

Double Standard

by jmlane57

A rebuttal to the story "Why Ginny Weasley Was Still A Virgin When She Married Harry Potter" by 'pettybureaucrat' I found on the Simply Undeniable site. In this story, Ginny is NOT so readily accepting of Harry's cheating on her during the Second Wizarding War upon his return home and lets him -- and the others involved -- know it in no uncertain terms. (I have written the story in such a manner because I firmly believe the original story and the situations therein are very OOC.)

1: Pain and Anger

Chapter 1 of 8

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1: Pain and Anger

Ginny had never felt more miserable in her life. She hadn't slept, had barely eaten enough to stay alive and cried more than she had ever believed possible. How could Harry betray her as he had during the war and yet expect her to forgive him? How could he claim he "couldn't help himself," "needed it so bad, despite how much I loved you"? How could he possibly claim to love her when he could so easily shag other witches, especially when he knew how she felt about him and that they were engaged? And he bloody well *should* feel guilty to have so neglected his commitment to her when she had been able to honour it.

She had been under every bit as much stress as he or any of the others involved, yet ~~she~~ *he* was able to exercise proper self-control ... but it seemed like Harry was incapable of it. Why be engaged to her if he was going to cheat on her the first chance he got? How the bloody hell would he have felt if *she'd* done what he did and then claimed to love him? She'd also like to ask him if he would have felt comfortable shagging her, knowing she'd been with so many others. Maybe that would give him some idea of what he'd done to her.

What's more, how could anyone sleep with him, knowing he was engaged? Of course, it didn't seem that any of them thought it was very important, least of all Harry, despite his claims, tears and protestations. She also wouldn't put it past him not to have said anything about it to anyone but Ron and Hermione. Which reminded her, how could *Hermione* have slept with Harry, knowing how Ginny felt about him?

Nor did Ginny believe for a moment that Ron would ever willingly countenance Hermione sleeping with Harry for any reason, even if she heard it directly from them. She sat at the table, her dinner uneaten, face buried in her arms. She was so wrapped up in misery that she didn't hear anyone approach until trays were set down near her. She reluctantly looked up to find all the ones, save one, that Harry had shagged during the war, including his so-called "sister," Hermione. One didn't generally shag one's sister, but then there was an exception to every rule. And to think she had considered each of them her friends!

"Ginny, are you all right?" Hermione asked, galling Ginny with her concern.

"Oh yes, I'm just fine. I just love knowing that the man I love shagged virtually every witch he ran across while keeping me away. I'm not too pleased with you, either. How could you shag him, knowing how I felt about him, knowing we were engaged? Didn't that matter to either of you at all?"

"Ginny, no one did it to consciously hurt you," Hermione claimed, but the way Ginny felt, all she wanted to do was hex them all, especially her erstwhile best friend. She had waited years for Harry to notice her, and once he finally did and managed to destroy Voldemort, she had hoped that they would be able to take each other's virginity. But he obviously didn't think it was important enough to save himself for their marriage. And if he could cheat on her now, what was to stop him from doing it after their marriage?

"That's not the point. The point is that you did it, knowing we were engaged and how much I loved him!"

"He wasn't willing ... at least not initially," Hermione recalled. "I had to talk him into it."

"Also, how could Ron possibly be okay with Harry shagging you? You know how he feels about you!"

"This was war, Ginny. Many times one does in wartime what one would never do ordinarily."

"And I suppose you think that excuses it," Ginny shot back, her hand just itching for her wand. "I wait years for him, yet he leaves me behind to shag all those other women while all the while claiming to love me. You know how highly sexed I am, but I managed to control *myself*. And I don't care what any of you claim, cheating is cheating, no matter how you try to justify it!"

"You and Harry are engaged, Ginny? I had no idea. I'm so sorry," Luna said, trying to reach out and comfort her, but Ginny snatched her hand away.

"For the moment ... but after what he's done, I'm very tempted to break it off."

"Ginny, he loves you. You would devastate him if you did that," Hermione broke in again.

"Yeah, I noticed how devastated he was without me," she shot back bitterly.

This time Hannah replied. "You knew about this and never said, Hermione? No wonder Ginny feels like she does. I would, too, in her shoes ... and wouldn't have slept with Harry if I'd known."

"Ginny's just overreacting. She'll come around," Hermione claimed.

"Oh yeah, I'm being childish," Ginny returned sarcastically. "It's perfectly all right for Harry to shag whoever he wants 'under the stress of war,' never mind that we're engaged, and then sprout a conscience after the damage has been done. Why should it matter to *me* that he didn't think our engagement important enough to keep himself for our marriage? I guess I was expecting too much of a randy eighteen-year-old to actually honour his commitment to me. He claimed to need it so much; well, why couldn't he have come back to me for it? How hard would that have been?"

"We couldn't do that, Gin," Hermione declared. "We had too much going at that point to be able to come home on a whim."

"Yeah, I'll bet! Which reminds me ... how would you have felt if Ron cheated *onyou*, Mione?"

"Ginny, it was not a matter of cheating," Hermione insisted. "It was a matter of fulfilling a basic need."

"What would you call it, then?" she shot back, tears of both anger and hurt filling her eyes. "Because of this, I don't know if I'll ever feel comfortable allowing Harry near me again, much less to shag me. How do I know he won't be thinking of one of you while we're doing it, or comparing me to you, Luna, Lavender, Hannah or even that Morag?"

"Now I know why Harry has dark circles under his eyes and is drinking like a fish," said Hermione. "His eyes are also puffy and red from crying. How could you do this to him, Ginny?"

"How could *I* do this to *him*?" Ginny almost screeched. "What about what *he's* done to *me*? Have you any idea how many hours *I've* cried over this, how many sleepless nights I've spent longing for him, while all the while he's been shagging one of you?"

"Just what do you expect us to do, Ginny, sit in sackcloth and ashes? What's done is done; it can't be changed now. Don't destroy the deepest love you've ever known for petty jealousy."

"Petty jealousy? *Petty jealousy*? Why, you ... Get out of here before I hex you into the next century!" She grabbed her wand and pointed it threateningly at Hermione. "And if Harry feels so bad, why don't one of *you* go comfort, or better yet, shag him? You thought nothing of doing it all the months of the war, what should stop you from doing it now?"

"The war's over, Ginny. He needs *you*."

"He should have thought of that before he let his bloody hormones get the better of him!" she sobbed angrily. "Now get the bloody hell out of here before I do something we'll all regret!" But instead, it was Ginny who stood up, then fled from the room, leaving behind several former friends who felt bad for her but had no idea how to help her. Indeed, what they had done had caused her ineffable pain, and it would be a long time before she got over this, if indeed she ever did.

* * * * *

She went up to the flat her parents had taken, knowing she had to talk to someone older, someone she loved and trusted, praying that Harry wasn't there doing the same thing. Hopefully Molly would be too upset with him for what he had done to go against her own daughter to support him, but Ginny couldn't afford to take chances. She found her mother in the kitchen, thankfully alone, her father being elsewhere in the castle with Harry supervising the reconstruction of one of the destroyed areas.

"Mum?" she called out quietly.

"Ginny? Darling, you look terrible. Did something happen between you and Harry?"

"You might say that," she returned quietly, just barely loud enough for her mother to hear. "He cheated on me during the war."

"He what?"

"He cheated on me," she repeated. "Then he tried to justify it by saying he needed it so bad, that he just couldn't help himself *Then* he acts so bloody superior about it by telling me that they used the Contraceptive Charm. As if that makes it all right! How can I ever allow him to touch me again after what he's done? How can he possibly claim to love me? What's worse, Mione was one of the ones shagging him during the war ... but has the gall to criticise *me*!"

"I'm sorry you're hurting so much, darling, but I'm sure they couldn't have meant to consciously hurt you."

"They might as well have. Even the Cruciatus would have hurt less than knowing this! What's more, the one I'd planned to spend my life with has stuck a knife in me. How the bloody hell am I *supposed* to feel at a time like this?"

"Don't swear," Molly returned sternly.

"It's either that or I hex them into the middle of the next century," Ginny returned quietly but dangerously. "How could they do this to me? What did I do to deserve it? Was it so much to ask for Harry to honour his commitment to me? I was able to control *myself*, yet he seemed to think nothing of shagging whatever witch he came across, all ostensibly because of the 'stress of war.' If he could cheat on me while we're engaged, what am I supposed to think but that he'd be likely to do it again if we married?"

"In wartime, people do things they would never do ordinarily," Molly pointed out.

"You know, 'Mione said the same thing. So I'm just supposed to forgive Harry as if nothing ever happened, as if he never cheated on me? Mum, how would you feel if Daddy did such a thing to you, yet still claimed to love you? Wouldn't you feel angry and hurt, want revenge on him?"

Molly had to admit that she would, at least to herself, and knew she had to do all she could to ease her daughter's pain, but at the same time still loved Harry like another son. In fact, he had been by earlier that day before he had gone off with Arthur and confessed everything to her...but at the same time, swore up and down that despite what he had done, he still loved Ginny with every fibre of his being but had no idea how he was ever going to convince her of that. He couldn't blame her for being hurt and angry; he would feel the same way in her position. Now he had some idea of the pain he had caused her due to how he was feeling because of their separation, this time instigated by her. No matter what he had done, gifts, flowers, cards ... he was unable to change her mind. And what's worse, what Molly had said had never left his mind.

"You've got to try to see it from her perspective. She was able to remain faithful to you, but you couldn't remain faithful to her. Basically, even under wartime circumstances, cheating is cheating, whether you consciously meant to or not. Was the momentary pleasure and release worth risking the greatest love you've ever known? It's most unfortunate that you didn't consider the potential consequences of your actions; because of that, you're paying for them now. I'm sorry for your pain, dear, but you've got to realise the pain you've caused Ginny."

"Molly, I can't do any more than I'm doing. Why does she have to be so stubborn?"

