

## The Darkness

The ceiling was plain.

Dull.

Boring.

Mind-numbing.

It had four cracks in the cheap paint that covered the plaster. One crack was two inches long; the other three were around double that size.

In the middle of the ceiling hung down a single light bulb.

It was a 60-watt clear bulb, with a bayonet cap.

The ceiling didn't change the fact that Sirius was dead.

Dead.

Deceased.

Passed away.

Sent on a one-way trip to hell.

The second Marauder to die before his time. While the traitor, Pettigrew was still enjoying his ill-gotten gains. With Voldemort, his Lord and master.

Sirius was dead. Pettigrew was not. Lupin was not.

*"I'm fine.*

*Nothing to report.*

*Harry ."*

He'd written that note when he had first arrived, then duplicated it. He was curious to find out if anyone would notice.

The same message flew with Hedwig to the Order with a regular monotony that had the snowy owl bored.

The events at the ministry had been good for one thing. One thing only. He wasn't ready for the final confrontation, and he wasn't getting any readier. What ever he knew was being carefully sanitized, so he was protected. Protected from a fate no one could avoid. How would he have reacted if he had been told from the start that he was destined to meet Voldemort? He didn't know, but he suspected.

Motivation? A debt? A sense of freedom perhaps? Who knew? He didn't. The choice had been made for him, as had every other major decision in his life. Yet, when he finally made a decision, it had been a poor one. There was no hiding from it.

Yet, with that realisation, came a sense of freedom. It forced another decision out of him. One he had been avoiding. One he had been scared to admit even existed. One he had done everything he could to prevent taking.

The darkness.

It was there. It sometimes talked to him. It had told him that the decision was a bad one. He had ignored it, been determined to prove it wrong.

The darkness.

It was there.

Inside his mind.

The ceiling had helped. It had given him something to focus on as he made his first decision: To see the darkness.

It was a gift. From his most hated enemy. Who didn't even know he had given it to him. It was focused through the years of being locked in a cupboard. Through the trial and tribulations of trying to be the Golden Boy, holding back his baser desires, being what everyone expected him to be.

It had grown.

It was fuelled by experience. Cedric dieing, duelling Voldemort, losing Sirius, yelling at Dumbledore and destroying his office, anything and everything was used and examined by it.

The Defence Association, even though it wasn't his idea, had been its biggest source, so many people hanging on to his every word. He had taken it, moulded it. Maybe it was time to take it a bit further.

The ceiling, with its crack, had been the focus, as for the first time, he had examined the darkness.

It wasn't evil.

That had been a surprise: a big one. He had been taught since he started school to see things in terms of black and white. Slytherin were evil, Gryffindor were good. Case closed, Q.E.D.

What it represented was acceptance that power was based on the meaning of the individual. The Cruciatus wasn't evil. It wasn't good. It was a manifestation of will. The will could be evil, or the will could be good. The spell didn't care. It was power.

Power: if a gift was from evil, but used for good, was it still evil?

No. Because the gift was neither good nor bad, it didn't care. It wanted what he wanted.

He wanted freedom: from interference, from manipulation, from overwhelming expectation. He needed the freedom to become himself.

A wand: the channel for his power. Yet like everything else, it had been manipulated. The Ministry of Magic monitored it. If he concentrated he could actually see the spell. If he dared to use the wand, dared to try and make his life easier, he would receive an owl. The monitoring spell would notify the famed Ministry, and he would be expelled for performing under-age magic. His first task towards his new goal was simple. Remove the monitoring spell from his wand and gain his independence.

The ceiling helped.

He concentrated on the smallest crack endlessly, not pausing for food or drink, or even sleep.

No one bothered him; his relatives hoped that they would never see him again.

He urged the crack to seal, to vanish. He tried to use his magic for the first time, without his wand. He could feel the darkness' eagerness to help, and he let it.

When the crack had gone, and the ceiling was smooth, he examined himself.

What he found was the final thing he needed. The darkness had told the truth. He hadn't turned evil; he wasn't as good as he was though. He hadn't really changed that much. He was more focused, more determined. Yet he was less as well. He was less likely to accept being manipulated now. Less likely to care what others thought.

So, he took a deep breath, and released the darkness from the mental prison he had placed it.

He tried to scream, to beg, to pray, anything. He could feel that his mind was on fire, although it didn't seem to hurt like it should. "Join us," a voice hissed, "come to us. We want you, we love you." Images appeared in his mind, Cedric beckoning him, his parents, even Sirius. They wanted him, and he wanted them.

His mind continued to burn, as new neural pathways were formed, new connections to his power centre, but at the same time, the voices grew more persuasive.

Behind him, people started telling him to go. Dumbledore, Ron, Hermione, the Dursleys, they all told him to go, that he had betrayed them, that he should leave, and at the same time, the other voices told him that they loved him, needed him, that they'd be a family, they'd be happy, it would be everything he ever wanted.

The fire continued, remoulding his brain, but ignoring his memories, his personality. The darkness was creating what it needed, a powerful conduit for the magic, for the power.

The choice needed to be made, to stay or go, to stick with the people who didn't want him, or go to the ones who did. In the end, he gritted his teeth, and walked away from both, going in his own direction.

He opened his eyes, and looked around wildly. He took a deep breath, aware now that his shirt was stuck to his back due to the sweat he had generated, and that he was really, really hungry. He took a deep breath, and checked his mind, checked what had occurred. He smiled slowly, his breathing returned to normal. He was himself again.

It was time for a clean slate. Everyone would get one chance. No more. No less.

He looked at his wand, and concentrated. The darkness no longer existed as a separate entity, it was a part of him. He could see the spell that monitored the wand, and he smiled once more. It was a simple thing for him to destroy it now. Such a small thing, yet it represented so much.

Freedom. A new start.

"Get down here, Boy!" Vernon Dursley yelled.

"Yes?" Harry asked, from behind him.

Vernon jumped a full six inches in the air, and spun around. "Don't you dare do that you filthy ingrate."

Harry wasn't there.

"Do what?" The boy asked, from behind him again.

Vernon twirled again, his fists raised.

Harry watched him curiously.

"Where are your glasses?" was the first thing his uncle could ask, as he stopped dead still, staring at the boy.

"I don't need them anymore," Harry replied blandly. "Was there something you wanted?"

"Yes," Vernon blustered. "Clean the kitchen."

Harry nodded, and idly waved his wand. "Anything else?"

"What did you just do?" Vernon snarled, his face going red.

"You know, that vein pulsing on your forehead is a sure sign of an impending heart attack," Harry mentioned casually. "It would be pity if anything was to happen."

Vernon froze, a deep-seated fear suddenly growing inside him. "What?" he croaked.

Harry smiled. "There, you see, you calm down and it disappears. It must be your blood pressure causing it. Now, was there anything else?"

His uncle slowly shook his head, scared beyond all belief. There was something about the boy, a new confidence perhaps. Something was different about him, and he had no wish to find out what it was.

"Good. I'll be expecting a guest tomorrow. I would like to see my room cleaned, while I write a letter." His vocal range didn't move into the threatening, it didn't actually change at all. Yet the fear inside Vernon increased exponentially. Without any real conscious thought, he grabbed Petunia, and for the first time the two of them went in to Harry's room and started to clean.

Harry walked into the kitchen and sat down comfortably. A mug of tea appeared next to him, as did some parchment and paper. He took a second to think, and then with a very un-Harry like smirk on his face, he started to write.

*"Dear Professor Dumbledore,*

*I had another vision from Voldemort last night.*

*My vision started with a dark cold room. Voldemort was sitting on a throne made of what looked like skulls. He was giving a speech, about the purity of blood, and his Death Eaters were cheering their agreements.*

*He finished by saying that it was time he procured an heir, a heir more powerful than him, and that he wanted them to capture the pureblood who had survived his diary.*

*Voldemort then looked around, and seemed to see me there. He concentrated, and I felt pain, endless pain like the Cruciatus curse, only worse.*

*That was where my vision ended.*

*Professor, the girl he was talking about was Ginny Weasley, and we can't let anything happen to her. She must be protected.*

*Harry"*

"Take this to Dumbledore, as fast as you can, Hedwig." Harry told his owl with a grin.

Harry walked back upstairs, and into his room. It was starting to look liveable for the first time in living memory. "I think it's time for me to thank you for all you love and care over the years." Although his tone was not sarcastic, both his relatives blanched and looked at him.

Petunia suddenly realised why her husband was so scared of his nephew. Those green eyes were now unnaturally bright, gleaming with a purpose that seemed to obscure for her to understand.

"I need you out of the way till I go back to school," Harry said bluntly. "So I will pay for you two, and Dudley, to go on an all expenses paid holiday, any where you want to go."

"What?" Vernon demanded angrily. "You have that sort of money and this is the first I hear about it?"

Harry tilted his head to one side, and examined Vernon like a scientist might examine a bug. The longer the scrutiny continued uninterrupted, the paler his uncle became.

"That would be wonderful, H-H-Harry," Petunia said suddenly, struggling over using his name properly. "I've always wanted to visit Egypt."

Harry nodded calmly, "I'll need a lift into London so I can get the money to pay for it, then we'll need to visit a travel agent."

"Vernon, take H-Harry and do what he asks," Petunia demanded, the chance of an all-expenses paid holiday, that she could boast about to her friends, was more than enough to overcome any fear of her nephew she might have.

Vernon walked out of the room, followed by Harry, as Petunia continued to clean. She didn't want Harry to be disappointed now and take away his present.

The journey to London passed by in silence. Vernon was too intimidated to say anything, and he didn't like it. Just yesterday, his world had been normal, but now everything had changed. The boy was doing magic without a care in the world, which meant that either he was allowed, or that no one was watching him. As much as it pained him to admit, he could no longer bully the boy.

The idea of the holiday was a good one; he had already taken the next few weeks off from work, so that he could spend some time with his wife and son, and doing it in Egypt would be much better. Plus, it would mean that he would be nowhere near this unnatural child and his freakish habits.

"Wait for me here, I should only be half an hour," Harry demanded, as they pulled into a street near the secret entrance to Diagon Alley. He wrapped his invisibility cloak around him and vanished.

The interior of Gringotts was warded against spells, and while they were happy to allow their customers the anonymity of invisibility cloaks, the staff could see everyone who entered.

