusted for any changes in her body because of her advancing pregnancy. Ginny had been unable to believe her very "full-figured" mother could ever have fit into that tiny dress she had brought out to show her but Molly informed her that at the time of her own wedding, she had been built much the same way as Ginny herself, so she had nothing to worry about. Ginny also definitely wanted her parents to give her away and for all their family who was able to come to be present.

They had also contacted the one responsible for Wizarding marriages at the Ministry and obtained his consent to marry them. The couple had originally wanted to marry on Valentine's Day but that was way too busy a day for the Head of the Department for Marriage and Children to do it, so they discussed several other options, such as the day they had met, the day they'd realised they were in love, one another's birthdays ... not to mention where, such as the Burrow or Hogwarts or even Kings Cross Station. They hadn't definitely decided yet, although they were seriously leaning toward the Burrow for the reception and Hogwarts for the wedding.

It was truly incredible how many details there were to arranging a wedding...something Ginny frankly never imagined she would ever have, especially with Harry, especially considering the fact of what he had had to do in order to legitimise Hermione's pregnancy. Fortunately for her, Hermione had realised that the marriage had served its purpose upon the safe and healthy birth of her child and was generous enough to let Harry go to Ginny, whom he truly loved, and return to Ron, whom she, Hermione, truly loved. A most fortuitous occurrence, since it enabled not only two couples who loved each other to be together, but to once again legitimise the fruit of the union of one of them.

As expected, the snag came a bare week before the house was due to be completed...they had run out of wood to complete the last room of the house...the master bedroom. Harry and Ginny could not move in until it was completed and furnished, and from what Faber had told him, it would be the better part of a month before the proper amount and grade of wood could be readied and the bedroom could be finished. Harry could not help but swear mightily upon hearing this, as did Ginny, but in her own way even as she did her best to soothe him.

"What matters is that the house is nearly complete, beloved. Our own home is well worth waiting for, however long that period must be."

"But I wanted..." Harry began.

Ginny put a finger on his lips to stop him. "I know what you wanted, and *wewill* be in residence, very soon. Just somewhat later than we expected." Just then, she felt her first labour pain ... and from that moment on, they were too occupied with the impending birth of their own child to worry about such a minor inconvenience as having to wait another month or more before being able to move into their new home.

It was only a matter of days before this that they had married at Hogwarts, on the anniversary of the day they had first met, as was finally agreed...with McGonagall presiding, but the official from the Ministry standing by...then, leaving the school grounds, they all Apparated to the Burrow, where the reception took place in the flower-bedecked garden behind the house. Hermione was bridesmaid, while Ron was best man; little Solomon was in Molly's care while his mother performed her wedding duties. The usual gifts were given, just as the newlywed couple had the traditional dance and toast, not to mention the first bite of wedding cake. But this was not to be the most memorable moment of their lives ... by no means. Instead, something far more miraculous would soon take place, scarcely another week after their marriage.

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Shortly after they had reached St. Mungo's and Ginny was being prepped, Harry fought back his rising nervousness and made himself owl the necessary people, informing them of what was presently transpiring and that he expected whoever could make it to join him...if only for moral support while waiting for Ginny to give birth. Fortunately, he did not have to wait long for that support, and when he received it, he welcomed it with open arms and all his heart.

That heart swelled with love and affection for all assembled before him...Ron and Hermione, his two closest friends and the child in her arms, his first-born, Solomon; Ron's parents, the closest Harry had ever had to parents, Arthur and Molly Weasley; and finally, Fred and George, the closest he had ever had to siblings. The other brothers had been owled and would come as soon as they could. Harry's adopted family all hugged him in order to give him strength to endure both the coming birth and his subsequent fatherhood.

He smiled at them all and said, "I've got to go now. I promised Gin I would be with her."