"Again, I can only say that you need to put yourself in her shoes. How would *you* feel if your situations had been reversed and she did it to you, then claimed to love you? Would you want her to touch you or make love to you, knowing she'd been with so many others and was possibly thinking of them, comparing you with them? Would you like that idea? Could you accept it as you're expecting her to do? That's why she doesn't want you to touch her now; she believes you would be thinking of them, comparing her with them when you should be concentrating on her alone.

"In addition, she had fully expected the two of you to lose your virginity to each other, not to someone else ... especially not to Hermione. But now, even if you should manage to convince her to take you back, she would still be the sixth you've shagged, not the first. That loss is a great blow to her, especially emotionally. I'm sure she still loves you despite it all, but it's a very complicated situation. I'm afraid you can only keep a respectful distance from her, at least for the time being. I also advise you not to shag anyone else while you're waiting. Do whatever you must to satisfy yourself, but do it on your own. That's the only way you're going to have even a remote chance of winning her back."

Harry hadn't considered that before, although he knew he probably should have. But how could he ever get through to Ginny if she wouldn't have anything to do with him, wouldn't allow herself to be alone with him, even for a moment? What's worse, he knew that Ginny wouldn't have...*couldn't* have...cheated on him, not for any reason ... yet he couldn't return the favour. He truly wished he could have, and he had told her so, even apologised profusely for it, but it was too late to change anything now.

It was very likely that he had lost her forever, and by his own actions, however necessary he had believed them to be at the time. Nor could he blame her if she started dating someone else and eventually shagged him, despite her claim that she wouldn't, at least not simply to get even with him, even if he deserved it. It would serve him right if she did, of course, but Ginny wasn't that kind of person.

At the moment he didn't see any way on God's green earth to get back in her good graces, so maybe Molly was right. All he could do was bide his time, keep a respectful distance from her and prove himself sincere by not shagging anyone while he was waiting. She was definitely worth waiting for, but if he couldn't convince her, there would be little left to live for. Despite what he had done, he did truly love her and didn't want to marry anyone else, now or ever.

Unfortunately, he was certain that not even 'Mione had the answer to this problem, not when she was basically part of it, as well as Hannah, Luna and the others. In addition, all the girls were at least engaged, so now that the war was over, he couldn't turn to them again for satisfaction. He'd done enough damage as it was and deserved to tough it out for however long it took to win Ginny back ... and whatever he had to do to prove himself, he would do it. The truest words he had ever spoken were when he had said he had ached for her every moment, loved only her, despite how it may have seemed. Hungered for her sweet lips, her arms around him, the feel of her body close to his. Her gentle touch, her soft voice crooning to him, her flowery perfume ...

Gin, I'm truly sorry to have hurt you so and intend to do everything in my power to win you back, to convince you that I really do love you ... always have, always will. I know I deserve everything you dish out and will gladly take it if it means eventually reinstating myself in your good graces. Of course, I wouldn't blame you if you never accepted me again after what I've done to you, however unintentionally. But however many have known my body, I can state unequivocally that you are the only one in my heart, now and for all time.

2: Anger and Frustration

Chapter 2 of 8

Harry continues to try to mollify Ginny, with no success, and eventually becomes angry and frustrated.

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"What the bloody hell do I have to do to convince you?" Harry wondered out loud for the umpteenth time, angry and frustrated after Ginny had again refused his latest attempt to mollify her.

"How about Obliviating me? That way I won't remember how you betrayed me," Ginny shot back.

"Betrayed you? I never did...I never fell in love with anyone else. It was just one of those things that happens under the stress of war. My feelings for you never changed, not one iota."

"Harry, how would you have felt if our situations had been reversed and I'd gone off to war, left *you* behind, slept with several blokes 'under the stress of war,' then expected you to understand and accept that they never touched my love for you, as you seem to expect me to do for you now? What if I told you I had been 'unable to help myself,'

was so 'lonely and needy, no matter how much I loved you'? Could *you* accept those so-called explanations that you *handme*? I somehow doubt it...you'd feel hurt, angry, betrayed ... just as I do now. Could you really be as forgiving and understanding as you expect me to be for you by taking you back, forgetting all you've done to me, letting you into my bed as if nothing ever happened, like you never cheated on me?"

He seemed too stunned at her outburst to speak, so that pretty much told her what she wanted to know.

"So war is a time to check your values at the door, toss them out the window when they cramp your style and are inconvenient ... but when the war is over, you think you can simply go back and pick them up again. And I still can't help thinking that you and the others all looked for the least excuse to cheat...and the 'stress of war' is as good a one as any. You basically wanted an excuse to have your cake and eat it, too. I can remember when you could scarcely speak to a girl, much less sleep around. What's more, after all I could have done during the war, even hypothetically, could you believe me when I said I loved you or feel comfortable giving yourself to me, knowing I'd been with other blokes, as you expect me to give myself to you, or believe that you love me after all you've done?"

"Secondly, who were you to tell me that you wouldn't let me stay and fight? You're not my keeper, Harry...for that matter, you need a keeper yourself! You made it sound like you, Ron and 'Mione were the only ones with the right to risk your lives. And for your information, I don't need my brothers' permission any more than I need yours or even my folks'. I'm seventeen now, remember. And you have no right whatsoever to dictate my life when you can't even handle your own! Even as hot-blooded as redheads generally are, I managed to control myself, even under stress...which is more than I can say for you and certain others I could name! And don't give me that superior attitude about not doing it since November despite plenty of offers. Big deal! If you were truly sincere, you'd have found the strength to say no right from the start!"

Harry was now every bit as hurt and angry as Ginny. "Well, bully for you! You're so perfect, why don't you just get measured for a bloody halo?"

"I never said I was perfect, just that I have a modicum of self-control ... and if you ever expect me to take you back, you've got to convince me that you have it, too. Unfortunately I have a long memory, and it'll take longer than overnight for you to do so, if you ever can. I go crazy with longing for you for months on end, turning down offers right and left ... but you go your merry way, shagging virtually every witch you run across with little...if any...thought of how it might affect me should I find out, then have the audacity to expect me to forgive you!"

"Well, excuse me for being human!" Harry snapped.

"I'm human too, Mister...but I managed!" Ginny threw back. "I wanted us to be each other's first, but that obviously didn't matter one bloody bit to you. Not to any of you! How would *you* feel if the one you loved most shattered your most cherished dream with no more thought than stepping on a bug? And if you could cheat on me under the 'stress of war,' how do I know you won't do it under other forms of stress?"

"Gin, please listen to me. I can't take back what I did, but I love you. I always have and always will, whether you believe me or not. However many knew my body, only one has ever possessed my heart...and that's you." Harry gave her his most sincerely penitent, apologetic look, but since he had done this many times before, Ginny reacted as she had those other times.

"You should have thought of that before you let your hormones run away with you. And I first realised something was wrong when you said *your* first time' to me. Didn't you ever consider that you were giving away something that rightfully belonged to me? I waited for you. Why couldn't you have waited for me?" Her large brown eyes were full of pain and question, which hit Harry right where he lived—as well it should!

"For what it's worth, Gin, I'm truly sorry. The last thing I ever meant to do was hurt you in any way." This time Harry put his whole heart into his declaration, hoping and praying that Ginny could sense his sincerity. If she didn't believe him now, she never would.

"I also can't help wondering if you would do the same if you needed it outside of war. Would 'Mione keep you company in bed if I couldn't, such as if I were in the hospital having your baby? Especially if Ron happened to be away? You know, the 'friends with benefits' thing?"

Again, Harry was unable to answer, although something told him that it would likely happen. The problem was, Ginny guessed it and responded accordingly. "I guess that answers my question. It's too bad that you couldn't have thought to ask yourself how you would feel if you had to do the same thing you expected another person to do, especially if it was something either of you might consider objectionable or emotionally painful. And don't tell me it was 'inevitable' or that 'everybody' does it, because 'everybody' does *not*. I'm living proof of that!"

"I also find it very hard to believe the other blokes the other women ended up with just blithely accepted the cheating as you expect me to. And it's most interesting that there 'wasn't a lot of privacy or secrets,' to quote you. What did you do, all stay together in a small settlement like at the Quidditch World Cup or something? For all I know, you even had group sex, orgies or watched others go at it ... maybe you even watched Ron and 'Mione going at it, or went at it with both of them! It frankly makes me wonder just when you had time to fight the war!"

Harry flushed, and not only from embarrassment. "It wasn't like that. Whatever else I am, I'm not that kinky!"

"But you obviously had thoughts along those lines, I feel sure of it, even if you didn't actually do it with them. For all I know, maybe you did it with Luna, Hannah and Lavender all at once, if not with one of them and Morag! And how could 'Mione possibly think it acceptable to shag you when she knew we were engaged? You also better not tell me that our commitment mattered to you. It couldn't have, or else you'd never have done what you did. If it had meant anything at all to you, you'd have found the strength to say no. And despite your claims, you obviously didn't consider shagging during a war cheating. But I assure you, it is, no matter how you try to justify it!"

"And it's almost too bad that we were engaged. It wouldn't have been so bad if you shagged while you were single and hadn't made any commitment to me. That's one thing...but for someone who's made a commitment to another, shouldn't they want to honour that commitment instead of sleeping around and trying to justify it by claiming it was done 'under the stress of war'? I guess what I'm trying to say is that it would be a lot easier to forgive you if we hadn't been engaged."

"Just the same, I would think you'd want me to be at least somewhat experienced," Harry remarked, wishing almost as he said it that he hadn't ... if only to avoid the look he got back in return.

"I do...but what I'd planned on was our getting experienced *together*. I guess that was too much to expect under the circumstances, though." Her tearful eyes continued to show pain and this time, reproach.

The next voice surprised her, if only momentarily. "Blame the situation, then, not Harry. He was a victim of circumstances. We all were," Hermione insisted as she joined the conversation.