Harry walked up to the counter, and asked for Griphook, the goblin that had helped him out the first time he had visited. The goblin looked through the invisibility cloak, and saw Harry's scar. He nodded and escorted the green-eyed wizard to a small office.

Visible once more, Harry waited patiently.

"What can we at Gringotts do for you, Mr Potter?" Griphook asked, as he entered and sat behind the desk.

Harry smiled politely. "I'd like a summary of my account, and make a withdrawal in Muggle money."

Griphook nodded and opened a large binder on his desk. "This is our accounts book," he explained. "All the transactions that are made are reproduced here, so that we know, to the second, how much gold is in our vaults at any one time.

"Now, you are aware that as sole beneficiary of Mr Black's estate, your fortune has increased dramatically?"

"Err, no, I wasn't." Harry looked very surprised. It took a lot of effort for him not to be upset, but his acceptance of his darkness had meant that he understood death a lot more than he used to. Sirius would always have a place in his heart, but he would not waste the rest of his life mourning him.

"That's strange," Griphook replied. "Anyway, as well as numerous properties and business interests, you have two new vaults, that we have taken the liberty of moving next to your original vault."

Harry nodded his thanks. "Unfortunately, I am in a hurry today. Would it be possible to come back in the next few days, and have you give me a more thorough overview of my holdings? I would like to keep our business on a personal level, and of course, in the confidentiality that Gringotts is famous for."

"I would be honoured, Mr Potter, to be your personal advisor. We do offer an advanced service for our more important customers, where we offer our expertise in investments, tax, and other services. There is a slight fee of course, but it is negligible."

Harry laughed softly. "Nice sales pitch. Let's make an appointment for Monday morning."

Griphook smiled - a slightly scary look on a goblin, but one that Harry took the right way. "Now, how much Muggle money would you like?"

The green-eyed wizard thought for a second. "I'm sending a family of three on a six week all expenses paid vacation. I'm not sure how much I am going to need."

"We do offer some Muggle facilities, sir. Including a debit card, it automatically translates any Muggle purchase to Galleons, and has a very favourable exchange rate. It is a very new service for our more exclusive customers."

"That would be perfect," Harry agreed happily.

It took less than five minutes for Griphook to produce the documents, and magically create the debit card.

Harry left, the card in his pocket, looking forward to his meeting with Griphook on Monday.

The holiday he had paid for had been extremely expensive, with such short notice, but he hadn't cared. It was more than worth it to get rid of his family for the rest of the summer.

The next morning, the Dursleys were packed and driving to the airport, where they were going to fly first class, at 5am. Harry had been extremely amused, as Dudley had tried to throw the fact that he was going and Harry wasn't, into Harry's face. Petunia, suddenly getting visions of her holiday vanishing, had turned and shouted, "Idiot boy. He's paying for this, shut up and get in the car!"

It had made Harry's day.

With his relatives gone, Harry walked into his room, and spent several hours expanding it, and splitting it into two separate rooms.

He cooked and ate a hearty breakfast, before curling up in the main armchair of the living room, with the fire burning merrily, and waited.

A few hours later, a loud whooshing sound signified the Floo network being activated, and someone stepping through.

Harry climbed to his feet and caught the small redhead that suddenly appeared.

"Hi Ginny," Harry welcomed his guest calmly.

Ginny looked up at him and suddenly wondered what the hell was going on. Harry wasn't expecting her; Dumbledore had told her that she would have to explain to him why she was visiting. In fact, she had been warned that Harry would probably be in his room, and that she would have to deal with those disgusting Muggles.

While she watched, he moved her trunk out of the fire, and extinguished it smoothly. "Would you like a drink?"

Ginny shook her head mutely.

"Please, have a seat."

Suddenly nervous, Ginny sat on the edge of the couch, and watched as Harry made himself comfortable in the armchair.

"I'm glad you're here, I wanted to talk to you." Harry smiled at her. "What's been going on at the Burrow since the end of school?"

"I thought you wanted to talk to me?" Ginny replied, not really wanting to answer that question, it would put her in a bad mood. This was a little too bizarre at the moment.

"I do, and I will," Harry admitted. "How about I try and guess for you?"

"Ron has been on your back since the end of school about Dean, and decided that he would do something about it for you. With the help of several of your brothers, he wrote to Dean and warned him what would happen if he didn't break up with you. Dean folded faster than a house of cards, and wrote you back directly, ending your relationship.

"Ron then invited Hermione around for the summer, and they finally got together. Hermione doesn't know about Ron's actions with Dean.

"At the same time, your parents won't tell you anything about the real world, except to say that you are too young to understand, and that you should study for next year.

"Your other brothers agree. You are feeling stifled, frustrated, and annoyed that you are treated like a baby, when you have touched more evil than they ever will.

"You have the darkness inside you, and you're scared of it, not knowing what it wants. You're trying as hard as you can to be the Ginny everyone expects and it's slowly driving you insane."

"Then yesterday evening, Dumbledore came to the Burrow. He told your parents and you that Voldemort is after you, but wouldn't say why. He told you that the safest place for you would be here, told you to say goodbye to your family and get ready to leave this morning. He would enable the Floo network for five minutes so you could get here, then he would shut it off again completely. He possibly told you that no one else would visit, because he didn't want any of the Order followed here. So this morning, you said a final goodbye to your parents and family and hopped in the fire."

Ginny's jaw dropped to her chest as she looked at Harry, total shock displayed on her face.

Harry sat in silence, waiting for her to recover. He wanted her full attention when he continued and her full agreement when he made his proposition.

"How do you know all this?" she finally asked. "And what happened to your glasses?"

Harry smiled faintly, a look that she had never seen on his face before. "I don't need my glasses anymore, and most of what I said was a guess. Well, apart from Professor Dumbledore and his actions. I wanted to talk to you, so I sent him a letter warning him of a fake vision, so that he would send you here."

"Wait a second; you manipulated Professor Dumbledore so that you could talk to me? You put me and my family through a night of worry, just to talk to me? Haven't you heard of Owl Post?"

Harry laughed softly. "What I want to say needs to be said in person. And yes, I did manipulate Dumbledore. Before we continue, what did he tell you to tell me?"

Ginny blinked. "That I had to stay here for my own safety. That in order to ensure that no one could find us; he would be blocking the Floo network once I had arrived, and casting a ward to stop owls from finding us. He has also given instructions for the Order not to come anywhere near Surrey.

He gave me a letter to give to the Dursley's, explaining the situation."

Harry nodded and smiled, pleased with the outcome of his fake letter.

"What do you want?" The girl finally asked.

"You," was his considered reply.

"What?" Ginny demanded, her eyes going wide.

Harry smiled slightly. "I want you, standing by my side for eternity. I want your heart, your soul, your mind, and your body. I want everything you have." His tone was deadly serious.

Ginny gaped at him again, then slowly went white, and for the first time in nearly two years, blushed furiously red. "You better start explaining yourself, Potter."

Harry settled down and crossed his legs. "After the debacle at the Ministry, I had plenty of time to think things over. To examine my own darkness, to see what made me do what I did. I was manipulated, played like a violin. I responded as everyone wanted, and Sirius died because of it. It was my mistake. The darkness tried to warn me, but I had to try and prove it wrong.

"Well, I embraced it Ginny. I opened myself to the darkness, and found something rather surprising. It's not evil. It's not good. The darkness is simply power. What I do with it is up to me. It has helped me, showed me how to do wandless magic, like Voldemort can.

"I'm stronger now, more intelligent, and more independent. I am becoming what they tried to stop me turning into. Myself. Everyone wanted me to be something I'm not. They tried to force me into their neat little boxes, not caring about the damage it did me.

"Well, I broke out of the box. I am becoming who I am now."

"What's that got to do with me?" Ginny asked softly.

"I could replace Voldemort," Harry admitted candidly. "I could become the next Dark Lord; I have the power and intelligence. I don't really want to though, so I won't. Surprisingly, something Dumbledore said has stopped me. The thing that Voldemort doesn't get is love. So I started thinking about love, about the people in my life.

"I asked myself if friendship was enough, with Ron and Hermione. I decided that it wasn't pretty damn quickly. So I looked at the women in my life.

"Cho: sure, she's pretty, but the only thing we have in common is Quidditch, and I can't see a relationship based on that working. We also have the whole Cedric thing hanging over us, and to be honest, our kissing was normally to wet to enjoy.

"I kinda like Luna, but also feel kinda sorry for her. She's a nice girl, and helped us out at the Ministry, and got her father to publish that interview. The problem is, I feel more like adopting her than going out with her."

Ginny giggled suddenly.

"Then there's Parvati Patil, who is also really pretty. We had a disastrous first date, which is kinda funny, when I think about it now. And she's really good in the D.A. but she's way too girly, and I really can't see her fighting besides me in a muddy field, on a winter's night, because it's the only way to save lives.

"I did think about Hermione, but it was instantly obvious that while she's one of my best friends, she is not a romantic interest. She can't be, and never will be. Sure, she's turning beautiful, and has always backed me up, she is also a little too bossy and overbearing, and has said some bad things about Hagrid.

"I guess that just leaves Pansy Parkinson."

Harry didn't say anything else, he just grinned at Ginny, causing them both to laugh at the stupidity of that idea.

"All this thinking did help me narrow down what I wanted. Someone beautiful," Harry stood, and walked over to her, kneeling next to her legs. He lightly touched her face, in a confident manner that he would have not been capable of a few days before. "You are certainly that."

Ginny blushed as she found herself unable to look away from his glowing green eyes.

"I want someone who is strong, who will stand up to me and tell me when I am being pigheaded. You were the only person to do that last year, when I was being a major git." He was amused that she didn't deny that he had been a jerk.

"I need someone who will fight with me in a muddy field at midnight because it's the right thing to do."

"I crave someone who can understand me. You are the only other person I know who has been possessed by Tom and can understand what it is like. You are the only other person who has this darkness inside them, this raw power that is Tom's final gift.

"Someone who would love me, as much as I love them," he finished on a whisper, his breath trailing out into a sigh.

"Someone like you."

"Oh," Ginny mumbled, not sure what else she could do.

