

A Little Piece of You

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An owl hooted softly outside an open window on the first floor of the Burrow. Ginny Weasley stirred in her bed and groaned as the oppressive feeling of wanting to vomit overwhelmed her. She tumbled out of bed, barely keeping her balance, and padded to the loo in case she lost her dinner from the night before.

It was a month before Ginny's seventeenth birthday and she was alone at the Burrow with her mother for the summer. It had been a rough year since her brothers, Hermione, and Harry had left to find the bits of Voldemort's soul hidden across the country and face the most powerful Dark wizard in a century. Ginny had been left behind, the only one of her family not able to use magic outside of school. She was sent back to Hogwarts the next September with a handful of other students. It hadn't been the same without the ones that mattered most to her and without Dumbledore.

Dean had been there and, after hearing that Harry had broken things off with her, had asked to rekindle their relationship. Ginny had hexed him and left him stuck to the wall of the common room, but his proposal had helped make her mind up regarding Harry. She'd wait for him, but it wouldn't be because she was particularly good at being the doting girlfriend.

Breakfast was sullen and depressing. Ginny pushed her porridge around in the bowl without any desire to taste it. She didn't usually eat until lunch anyway. Her mother seemed to notice, however.

"Ginny, dear," she said, in what she must have thought was a consoling manner, but it only irritated Ginny. "I don't like it when you don't eat. It worries me."

Ginny dropped her spoon and stood. "Maybe I can't eat because *I'm* worried," she said, a bit more harshly than she intended.

Molly sighed and approached her daughter. "I'm worried, too," she admitted with a muffled sniff. "I wish they'd stay with us every night instead of just when they're not on duty."

It was a mark of Ginny's restraint that she didn't demand to leave with Ron during the token visits he made to the Burrow. While her father and other brothers came home regularly to rest and get re-supplied with food and love, Ron had only appeared once since Hogwarts had ended its last term. She'd only seen him twice at school after he'd left with Harry and Hermione the night of Bill and Fleur's wedding. She'd seen Harry even less.

"Well," Molly said after a moment, breaking Ginny out of her thoughts. "At least they bring us news when they come," she said sadly.

And it was true; they had been bringing them news, but it wasn't always welcomed. When Fred hadn't come home with the rest of them, the girls were told that he was in St. Mungo's with a thousand Billywig stings and it would be a week before they got all the poison out of his system. The last time she'd seen Ron – three weeks ago – he reported that Harry had been wounded after finding one of the Horcruxes and was blind in one eye. Ginny hadn't been able to spend time with Harry then, even though he'd been sleeping in Ron's room. Harry preferred not to chance it, and even though it left a bitter taste in her mouth, she hadn't seem him while he was awake, preferring instead to visit him at night.

Molly shifted again and took a half-step towards the living room. "Best get on with the laundry," she announced and sent the breakfast dishes to the sink; Ginny's uneaten porridge whisked into the rubbish bin on the way. She followed her mother and felt a stab of regret in her middle. If only the war had started a year later, Ginny would have been old enough to use magic and would be *doing* something instead of folding half-charred trousers.

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Post was restricted since it was so easily intercepted and forged, so Ginny and Molly had to rely on hand-delivered messages from Arthur and whomever needed to stay with them on their off shifts. These were Ginny's life lines and from the way her mother clung to the ones in her dad's writing, it seemed that her mother valued them quite as much as she did.

Remus had appeared a month before, looking as battered and weary as ever, clutching three letters for each of them. Molly had sequestered herself in her room to read the ones from Arthur, Fleur and Ron, while Ginny fell asleep reading and re-reading the fourth letter Harry'd ever sent her.

He'd been in Wales tracking down the last Horcrux and was resting in an abandoned castle with Ron and Hermione. The thing that had caused Ginny to read it over and over wasn't the descriptions of the battles he'd been in, or even the fantastic places he'd been visiting. It was the fact that he'd told her how he'd felt...