"So was I, but I managed," Ginny snapped. "But would Harry *truly* be able to excuse me as he expects me to excuse *him*? And when are you two finally going to take responsibility for your actions instead of blaming them on everything but yourselves?"

"How quickly you forget how you reacted when you saw Ron snogging Lavender, 'Mione. And Harry so conveniently forgets how jealous he was of me being with anyone else, how he wanted to either hex them or beat them to a pulp, yet I'm supposed to just automatically take him back, no questions asked, blithely accepting his peccadilloes and his claims that they never touched his so-called love for me, that he simply needed 'closeness' and 'release.' And I still find it hard to believe that the other blokes have the same attitude as you say Charlie does, that they didn't want to hex Harry into next year for deflowering their girls before they could. Most blokes prefer to do that themselves, as far as I know. And why should I honour our so-called 'agreement' when he didn't see fit to honour the far more important one we made together?"

This parting shot effectively rendered the other two speechless, which prompted Ginny to turn around and leave them standing there, able only to watch her walk away, unable to stop her or refute anything she said.

3: Confrontations

Chapter 3 of 8

Ginny confronts Ron and Hermione over what happened during the war.

3: Confrontations

At the first opportunity, Ginny made sure to confront Ron about the situation.

"How could you possibly agree to have Hermione shag Harry? That doesn't sound like you at all. I would think you'd want to keep her all to yourself."

"It wasn't my idea, I assure you, but she talked me into it. Just the same, there were ... extenuating circumstances."

Ginny sighed exasperatedly. "Yes, I know. You were at war. From what I understand, that's supposed to excuse every bit of cheating any of you ever did, especially Harry. Didn't any of you consider that in shagging Harry, Hermione was taking away something that rightfully belonged to me?"

That prompted a stricken look on Ron's face once he realised what she was talking about, but he seemed to have lost the power of speech, although Ginny was sure he finally remembered her and Harry's engagement—unfortunately, too late to do her any good.

"I'm so sorry, Gin. I totally forgot. I wouldn't blame you if you never forgave me. Unfortunately, there's no way to go back and undo it now."

"It wouldn't have been so bad if she'd been the only one—but there were *five* in all ... and 'Mione probably shagged him at least two dozen times, by her own admission—and that's not counting how many times the others probably did."

"But that didn't mean Harry ever stopped loving you, Gin. Not for a moment. It just meant that—"

"It meant, basically, that despite his claims, Harry didn't consider our engagement enough reason to find the strength to say no."

Ron looked like he wanted to argue, but knew she was right. "You aren't going to break off the engagement because of this, are you? He feels bad enough without that."

"I should, Merlin knows—and I'm greatly tempted to sever ties with 'Mione as well. This was one time she was totally wrong. Really, all of you ... she, Harry and you ... share the blame."

Ron's eyes softened with sympathy. "I wish there was something I could do to make things right again. And I know it doesn't mean much now, but I—we—truly are sorry."

"Too late for that, I'm afraid. Far too late. And with all due respect, you've done enough. Incidentally, tell 'Mione ..." Ginny's voice was laced with sadness and regret. Her voice trailed off. "Never mind. Just tell her I want to see her."

Ron nodded with a sad smile, then left.

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Hermione came by the following day. "Ron said you wanted to talk to me."

"I do—but mainly to remind you that you've taken something away from me that I'll never be able to get back as long as I live."

"May I ask what that 'something' was?"

"Don't you know? Can't you guess?" But the look on the other girl's face told Ginny she was waiting for an answer. "Harry—or more accurately, my right as his fiancée for us to take each other's virginity. Either you didn't care, or didn't remember, that Harry and I were engaged when you decided to shag him. From what you said earlier, you said you didn't consider it right to have him listen to you and Ron go at it. There *is* such a thing as a Silencing Charm, you know. Didn't you think of that? Obviously not. So I suppose it was right for you to take his virginity, something that belonged to me. It didn't seem that you considered what you were actually doing, did you, not for a moment. In which case, you're just as responsible for Harry's ultimate unhappiness as I am—or more accurately, you and Ron.

"Since you didn't bother to tell Luna, Lavender and Hannah about the engagement, I can't really blame them for what they did—or Morag. They acted out of ignorance ... but you, you knew bloody well that Harry and I had planned to be married ... and worst of all, you—*you*, of all people—seduced him!"

"So?"

"'Mione, doesn't it matter to you at all that you denied me the right as Harry's fiancée to be the one he lost his virginity to? Harry was wrong to do what he did, but *you* were the one to make him do it. If you're so clueless as not to see the wrong you've done me—to both of us—then I can't see my way clear to continue our friendship. That is, if indeed, we ever truly had one, if you could do such things to me and not feel any remorse, show no pangs of conscience. It's fine for you to shag Ron; I fully expected it at some point—but why in Merlin's name couldn't you have left Harry alone? How would you have felt if someone had denied you your right as my brother's fiancée to take Ron's virginity as you've denied me mine? I'm also warning you right here and now—keep your claws off Harry from here on in or else the Bat-Bogey Hex will be the *least* of your troubles. You understand me?"

Hermione nodded miserably, the magnitude of what Ginny said only now beginning to sink in. Truly, she wouldn't blame the younger woman if she never spoke to her again because she had been the one to have basically instigated the whole thing—and was, in fact, with Harry the most of any of the girls, most of whom were there only a relative handful of nights each. After what she had done, no amount of apology would be enough—not even if she did it every day for the rest of her life. Nor would Ginny be likely to ever forgive or believe how sorry she was ... and unfortunately, for good reason.

"I never meant for anything like this to happen, Gin. Even if you don't believe anything else I say, believe that. I was only thinking of our immediate situation and believed that what I did would help Harry. Instead, I ended up hurting you both, all but irreparably. There's no way I can make it up to either of you, but I hope you won't take it out on Harry anymore. If it's any comfort to you, please know that he always called for you in his sleep, it was always your name he called out when he—"

Ginny held up a hand. "I get the point, 'Mione. Now if you would please go ..."

"Of course." Hermione hugged Ginny one last time, tears in her eyes, before Ginny could stop her and not before murmuring a heartfelt apology. Then she Disappeared. It would be very difficult to break off their relationship, but it was necessary. They would be on speaking terms, but that was it. Meanwhile, Ginny had a letter to write and an

owl to send.

It wouldn't be the same between her and Harry ever again; there would be a very important part of their relationship missing—but she had waited for him too long, loved him far too much, to willingly give him up now. It wouldn't be easy, and it would take a long time for her to fully forgive him, but she was sure she would, eventually.

My dearest, most beloved Harry ...

I need to see you—but don't worry. I forgive you, if you can forgive me. It won't be easy to forget what you've done, but I can't lose you, now or ever. I love you far too much.

All my love,

Now and forever,

Your Ginny

After finishing the letter, she sealed it with a heart charm and a kiss, then put it in her owl's beak and told him to take it to Harry.

4: Reconciliation ... With Conditions

Chapter 4 of 8

Harry and Ginny manage to reconcile, but Ginny lays down several stringent conditions he must meet, including making the Unbreakable Vow.

4: Reconciliation ... With Conditions

She had just come out of her bathroom, dressed in clean clothes and her hair still wrapped turban-style in a towel when she heard a most unexpected sound...the doorbell. Even as she headed for the door, she couldn't help thinking how unusual this action was. When she opened the door, the most welcoming smile she could muster on her lips, the sight which greeted her was all she could have asked for. It was just Harry, not bearing any flowers, chocolates or any other kind of peace offering. Of course, it couldn't come as too much of a surprise to her that it would take him this long to realise that all she wanted at the moment was him and his love. Material things could come later. For the moment, they had better things to do.

"Gin." He smiled cautiously. "It's good to see you again. May I come in?"

"Of course," she assured him. "It's good to see you again too, Harry. Would you like anything to eat or drink?"

"Butterbeer, cold, if you have it. Thank you." He followed her to the couch and seated himself, watching her with hungry eyes, his groin tightening even as she headed to the kitchen to retrieve drinks for them. It hardly seemed possible, but she had become even more beautiful since he had last seen her; all he wanted to do was take her in his arms and tell her how much he loved her. Unfortunately his own actions had put her trust of him and his motives into serious question, and he knew if he didn't play his cards exactly right, he not only could but would lose her. The problem was, how could he possibly be sure whether or not he was doing the right thing? He supposed the best thing to do was take his cues from her.

"Harry?" Ginny's musical voice brought him back to reality. "Here's your drink."

"Thanks," he said with another smile, again watching her as she sat down a safe distance from him but still on the same couch with him ... which was a step in the right direction, if nothing else. "Your owl said you wanted to talk to me." He charmed his bottle open and took a swallow.

"Yes," Ginny replied as she took a swallow of her own frosty bottle of butterbeer. "I wanted to let you know that I've decided to take you back."

Harry could scarcely believe his ears. His head lifted to meet her soft brown eyes, eyes he had so missed gazing into for the longest time, his eyes traveling down to her lips after carefully studying her features, unable to help recalling how warm and sweet those lips were, deeply pink lips which he hadn't tasted for months. Her voice again brought him back to reality.

"With a few provisos, of course."

"I expected that," he returned quietly. "What are they?"

"You don't shag anyone else for any reason. If I'm not enough for you, you can leave right now. I've lost the chance for us to take each other's virginity, thanks to a so-called friend ... with whom I have now terminated our relationship. Which brings me to the next proviso. You are *not* to turn to Hermione should I be unable to shag you for a given amount of time. She's taken enough from me; I don't intend to allow her to take any more. Do what you must to satisfy yourself, wank off or whatever, but stay the bloody hell away from her!

"Also, if you happen to think of her or any of the others, what they were like in bed or whatever while we're shagging, don't mention it to me. I don't want to know. Ideally, you should only think of me at a time like that, but because of ... extenuating circumstances ... that is unlikely to happen. It won't be easy for me to deal with, but I think I'll manage eventually. However, it's going to take time before I feel comfortable allowing you to kiss me or touch me, much less anything else, because of what's happened, so I must ask you to bear with me."