"So, the offer," Harry continued, his voice returning to normal. "Be mine. Give me what I want from you, and in return, I'll help you control your own darkness, and give you myself. You will be the only person I will listen to, the only person able, and encouraged, to give me your opinion, to show me different ways to go. You'll be my Queen."

Harry moved to his feet. "I know this is a lot to take in, so I've prepared a room for you. It's at the top of the stairs, first door on the right. You will be left alone to think, food will be provided for you. If you decline, this conversation will fade from your memory, and I will arrange for you to be sent home, to spend the rest of the summer with your family.

He walked out the door, vanishing halfway through it, leaving a stunned witch in his wake.

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Ginny slowly moved and climbed the stairs to her new room. She didn't even look around it, just falling straight on to the bed.

She stretched out, and started to think. The green eyes had been slightly different, they had still burned, but there had been no glasses in the way, obscuring them. Those eyes were unearthly. She had no reason to doubt him; just the fact that he had arranged for her to be there was proof enough.

She guessed he believed that she was over her crush on him. Yeah, right. Like that was ever going to happen, especially when he went around being brave, loyal, intelligent, and gorgeous at the same time. She had hidden it well, and had managed to become friends with him.

What he offered her was something scary. It hadn't been his words, but the tone of his voice and the look in his eyes. If she surrendered to him, she would enter into the most intense relationship possible. It would be a relationship that could destroy a normal woman. She would need the darkness inside her to survive.

He was offering himself, power, and freedom. The freedom she craved from her family, from her life, from everything.

Yet he wasn't forcing her. He made the most attractive offer he could, then given her the time to think her way through it.

He wanted her mind, soul, body, and heart. He didn't hide the fact that he expected to have sex with her, or that he wanted her total commitment and fidelity. Well, sex with him had been a fantasy since puberty, so would hardly be a hardship, and in a way, it had been why she hadn't slept with Michael, despite his requests to the contrary.

She smiled to herself. She would soon be free. Yet at the same time, ensnared in something so incredibly powerful, it took her breath away. In a few short minutes, Harry had changed her life around, and gave her the opportunity for everything she had ever dreamed about.

The downside had been understated, but she understood that as well. Her relationship with her family would never be the same. Hopefully, they would accept her, but if not, she would have her own family, in a way that rest of the world would never understand.

The power of obsession, desire, and a deep-seated emotion that was almost too much for a word as simple as love.

She had said goodbye to her family last night, not realising that it was not the goodbye that everyone thought.

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Ginny woke early the next morning, and had a shower in the en-suite bathroom. She dried her hair carefully, and then fretted over what clothes to wear. She ended up in her favourite t-shirt and a pair of jeans. She knew the jeans hugged her legs, while the t-shirt was a little too tight for normal public consumption.

There was a knock on her door, so she opened it eagerly.

"Hi," Harry smiled at her.

"Hey," Ginny replied, smiling back. She opened her door wider and invited him in.

The green-eyed wizard smiled at her and sat down on the side of her bed.

"You want my heart, mind, body, and soul?" she half asked, half stated.

"Yes."

"And in return, you'll give me the same, and teach me to deal with my darkness?"

"Yes."

"I accept."

"You do realise that this will change your life like nothing before? You'll never have the same relationship with anyone you know again."

"I know. I said goodbye yesterday morning. This is my decision and I have made it."

"Once we start, I don't think I will ever be able to let you go, there will no going back. What you are entering into is the most profound form of slavery in existence. Love isn't really the right word; it doesn't even begin to describe what our relationship will be like. It will go so far beyond that, as to be unrecognisable."

Ginny smiled slightly, this was the final proof that Harry hadn't changed that much. He was still thinking about her, almost trying to persuade not to accept. He didn't know that she had already accepted, that her own darkness had explained it all to her.

"The slavery goes both ways," she stated calmly.

Harry nodded.

"Then I accept. I, Ginevra Molly Weasley, hereby offer Harry James Potter my heart, my mind, my body and my soul, for now and for eternity."

The words seemed formal, almost like a spell.

"I, Harry James Potter, accept Ginevra Molly Weasley's offer. I hereby offer Ginevra Molly Weasley my heart, my mind, my body, and my soul, for now and for eternity."

"I, Ginevra Molly Weasley, accept Harry James Potter's offer."

Ginny dropped to her knees in front of him, and lent forwards. She covered his lips and kissed him properly.

Harry's magic felt the sincerity behind the words, the desire, and it decided to help. Ginny's magic recognised what was happening, and even though her own dark power was still being subdued, it helped. Magic flowed around them as the universe accepted their vows, causing raw power to flow through their lips, chaining themselves to each other.

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In Hogwarts, Professor Dumbledore frowned. Someone had just unleashed an extremely powerful ancient magic spell. He could feel it in the air, even though he could tell it was many miles away.

The world had just turned, and he had no clue whether it was for the good or not.

He had no idea that Lord Voldemort was the only other being on the planet capable of recognising old magic, and that he too, felt the change in the order of things. A thin smile crossed the Dark Lord's lips. He wasn't worried. The magician would either join him or die.

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Ginny and Harry slowly broke the kiss.

"What was that?" she asked softly.

"An ancient marriage ceremony," Harry replied, equally as softly, although he was as surprised as she was. A memory dredged up from the recesses of his mind, of a book he had read a few years ago. "There can be no divorce for us; this isn't a standard legal marriage. We pledged our immortal souls to each other in front of the universe, and she accepted."

Ginny nodded, idly wondering why she wasn't freaked about this. She quickly realised that she had known before hand. Not in as many words, but in thought and intent.

Ginny Potter, for how long had she wanted to be called that?

Harry slowly raised her to her feet. He blinked as he noticed just how tight her t-shirt was, and how many curves it was revealing.

Ginny giggled at his expression.

"Witch," he groaned softly.

She nodded in agreement, pleased at his response. It eliminated the doubt that he wasn't physically attracted to her.

"Okay," Harry said, tearing his eyes from her chest. "Could you put something a little less distracting on, we need to deal with your darkness first."

With a degree of reluctance, Ginny nodded and walked over to her trunk. She could feel his eyes on her, so slowly pulled off her t-shirt, letting him see the smooth expanse of her back. She was grateful that he couldn't see how furiously she was blushing.

She bent over the trunk, knowing that the tight jeans would have a similar effect.

His groan was exactly what she wanted. She pulled out a looser t-shirt and made a small show of pulling it over her head.

She turned, to see him watching her with knowing eyes. "We will consummate this relationship, later," he told her simply. "When you understand more about what is going on."

She nodded.

"Come with me," Harry said as he stood and walked out of her room, through a door she hadn't noticed before. It led into his room. It had changed dramatically over the past seven hours. He had used up a lot of his nervous energy, as he had worried about her response. In one corner was a huge bed that looked exactly like the one in his dorm room at Hogwarts. The corner nearest it was set up to be a small study, with two comfortable chairs and a small library. Opposite that was a kitchen area and a walled off area she presumed was a bathroom.

The whole room was around eight times bigger than the space available, screaming out advanced magic.

"Wow," Ginny exclaimed softly.

Harry walked over to the library area, and took one of the seats, indicating that she should take the other.

As she settled comfortably, he leant forwards and pinned her with his preternaturally green eyes. "Do you know what the darkness is?"

She shook her head and mentally braced herself.

"But you know where yours comes from?"

She nodded, "Tom's diary."

Harry smiled at her warmly. "Correct. When Tom possessed you, he imposed his personality on yours, forcing your brain to work in a slightly different way. This change to your mental processes unlocked a dormant part of your brain — as it was new, your conscious mind couldn't deal with it, and locked it up in a corner of your mind. As you couldn't access it, but were aware of its presence, you started to refer to it as the darkness — the darkness in your mind. Occasionally, it would whisper to you, telling you things, but you would ignore it, because darkness is bad."

"Exactly," the witch whispered. The look on her face was a mix of relief and excitement, mingled with a hint of love. Finally, someone understood her. Understood her like no other. It was unnecessary proof that she had made the right decision by bonding herself to this strange man-child in front of her.

Harry's smile twisted slightly. "Did you know why I am the Boy-Who-Lived?"

Ginny shook her head, not sure what he meant, but wanting him to speak, to tell her.

"Bad luck. There was a prophecy that I'll explain later; it basically said that either Neville or me would be Voldemort's downfall. For a lot of reasons, Voldemort attacked my family first; he cast the killing curse at me. As everyone knows, the curse rebounded and half killed Voldemort.

"What no one really looked into was why I survived. Everyone thought it was my mother's protection, but she was not the first mother to sacrifice herself to save her child.

"What happened that night was pure luck, mixed in with a bit of arrogance. The *Avada Kedavra* is a simple spell that effect's the chemistry of the brain. It basically drains all the electrical energy, killing instantly.

"When Voldemort cast the spell on me, he didn't pay attention to the fact that, as a baby, my mind was not very sophisticated, and didn't have that much energy anyway. Voldemort poured too much of his own power into the spell, really over doing it. When the spell couldn't find enough of what it was looking for, it backlashed against the caster — that's what caused my scar. Voldemort, in his quest to become immortal, had cast a lot of spells on his body. One of those saved his life. It used his physical energy to keep his brain alive. Because of how much power he had poured into his spell, it took most of his physical energy to survive, leaving him in the almost non-corporeal state.

"The spell changed my mind, changing how I think, the power that flowed through me unlocked similar aspects to yours, but on a bigger scale. I was too young to understand, and it was locked away, I knew it was there, but was afraid of it.

"Now, I want you to close your eyes and look at the darkness. Seek it out, examine it, and tell me what you see."

Ginny closed her eyes, and started to search mentally for the darkness. "I'm scared," she whispered softly. She was glad her eyes were closed, so she wouldn't see his disappointment.

Harry thought for a second, not having anticipated this. It quickly occurred to him that her possession had scarred her more than he had thought, and it made his already high estimation of her raise another couple of points. To suffer so much, yet overcome it and be the bright, vivacious, intelligent person she had become was extremely impressive.

He stood silently, moved over to her, and bent down. He lifted her into his arms, thankful that she was still so small boned, and carried her over to his chair, sitting with her in his lap.

"I've got you, Ginny. Mind, heart, body and soul, I'm yours as much as you are mine. Trust me in this. You know where the darkness is, go, and see it. Now, what do you see?"