They all wished him the best of luck even as he turned and made his way into the delivery room, murmuring concernedly among themselves as to their doubts regarding whether or not Harry could handle it. He had handled a lot of difficult things in his short lifetime, but never anything like this, the birth of a child...and what's more, *his own* child. Even with Hermione, he had not been present in the delivery room; he had chosen to wait until the mediwitch had brought him his newborn son. Only time would tell how this day would turn out.

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However, Harry was scrubbed, gowned and masked before he would be allowed near his wife. Even at that, he didn't let it stop him from raising her hand to his lips and kissing it passionately several times. "I'm here, Gin. Everything's going to be fine."

"Harry ..." she moaned, clutching his hand tightly upon mimicking his earlier action. "Help me, my love. Help me ... it hurts so much ..."

"I know. I won't leave you, not until it's all over. I promise you that with every ounce of my being." Ginny smiled softly and seemed to ease into her next contraction, despite the fact that up to this point, the labour had been hard and painful for her. It was as though his love had literally become part of her and helped her to give birth. After this, it was still painful, despite the painkilling potion and the episiotomy which had been performed to ease the child's emergence...but by comparison, the rest of the childbirth had become almost effortless.

It was still some hours later before the child was born, but Harry never left Ginny's side the whole time, which ended up being twelve hours...and he knew his hand wouldn't be useful for much of anything for several days following this, but it would be worth it. She finally gave one last push and the child was out...out and being vigorously rubbed to get her circulation going. When the couple heard the cry of their child, a child with Harry's green eyes but Ginny's red hair and freckles, tears of happiness began to stream down both their cheeks. Neither of them could stop smiling, either...especially when the child was put into Ginny's arms and was showed off to her proud father by her exhausted but ecstatically happy mother.

"Oh, Harry, love, she's so beautiful. So very beautiful. Little Rosalind Megan," Ginny rhapsodised as she hugged and kissed her child. "Truly a miracle of love."

"Every bit as beautiful as her mother, who is every inch a miracle herself," Harry replied, feeling such love for both his ladies that he felt certain that his heart would burst right out of his chest even as he gathered them both close and dared anyone else in the room to disturb them...even the Healer who had just delivered the child. She stepped back to give them a bit of privacy, but after about half an hour, knew her work was not finished.

She spoke quietly but firmly and with authority, "Mr. Potter, I must finish my work. I will come for you to be with your wife and child when I am finished." Harry's eyes momentarily blazed with indignation, but he knew she was right, so he backed off after giving one last kiss to Ginny and his child. He left the room and rejoined his adopted family; all saw he had been crying, but it was Molly who reached his side first and gathered him into her strong, loving arms.

"Harry, dear, you've been crying. Is everything all right?"

Tears of happiness again filled Harry Potter's eyes as he smiled at his surrogate mother. "Everything's perfect, Molly. I have a daughter ... the most beautiful daughter in the world! The most beautiful *wife* in the world! A wife and daughter I would never have had without you and Arthur. For that, I can never be grateful enough to you...both of you...not for as long as I live!" He hugged her tightly and buried his face in her shoulder, sobbing unashamedly in his great happiness.

It was truly the most wonderful day of his life, now or ever, and he couldn't ask for better people to celebrate it with...all those whom he loved best, with a few notable exceptions. But even at that, he was sure they too were all looking down upon him at this very moment and smiling.

Conclusion

Chapter 11 of 11

Everything is turned around, and those who truly love each other are not only married to each other now, they have either already had a child or are expecting one. The step-parents involved have even been able to bond with the children from the other relationship.

11 Conclusion

It took some time for the new parents to calm down and compose themselves. Once that was accomplished, however, they set about deciding on how to both introduce the children to each other and get the step-parents, both present and future, to bond with them. Molly advised them to pretty much let the children do the bonding themselves and let the problem basically take care of itself.

Of course, it might take a little more time in Ginny's case, but little Solomon was a mixture of Harry and Hermione at their best...for instance, he had Harry's green eyes and was likely to have his mother's curly hair, not to mention her brains. If only for the fact he was Harry's child could it possibly be made easier for Ginny to bond with him. Ginny was personally more concerned with how the children were likely to get along when they were older, as opposed to now, when it wasn't that much of a problem.