The Death Eaters fight like they don't care if they live or die. How can we possibly win against people who have such disregard for life? I can't even manage to cast Cruciatius at them, let alone the Killing Curse. They throw it around like they don't know any other spell. Ginny, if I make it through this, I'm going to come straight to you and... well, I can't really say, because I'm afraid I'll come and do it right now. After all this... death, I'm going to need someone like you to make me whole again. Is that selfish of me? You can tell me off for it and I wouldn't be surprised. I just can't think of anything else but those times we went out to the lake... We'll be at the Burrow in a couple of days, but like the

last time I was there, I need to ask you to not visit me. I won't be able to leave you again if you don't keep away. It'll only be a little longer, Ginny.

Ginny fought back both her overwhelming sadness at being told not to see him, even though he'd be so close, and the urge to smack him the second he Apparated there for even suggesting it.

The other two letters Remus delivered had been from Ron and Hermione. Ron's, she'd read over lunch and it didn't contain anything that she hadn't heard from Harry already or would be covered by Hermione's usually more thorough letter. She decided to read her best friend's missive at the end of the day, after their chores were done.

But as they finished dinner and set to work repairing trousers and cloaks, all thoughts of a relaxing evening reading Hermione's letter flew from her mind.

"Arthur says he won't be coming back for another two weeks," Molly pronounced as she pointed her wand at a large hole in one of Fred's jumpers and watched thread fly from the tip of the oak stick and weave itself into the material. "Something about a lead on where Lucius Malfoy's operating from."

Ginny snorted, amused that it'd taken so long to find him after his escape from Azkaban, but then her feelings shifted to anger as hot desire welled up inside her – desire to be out there *doing* something. Sitting at the Burrow, safe and protected was nice, but also completely stifling. She pulled roughly on her needle, forcing the thick thread through the patch she was sewing onto Ron's trousers. "It isn't fair," she hissed in what she thought was a quiet voice.

"What's not fair, dear?" Molly asked, moving on to one of Arthur's cloaks that had been charred almost beyond recognition despite a very powerful anti-flame charm.

Deciding not to hide her frustration, Ginny squared her shoulders and faced her mum. "This whole thing," she said, waving a hand around the air. "It's not fair that they get to go off and fight Voldemort while I have to stay here and repair trousers." She brandished Ron's almost-repaired pants in front of her for extra effect.

Molly frowned. "We've been over this, Ginny. You're not of age. You can't fight in the war yet, and even if you were old enough, I would still tell you not to go."

Ginny winced as she pushed the needle hard into the denim and into her finger. She threw the offending trousers to the sofa, and sucked on her finger for a second. "Well," she said defiantly, "I'll be of age in August and there's nothing you can do to stop me from fighting then."

Mother and daughter stared at each other a long second, each holding the other in a challenging gaze. "Ginny," Molly pleaded, holding out her hands. "Please don't leave me here alone. Don't... leave," she croaked.

With two forces battling inside her, one aimed at getting her at Harry's side and the other guilty for not supporting her mum, Ginny decided on a compromise as she went into her mother's embrace. "If Harry hasn't killed Voldemort by the time I turn seventeen, I'm going to ask him to let me come with him," she said. Molly shuddered in her arms. "If he'll have me, I'm going to go, Mum. He needs me."

"What about me?" Molly asked tremulously. "Who'll I have when you lot are gone? I can't even bear to think of losing one of you and you... you're my baby," she wailed, clinging even more tightly to Ginny.

"Mum," Ginny said with tears forming in her own eyes. "I'm *not* a baby anymore and if Harry needs me, I... I'll have to go."

Molly cried on Ginny's shoulder, and nodded her head, seeming to accept the inevitable.

After a long while they broke apart and Ginny walked languidly to her room, not feeling much like repairing rips just then. It was gloomy and sullen outside, the normally-hot July sun held hostage by an ever-present mist.

Sitting on her bed, she took Hermione's letter from her pocket and opened it. It took two hours to read the whole thing and she had to re-read one section three times to make sure she'd read it right.