"It's eager. It wants to help me; it promises it won't hurt me. I don't trust it though, it's dark," the redheaded witch whispered into his shoulder, snuggling into him as deeply as she could.

"Ginny, I've got you. I promise I won't let it hurt you if it tries. I want you to open the gate holding it back. Please Ginny, do this for me."

The words washed over the almost entranced girl, words that she had wanted to hear for what seemed like her entire life. For the second time that day, she put her entire future in his hands, and opened the gate.

Her body started to shake and her mouth opened, to either yell or scream she didn't know what. Her mind felt like it was on fire, yet it wasn't hurting like it should. She could feel insanity calling, demanding she give up. At the same time, her mind locked onto another voice, one professing love, calling her back to him. She followed the voice and opened her eyes, seeing Harry's bright green orbs staring at her.

"I'm back," she said needlessly.

"How do you feel?"

She thought about it for a second, then frowned and started to try and get out of his lap. "I feel like I've been manipulated for the last four years. Like people have stood in my way, forced me to be someone I'm not. Let me go, I need to go to them, tell them they won't be able to do that again."

Harry tightened his arms. "That was my first reaction as well. You can see things a lot more clearly now. Fight your way through your emotions Ginny, through the anger. Look at yourself and see what has happened." His voice was low and incredibly intense.

The red-haired witch fought for a few more seconds, even as she did what he asked. "Power," she whispered softly, "clarity and purpose. Harry, for the first time in years, I feel whole again. Something was missing and I didn't know it. It's back. I'm me, how I should be. I don't have to fake it anymore, I don't have to pretend, to act on memories." Tears started to run down her face as she realised how close to insanity she had been just yesterday.

The battle had been killing her, as she had fought part of her mind, because she had been conditioned to think in terms of black and white, and anything black was evil.

She had to ask one last question. "What would you have done if I had said no to you?" Her eyes were locked onto his now, realising that she would be able to tell if he was lying.

"Locked up the darkness so tight you wouldn't have been able to feel it. It wouldn't have been perfect, but it would have allowed you to live your life normally."

She leaned up and touched her lips to his. "Thank you," she whispered.

Harry smiled against her lips. "No problem."

She had no desire to leave his lap — ever, so asked another question. "When I let it out, I heard insanity calling me, it wanted me, and I wanted it. But your voice called me back. How did you manage to avoid it without anyone helping you?"

Harry frowned a little. "I've got a little more experience in insanity than you have," he whispered softly. "I've touched it more times than I want to remember. Every time I am under the Cruciatus I hear it calling me. Every time I have a nightmare about Sirius, Cedric, or Voldemort, it's there, begging me to join it. I fought it, as I had every other time. There was no way I was going to accept the darkness and then lose myself to insanity."

"What about our marriage earlier?" Ginny asked.

Harry smiled at her, "you know the answer. Tell me what happened."

Ginny frowned, how would she know the answer? Then she realised she did, the darkness was telling her. It was at that exact point that she consciously realised that the darkness wasn't dark it was power. And the power was telling her that their act had been "*Aeternus Iugum*" an eternal bond of love. "Ancient magic," she said quietly, staring into the fireplace. "Where magic responds to the desire of the castor not the words they say. When I said those words, they were ignored, but the certainty and willingness started the magic. When you accepted, with your power and belief, the spell was invoked, joining us in a way that no one else alive will ever understand."

Harry smiled. "Ten points to Gryffindor."

They sat in silence for a long time, communing in a way that involved no conversation, yet was more profound than anything either had experienced before. It wasn't telepathy, there were no thoughts; it was more like empathy.

"Where are the Dursleys?" Ginny eventually asked.

"I paid for them to go on holiday to Egypt. They left this morning. I wanted them out of the way."

"What are we going to do, Mr Potter, with this lovely room to ourselves, and no one else around?" she asked suggestively.

Harry grinned at her. "Tomorrow, we have an appointment with Griphook at Gringotts. After that, we are going to Knockturn Alley to get a few books that are a little illegal. From there, well, I'll explain the plan if we find what I'm looking for."

"That's not exactly what I meant," she mumbled, a little disappointed.

"I know," Harry said softly. "Part of me wants to throw you onto the bed and screw you into next week. But, strangely enough, when you consider that we are married, Mrs Potter, I think we should take it a little slower than that. We have all the time in the universe, lets not muck it up by doing something we're not ready for."

"Harry, I've been fantasising about you for years, and I've been on the potion for nearly a year now..." Ginny started. The potion was similar to Muggle birth control pills, only 100% effective.

"Ginny," Harry interrupted. A very slight blush appeared on his face. "I have no parents, and my godfather is dead. I have a very vague understanding of what sex is. I have no clue if I am ready or not, I'd like to do some research first, so that I have a basic idea of what is going on."

Ginny looked at him, a little shocked. She had never expected that, but it made sense, and it made her extremely proud of him. "I love you," she whispered softly, for the first time.

"I wouldn't have given you everything if I didn't love you," Harry whispered back, before his lips descended onto hers.

They spent the afternoon with Harry teaching Ginny the basics of wandless magic, and how to control it, and then he showed her how to remove the spell on her wand, so that she could use both.

"How did you fix your eyes?" Ginny eventually asked.

"I basically told my power to do it for me. It was looking in a mirror, and imagined the flaws in my cornea and optical lens; somehow I could see it, with their weaknesses. I simply fixed it."

Ginny looked proudly at him, and dropped a kiss on his lips. "I love this," she said softly, staring into the fireplace.

"Love what?"

"This feeling of completeness I have with you. The ability to kiss you when ever I want to, to be close to you and not have to worry about anyone else."

Harry smiled at her, "I do as well. You're the first real family I've ever had, Gin, and I'm never letting you go, or get hurt." There was a raw passion behind his words that should have scared her, but didn't. It reassured her, because she felt the same depth of emotion.

"I feel like I'm at peace when I'm with you. I'm not concerned about my fame, or the prophecy, or anything else. I can just be me."

They held each other, until they fell asleep on the couch.

The next morning, they awoke later than Harry had planned, so he sent her to have a shower while he organised a taxi to take them to the train station. He cooked them both breakfast, and asked her to tidy up while he showered.

They were out of the door bang on time. It was lucky that Dudley had forgotten to take his piggy bank, because despite having a debit card, Harry didn't have any cash to pay the taxi driver. He emptied it, and took the notes.

Once at the train station, he brought them two return tickets into London. For Ginny, the whole thing was a big adventure. She had never seen a taxi before, or been on a train, and it had made Harry laugh to watch her face as she looked around excitedly.

From the train, they switched to the underground to take them nearer the entrance to Diagon Alley.

They entered the Alley under the invisibility cloak. Harry knew that there would be endless hassle if anyone saw them, as they were both supposed to be the two most protected individuals on the planet.

They arrived at Gringotts just in time for their meeting. Griphook was waiting for them, in a larger office than the one they had used the day before. "This is my real office," he explained. "The other one is more of a shared office."

"First off, I need a new key made to my vaults made for my wife."

"Your wife?" the goblin sounded surprised.

"*Aeternus lugum*," Harry explained briefly.

Griphook frowned as he searched his memory, before a look of surprise appeared on his face, a look that swiftly changed to awe. "That's very old magic," he commented.

"Yes, it is," Harry agreed blandly.

The goblin caught the hint, and moved on. "Mr Potter, Mrs Potter, I have to say that after conducting a thorough review of your accounts, your current standing is extremely good." He passed them a piece of paper that was a summary of their account. It showed the totals of businesses, gold and jewels, and property. The number at the bottom was extremely large.

Ginny looked at Harry, her eyes widening in shock. "You own that much?" She half whimpered.

"We own that much," Harry corrected.

To someone who had been poor all her life, and knew it, the sudden reversal in fortune was astounding.

Griphook spent the next thirty minutes explaining the services that his bank was offering for wealthy clients.

"Griphook," Harry said, when they had finished. "I believe in dealing with individuals, not corporations. I will pay for you to be my personal account manager. You have my trust, lose it and it will be gone for ever."

"Yes sir," Griphook said excitedly. This would mean a huge promotion for him. It would also mean that he would work on Harry's account full time. It was that large, and he wanted to prove himself to his peers.

"Six percent," Harry stated after a few seconds thought.

"What?" the goblin asked confused. The fees for the services were a flat yearly amount.

"What ever profit you make for me, Gringotts gets to keep three percent, and you personally get the other three percent."

"This is unheard of, sir," the goblin said cautiously. "Wizards don't normally trust goblins like this."

Harry looked directly into the Goblins eyes, and for the first time, Griphook realised that the rumours about Harry Potter that he had idly dismissed as fancy, meaningless, wizard talk, was true. His client was incredibly powerful, and those eyes didn't appear human. "I'm not dealing with a goblin, I'm dealing with a partner," Harry told him firmly.

"If you'll give me a few minutes sir, I'll need to authorise this with my manager." Griphook was out the door mere seconds after Harry's nod.

"You okay?" Harry asked softly.

Ginny had a glazed look in her eyes, but quickly responded. "You have so much gold. Are you sure about this, it's hardly as if I'm bringing anything to this marriage?"

Harry pulled her onto his lap. "Would you still have done this if I was poor?"

"Of course," Ginny replied, a little hurt by the idea that he even asked. It was only when she saw the twinkle in his eye that she realised that the same should apply for him.

"Why are you giving the bank money on top of their fees?"

Harry looked thoughtful. "The war has started, Gin. There is the Order, Voldemort and us. We are going to need help to get where we want to go to. Neither side has done much to secure the neutrals, so we will. Besides, if we can get rid of this stupid idea that wizards are top of the food chain, we'll be doing society a favour as well."

Griphook returned, with another goblin in tow. The only way Harry could tell a difference was with the hairstyle and the clothing it wore.

They spent another hour going over the plan, and writing out the contract between the two groups.

When Harry and Ginny left the bank, the two goblins looked at each other. "It seems that Mr Potter is branching out on his own."

Griphook nodded in agreement. "I think he could be the one we have been waiting for, all these years."

The manager, Shonkton, looked thoughtful. "Do a good job with this account, Mr Griphook. Use any resources you need. I want Mr Potter happy with our services, when we approach him."