"I'm truly sorry, Gin. You must know it was never my intention to hurt you ... and that whatever I've done with other witches, you are the only one in my heart, the only one I want to marry or have children with, for now and all time."

"I'm glad to hear that ... but you still did it," she returned quietly, sadly. "However, I've decided that I can't lose you, not now, not ever, even if you are a randy git who's incapable of keeping his bits inside his trousers. Nonetheless, I've decided to let you off the hook ... this time...as long as you're only a randy git with me. Think you could manage that?"

The tone of Ginny's voice made Harry look up and meet her eyes again to see love and desire for him there, something he had never expected to see again, especially after how he had betrayed her. He wanted to give her his word, but right now his word, his very integrity, was in question in her eyes and he couldn't blame her for doubting him. "What would you consider the most binding promise?"

"How about an Unbreakable Vow?" she suggested. "The problem is, we'd need someone to be the Bonder, to make it official. How about Mum?"

Harry made himself smile and nod, apprehensive at the prospect but not allowing himself to show it. Besides, regaining Ginny and her love was worth any risk to himself. "When did you want to do it?"

"How about after finishing our talk?"

"What else did you want to talk about?"

"Renewing our engagement. Your proposing to me again...and this time we do *itright*. Here." With that, she reached into her pocket and withdrew the beautiful two-carat diamond ring with a dozen tiny diamonds surrounding it, set in yellow gold and a Tiffany setting, that Harry had given her a year before. Harry felt such happiness and relief that he could scarcely keep from crying, much less grabbing Ginny and kissing her senseless, but with a Herculean effort, he managed to restrain himself.

In the next moment, Harry was on one knee in front of her and holding out the ring to her, his love for her fairly radiating from him. "Ginevra Molly Weasley, will you make me the happiest, luckiest wizard on earth and do me the great honour of becoming my wife and the mother of my children?"

Harry was glad to see tears in her own eyes as she smiled at his obvious sincerity, reaching out to touch his cheek. He closed his eyes in pain and pleasure for a moment before raising his free hand to cover hers, then opened them again to once again see Ginny's lovely face before him...but considerably closer this time. "Before I answer, I have something to ask *you*, Harry James Potter."

"Such as?" he prompted.

"Harry James Potter, will you make me the happiest, luckiest witch on earth and do me the great honour of being my husband and the father of my children?"

"I will ... with all my heart," he returned with every ounce of love he could muster.

"Then I will marry you," she declared, holding out her hand so he could slip the ring onto it again. Once Harry had done so, he raised it to his lips and kissed it, then lowered it but still held onto it, asking with his eyes if it was all right. Ginny smiled and nodded even as she felt their fingers intricately entwine. After a few moments of tense silence, Harry made himself speak, making his request a question and giving her the option of refusing if she chose.

"May I hold you and kiss you?"

She didn't reply, at least not verbally, but her eyes told Harry all he needed to know. He gingerly slid an arm around her and pulled her close, lifting her face to his with the other, shivering when he felt Ginny's hand lightly stroke the back of his neck, his groin tightening even further at her touch. Their reconciliation was still too tentative for him to allow her to realise his arousal just yet, even if she had accepted his proposal and was once again wearing his mother's ring. As it turned out, the ring was a Potter family heirloom which had been passed down through several generations, coming into his mother's possession twenty years ago when his father James had given it to her after asking her to marry him.

A short time later their lips met; he held her gently but securely, and for a time their kisses and caresses were simply sweet and tender, her arms going around him and holding him as well even as she moaned softly in pleasure. Her lips were sweeter than he had ever imagined they could be and he simply couldn't get enough of them. Only after about five minutes did they start becoming passionate, Harry scarcely able to stop himself from Vanishing her clothes and taking her right here on the couch. But she deserved to have as memorable a first time as he could manage to give her, and that wasn't the way to do it. How ironic that he would now be able to please her properly, whereas he wouldn't have been before. Just the same, he could well understand her wish that they could have been able to take each other's virginity. But in a sense, when the time came, it would be the first time for both of them after all ... their first time *together*.

Harry was truly sorry that he had been unable to keep himself for their marriage...sod that bloody war with Voldemort which had so mucked things up for them...but now that it was over, he would make Ginny his own in every way, for now and all time. What mattered was that Ginny was in his arms again, his fiancée again ... and that he was once again feeling her soft, sweet mouth beneath his and her warm, delicious body close to his own. After an interminable time...an hour? A day? Several sunlit days?...Harry made himself stop kissing her and moved to kiss her neck and throat, then any other bare skin he could find. All that mattered was here and now, sharing such bliss with the only girl he had ever loved, the only girl he would ever love, as long as he lived.

"Dear gods, Gin, I love you so much ..."

"Harry, my love ..." she crooned. "That feels so wonderful. *You* feel wonderful. Please don't ever stop."

His lips brushed her ear, then his teeth gently nibbled the lobe even as he gently pressed her into the back of the couch. "Does that mean you're willing for us to spend the night together, or would you rather wait until we get married?"

"I want you more than anything in the world, beloved; surely you've guessed that by now ... but we can't shag, not yet. Not until after the Unbreakable Vow...and our wedding." Ginny smiled knowingly upon feeling her companion's obvious arousal.

"Then we'll just have to make it as soon as possible, because I don't know how long I can wait," he growled passionately. "Do you know the minimum waiting time to get married?"

"I think we'll have to ask Mum or Dad about that," Ginny informed him. "Meanwhile, no more talking, Mr. Potter. There are much better things to do with our lips." This time she was the one to initiate the snogging, and Harry had no objections whatsoever to her doing so.

5: Preparations

Chapter 5 of 8

Harry and Ginny go to Molly to perform the Unbreakable Vow, then make preparations for their upcoming wedding. However, Harry is surprised at Ginny's choice of honour attendant... in more ways than one.

5 - Preparations

Harry only thought to look at his watch when they reluctantly parted to take a deep breath. It was four o'clock; he had been here four hours. If it was left to him, they'd never leave this place, but he had promised Ginny to have Molly act as Bonder for their Unbreakable Vow, so they had best get to the Burrow and see if she could do it now. With

that, Harry wrapped himself around her and Apparated them both to the Burrow. Molly came to meet them, tears of happiness in her eyes as she realised they had reconciled, even if the only indication was the fact that Ginny was once again wearing her engagement ring and not merely the glow of renewed love on the pair's young faces and their arms around each other.

"We're back together, Mum," she returned happily. "But we have a favour to ask you."

"You know I'll do anything I can for either of you, darling."

"We need you to perform the Unbreakable Vow."

There was silence for a long, uncomfortable moment, then Molly nodded. "Of course...but may I ask why you find it necessary to do so?"

"It's the only way I'll feel confident as to Harry's sincerity regarding me," Ginny told her.

Molly looked back and forth at the couple, first individually, then together. "This way."

With that, the pair followed her into the house and into the living room.

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Once that was done, the couple and Harry's future mother-in-law sat in the living room discussing the particulars of the upcoming wedding. Harry knew he would be having Ron as his best man, but Ginny's choice of her own personal attendant had changed after what had happened during the war between Harry and Hermione. Her second, Luna, was also out, although she and Hermione would be invited to the wedding, if only for the sake of keeping the peace. Hannah and Lavender were out as well; the last thing she needed was to have an attendant who had shagged Harry during the war. Just about all the ones she knew had done so, including Morag, so she was left with the only one she knew who *hadn't* been with him...at least not as far as she knew.

"Probably Susan Bones," she finally said...and although Molly gave her daughter a funny look, Harry knew why she had chosen her. In fact, ~~he~~^{she} had approached Susan in between Luna and Hannah, but she had already been in love and politely refused him. Because of this, it was best that neither Susan nor Harry ever mention this in Ginny's hearing, if only for his sake. "I'll owl her and see what she says, anyway."

"What about wedding attire? Do you already have something in mind or do you want me to get out my wedding dress for you? After all, it might bring you luck, considering how long your father and I have been happily married."

"I'll consider it, Mum," Ginny promised. "Meanwhile, let's move on to other things."

Molly was all too pleased to do so, well aware of everything that went into planning a wedding as well as pulling it off, so Ginny pretty much decided to leave it to her, only making sure that her mother knew that she expected to be consulted regarding her and Harry's personal preferences. It was *their* wedding, after all. Ginny also fully expected her to owl all her brothers and tell them of the renewed engagement and wedding plans; Harry would likely tell his friends himself.

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Their friends were as happy as could be expected, both of them hugging them in congratulations, Ron adding a kiss on his sister's forehead to his. They were surprised to hear of the provisos and Unbreakable Vow, too...or at least Ron was. Hermione well knew why Ginny had chosen to have it done and vowed to never show anything but friendship toward Harry after this, whatever it took to accomplish it. After what she had done to Harry and Ginny's relationship, Hermione believed it best. Too bad she hadn't thought of it far sooner ...

"Who were you going to have as your maid of honour, then?" she made herself ask.

"Probably Susan Bones," Ginny replied matter-of-factly.

Hermione bowed her head and lowered her eyes, knowing why Ginny had not chosen her or one of the others who had heretofore been her friends. Certainly the relationship between them would never be the same after this, after what she'd done with Harry, but at least she would be able to see them married as they should be...and was happy that they had reconciled because she knew as well as anyone how much the couple loved each other. For the moment, it was best to simply make the best of what they had, take one day at a time and see what turned up.

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Ginny owed Susan the next day, explaining her need for an honour attendant for her wedding to Harry and asking her if she would be willing to act in that capacity, also explaining her reasons for not choosing someone else because she wouldn't feel comfortable...to put it mildly...having an honour attendant who had shagged Harry. It took several days for Susan to answer, but when she did, it was in the affirmative. In the meantime, she had also received an owl from Harry, warning her not to breathe a word about his having approached her during the war. Susan could well understand both their reasons for doing what they were doing, but also knew that there might be trouble in the event Ginny ever learned of what had passed between her and Harry.