There was also time to determine whether or not the children had magical abilities...and whose abilities would be greater. Once that had been ascertained, Harry and the mothers of his children would register them for eventual attendance at Hogwarts. It would also be interesting to see which (if either) developed an aptitude and love for Quidditch. Meanwhile, he was waiting for Faber Construction to owl him and let him know when the new house had been completed. He would then contact those who knew how to put up the most effective protective wards in order to make sure he and his family stayed safe once in residence.

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Three days later Harry picked up Ginny and little Rose at St. Mungo's and took them home to...or at least their temporary home...the Burrow. To his delight, it was shortly after he had gotten her and the baby settled in their room that there came a large tawny owl, which turned out to be from Tignarius Faber, informing him that the house had been completed and that final furnishing and preparations to move in could begin. Harry then made arrangements for the final lump sum payment from Gringotts to be made to Faber and his company so the house would be his free and clear. Wait until he told Gin and the others!

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After he told the others the good news and discussed the particulars of putting the proper wards on particular areas of the house with them, he heard a soft sound from Ginny's ground-floor room. Either she was waking up or the baby was; whatever the case, he needed to go check on them. He excused himself and returned to the room. Ginny was awake and had the baby in her arms, nursing her. She looked up at his entrance and smiled at him. "I notice our little flower is hungry."

"She woke up that way," Ginny replied. "And I was feeling top-heavy anyway, so I thought I might as well feed her." The look on his face prompted her to ask, "Do you have something to say?"

"I got an owl from the construction company. The house is finished. All we need to do is finish furnishing it, or specifically, the master bedroom, then we can move in ... probably within the next week or so." He moved to sit down beside her and stroked the baby's head, then leaned over to kiss his wife.

"That's great, love. Now we can get the bedroom furniture out of the vault and set everything up." Ginny then looked down at the baby, having noted that her mouth had loosened from the maternal nipple and that she felt heavier in her arms. "She's asleep again." After checking the baby's nappy, she laid her in the cradle again next to her side of the bed. Harry smiled as he gazed upon his little daughter and thought Ginny might be mellow enough to agree to his bringing Solomon over to bond with his little sister once they had moved into the new house.

"You know, I was thinking ..."

"What?"

"Would it be all right to have Solomon over for the weekend? He hasn't seen his little sister yet, and I wanted to introduce them."

There was a long and, to Harry an ominous, silence, then Ginny nodded and smiled. "Probably wouldn't hurt as long as we're there."

"I'll owl or Floo 'Mione, then, and see if she can bring him over. That is, if he isn't with her mother or Molly. Thanks, love."

Ginny shrugged. "It's time they met anyway, since they're going to be pretty much growing up together."

Harry could sense she was doing it simply to please him and still wasn't all that comfortable at the prospect and decided to let her off the hook if necessary. "If you'd rather not, I'll understand."

"No, it's all right," Ginny assured him.

Harry frowned sceptically at her but didn't argue. "If you say so. Meanwhile, may I join you? I'm kind of tired."

Ginny really wasn't, but knew how much Harry enjoyed sleeping in her arms, so she didn't argue, just simply slid her arms around her husband, stroking his hair for a time before kissing the top of his unruly head, then resting her cheek on it and sighing contentedly. Soon he was deeply asleep, his head heavy against her bosom and his breath warm on her skin. Surely she couldn't ask for any more than to belong to Harry, be his wife and have his child. That was what really mattered; it would take time, of course, for her to get used to his having another child and having been married to Hermione, however briefly, but those were the fortunes of war. The past was in the past; it was time to work toward making the future everything they had ever dreamed of ... or at the very least, everything they could realistically make it.

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By the time the couple was able to make love again, some weeks later, shortly after they had moved into their new home, a radiant Hermione brought little Solomon over for his regular visit with his father, flashing a ring on the proper finger. "Guess what, Ginny! Ron proposed to me!"