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Harry and Ginny walked, back under the invisibility cloak, into Knockturn Alley. It was as dark and depressing as Harry remembered it, and he wrapped his arms around Ginny protectively. He knew that he couldn't be seen, but that wasn't the point. There was no way in hell that he was going to lose his new wife now.

They entered the bookstore together, staying under the cloak. The proprietor was used to his clients not wanting to be seen, so was not disturbed when the door opened and shut on its own.

"What are we looking for?" Ginny asked.

"Pretty much anything that looks like it might be useful. Especially anything that relates to Portkeys or Time Turners. Some books on advanced defence would be good as well."

They walked around the shop, picking up random ones, examining them, and piling the ones they wanted to keep on the desk. The shop keeper was obviously used to books floating around his store. They ended up with around twenty books, which Harry paid for from behind the cloak. The shop owner offered him a bag, which was magically charmed to be bottomless and weightless, for an extra hundred galleons. Harry took it without a second thought, realising just how useful that could be.

They left, and walked back into Muggle London. "Rather than go back home, let's go shopping," Harry grinned excitedly. "I need new clothing, you need new clothing."

"Huh?" Ginny asked, stopping dead in the street.

"You're my responsibility now, my family. Everything I do is tied up around you. I need to make sure you are happy, and have everything you need. A new wardrobe is merely the start."

Ginny smiled and hugged him hard.

His first stop was a standard department store – he knew that he would not be able to walk into the stores that he wanted to take Ginny into, in his cousin's ill fitting clothes.

He walked out a few minutes later in a new pair of jeans and a white t-shirt.

It was the next shop, a higher class one, that Harry happily took Ginny into. He guided her straight to the ladies section.

"What can I get?" Ginny asked, after hugging him tightly again, for a second.

"Anything - everything."

Ginny smiled brightly, and started to shop. She showed him everything she was thinking, and found that he actually had good fashion sense, as some of his suggestion really suited her red hair and brown eye combination. She carried a pile of clothes to the changing room, and started to model for him.

After several outfits, she reappeared in her original clothing, and repressed the urge to bounce again as he calmly paid for everything.

It was this pattern that was repeated over and over again as he paid for a complete new wardrobe for her. Harry was thankful for the magic bag; because he had no clue just how they would have handled carrying this many different store bags.

It was the most fun Harry could ever remember having. Ginny's excitement was contagious, and he loved watching the expression on her face as she tried something new on.

There was no problem with the purchasing, the fact that he had a debit card was all the assistants cared about, and the fact that it was a platinum card ensured that they received the best service everywhere they went.

He got some clothes for himself as well, Ginny choosing most of them.

They stopped for lunch, in a fast food restaurant. It was the first time Ginny had tried it, and she enjoyed it thoroughly. The hamburgers very different from the ones her mother made on the grill.

"Why don't you put some of your new clothes on?" Harry smiled at her, pointing to a bathroom.

She nodded eagerly, and separated an outfit into one bag. She dropped a kiss on to his cheek, and vanished.

Harry whistled softly under his breath as she returned. She was wearing a short white shirt, which left her flat stomach bare, a short denim skirt that emphasised her legs, and shiny new white trainers. The deep red of her hair hung like flames down her back, the white of the shirt showing all the intricate shades.

"You like?"

"Oh yeah," he grinned appreciatively.

They did some more shopping that night, before returning, through public transport, to Little Whinging. They settled down in his expanded room and unpacked all the books they had brought.

Harry created a new wardrobe for their clothes, and then changed it, as Ginny pointed out it didn't really look like the rest of the room.

"You know, Hermione would love this," Ginny said with a smile as they started to go through their books.

Harry laughed, "After she got over lecturing us for going to get them like we did."

"What are we looking for?" the witch asked, curiously.

"You're looking for anything that might be interesting," Harry responded with a secretive smile.

She laughed, and picked up a book and started glancing through it. The title was 'Portkey your self to victory', and was a how to guide on creating port keys. She started to read it, knowing with her new power, she should be able to cast the spells herself.

Harry's approach was a lot more focused; he knew what he was looking for and flipped through the contents of each book till he found what he wanted.

His idea had its basis in Hermione's time turner, a device that let the user travel back in time an hour.

He walked down to the kitchen, and took the clock off the wall. He placed it on the floor just outside his room, so they could still see it, and picked up his wand.

"*Chronotos passib dementos*," he chanted under his breath. A yellow glow came from the end of his wand, and filled the room, before vanishing.

"What does that do?"

Harry looked at his watch it was ticking normally. He looked at the clock in the hallway and smiled. It seemed to have stopped. Rather than answering, he watched the clock, till it slowly ticked, marking the time on his watch at the same time.

"Tell me when that clock ticks again," he demanded.

Ginny nodded, shelving her questions, and concentrated on the clock. She soon realised it was incredibly boring, but didn't look away.

"Now," she said, finally.

"Hmm," Harry responded thoughtfully.

"Going to tell me what is going on?" Ginny grinned.

"The spell slows time in this room. One second out there is ten minutes in here. This means we are running about 600 times slower than normal time."

Ginny's brown eyes went incredibly wide. "Why?"

Harry smirked. "I don't think it's fair that Voldemort is grown up, and I'm not. I figured we would even things out a little. And it will give me a chance to teach you to defend yourself, and for me to learn more as well."

Ginny leant forwards and kissed him soundly. "This is going to be so cool."

Harry walked over to the fridge, then the cupboards. "Ok, I think we have enough food for seven days, so I'm going to cast the spell again, and try and make it last for seventeen minutes. The first thing we'll look at is how to create food, once we've mastered that, and then we'll slow it down a bit. We'll do around a month for each day."

Ginny tilted her head to one side, "So when we go back to school, we will have had an extra year and a half?"

Harry nodded. "Is that ok?"

She smiled softly at him. "You're asking if I want to spend over a year, with just the two of us, while you teach us both magic."

Harry nodded, unsure of her point.

"I love you," she stated clearly. "With everything inside me, every part of me, all that I am. I want this more than I can even think of explaining."

Harry pulled her over to him and kissed her softly.

Harry cancelled the time spell that was running - the clock showing that only nine seconds had past. He took a deep breath and concentrated hard, while the incantation was identical, the thoughts needed were different. With a grunt of tiredness, he cast the spell again.

"I've put it around the whole house, so we can move around," he explained tiredly. "I think I need a nap first."

There was no way Ginny was going to miss a chance to sleep with him again, so she joined him.

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*He knew that the eyes were the key to the soul. The gateway to the mind. The guardian of sanity.*

*It was dark. So dark. He turned his head, then his body, but couldn't see. He walked. Slowly, arms outstretched. Through the darkness, hoping.*

*It was light. His wand was in his hand. He could feel his power. In front of him, an army. Behind him, another.*

*He raised his arm, the one with the wand in it, and pushed it forwards, yelling at the same time. The army behind him roared their approval, and followed him.*

*He ran. Dodging, ducking, aware in the corner of his mind that she was there, that she was with him. He fired curses, charms, hexes, non stop, some with his wand, some with his hand. It didn't matter to him.*

*They engaged, the two armies combining into a mess of personal duels. Goblins, dwarfs, elves, giants, orcs, vampires, and numerous other creatures squared off, the chance for revenge too much to ignore.*

*Death was all around, revelling in the blood shed, the lives lost.*

*He fought; he killed; he was unstoppable. His dark queen by his side, protecting him, showing her own skills, killing her own quota of the enemy.*

*"It comes down to this?" the voice hissed.*

*He nodded. He didn't need words, not now. He didn't care what it had to say, he was there to kill it.*

*They duelled. Stray curses taking out members of each others army, members of their own, it didn't matter. This was everything they had wanted. There was a curious sense of freedom, of relief, no more worrying about the outcome. Just two people with diametrically opposed views using every trick they had to kill the other.*

*He backed his red eyed opponent up, calling on every ounce of his power, of his will, of his hate and anger, of his love.*

*His enemy hissed, knowing the end was clear, so shot a curse that deliberately missed, his final satisfaction before he died, incinerated.*

*He turned, victorious, and was met with a cheer, his army decimating the demoralised opposition.*

*Fear gripped him, hard, as he ran over to his queen. Her eyes were dead, no warmth, no love, no passion, no intelligence. The brown that had ruled his life was empty of anything.*

*He threw his head back and howled.*

*The scene changed. Another war, another army, they were outnumbered. But still they fought. Names that used to mean so much to him stood in his way, Dumbledore, Weasley, Granger, and he didn't care.*

*Another charge, an awesome sight as the warriors followed their Dark King, the unbeatable warlord who was changing the world in his image.*

*Another duel, the old white haired man, the younger red haired man and his mate, the bushy haired woman.*

*He fought and dodged, as his army eliminated the resistance, they were so well trained. Old friends of his died and he didn't notice. Old enemies passed away, and he didn't care. It was just him against the three of them, fighting for the future of the planet.*

*Good versus evil.*

*Light versus dark.*

*He won. He always did. He was the best. The girl, Granger, died first. A magically enhanced dagger piercing her left eye, into her brain. The boy, Weasley, lost all of his sanity and attacked, screaming his hatred and rage.*

*He had moved, dodging the first attack, then casually reached forward, grabbing the man's chin with one hand, the back of his head with the other, and lifted. Weasley's feet had left the ground, his rush halted, leaving it easy for him to twist violently, shattering every bone in Weasley's neck.*

*He dropped the body, letting it fall bonelessly to the floor.*

*He faced Dumbledore. The old man nodded slowly, and placed his wand on the floor. Dumbledore stood there, unarmed, and unafraid and started to talk, words, promises, explanations, anything to try and change his mind, to save the day.*

*He didn't care. He hadn't since her death. He killed Dumbledore, decapitating him with a single strike of his sword - the sword of Gryffindor.*

*He turned and roared his triumph, a roar that was echoed by his troops, by his dark soldiers, by his dark creatures.*

*The scene changed again, to a room, red velvet everywhere. He was looking in his mirror. Into his own eyes. He saw the emerald green was dead, no signs of life or humanity, they burned with a hatred of everything, and everyone.*

*He could see his soul.*

Harry woke from his dream and screamed in absolute terror.