Both would have to be especially careful, both before and during the wedding (once Susan had arrived), not to give their secret away. Of course, since nothing had actually happened between them, hopefully the repercussions wouldn't be too horrific should it become known to Ginny, but after what she had already had to endure of Harry's peccadilloes during the war, there was no sense tempting fate.

In the end, Ginny also decided to invite the other girls to the wedding, making sure to invite their men as well while she was at it...if only to put a constant reminder before Harry to behave himself and not to try to approach any of them in the presence of their own "significant others" because they were just as likely to hex him into the middle of the next century if they caught him ... and that was on top of the danger Harry would be in if Ginny found out and he wasn't able to talk his way out of it.

Ginny was also pleased to note that Susan basically agreed with her in regards to how an engagement should be treated, and how both the man and woman should act in regards to the couple's individual interactions with the opposite sex while apart. She even assured her that she would have done much the same thing to Harry if it had happened to her and would even help Ginny hex Harry if she ever caught (or learned of) him misbehaving. Of course, Susan was luckier in that respect; she was in love with Ernie Macmillan, and he had always been the faithful type, so there wasn't much danger of his betraying her.

Susan had even mentioned an article she had once read concerning this type of situation in a *Witch Weekly* romantic advice column a while back. It basically said that when a man does such things to his woman, it was his respect rather than his love for her that was in question. Once Ginny learned this, she intended to do whatever was necessary in order that Harry not only developed but maintained the proper respect for her.

He was toeing the line so far, but how long would it be before he was tempted to stray again? She couldn't always keep an eye on him, so she knew she would have to look into spells which would tell a woman if her man ever strayed and even affected him physically, albeit temporarily, in order that it be psychologically impossible for him to even consider doing it again. Once she did, she intended to hold it in reserve to keep him in line ... maybe even tell her friends about it in order to keep their men in line. If it worked on Harry, it would work on anyone.

* * * * *

It was roughly a week later that Susan arrived, and Ginny invited her to stay at the Burrow with her, using the room that was once Percy's. Fortunately...at least for a while...there was no chance of her and Harry accidentally running into each other, considering his ongoing Auror training. Even at that, both knew it was just a matter of time, considering his closeness to the Weasleys, not to mention his upcoming marriage to Ginny. Susan could only hope that she and Harry would be able to talk their way

out of any tight spot they might find themselves in, but there was no guarantee of that. For the time being, the best thing to do was think of things to say designed to mollify Ginny in said situation. No guarantee they would work, of course, but that was a chance they would have to take.

Even now, Harry could recall how he had approached Susan, who had totally avenged the family she had lost, her aunt, uncle and cousins, by dispatching the Death Eaters who had killed them (with the help of Harry and company) roughly three months before the end of the war, and she had tactfully refused him.

"Susan, I have some free time tonight. How about we spend it together?"

"Are you asking me to spend the night with you, Harry?"

Harry had to nod; Susan smiled and shook her head. "I'm flattered you would ask, but I can't. I'm in love with Ernie, and he would never understand. Which reminds me...aren't you engaged to Ginny Weasley? How do you think she would feel if she found out what you're doing with other witches?"

Harry had to admit that Susan's assertion was true, but said, "Yes, I am engaged to Ginny...and I love her very much. I could not risk her life by allowing her to accompany me, but because she's not here, I need closeness and release, even above and beyond my relationship with her."

"As I said, Harry, I'm sorry, but I can't accommodate you. And you shouldn't be doing it, either."

Harry didn't argue with her, but still had every intention of finding someone who would accommodate him. Shortly after this, he approached the Scottish girl, Morag MacDonald, who closely resembled Ginny, and spent a night with her. Unfortunately, it was the very next day that they had had a fight with a dozen Death Eaters, and Morag was among the casualties. As it turned out, they had made a special point of killing her because they thought she was Ginny, which only reinforced Harry's conviction that he had done the right thing by insisting that she stay behind.

All the same, Morag had been very much like Ginny personality-wise as well as in looks, and her death would haunt Harry the rest of his life. He was so very thankful that it hadn't been Ginny, but knew he would have some tall explaining to do once she learned of his perfidy, however necessary he had found it to be at the time. Maybe he was too easily influenced, especially by his hormones, much less his brainy friend Hermione, who had also become his first lover ... He could just imagine how Gin would react when she learned that. Morag and the others were one thing; Hermione, whom he had always regarded as a surrogate sister, was another matter entirely.

Susan had also expressed her condolences to Harry shortly after Morag's death, especially after she had learned just why it had happened. "You see why I didn't want Ginny here now, don't you?" Harry had asked her. "Enough lives are being risked as it is. I have no intention of putting hers in danger, no matter what you or anyone else says."

"Yes, I'm afraid I do," Susan had to agree. "But that doesn't make it right to cheat on her. Think of how you would feel if the situation was reversed."

"It wasn't a matter of cheating, Susan. It was a matter of fulfilling a basic need. Nothing I've done has changed my feelings for Gin one bit."

"That still doesn't make it right ... and I feel sure that Ginny will tell you the same thing once she finds out. Oh, one last thing ..." she asked as he was about to walk away. "Consider this, Harry. An engaged couple should lose their virginity to each other...and only to each other...on their wedding night, but you and Hermione have taken something that was rightfully Ginny's. Once she realises this, she is going to find it very difficult, if not impossible, to forgive either of you."

"I'm truly sorry about that, but it couldn't be helped," Harry declared.

"Yes, it could," Susan countered. " 'The stress of war' is one of the oldest excuses in the book for cheating, Harry. If you truly loved and respected Ginny, you would have found the strength to say no. As it is, there will always be a very important part of your relationship missing." With that, Susan turned and walked away, leaving Harry speechless behind her.

Harry was brought back to reality by a knock on his door. He answered it to find Susan standing there. "Susan! When did you get here?"

"Just a few days ago. Ginny invited me to stay here...but I can't stay long. I don't want her to catch us together."

"What difference would it make if she does? Nothing happened between us."

"That's beside the point. You know what she's likely to think if she finds us together. And from what I understand, you've taken the Unbreakable Vow, so it simply cannot be risked. You've both been through enough as it is."

Harry had to agree with that and had to ask just why she had stopped by.

"I was told to ask you..." Susan began.

"Ask him what?" Another voice put in. Harry recognised it as Ginny's.

"What are you doing here, Suze? Hello, love."

"Hello, Harry." Ginny smiled and nodded in his direction, although the smile seemed a bit forced even as they shared a kiss of greeting. "Now what did you want, Suze?"

"One of your brothers sent me. Something about what kind of entertainment you wanted for the wedding."

"We haven't decided for sure on that. Too many other details to attend to. Besides, why didn't he come himself?"

"Well, you know how George is. Too busy with the joke shop. Besides, he knows I'm staying here with you, so he recruited me to carry the message."

"Was the message specifically for me or Harry?"

"Both of you, really," Susan replied. "Well, let me know when you decide on entertainment, and I'll tell George."

"If we don't see you between now and then, one of us will tell him," Harry assured her. "Good to see you again, Susan."

"You too, Harry." She smiled at the both of them, nodded in their direction and departed.

Once she was gone, Ginny gave him a hard look.

"What's that look for?" Harry demanded.

"Didn't you miss anyone during the war? Was she another of your conquests?"

"No, love. I swear on the Unbreakable Vow that there was absolutely nothing between us."

"Did you approach her?" Both Ginny's eyes and tone warned him not to try to cover anything up if he knew what was good for him.

"I admit I approached her, but she turned me down," he told her. "What's more, she lectured me about my liaisons with the other witches, pointing out that what I was doing wasn't fair to you and that Mione and I had taken something away that belonged to you."

"She's right, you know," Ginny reminded him. "I've forgiven you, love, but forgetting is another matter. It's going to take a long time...*and* your steady attentions to me...before I manage to do it even occasionally."

Harry stepped up to her and opened his arms. "Believe me, I have no need for anyone else ever again." Ginny moved close to him and slid her arms around him, the couple sharing a sweet, deep kiss.

"You better not. Otherwise, the Bat-Bogey Hex will be the least of your troubles should I ever catch you with anyone else," Ginny warned him as they reluctantly separated.

Harry's embrace gently tightened, her head over his heart as he held it in place with one hand, kissed it, then rested his cheek on it as the other snaked around her waist. "I love you, Gin. You're the only one I want, now and for all time. Nothing and no one's ever going to change that. Now, what kind of entertainment would you like for our wedding?"

6: The Best-Laid Plans

Chapter 6 of 8

In the midst of Harry and Ginny's wedding plans, a trouble-maker almost derails them permanently before Ginny takes matters into her own hands to make sure no one of her (the troublemaker) ilk can interfere with them ever again.

6: The Best-Laid Plans

Fortunately nothing compromising happened between Harry and Susan...but something else suspicious happened ... something between him and someone he had never expected to see again. And to think it had started so innocently...but he should have known that she was plotting something right from the start ... something sneaky and underhanded, designed to break him and Ginny up once and for all, and this ... person conveniently there to "console" him. Well, he had no intention of letting that happen if he could do anything to stop it.

Unfortunately, the old saying about the best-laid plans of "mice and men" applied here ... or more accurately, at least in Harry's case, "mice and wizards." He cursed the day that wretched girl had ever been born, much less that he had ever laid eyes on her...and now it was likely that she had wrecked his chances with Ginny for all time. How could he ever redeem himself now after what Ginny had caught them doing ... or more accurately, *supposedly* doing?

He surmised that her love potion had gotten him, the love potion he had escaped in school, the same potion which had gotten him a few moments ago when she had walked close enough for him to smell her perfume...then upon smelling it, he had pulled the attractive black-haired girl close and began snogging her. It was in the midst of that passionate clinch that Ginny had come upon them right next to the door leading to the bedroom she shared with Harry and screamed, "*Just what the bloody effing hell is going on here?*"

Her voice had brought Harry back to his senses, and he had abruptly released the black-haired girl; even Ginny's hair seemed to be on fire, and her eyes were blazing.