"That's great, 'Mione. Harry should be thrilled when he hears." She heard little Rose awaken and went to pick her up and bring her out to show her friend; both babies soon began to play with each other in their play-pen as their mothers talked.

"Where is Harry?" Hermione asked.

"Not home from work yet, though he should be any minute." Almost before the words were out of her mouth, Harry Apparated in.

"Hello, love." He smiled in Ginny's direction, kissing her in their customary greeting. Only then did he turn to greet Hermione. "'Mione, what are you doing here?"

"Bringing Solomon for his regular visit ... and to bring you some good news." She lifted her left hand, and Harry noted a ring glittering there upon placing Solomon in his father's arms. Harry hugged and kissed his boy, then positioned him on his shoulders, holding his tiny hands in his.

"Does that mean what I think it means?"

Hermione smiled radiantly. "Ron proposed to me last night. We're thinking of getting married in the next three months when he has a week off from work."

"Congratulations. All the best and every happiness to you both." Harry moved over to kiss his ex-wife on the cheek. "Chosen your attendants yet?"

"Not officially, but it's basically a foregone conclusion. You and Ginny, our closest friends." Hermione then checked her special witch's watch. "Oh, it's time for me to go. I need to be at work in a few minutes." Hermione had recently gotten a job in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement as a legal assistant. It was a paid position, so it wouldn't be much longer before Harry wouldn't need to give her alimony, although she would probably still need child support.

"That's right, you just started working at your new job. Congratulations," Ginny said.

"What she said," Harry echoed.

"Thanks. I'll let you know when I don't need alimony any longer, Harry. Now, I've really got to go. See you all later. Put Solomon with Molly if you have to; just owl me so I know where to pick him up." With that, she Disapparated.

However, the new parents were in for a surprise when they turned to face the play-pen again. The babies were lying next to each other, heads touching and sound asleep. One of little Solomon's hands was even over those of small Rose as if to calm her. "Oh, Harry, look! Isn't that adorable? Where's the camera? I've got to get a picture!"

"One moment." He went to the nearby desk drawer and retrieved the camera that took wizarding pictures and handed it to Ginny; she quickly took pictures of the sleeping

babies at different angles.

"Well, that's that. What do you want to do now?" But Ginny knew the moment she met her husband's eyes. The last six weeks had been as hard on her as on him, and he had been very pleased...to put it mildly...to learn that she had recently been given the all-clear to resume their lovemaking. "Harry, you're *not* very subtle," she remarked with a cheeky smile.

"Why should I be?" he threw back. "The last six weeks has seemed like *sixmonths*."

"I know, love. Meet me in the bedroom in five minutes. Just need to put a blanket over the babies."

"I'll be waiting." Ginny waved her wand over the babies, the nearby blanket soon settling over the sleeping infants, then turned for the bedroom.

No sooner did she step through the door than she was gently pulled against a warm, aroused...and very naked...body by hands that automatically found the most sensitive areas of her body even as they removed her clothing. She tried to speak, but warm, delicious lips silenced her. The next thing she knew, she was literally swept off her feet and carried to bed. A moment later she found herself on her back with her legs spread, her body being passionately possessed even as his strokes gradually increased in frequency and intensity, her arms and legs tightening around him before he tensed up and became almost incredibly hard inside her before softly crying out in pleasure and relaxing against her. At no time did he say a word, preferring to let his actions speak for him, his movements, kisses and caresses having pleased her almost beyond endurance. Oh, gods, how she'd missed this ...

She kissed his nearest ear and crooned, "Harry ... Harry ..."

"Gin, that was bloody incredible ... but I've got to sleep now." His voice was drowsy, and the next thing she knew, he began to softly snore.

"Sleep then, love. I'll be here." She had made sure to leave the door open so she'd hear the babies should either or both of them awaken...then allowed herself to fall asleep as well. Truly, life had taken a 360-degree turnaround over the last year, and she couldn't be happier, now or ever.