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Ginny looked around as she returned to consciousness. Her gaze settled on Harry, who was tossing and turning in the bed, his facial expression changing rapidly. She could see he was having a nightmare, when he suddenly sat up and screamed with a terrified look on his face.

She didn't hesitate; she reached forwards and pulled him against her. He fought it, not yet conscious, but she didn't care. She whispered into his ear, meaningless soft sounds of comfort, like her mother had done to her when she was younger, and continued to hold him, rocking him back and forth. She could feel him calming down, his breath slowing from the hysterical panting.

"Shh," she whispered tenderly. "I'm here, you're not alone. You'll never be alone again."

He pulled back, his eyes wild. "Don't leave me, don't ever leave me," he begged.

She moved her left hand, gently brushing his hair back over his scar. "I will never leave you, Harry. I love you. I've joined my soul to yours; I will be with you for eternity."

Harry nodded, still breathing hard, as he fought to regain control. "You died," he whispered, almost under his breath, his eyes now looking scared.

Ginny smiled softly at him, inside half of her was amazed and pleased, that she could affect him so much; it was proof that he did love her, more proof. "I'm here," she whispered again, "I'm here for you, always for you. I love you, Harry. You're mine, I'm yours. Look inside yourself, look at our bond, what do you see?"

He was still breathing hard, as his eyes lost focus, as he looked inside him. "We're joined. I can't live without you. You can't live without me." The simple fact reassured him.

"Exactly," she smiled. She gently pushed him back down on to the bed, and draped herself over him. She rested her head on his chest, and relaxed as she felt his breath on her hair. She listened to his heart as it slowed, before he fell back to sleep.

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Harry listened to his life mate as she reassured him, felt her love as she pushed him down on to the bed. He relaxed as she placed her head on his chest, allowing him to smell the sunshine in her hair. He curled his arms around her, and slowly fell asleep.

Now that he realised that if she died, he would too, he was reassured. He would never become that which he feared most. She had saved him, and he would be forever grateful for that.

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The first day in slow time was spent going through all their books, looking for spells that would help them. They were relaxed in each others company, getting to know each other more and more, each delighted to find out how compatible they were.

The changes to Harry that had happened over the past two days in normal time were obvious. He could feel his magic working differently inside himself, but it wasn't strange, it was as if his power had been shifted out of alignment, and was now back in place.

He knew he could never go back to how he was before; it would be the magical equivalent of losing his sight or his hearing. Spells were now a lot easier than before, and he seems to have an eidetic memory, remembering nearly everything he read.

Ginny found herself learning a lot more than she had expected, the power had given her the same sort of basic understanding of magic that Harry had received. After the Defence Association last year, she knew that Harry was a good teacher, who explained things a lot better than most of her professional teachers. He spent as much time teaching her as he taught himself new stuff. His familiarity with the power enabled him to pick things up quicker.

They returned to normal time, having timed it carefully so they wouldn't feel a difference, and had a leisurely afternoon off.

The next day started a regular routine, as they would go to Knockturn alley in the morning, to get more books, and spend the afternoon in slow-time reading them.

Harry picked up a book on sex, and sex magic itself. It was entitled, "Sexing up a relationship: the difference between wizards and witches." It gave him the confidence to take their petting to a new level, and then a week later, with Ginny's full consent and participation, they consummated their marriage.

They shared everything, from food, to showering together. While neither of them consciously knew it, they were acting like they had been married for years, and they both enjoyed it. There was a sense of intimacy about their relationship now that seemed to fill a part of them that they didn't know they were missing.

The darkness that gave them power, the marriage ceremony, meant that they were completely content to be each other's only companion. They didn't feel the need to see other people, to be sociable, preferring instead to spend the evenings either talking about the new spells they were trying to learn, or in their bed, making love.

The next day, in slow time, Harry watched her as she showered, then shaved her legs.

"I hate prickly legs," she half explained, half moaned.

Harry's now almost perfect memory dredged up something from the sex-magic book and smiled.

He moved over to her and stopped her shaving.

She watched him quizzically as he concentrated, the slid his hand over her lower thigh. Her eyes widened as hair fell out, from the root.

"You'll never have to shave again," he promised her, with a grin.

Harry ran his hand all over both her legs, leaving her smooth and clean.

"Everywhere," Ginny told him firmly. The feeling was like a warm flannel over her body, reassuring and extremely nice.

She grinned impishly as he paused, looking at her questioningly. "All of it," she said again.

He nodded, and ran his hands everywhere.

She slid the showerhead against her legs, sluicing any remaining hair off. She touched herself, and smiled, loving the silkiness. She leant upwards and kissed him tenderly, pouring her gratitude into it.

Harry kissed her back, matching her tenderness, telling her in deeds that he did love her.

The next thing Harry did for Ginny would have been enough on its own to gain her eternal gratitude. For the first time in a month she was grumpy when she woke up, to Harry's surprise. She explained that it was her period, and she wasn't pleased about it. After a complaint about her uterus feeling like it had been punched several times, Harry decided to do something about it quickly.

The green eyed wizard grinned at her, picked her up, and carried her to the shower. He stripped her, ignoring her grumpy protests, and placed her under the stream of water. He placed his hands against her stomach, and chanted softly.

Ginny gulped; as she felt a rush of fluid exit her body, and looked down to see the water run red for a second. As soon as it finished, she realised she felt good, really good.

"What did you do?"

He smiled up at her, "accelerated your period so that it only lasts around five seconds."

"You can do that all the time?"

"Yep, it doesn't have any side effects; it was developed by a wizard when he was cursed to have periods after he made a joke at his wife's

expense."

"Well," Ginny mumbled. "That proves that Hermione was right â€" if a man suffered from a period, they'd invent something to cure it instantly."

Ginny stepped out of the shower, dragged him into the bedroom, and spent several hours proving just how grateful she was.

The third month of slow time was the most productive. Harry came across a spell to create Golems - mindless beings that could be programmed to follow any command. He combined it with a couple more spells, and had perfect training bots for them to fight against.

He didn't just concentrate on magical duels, but used them to teach basic martial arts as well.

With all the good food they could now create, and the regular exercise, Harry started to fill out normally, no longer a skinny boy; he was now a definite teenager.

Ginny, being a year younger, didn't quite grow as much, but firmed out a lot. Her legs, for example, went from girlishly straight to curvy.

Each morning was spent doing physical exercise, followed by magical duels. The afternoons were spent learning new spells and practising them. There was no way that either of them would be unprepared for a duel.

They had no idea what classes they would be taking this year, because of the ban on communication, but Harry wasn't too concerned. Assuming that he hadn't totally failed his OWLs, he knew that they would put him in the classes he had talked about the year before.

Harry ensured that Ginny knew the entire fifth year syllabus, then the sixth as well. He found a very useful book on OWLs and they worked through that as well. School was going to be very different for them. Although he didn't mention it to the girl, he wanted her moved up a year, so he could keep her close during the day as well. After Voldemort's possession of her when in school, he no longer thought of it as a safe place.

The day before they were due to meet at Platform nine and three quarters, they went into London to get new clothes. The old ones were a year old now, and didn't fit as well. Both of them decided that they would leave the problem of their school robes no longer fitting to Dumbledore; after all, it was him that had banned them from going to get new ones. They both suspected that no one expected their growth spurt.

With his uncle and their family still not back from Egypt, they spent the morning removing all the modifications to the family house. When it was back to normal, they packed their trunks and left.

Their trunks had undergone major modifications, now carrying a lot more than they were supposed to, and were extremely light.

They took the train to London for the final time; they had season tickets now, and talked about how they would deal with everyone.

They decided not to hide their powers, not to flaunt them, but not to hide them.

Their personalities had changed a little as well. They offset each other perfectly. Harry had been touched by the darkness more than Ginny. He was calmer now, cooler, and more intellectual. His power was barely visible to anyone looking at him. Ginny was lighter, the darkness Tom had inflicted was not as deep as Harry's; she was passionate and fiery, her emotions more on the surface.

Together, they walked through the barrier and re-entered the world of magic officially for the first time in six weeks.

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Hermione and Ron were standing with Mrs Weasley, waiting for Harry and Ginny to arrive.

"Oh my God," Ron whispered, as he saw the two teenagers walk through entrance.

"Ron," Molly admonished sharply, before looking up at the two of them. Her mouth dropped open in shock.

She had half expected her daughter to be hungry and drawn, after having to give her up to those disgusting Muggles. The last thing she had expected to see was this. Her younger daughter was glowing with health, her hair looked like it had been styled professionally for the first time in her life, and she was wearing Muggle clothes that looked more expensive than her entire wardrobe back home, an instant later, Molly realised that her old school robes simply wouldn't fit the girl, she had changed too much.

As Ginny smiled and waved, she pointed them out to Harry. The movement made Molly notice the athletic looking muscles the girl had acquired.

She turned her attention to Harry, the boy she thought of as the eighth Weasley, and felt her jaw open even more.

Harry Potter was strolling with his arm around her daughter, with a kind of smooth casual ease that he should not be capable of. He was wearing a tight t-shirt that showed off more chest muscles than a sixteen year old should have. But it was his face that attracted most of her attention. His glasses were gone, and his eyes were incredibly bright, the green offset nicely by his dark hair. His hair itself had changed; it was spiked up nicely, almost emphasising his scar not hiding it.

Both were completely unaware of the silence they left in their wake, as the students watched them, and then turned to each other with an expression of awe on their faces.

Ron and Hermione's response was similar they were shocked.

"Mrs Weasley, Ron, Hermione," Harry greeted them with a smile. "How was your holiday?"

"Fine," Molly whispered. "What did the Dursleys do to you?"

Harry and Ginny exchanged a quick look Ginny giving permission for what she saw in his eyes.

"Nothing," Harry explained calmly. "Who ever decided to send Ginny to stay with me should really have checked before hand that the Dursley's were at least in the country. They left the day Ginny arrived, on holiday to Egypt."

The three of them gaped at him, "But don't worry, I took Ginny into Muggle London and we got the supplies that were needed. I didn't think it was safe really, but with the wards blocking anything magical coming in and out, there wasn't much else we could do."

Ron looked at his mother, and took a step back. He could see the signs of an onrushing rage.