"Gin ... oh, my God ... it's not what it looked like, luv, I swear to you on my life ... "

"Don't say another word, Harry," she bit out, controlling her temper by the barest of threads. "As for you, you filthy, shameless slut ... get *out* of here. Get out of here *now*! If I ever see you again, or catch you within a hundred miles of Harry again, I'll Bat-Bogey you into the middle of the next century!"

Romilda only needed one look in Ginny's direction to know that she meant business, and with that, she slunk away like the alley cat she was. Once she was gone, Ginny turned back to Harry; he was fully expecting a Bat-Bogey Hex at the very least, which was no more than he deserved...if not one of the Unforgivable Curses. According to legend, he should have died for breaking the Unbreakable Vow, but it turned out that it was the one the Vow was made to who could choose to allow the one who might break it to live or die at their leisure. For some time, Harry was sure she would decide the latter and he wouldn't have blamed her one bit.

Harry wanted to reach out and hold her, but knew he had best refrain from doing so, at least for the moment. Really, what could he ever do, what could he ever say, to convince her that no matter what Romilda had had in mind, *he* had had no intention of doing anything with her? There were potions which simply provoked the desire to snog, others provoked strong sexual desire...and the one Harry had smelled was the former. Of course, Ginny had no way of knowing this, and anything he said would be just his word, which wasn't too reliable at the moment ... to put it mildly!

"Ginny, luv ... please ... let me explain ..."

"I don't want to hear it, Harry," she bit out. "For Merlin's sake, not even the Unbreakable Vow stops you, does it?"

"Gin, I swear to you, all that happened was snogging ... nothing else!"

"Only because I happened to get here before things went any further!" she shot back. "Damn you, Harry ... damn you to hell! And to think I believed you when you said you'd never do this again!"

"Gin, please! Don't do this! I'll do anything to make you believe me ...*Anything*!"

The earnest tone of his voice managed to reach her, and even though she had been prepared to run out of the room and lock herself in her old upstairs room, she looked at him and their eyes met. Love, pain and pleading were in his lovely green eyes, just as tears of love, pain and question were in hers...along with a smidgen of hope that she hadn't lost him for all time, that he was truly sincere and that it was simply another of Romilda's evil schemes.

"Anything?" she finally said, just barely loud enough for him to hear her.

"Anything," he declared.

There was silence for a long time as they gazed at one another; Harry's heart pounded with a mixture of fear and desire even as his own eyes filled. He loved her so much; he *couldn't* lose her now, not over something like this. *Please, God, let her believe me!*

"Well ... all right. Let's go see if 'Mione has some Veritaserum she's not using. Either that or we'll have to go buy some. Either way, I intend to bloody well hold you to your promise, mister!"

With that, the couple headed out of the room to go find Hermione and see if she had any extra Veritaserum around. Otherwise, they would have to go buy some because it took too long to brew, at least a month, and Ginny couldn't wait that long to be assured of Harry's sincerity. She very much wanted to believe that he hadn't been cheating on her again, but after what he had done during the war, she could no longer simply take his word for it and needed something which would oblige him to tell the truth, and Veritaserum was the strongest truth potion available.

* * * * *

It was a few days later, in fact, that Harry and Ron went for the fittings of their dress robes for the wedding. Fortunately both were now old enough so that they were unlikely to grow any further, so magical adjustments would be unnecessary. Harry's ended up similar to, albeit larger than, the ones he had worn for the fourth-year Yule Ball; especially pleasing to Ron was the fact that his own dress robes wouldn't be secondhand, Harry had assured him of that...even if he had to pay for them himself. All the same, he was determined to pay him back eventually. Of course, he didn't tell Harry this, because he would have refused the repayment; rather, he intended to pay him back in full when he least expected it...even if he had to deposit the money in Harry's account anonymously.

The better part of the afternoon passed before the boys returned home, where Harry was certain that Ginny was getting fussed over within an inch of her life, something she likely was protesting mightily about, if not hexing those who did it...even Susan and her mother, who were most likely to be the ones to be doing the fussing over her. The boys had been assured that their robes would be ready a week before the wedding; they would be owed when to pick them up. It was the women who took care of the other details, including all the necessary flowers for everyone. Even at that, there seemed to be literally a million details to see to, and if they hadn't had magic, they would never have made it ... and even keeping it to just close friends and family, it would prove to be a large gathering, owing to the size of the Weasley family and circle of friends.

Remus had been chosen to serve as Harry's surrogate father, along with Molly as mother figure. Tonks would be one of the bridesmaids, as were two of Ginny's other closest friends, including Susan Bones, who would be maid of honour. It had even been arranged that Dumbledore's portrait would be brought from Hogwarts to observe the wedding, and McGonagall, who was attending, would bring it. It was only a couple of weeks to go now until the wedding, and there were times that all concerned literally felt like pulling their hair out because they were sure that something would go wrong when they least expected it...and even with magic, they knew that plenty could still go wrong, no matter how much they were assured everything would be fine.

However, Harry refused to allow these facts to get him down; all he was thinking about, in fact, was finding Ginny and seeing if he could catch her unawares in her wedding dress or something, even though technically he wasn't supposed to do it because it was bad luck...just as seeing her before the wedding on the wedding day was. But he frankly considered those traditions both outdated and a colossal pain in the arse. If nothing else, he would have everyone in the wedding party take Felix Felicis in order to ensure a perfect wedding day.

Meanwhile, he made a beeline for Ginny's room, hoping to find her alone, even as unlikely as that prospect was. If he did, maybe they could get in some surreptitious snogging. They had been so busy finalising the wedding plans and last-minute details that they hadn't had a chance to be alone in days. Of course, if the bridesmaids and Molly were still there, he would simply have to make the best of it...especially if he wasn't allowed to see her.

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Molly and the attendants had just left her a few minutes before, and Ginny was posing in front of her full-length talking mirror, admiring her dress from all angles before placing her jeweled tiara with attached fingertip veil on her head, making sure her bare feet didn't show because to have bare feet showing beneath the lacy, pearl-trimmed, form-fitting dress was incongruous, to say the least. She stiffened when the soft, distinctive knock came. Only Harry ever knocked like that...and how fortuitous that she was alone!

"Come on in," she called, removing her headdress but leaving her dress on, although if she knew Harry, he would have loved to have been able to take it off and share some quality time with her in bed ... or even against the wall, if necessary. He wasn't particular as to where they did it, either--not as long as they were alone and in a comfortable spot, unlikely to be discovered.

Harry stuck his head in the door and looked around the room before meeting Ginny's eyes, giving her a sly smile, hungry look and wolf-whistle upon seeing her in the dress. In spite of herself Ginny blushed, and Harry's knowing smile widened.

"I swear, Gin, you look positively edible! If it wasn't for the fact that we're getting married in a couple of weeks, I'd..."

He moved to stand before her and take her in his arms, kissing her deeply and gently pressing her close to his obvious arousal before reluctantly releasing her. Ginny then lifted a hand to place a finger over his lips, which Harry promptly kissed.

"Don't say that ... at least not until we're alone...after the wedding."

Harry well knew how hard it was for her to resist him when he started purring in her ear, pressing her close as he kissed her. The only reason he had decided to release her (albeit *very* reluctantly) was because he didn't want to get either of them in trouble.

"And besides, you shouldn't be here. Mum and the others will be back any minute, so you'd better leave before they catch us. Otherwise we'll never hear the end of it."

Harry sighed in affectionate exasperation. "As you wish, my lady. I'll go now. Just wanted to see you and be alone with you for a few minutes." He pulled her close one last time, kissed her again, then smiled, winked and slipped out the door, closing it silently behind him.

Ginny turned back to the mirror and saw that she was still flushed, and her heart was pounding so hard it was painful at the mere thought of what she and Harry had shared only moments ago. Oh Merlin, what he could do to her with a simple look or smile, much less a touch or kiss! How was it possible to love and desire anyone so much? But what mattered was that she always had and always would.

As she waited for the other ladies to return, she was warmed at the thought of how Harry had passed the test with flying colours when she had questioned him regarding his inadvertent rendezvous with Romilda. She now knew that he had been totally innocent, for which she was immensely thankful. Just the same, she fully intended to see that he never forgot what she would do should he ever even *think* of straying again ...

As for Romilda, Ginny had already arranged so that the wards around the Burrow would not allow her in again, and if she ever ran into her again, she would be greatly tempted to hex the sneaky bitch into the middle of the next century, preferably with the Bat-Bogey Hex ... although she also intended to ask Hermione to see if she could find some spells she could use against her nemesis...and Harry's too, come to think of it. For the time being, though, Ginny intended to just enjoy the prospect of being married to the one she had loved since she was a child and the one she would love until she took her last breath. To this day, she could scarcely believe it was really true. It still seemed like the world's most beautiful dream that she was actually living...and if she had anything to say about it, she would live it every day for the rest of her life!

7: Trick of Fate

Chapter 7 of 8

On top of everything else, Draco enters the game, causing jealousy and anger on Harry's part even as Ginny tries to assure him that nothing happened. However, he finds that very hard to believe because of the way he found them.

7: Trick of Fate

Of course, with Harry being Harry, fate still had some tricks to play on him...and Draco Malfoy, currently between girlfriends, was to be a key player in the ensuing soap opera.

Ginny was in the Three Broomsticks waiting for Harry to get off from his job at the Ministry in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement (he wasn't an Auror yet; this job was sort of a precursor to that). There were female Aurors, of course; Ginny knew that...some very beautiful as well as extremely competent. They were bound to interact with Harry on occasion, maybe even come on to him from time to time, if only because of his looks and fame ... not to mention people who sought out the help of the Department. Because of this Ginny knew she had to cut him some slack, but at the same time, couldn't let him have free rein, either, not after what he had done during the war. She also couldn't spend her time picturing Harry shagging every witch he met; she'd drive herself up a tree in no time. A cultured male voice brought her back to reality. It was surprising not to hear it with its trademark sneer, but she recognised it nonetheless.