We've come across some very interesting spells in our research on howto destroy the Horcruxes. There are all sorts of ways to remove the bit of Voldemort's spirit from the enchanted objects. From Transfiguring them into something living, to out and out destroying them. There was even a spell originally used to impregnate a woman with a dying man's baby (D issero Ventris) in desperate circumstances. A dark wizard had adapted it so that it removed parts of a person's soul instead. I don't think that this spell would do anyone any good, as it'd take casting it loads of times before it would kill off Voldemort. Still, it is a fascinating concept, isn't it? D issero Ventris has to be cast during the fertile part of a woman's cycle to be effective.

Ginny had blinked very hard the first time she had read that passage. The next paragraph was abruptly different from the rest of the letter, as if the bit about Dissero Ventris was added in after the fact. She knew that Hermione never did anything without a reason and despite all her attempts to rationalize it differently, Ginny kept coming to the same conclusion.

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Harry arrived that evening and Ginny watched him from the kitchen as he gave her mum a weary hug and accepted a mug of cold pumpkin juice. They locked eyes for a moment, his blind one completely white, and then Harry turned to walk to the loo. In that moment, she felt a brief surge of terrible want and long-repressed need course through her veins. It was fine and dandy to say that they couldn't be together, but it was cruel punishment to have him so close after being apart for so long.

Hermione followed Ron and Harry upstairs, but not before smiling at Ginny and giving the younger girl a significant look. While Ginny had agreed to not see Harry, she hadn't said anything about not visiting with Hermione. The first chance she got, she grabbed the brown-haired witch by the arm and steered her into the room they'd be sharing.

"All right, Hermione," Ginny said imperiously. "What's going on with the not-so-subtle hints in your letter?"

Flopping down on her camp bed, Hermione closed her eyes and let out a weary breath.

"I'm not stupid. I know what you're implying and it's... well, it's a little sick, don't you think?"

Hermione opened her eyes and sat up. "No, I don't," she replied. "Tell me why you think it is and I'll tell you why you're wrong."

Ginny sucked in a breath. It wasn't like Hermione to be so short with people. Then again, Ginny rationalised, Hermione had been involved in a war for over a year now; she was bound to have become a little hard around the edges.

"Well," Ginny began, "first there's the whole fact that it's dishonest. Don't you think he'd want to *know* about it?"

Hermione did not answer, but simply stared back at her.

"And then there's the fact that I can't perform magic until next month...."

"Yes, you can," Hermione answered. "You were there when Harry told us how the Underage Magic Office detects magic."

Ginny sat on her bed, remembering that night before Dumbledore's funeral. "Yeah," she admitted. "I remember."

They sat on their separate beds for a while as Ginny's mind raced. "And with us here," Hermione continued, "there'll be even less of a chance that they'd figure out who performed the charm."

Ginny narrowed her eyes. "Wait a minute," she said suspiciously. "*You* were thinking about performing this charm, weren't you?"

Reluctantly, Hermione nodded. "I was. Until I realised how stupid it would be for *me* to do it. I mean, what with Ron and I together every second of every day. If he were to be killed, I'd likely be killed too... and...."

There was another moment of silence in which Ginny chewed nervously on her lip. It was not a question of how much they loved each other; it was more a question of taking something so personal from him and....

"Do you really think he doesn't know that I've told you?" Hermione said, breaking into her thoughts. "Do you think I'd be suggesting this if we hadn't already talked about it and he hadn't said it was a great idea?"

Ginny was thunderstruck. "What? He... he said he wanted to do this?"

Hermione paused. "Well, as much as he commits to anything concerning you. You know how he is, Ginny. Ron and I had been talking about doing it and Harry was listening. He said, 'It's a great idea, only, you'd be better off with one of you tucked away safe... at the Burrow.' Then his eyes got a little misty and he looked away." Hermione moved over to sit next to Ginny. "I approached him later that night and tried to get him to tell me what he wanted – you know I just want you and him to be happy, don't you?"

Ginny nodded, still reeling from this new information. Why hadn't she said more in the letter?