"Are you telling me, that you were left alone, with no one to look after you, for over a month?"

"Yep," Harry said calmly. Having faced five Golems at once, all using magic to try their best to kill him, one woman's rage was not as scary as it once was.

"And you turn up, on time, with my daughter looking happier than I can remember ever seeing her, and you did this without any parental help?"

"Yes."

Molly lunged forwards and engulfed the boy in a huge hug. "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

Harry smiled and hugged her back. "It was my pleasure, Mrs Weasley, although you should know I asked Ginny to be my girlfriend last week. We enjoyed spending the time together so much, that I realised I was starting to have feelings for her." They had decided not to tell anyone about their marriage yet. It wasn't really any of their business, and they were not quite ready for things to change.

Molly looked surprised, her temper was still bubbling, although not towards the two in front of her. She moved and hugged her daughter. "Where did you get those clothes?"

"Harry brought them for me," she explained, as her mother finally released them.

"You shouldn't have," Molly admonished, trying to work out how she could pay the boy back.

Harry's eyes darkened, as he fixed them firmly on his love's mother. "Yes, I should have."

Molly blinked, and opened her mouth.

"If I want to buy stuff for my friends, I will do. If I want to buy stuff for my girlfriend, no one will stop me. Who ever sent Ginny to me, put her in my care, thus she became my responsibility. I took, and still take, that responsibility very seriously. She has a key to my vault at Gringotts, and my permission to use it for what ever she wants."

Mrs Weasley closed her mouth, stumped. All she could think of was the Howler she was going to send Dumbledore. Eventually, she did the only she could do, she hugged the boy again and thanked him.

"So you have no problems with me dating Ginny?" he asked.

"No," his mother-in-law smiled softly at him.

"Good," he grinned impishly at her, showing her that he was still the same boy, just a little older.

A loud siren announced the trains imminent departure. Harry moved forwards and hugged Mrs Weasley once more, before standing aside while Ginny did the same.

"You can always come to Hogwarts if you want to talk some more," Harry told her, his eyes twinkling. "Come on, Guys. We need to get a carriage."

Harry and Ginny walked off, pushing their trolley in front of them. They found an empty carriage quickly, and loaded their trunks into it.

They sat down, Harry pulling Ginny onto his lap, and waited for their friends to join them. It didn't take long before Ron and Hermione were seated opposite; Colin Creevey and Luna Lovegood joined them a few minutes later.

"How did you do on your OWL's?" was Hermione's predictable first question.

"No idea," Harry said calmly. "When Dumbledore banned all magic communication, it meant that I couldn't receive them. I presume that I'll be told when I get to school."

Ron was frowning, he was jealous of the obvious close relationship between his sister and his best friend, and that she was sitting on his lap.

Hermione was shocked as well, but for a different reason, Harry was hot. The muscles beneath his t-shirt had definitely not been there the year before.

"So," Harry said with a grin. "What happened in the wizarding world over the summer?"

The ploy distracted them perfectly, and they spent several hours talking about Death Eater attacks and the wizarding world's response.

They were interrupted by the door being thrown open and a nasally voice sneering, "Well, if it isn't the Weasels, the mudblood and Potty."

"Ahh, Draco," Harry drawled with an amused expression. "I can't tell you how much I missed you over the summer."

At the stunned expressions of his colleagues, Harry continued. "I really can't."

Ginny got the joke first, and laughed, while Draco just looked confused.

"What are you doing with the Weasel on your lap, they selling their youngest for..."

Whatever insults Draco was going to say ended as Ginny moved. She slid off Harry's lap, her eyes dimming from their normal brown into something approaching black. Two quick curses took out Crabbe and Goyle, neither of them her favoured Bat Bogey Hex.

She turned to Malfoy, who had his wand half out now, and grabbed his wrist. She squeezed hard, crunching the bones together, causing the boy to yelp in pain and drop the wand. She pointed her own wand directly between Draco's eyes.

"I have been hearing your unimaginative insults for four years now. Give me one reason why I shouldn't just kill you?" she asked him quietly, her eyes promising that she would go through with it, regardless of any consequences.

The blonde wizard paled dramatically, and started to stammer. His eyes flickered to Harry, expecting him to be shocked, to intercede. He knew that Harry was the Gryffindor golden boy, and this is not how they acted.

Harry met his eyes with a slight smirk. There was no condemnation of Ginny in there, more a look of pride and support. It was then that Draco realised that it wasn't just the girl had changed. He wasn't normally that perceptive, but he understood that these two were going their own way now. He didn't know why, or even how he knew, he just did.

Draco turned, grabbed his wand, and ran. Ginny released Crabbe and Goyle, who immediately followed the blond unsteadily.

Ginny sat back down on Harry's lap, her eyes back to normal, and smiled happily as he pulled her securely into place. She immediately felt a wave of support and love emanating from him.

"So, you were saying," Harry asked Hermione, as if nothing had happened.

The four other people were just staring at them, open mouthed once more.

"That was bloody brilliant," Ron gasped, looking at his sister in awe.

"You shouldn't have done that," Hermione told her, "you could get in trouble for using offensive magic outside the classroom."

None of them had seen Ginny's eyes, or the look that Draco exchanged with Harry, so they were treating it as a normal Malfoy interruption.

Harry smirked at her, "Maybe, maybe not. You know, the Ministry tracks our magic with a spell on our wands, you disable the spell, and no one knows anything."

"Ron, Hermione, I can do your wands if you'd like?" Ginny offered.

Hermione looked torn, the chance to learn more magic was always good, but breaking the rules was against her beliefs.

They were interrupted by the signal that they were nearly at the station.

"Ok, we'll sort it out later. Ginny and I haven't got robes yet, so we'll leave you to get changed."

The two of them walked out in the hallway. Harry pulled Ginny into his arms, and then smiled as first Hermione and Luna joined them, then Ron and Colin as the two girls went back in.

They arrived at the platform, and took one of the carriages to the school.

Headmaster Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall were waiting for them. "Mr Potter, Ms Weasley," Dumbledore said, "Would you come with me please?"

Harry wrapped his arm around Ginny's waist and nodded coolly.

They followed the headmaster to his office, the password was 'Smarties', and they entered.

"Hey, Fawkes," Harry grinned at the Phoenix.

Fawkes looked at Harry leisurely, and then did a classic double take. The Phoenix sensed something deep inside the boy, and smiled to himself; this year was going to be very different. Idly, he spread his wings and drifted over to the boys shoulder. He decided he would be spending a lot of time here this year. The power the two were giving off was almost intoxicating to the magical bird.

For a brief second, Dumbledore looked surprised as his pet landed on another person, before his face dropped its normal mask.

"How was your summer," he asked.

"So, so," Harry replied, he sat Ginny back on his lap opposite the professor. "How was yours, sir?"

The headmaster looked at the smouldering embers of one of Molly Weasley's Howlers in his fireplace, "It could have been better."

"What can we do for you, sir?" Harry asked, taking control of the meeting.

The Hogwarts Headmaster frowned slightly, suddenly realising he couldn't read Harry. At all. He was getting a few things out of the girl, happiness and contentment but nothing else.

"I think that I owe you an apology," the professor started.

"New school robes will do," Harry interrupted.

"Excuse me?" Dumbledore asked, his eyes peering over his glasses.

"You made a mistake," Harry said. "We accept your apology, it worked out for us. You know most of the details thanks to Mrs Weasley and the Howler in your fireplace. Your mistake worked out, you're not omnipotent, and so as we need new school robes, if you could provide them we will call it equal and move on."

Dumbledore nodded slowly, his eyes losing their twinkle. Something obviously had happened over the summer, and he didn't know what to make of it. He felt his age for the first time, and prayed that the changes would work out.

Harry looked at his watch, "I believe we should hurry, sir. We wouldn't want to miss the sorting ceremony."

"Quite," Dumbledore agreed. He waved his wand, creating two sets of robes. "We will have to meet after the ceremony, to discuss your results, Harry."

"Okay," Harry agreed.

"Thank you for the robes," Ginny smiled at the professor. She trusted Harry to handle the conversation, understanding that he no longer really trusted the headmaster.

They put on the robes over their jeans and followed him to the Great Hall.

"Hey, Harry," Neville greeted them. "What's with the lack of glasses?"

Harry grinned at him, and whispered, "Magic, Neville, magic."

They sat down together, to find that Ron had told pretty much everyone about the incident with Draco, and that the blond Slytherin was blushing furiously, and shooting hate filled glares at them.

After a new batch of students had been sorted, Gryffindor getting eleven new first years, Dumbledore gave his normal warnings about banned objects and the forbidden forest.

It was very difficult for Harry and Ginny to sit in a room full of people. They were used to just the two of them being around, they were used to being able to drop everything and have sex at a whim, they were used to being able to snog each other senseless where ever and when ever they wanted.

They looked into each other's eyes, communicating effectively their frustrations. Ginny would have been more worried, but a slight gleam of confidence in Harry's eyes told her that he had a plan.

After the feast, Ginny stood to go to the Common Room.

"Where are you going?" Harry asked with a smile.

"To the Common Room, you have a meeting with the Headmaster."

"You're not coming with me?"

"I wasn't invited." Ginny looked at him quizzically.

Harry smirked. "Ginny, would you please come with me to the Headmasters office?"

The red haired witch laughed, and they walked off together, leaving a rather surprised Ron and Hermione behind them.

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"What's happened to Harry?" Ron asked. "He seems like he's almost a different person."

"It's more like he's accepted that he's not responsible for Sirius' death, and the death of the others. I think that Ginny has helped with that."

Ron's only response was another frown as he decided to owl his brothers to tell them of this development.

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Harry and Ginny walked, hand in hand, to the Headmasters office. They used the password, and sat down opposite Dumbledore's desk. Once

again, Harry sat Ginny firmly on his lap. He found it a lot easier to act the part when she was close.

The headmaster walked through the door from his chambers, accompanied by Minerva McGonagall, the head of Gryffindor house. She looked at the two of them curiously; she hadn't known that Harry was going to bring Ginny with him.

"I have your OWL results here, Mr Potter," she said, handing over his envelope.

Without ceremony, Harry ripped open the envelope and scanned the contents. His expression didn't change as he handed it to Ginny to look over.