"Weaselette, is that you?" Draco Malfoy asked as he approached her.

Ginny was also surprised to see that he even wore Muggle-type clothes...jeans, a T-shirt and hoodie with top-flight athletic shoes...when ordinarily, he wouldn't have been caught dead in them. He must have mellowed considerably from when Harry and Ron had rescued him from the flaming Room of Requirement during the Battle of Hogwarts. Or he could have come to the realisation of the merits of Muggles on his own. Whatever the case, she was glad of it because it would make life a lot easier for both her and Harry.

Ginny frowned at the old derogatory nickname. "The war's over, Malfoy. Isn't it about time you called me by my name? I'm Ginny."

"If you say so ... Ginny. By the way, what are you doing here by yourself?"

"Waiting for Harry. We're having supper after he gets off work. He works in the MLE Department."

Draco's mouth twisted. "Can't say I'm surprised to hear that. Potter's always been the do-gooder type."

"I'd be thankful for that if I were you ... Draco. He could have just left you to the Fiendfyre, you know."

Draco held his hands up in a peacemaking gesture. "No insult intended ... this time. Just making an observation."

Looking around, Draco noticed that the pub had filled up seemingly by magic and that the only free seats were beside and across from Ginny. He was dubious as to the possibility that she would allow him to sit with her, but he didn't have a choice but to ask.

"Looks like I'm forced to ask if I can join you, since I don't see any other free seats in here."

Ginny frowned. "I don't know. Harry might get the wrong idea, and it doesn't pay to get on his bad side, as you well know."

"From what I heard of him during the war, he was literally the wizarding world's equivalent of Don Juan, so I don't see that he has any right to judge you," Draco remarked as he slid into the seat across from Ginny and ordered a firewhisky when the server came by. "All the same, I can't understand how he could do that when he had a dish like you at home."

"He claimed he was under 'a lot of stress' and

needed 'closeness' and 'release' even while claiming to love me. At that point in time, I was convinced that he no longer knew the meaning of the word! Never mind that I went through the same kind of stress and needed closeness and release just as much, but managed to stay faithful to him. He toes the line now, because he knows what I'll do if he doesn't. We had a bit of trouble when I first learned of his cheating, and I told him I wouldn't take him back unless he did some crawling...and even then, we took the Unbreakable Vow."

Draco was hard-pressed to conceal a smirk. He could just imagine how Potter had reacted to that!

"I bet he enjoyed that. How's he doing?"

"Pretty well so far...fortunately for him. We had a close call a while ago when Romilda Vane tried to get to him again by using a love potion in her perfume. But I got there before any more than snogging ensued. Harry swore to me up and down that it wasn't as it seemed, that she had been the aggressor."

Draco looked thoughtful. "She *did* have that reputation at Hogwarts, that's for sure."

"I ordered her off the premises and set up the wards so that they won't allow her in again."

"Good for you," Draco said, taking another swig of firewhisky. "And am I correct in assuming you've severed ties with Granger because she was the one whose idea it was to have Harry shag witches during the war, and her one of them? So much for her supposedly being his 'surrogate sister'. I'm afraid that's one time when the know-it-all didn't know squat!"

"You are," Ginny confirmed. "When I got upset, she claimed I was 'over-reacting,' that it was 'not a matter of cheating, but fulfilling a basic need.' ... and that they were all supposedly 'victims of circumstances.' Huh!" Ginny scoffed. "Harry visited me several times during the war, and we had plenty of opportunities to shag, but never did more than snog and caress. I think I can guess why now." Her lips twisted bitterly. "It was because he was shagging 'Mione and four others the whole time."

"He was a bloody fool to have had the opportunity to shag you and not taken advantage of it." Draco's voice held such sincerity that Ginny had to look up at him; his eyes held every bit as much and she was warmed by it in spite of herself.

"It wouldn't have been so bad if he and I could have actually taken each other's virginity, but no, he let 'Mione talk him into it, even claiming that she and the others 'made' him do it. Yeah, right!" Ginny scoffed again before taking a swig of her own drink, having put up a *Muffliato* spell in order so that she and Draco wouldn't be overheard by others near them. "How the bloody hell would he have felt if I'd done that to him?"

"You wouldn't," Draco stated matter-of-factly. "Whatever your other faults, you're not that kind of person."

In earlier days he would have been sure he was going soft to say something like that out loud, but now he knew he was stating a simple fact.

"Damn bloody right I wouldn't," Ginny emphatically agreed.

"Sounds like he was just making excuses to have his cake and eat it too, as the Muggles say...and pretty flimsy ones at that."

Ginny was pleased to note that Draco had mellowed and matured considerably after what Harry had done for him and his family during the Battle of Hogwarts. Certainly he wasn't fond of owing Harry a life debt, but the truth could not be denied. By this time, Draco's inhibitions had loosened enough due to the firewhisky that he reached for Ginny's hands and held them. They were warm and soft, and she smelled of flowers. He could definitely see why Potter had fallen for her. If only he could have woken up sooner ...

"I hope Potter knows what a lucky bloke he is...and if he's smart, he'll never let you go. If he does, though, I'll be waiting." Again, Ginny saw the truth of this in her companion's smoky blue eyes and squeezed his hands back.

"Thanks. I'll keep it in mind."

Just then an angry and familiar voice cut in. "Get your bloody meathooks off my fiancée, Ferret!" Harry had barely stepped into the pub when he spotted Malfoy sitting with Ginny, their heads close together and holding hands, their eyes holding a sappy look usually reserved for bad romance novels.

Ginny looked up and smiled, releasing Draco's hands. "It's all right, Harry. Draco's only here because all the other seats were taken."

"Yeah, I'll bet," Harry almost sneered. His eyes were a blaze of green with jealousy and righteous anger, his hand just itching for his wand.

Ginny gave her intended a hard look. "For Merlin's sake, Harry, nothing happened! Draco was merely congratulating me on our engagement."

Harry gave Malfoy a look which went right through him, but Draco didn't flinch. "Ginny's right, Potter...but after what you did to her during the war, you deserve to lose her." He looked at Ginny like she was something edible.

Harry cut him off. "Don't worry; I assure you I'm paying for that mistake every day. And one more look like that in her direction, Ferret, and I'll make you regret the day you were born. Remember, you still owe me a life debt. Don't make me cancel it."

"Believe me, I know. Don't worry, I'm not staying. I was just keeping Ginny company until you got here. She said you got off work late."

"Yeah, that's right, as far as that goes," Harry reluctantly conceded. "But I still don't want you anywhere near her unless absolutely necessary...and even then, I intend to be there and watch you like the proverbial hawk."

"Don't worry, I won't be ... as long as you treat her right. But if you ever abuse her in any way..." Draco broke off abruptly but Harry knew what he hadn't said.

"Just do us both a favour and stay the bloody hell away from her, period!"

Harry had enough problems getting Ginny back as it was without Malfoy adding to them. And even as much as he would have loved to warn Gin away from him, if he wasn't careful, she'd likely end up right in the Ferret's arms, if only for rebound's sake. After what he had done to her, abused her trust, cheated on her, stolen her right to claim his virginity, she technically had every right to get revenge on him. Whatever his other faults, however, Harry couldn't let Ginny go. She was his heart, his soul, his other half. He had come far too close to losing her forever for him to feel comfortable allowing other blokes anywhere near her. Despite how it may have seemed, he loved her with every fibre of his being and intended to spend the rest of his life showing her, doing everything in his power to make things up to her.

It wouldn't be anywhere near what she deserved, but it was all he could do ... all any human could do, be they wizard or Muggle. Just the same, he had every intention of keeping a discreet eye on Draco if the Ferret was anywhere around Ginny, especially after his veiled threat to take her if Harry didn't treat her right ... and Harry knew him well enough to know that he meant it. Perhaps he could help defuse any potentially explosive confrontation by inviting Draco to their wedding at the first opportunity.

"Come on, love, sit down. Let's get something to eat." Ginny pulled on Harry's arm to get him to sit down beside her; Harry allowed himself to be pulled down and seated. The server seemed to materialise out of thin air and took their orders, returning with their charmed plates and glasses which would automatically fill with their desired food and drink upon request. They then settled down to eat, all conversation temporarily shelved.

After he had paid for their meal and they left the pub arm-in-arm, Harry apologised for his earlier outburst. "Didn't mean to cause a scene, love. I guess I'm still afraid of losing you."

"Harry, when will you realise I would have far more cause for concern than you?"

"Not any more," he declared. "And I intend to spend my life doing everything humanly possible to make it up to you." They stopped on the street and he pulled her out of the way, proceeding to snog her within an inch of her life.

"Harry ..."

"Quiet, love. We have better things to do with our lips."

He moved to once again silence her with a passionate kiss, moving sensuously against her, fortunately having had the presence of mind to have thrown his Invisibility Cloak over them beforehand so they would not be seen. Otherwise they'd have been on the front page of every newspaper in both the wizarding and Muggle worlds within 24 hours. Again, it was blissful oblivion. All Harry knew was the warm sweetness of Ginny's lips and tongue, her lovely, compact body, the floral smell of her. It was incredible that he could ever have wanted to shag anyone else when Ginny was in the world. Definitely not the smartest thing he had ever done, to put it mildly, and he would likely pay for his stupidity for the rest of his days. But now all that mattered was her nearness.

He shivered deliciously when her fingers stroked the back of his neck, then ran through his shock of black hair before going down to his waist and slipping beneath his shirt to stroke the smooth skin of his bare back. Truly, there was no excuse for what he'd done; besides, the only person he wanted to know intimately after this, now or ever, was Ginny.