"Well," Hermione continued. "It wasn't easy, but in the end, Harry told me that he loved you and the thing he wanted most in the world was to kill Voldemort, marry you, and have loads of red-haired children."

Ginny's stomach dropped and a feeling of light giddiness spiralled up through her anxiety. If the daft prat really felt that way, then why didn't he say so? Why didn't he just talk to her, Ginny, and not Hermione about all this? They could have had many wonderful moments, maybe even tried to do things properly, instead of using some ruddy spell.... Then something struck her as she realised part of what Hermione had said in her letter.

"Hermione, it doesn't matter anyway. My period was last week."

Hermione smiled and fished for something in her robe pocket; when she found it, she held it out triumphantly. "Tell me exactly when your period started and I'll add enough essence of rue to adjust your cycle."

Ginny told her, but still couldn't believe this was happening at all. "Hermione?" she asked as the older girl was adding a bit of carefully measured powder to the vial. "Why can't I... why can't Harry and I... you know... do things the normal way?" Hermione blushed a little. "If it's that important to him, why can't we...?"

"I don't think you'd be able to convince him of that," Hermione said. "Think about it. Harry's barely got enough nerve to do *this*," she said, waving the now-pink potion in the air. "He'd never agree to *that*; especially not before he asked you to marry him and *especially* in your parents' house."

"He said that?" Ginny asked. "He... said he wanted to marry me?"

Hermione chuckled. "Yes. Did you think he asked you to wait for him because he thought the snogging was good?"

Thinking about snogging Harry made Ginny flush. "It's not like it was bad," she offered as a token of levity, but the joke fell flat. She focused her eyes

on the vial. Something overtook her just then, and she snatched the now-corked potion from Hermione's hand. "When do I take it?"

"Right before you perform the spell. You'll have about five minutes and your body will go back to its normal cycle."

Ginny nodded again, slipping the potion into her jean pocket. Her decision made, she let out a breath and slapped Hermione's knee. "So.... tell me how the war's *really* going?"

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It was the day before Ginny's birthday that she got the news. Harry was coming home, and Ginny was going to be there to meet him.

She checked herself in the mirror to make sure that her dress was clean and wrinkle-free. Her cheeks were slightly red from a spot of makeup that matched her lipstick. Her hair was pulled back in exactly the way he liked it, gathered together with a clip that allowed her neck to show on the sides. Last, she applied a dot of his favourite flower-scented perfume on each wrist and rubbed them on her neck.

He was waiting for her at Hogwarts, in the Great Hall. All of their friends were there, dressed in their finest and ready to welcome their hero home after defeating Voldemort once and for all.

Approaching the head table, where she could see him still waiting, Ginny was almost held back by Professor McGonagall. They were about to start the program and she would have to wait, but Hermione intervened. She whispered something into the Headmistress' ear that caused her eyebrows to rise high on her normally-controlled face. She let Ginny pass.

Stepping lightly up the stairs, Ginny walked to where he could see her, his one blind eye still staring unseeing past her face.

"I'm here, Harry," she said, letting a tear drip down her cheek. "I waited for you, just like I promised."

He did not respond, but there seemed to be a ghost of a smile on his face. She wanted to gather him up in her arms and hold him tightly, to rain kisses on his lips and to be kissed in return, but that was not meant to be. She took his hand; it was cold in hers and she wept harder.

Bending down lower, so that her lips were right by his ear, she whispered, "I have a secret, Harry – but I think you must already know." She rose up a little so that they were facing each other, her lips trembling in an effort to control the sob that was threatening to leave her mouth. She lingered there a moment and then said, "I'm pregnant." Again, there was no response, but this did not trouble Ginny, for she knew that he approved, and knew that the baby was his. She gave him a watery smile and, holding her shaking hand to her stomach, she kissed his cold cheek and stood. "Good bye, Harry," she said quietly and gave him one final, sad smile, feeling a tingling pressure building in her chest. Then she turned, walked down the stairs, took her seat with her family, and waited for the funeral to begin.