THREE MONTHS LATER

Everything seemed like a blur to anyone who tried to recall the events of the last three months with all the preparations for Ron and Hermione's upcoming wedding. Little Solomon would even be the ring-bearer for his mother and her new husband; Molly would carry him down the aisle while he carried the rings tied to a small white silk pillow. This time Hermione decided on a veil with a rose headdress, accompanying an off-white, lacy dress with a scoop neck just low enough to show a bit of cleavage, short cap sleeves and a string of pearls around her long, slender neck. Her hair was styled in a manner reminiscent of the style she had worn it in for the fourth-year Yule Ball.

Ginny wore a lacy, pale blue empire-waisted dress as matron of honour, blue silk roses around her head and her hair curled almost all the way up to her head. She had lost virtually all the weight she had gained from her pregnancy, but considering the way she and Harry had been going at it lately, the only thing that kept her from getting pregnant again was the special Contraceptive Charm used especially for those with strong libidos. As it turned out, it was a good thing Ron and Hermione were getting married, for she had been sporting the same symptoms as Ginny herself had for the last couple of weeks, so the latter strongly suspected that her friend was pregnant again.

Knowing her brother's sexual appetite, it wouldn't surprise her one bit. The only thing she wondered about was whether or not he had yet been able to bond effectively with the child who would soon be his stepson. But the next thing she knew, the Wedding March had started, and she shelved her question for the time being.

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By the time she thought of it again, it was just after Colin Creevey had taken pictures of the wedding, just as he had for Harry and Ginny...including one of Molly with little Solomon in miniature dress robes and the pillow holding the rings for Ron and Hermione. She was all ready to ask when Ron took Solomon from Harry and positioned him comfortably yet familiarly in his arms, acting for all the world like his actual father. If 'Mione was pregnant again like Ginny suspected, Ron would indeed be a father in the not-too-distant future.

"Well, it looks like you've bonded nicely with Solomon," Ginny commented upon noting her brother's actions.

"It was mainly he who did the bonding," Ron claimed, but it was obvious that he now had great affection for the child, if only for the fact he was Hermione's son. That Solomon also belonged to Harry seemed to be only incidental at this point. What mattered, though, was that the bonding had taken place. Ginny had already told everyone about how the babies had bonded some weeks back and even showed them the pictures she had taken of them sleeping together.

"The babies seem to be getting along too," Hermione remarked as she recalled the pictures Ginny had showed her. "Of course, it remains to be seen how they'll get along when they're older."

"We'll just have to wait and see on that," Harry added, now holding little Rose, dressed in a frilly pink dress with a rose appliqué and matching booties. "For the moment, I think our friends should get started on their honeymoon. Hand over my son, mate," he directed, handing little Rose to her mother. Hermione had already thrown her bouquet, and it had landed in the arms of Susan Bones, another one of Hermione's bridesmaids, so if the old tradition held, she would be the next to marry. Of course, it didn't necessarily follow, but stranger things had happened, so they couldn't rule it out.

A short time later, the newlyweds headed off to the nearest Portkey, heading for their chosen honeymoon spot of Oahu, Hawaii. Of course, due to the distance, they would have to do it in thousand-mile increments, but they would get there eventually...and once they did, they would be there for a week, having already made reservations at a secluded beach house. Both Harry and Ginny could only hope that Ron wouldn't come home with his skin as red as a lobster because redheads' skins were notoriously sensitive to sun; probably the best thing for him to do was use the strongest sunblock they could find--if not a special sunblock spell.

It was only when they all got home and settled back in, having changed back into their everyday clothes and put the babies down after feeding them, that they realised once and for all that a year ago this time, Harry had been married to Hermione. Incredible how much could happen in just a year, but what mattered most was that all concerned were now each married to and parents with the ones they truly loved. Only at this point was Ginny able to forgive Harry for what had happened between him and Hermione, which had prompted her pregnancy. He belonged to her now, and if she had anything to say about it, he always would.