8: Three Days to Go

Chapter 8 of 8

Three days before their wedding and tired of both making wedding plans and Molly keeping them apart, Ginny devises a way to finally be alone with Harry again ... giving him a VERY pleasant surprise and an equally big regret.

8 - Three Days to Go

In the end, Harry and Ginny decided to use several songs for the wedding reception since they couldn't decide between them. As for the actual wedding, they would use both the Wedding March and the same song Arthur and Molly used at their own wedding, *True Love*, from the only Muggle movie he had ever been able to get her to watch, *High Society*, with singer-actors Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra, which had come out in 1956. *True Love* had been their favourite song from the film; he had taken her to see it to celebrate their getting engaged. They had gone to see it after having had dinner at the Three Broomsticks. Molly had told her daughter and son-in-law to be that Arthur had saved for six weeks in order to be able to take his love on a very special date. He had especially wanted her to see *High Society*, even though he usually went to the Leaky Cauldron or Molly's house for food...and the couple had also eventually adopted *True Love* as "their" song.

Of course, even at her then-young age, Molly was an exemplary cook, having learned from her own mother. The story had so intrigued the younger pair that they had decided to use that very song for their own wedding. As for other details, such as the type of wedding cake they wanted, they had already decided on chocolate with strawberry filling, although they wanted the usual type of frosting and decorations...white with four layers, along with red roses and statuettes of a bride and groom, the one of the man made with glasses and the one of the girl made with red hair. They had arranged for Colin Creevey to be the photographer; his brother Dennis was his assistant. Kingsley Shacklebolt, now Minister of Magic, promised to personally handle publicity as a favour to Harry since he knew how to report fairly and accurately, with no sensationalism. Flowers were white roses streaked with blue, specially charmed by Hermione in keeping with the colour scheme of the wedding.

The girls' bridesmaid dresses were pale blue, Empire-waisted with silk ribbons tied beneath their bustlines, lace-covered silk and floor-length with matching shoes, as well as off-the-shoulder with ruffles around the top and bottom hems. Ginny wore the diamond engagement ring Harry had originally gotten her brand new, but planned to get out his parents' rings from the family vault and use them at the proper time. Also, at least part of the honeymoon would be spent in the same places Harry's own parents had gone. He had even found his mother's wedding veil in the family vault and suggested that Ginny use it. She had already decided to use Molly's wedding dress, so it couldn't be better in regards to showing respect for their mothers. Maybe even use Lily Potter's veil as one of the traditional wedding items..."old, new, borrowed, blue," as the saying went. The dress and veil would be the "borrowed" items, the engagement ring and pearl choker Hermione had bought her the "new", Great-Aunt Muriel's goblin-made tiara the "old"; and finally, the lacy blue teddy and lacy garter the "blue" items which Ginny would wear under her dress.

Harry still wasn't fond of the idea of inviting Draco, but did it to keep the peace...and to surprise Ginny. He had also owled Hogwarts and obtained the current addresses of his former classmates and invited them. If weather permitted, the wedding would be held outdoors in the Burrow's flower garden and the reception at the Three Broomsticks, which Harry insisted on paying for. Otherwise, it would be held at the Three Broomsticks, period.

Harry also hoped McGonagall would be able to officiate, although someone from the Ministry's Department of Marriage and Children would be there to make the wedding legal. Ginny's garter was made with blue silk and white lace, gold wedding bells dangling from it over her right knee. Not to mention her favourite scent of honeysuckle rose for the wedding. The other girls would wear their own favourite scents, not to mention hairstyles. Ginny had already decided what kind she wanted, but it wasn't only for herself that she had chosen it. She smiled evilly as she visualised Harry's reaction to it. They had also decided to have Molly do the catering for the reception, since no one knew their favourite foods as she did. The Weasley matriarch had also carefully chosen what kind of wedding outfit and hairstyle she wanted for herself. Arthur had decided to magically increase the size of the dress robes he had worn on his own wedding day, as well as shine up his one pair of dress shoes.

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Of course, not everyone's mind was on the upcoming wedding every moment of every day. Particularly not Harry's mind. Even as much as he loved Ginny and wanted to marry her, he was still a young man...and wanted to act accordingly. Specifically, he wanted to be alone with his fiancée, even if only for a short time each day ... but the closer it got to the wedding day, the more difficult it became for the lovers to steal even a moment alone, much less an embrace or kiss. It got so the best they could do was steal longing looks or smiles in each other's directions or blow kisses...if not sign "I love you," but even those moments were becoming increasingly infrequent. And now, just three days before the wedding, with virtually everything either already arranged or in the process thereof, Harry sat on the edge of his bed, head bowed dejectedly, eyes closed in pain and his hands clasped in his lap.

Bloody hell, this is ridiculous, he thought, tears of both anger and pain misting his eyes even as he threw himself backwards onto his bed, one arm covering his eyes upon removing his glasses. *I miss Gin so much it hurts...and I can tell she misses me, too...but it seems that the closer we get to our wedding day, the harder it is for us to find a moment alone, even to simply smile at each other or blow a kiss. I don't know how much longer I can stand it. I've not been able to even touch her hand for ten days now, much less hold or kiss her. It's for sure that I've set a record for cold showers, too ... I know there's only three more days until we're together forever, but the way things have been...the way things are now...it seems more like three years, if not three centuries. In fact, I'll be lucky not to attack her like an animal in heat on our wedding night.*

His body ached and burned with desire for his beloved...an ache and burning only Ginny could ease...but she wasn't here ... and could not be here, even as much as she may have wanted to be. In fact, it wouldn't surprise him if Molly was purposely keeping them apart until the wedding.

Gin, I need you so much ... I need you ... Oh, Merlin, how I need you ...

He knew Molly meant well, but at the same time wished she was far away...if not the other side of the world, of London. Gin's brothers, too, for that matter. They might even be in on a conspiracy right along with Molly. One thing was for sure, he intended to have at least a week's (if not two) honeymoon in order to have a chance to be with Gin alone long-term with no well-meaning but meddlesome family or friends to stand in the way of romance. That is, if he could possibly manage it. He never dreamed he would find himself envying Ron and Hermione. Even they had been able to spend more time alone together of late than himself and Ginny!

However, Harry didn't yet know of the plans Ginny had made for the two of them at this very moment. He would have felt a lot better if he had known, of course, and it wouldn't be too much longer until he did...and then they would finally be able to spend many tenderly passionate hours together ... or at least enough to take the edge off until their wedding night. This she vowed with every ounce of her being, whatever she had to do!

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It was shortly after midnight that night that Ginny Apparated into Harry's room and stood there for a time just watching him attempt to sleep, certain parts of his incredible body spotlighted by the moonlight which slanted in through the half-open window. She heard him moan softly, then toss and turn; if she hadn't known better, she would have suspected he was having another nightmare. However, he had not had one for some time; by this time she knew the signs and what to look for. This was sexual frustration, pure and simple.

She knew all too well what her mother was doing and why, appreciative of Molly's having her daughter's best interests at heart...but at the same time, wasn't about to allow it to go on any longer. She was just as ready to climb the wall as Harry was and intended to let him know. This prompted her to then take his nearest hand and Apparate them to a place where they could be alone for several hours with no interruptions, whatever she had to do to prevent them.

Upon arrival, Harry yawned, moaned softly again and opened his eyes to see a blurry image of his beloved beside him. "Gin, what's going on? Where are we?"

"All you need to know right now is that it's somewhere where no one can bother us," she informed him. "No more talking now, love. We have a lot of time to make up for."

With that, she dropped her nightgown and situated herself beside Harry, then gathered him into her arms and kissed him deeply. All they knew after that was each other's touch, their scent, the feel of their bare skin, their lips ... and that's all they *wanted* to know, for now and the foreseeable future.

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Harry awoke to find himself intricately entwined with his fiancée's warm fragrant body, his face nestled in her sweet-smelling hair, tousled with sleep and passion. Her breath was hot on his bare skin and he loved the feel of it; at the same time, it was no hotter than the flames of passion which had burned inside both of them the entire

time their bodies had moved almost frantically together in the age-old rhythm. Truly, he was certain that he would never be able to get enough of her; he had been deprived for so long. He was never going to allow anyone to stand in his way again where Ginny was concerned; they had waited far too long to be together. They deserved every moment alone they could possibly beg, borrow or steal.

His heart felt so full that he was certain it would burst with love for the woman in his arms, her beautiful, compact body with its full hips and slender waist, even fuller breasts with deep peach-coloured nipples, breasts which were covered with innumerable freckles...freckles which covered virtually every inch of her. He loved her breasts and soft, sweet, intoxicating mouth second only to the hot, wet, and almost unbearably delicious tightness between her lovely legs. He intended to spend the rest of his life getting to know her as intimately as he possibly could...especially after the mistakes he had made with her. It was for this reason above all that Harry intended to make sure his own children never made the same mistakes, whatever he had to do.

He smiled as he watched her sleep for a time, then closed his eyes momentarily. However, it turned out to be much more than a moment, for he felt Ginny kiss him awake, becoming lost in her velvety brown eyes with their thick, dark lashes (he was sure she used a Cosmetic Charm which simulated mascara and eyeliner with complementary colours of eye shadow), but as far as he knew, that was the only makeup she ever wore other than a touch of lip gloss.

"Morning," she crooned. "Sleep well?"

"Great," he replied. "Once you finally finished wearing me out." He gave her a sly wink.

"Now you know what you missed all during the war," she remarked, stroking his lips before kissing his nose. "Bet you wish you'd waited now, don't you?"

She was definitely right about that...and although there was no way to make it up to Ginny for the way he had betrayed her, Harry intended to do everything humanly possible after this to see to it that she was the only woman he ever knew intimately again, whatever he had to do. They would be married in just under three days, and only they would know the passionate shagging which had gone on this night. It was no one else's business but their own, now or ever.