Dumbledore hid another frown. Everything he knew told him that Harry should still be upset by the death of Sirius, and perhaps angry with him. He would prefer the anger right now, because he hadn't a clue how the results had affected the boy. Not even the bright green eyes had given a hint of what he was thinking.

Ginny smiled happily, and un-self consciously twisted to place a firm kiss on his lips. "I knew you would do well," she told him proudly.

His results were not perfect, but he had achieved high enough scores in each of his major subjects to allow him to do NEWT level courses.

"I signed you up for DADA, Potions, Charms, Transfiguration and Divination," McGonagall explained.

"You should probably drop divination and take Arithmancy instead," Ginny advised.

"Hmm, good idea," Harry agreed thoughtfully. "There will be no problems doing that?"

"Errr, none at all," a confused professor responded. She knew from experience that advising Harry could be extremely frustrating when he had made his mind up, and the casual ease in which Ginny had redirected him set off a small alarm in her mind, but she couldn't work out why.

"Is that all, Professor?" Harry asked politely.

"Erm, no. With Professor Umbridge gone, we have lifted your lifetime Quidditch ban, and we would like to make you Gryffindor captain."

"Thank you," Harry replied calmly. "But I am afraid that I am going to have to decline. I'm sure you'd agree that there are more important things than sport at the moment. Besides, Ginny is an extremely competent seeker."

"Harry," Dumbledore entered the conversation. He had the same feeling again that he was losing control over the boy, that he was following his own path, and that the venerable professor did not have a clue where that path was leading. "Flying is one of the things you do best; you really shouldn't give that up because of Voldemort. That would mean that he has won."

"I'm afraid I disagree," Harry replied. His hands tightened imperceptibly around Ginny's waist, as he struggled with his self-control. His anger was harder to control these days. It was like a volcano inside him, wanting to erupt. It took more to set it going, but when it did start, the desire to lash out was so much more appealing. Yet all it took was the small form of the woman who held his heart to calm him down.

Ginny could feel his anger, and relaxed against him, snuggling a little, not caring what the teachers thought, more concerned with giving Harry the support he needed.

"I'm going to be a lot more involved with running the Defence Association this year, and on top of my studies, it won't leave much time for sport."

A faint frown creased Dumbledore's forehead. "Running the Defence Association?" he enquired politely, curious to see if Harry's reasoning for continuing the club matched his.

"Can I ask if any of the members didn't get an Outstanding in their Defence OWLs or NEWTs?"

"They all passed with flying colours," McGonagall admitted.

"And despite Sirius' death, every member involved with the debacle at the Ministry proved their worth. I will not let them down by failing to continue their training. I'm considering opening it up for new membership this year, perhaps splitting it into two days, depending on people's schedule.

"I want the Defence Association to continue, as it did last year, to prepare the students for facing Death Eaters so that they have a third option."

"A third option?" McGonagall asked.

"Yes, Fighting. Most of them would prefer it to the standard running away, or dieing."

A few seconds of silence followed Harry's blunt words. Ginny kept her smile to herself, as she felt Harry relax underneath her. It was almost funny to see the reactions of the two adults. They were both obviously desperately trying to reconcile the Harry they knew from last year, with this calm one in front of them, and failing.

"Harry, I am going to make the Defence Association an official school club. It means that you will be able to run it openly. I take it that you will be in charge?"

"To start with, yes. The person at the top of the club will be the most powerful magic user, whether that is a witch, a house elf, a goblin, or I. There will be regular leadership contests to ensure that the best people are at the top. I'll also be inviting some special guests to give lectures."

Professor McGonagall mentally rewound his words, something was not appearing right to her. It took her a short time to realise that Harry had stated his plans, not asked permission for them. She wasn't sure how she felt about it.

Ginny looked a little proud at Harry's statement. He was determined to try and end this inequality in the wizarding world, and was going about it in a lot more practical way than the unfortunately entitled SPEW.

"We'll hold our first meeting on Friday, and I'd like to invite you, and any other teacher, to watch our first lesson."

"Thank you, Harry; I see that you have been thinking about this over the summer." Dumbledore said slowly. "I'll look forward to the first lesson."

When the two had left, Professor McGonagall turned to her headmaster and asked, "What the hell happened to them over the summer?"

The two in question walked to the common room, giggling over the Howler that Molly had sent Dumbledore. Neither of them had guessed that her mother would actually do it. They slipped in quietly, taking a seat near the back.

They were so silent and unmoving, that they were almost unnoticed among the loud students who were getting to know each other again.

Ron and Hermione joined them; talking about the classes they were going to take this year. Harry told them about his exam results, and that he was dropping divination. There were two very predictable responses. Ron was dismayed that he was losing his friend, and co-conspirator in faking the homework, and pleasure from Hermione that he was dropping such a useless subject.

Eventually, it was time for bed, and Harry dropped a soft kiss on Ginny's cheek.

"Night, love," he smiled at her.

"Night, Harry," Ginny whispered back, as they separated to their respective dorms.

Inside the girl's dorm, Ginny pulled off her robes, and then stepped out of her jeans and t-shirt.

"Lights out, Girls," one of the seventh year prefects shouted.

Ginny undid her bra, completely un-self-conscious these days, and stretched. She wasn't even aware that she was attracting attention from the girls in her year.

"Night," she said cheerfully, and climbed into bed, drawing the curtains behind her.

She settled down, and immediately sighed. A bed was extremely lonely with out one Harry Potter in it, and she wasn't looking forward to the night.

She held in a squeal as her mattress suddenly shook, as a body dropped out of mid air.

Harry grinned at her, and placed a silencing charm around the bed.

"Hey Mrs Potter," he grinned.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Not pleased to see me?" he playfully pouted.

Ginny slid across him and kissed him hard.

"Stupid question," Harry murmured to himself, a little dazed. "I did a spell that links our beds together. I roll over in mine and end up here."

Ginny rewarded him with another deep kiss. She felt his hands slide down her back possessively, and cup her tightly.

Harry smirked, "You told them about us?"

"Not yet."

"I told the boys a little, but said I was tired."

Ginny decided they had talked enough, and went back to kissing him.

They moved together, with the experience of long practice. An hour later, they collapsed, exhausted, together. The cleaning charm was automatic for him, and done with a wave of his hand.

He wrapped his arms around her, and whispered quietly, "I love you, Gin-gin."

She smiled sleepily, and whispered, "I love you, too, sweetheart."

Together, the two of them fell asleep.

A soft ringing woke them in the morning. Harry groaned, "Someone's trying to wake me, I need to get back to my bed." He kissed her softly, smiled, and rolled over, vanishing.

A second later, her own curtains were rattled as a sign to get up. She pulled her knickers back on, and climbed out of bed.

Morning," she called cheerfully.

She was met with several groans, and left for the showers attached to her room, a towel slung over her back. She showered and washed her long hair, before leaving, a school towel wrapped around her hair, her own wrapped around her body.

"Ginny," Hermione scolded. "You'll never have your hair dry in time for breakfast."

"Sorry, Mum," Ginny rolled her eyes. She grabbed her wand and pointed it to her hair, using a drying charm Harry had taught her. The charm dried her hair instantly, styling it the way it had been the day before. She turned and smiled at Hermione. "See, all done."

"What was that?" the stunned voice of Lavender Brown asked.

"A hair drying charm," Ginny said with a smile.

"Who taught you that?"

"Harry did, why?"

"We didn't cover that in class, last year," Hermione explained, her eyes wide with the shock that Harry might know something she didn't.

"Oh," Ginny said, unconcerned. "He did say something about teaching himself this year's class, just so he was ready. Harry found all sorts of useful spells, but didn't have time to teach me everything."

"Like what?" Parvati asked.

Ginny put her leg out, showing off how smooth it looked. "Like a permanent hair removal charm. I've not had to shave in ages. And he did this charm that made my period accelerate; I went through the whole cycle in about five seconds."

The girl's mouths were gaping now. Each of them was trying to work up the courage to ask Ginny to ask Harry to cast the charms on them.

Hermione was shocked, she had never heard of these things, but the evidence of the hair charm was in front of her. She suddenly realised that Harry might be able to fix her own bushy hair.

Ginny got rid of her towel, proving that she had used the hair charm all over her body, and pulled on some expensive silk underwear.

"Where did you get those?" Parvati Patil asked, looking at Ginny's underwear, drawing attention back to the girl.

Ginny looked up and smiled easily, the blushing teen of a few years ago completely gone. "Harry got them for me; he took me shopping in London."

"He's got really good taste," Parvati said with an approving look. "What happened to you over the summer?"

The other girls were now gathered around, listening in.

Ginny smirked at them, "Dumbledore found out that Death Eaters were after me, so he sent me to Harry's, as his house has a load of protection magic on it - to stop Voldemort getting to him."

The girls gasped at the mention of Voldemort and the Death Eaters.

"The only problem was," Ginny added with a grin. "No one bothered to check if Harry's relatives were there. They weren't, they had gone to Egypt on holiday, leaving Harry on his own."

"That's horrible," Lavender exclaimed.

"Anyway," Ginny continued. "I turned up, determined to be brave and courageous as always, and told him what was going on." Her tone was lightly self-mocking, as if she had put that person long behind her. "He explained about the Dursleys and offered me a choice. I could go back, or trust him to look after me."

"What did you do?" Hermione asked, caught up in the story.

"Well, you all know I had a huge crush on him," at the multiple nods she received, Ginny continued. "I told him that I trusted him. His eyes seemed to light up, and before I knew it, he'd arranged for a Muggle taxi firm to pick us up and take us to the train station. I'd never done anything in the Muggle world like this before, so I was really excited, but he was cool about it. He managed to sneak us into Gringotts, without anyone seeing, and no," she said, before anyone could interrupt, "I won't tell you how."

"He arranged for a Gringotts debit card, so that he wouldn't need to use Muggle money. We sneaked back into Muggle London, and he took me on a huge shopping spree. He brought me anything I wanted, wouldn't let me turn him down or anything."

She giggled to herself, "No one cared about our ages; I think they thought that Harry just looked young for his age, because as soon as they saw how much he was willing to spend, we got the best service."

"Why did he buy you everything?"

Ginny's smile changed, to a softly loving one. It was an expression that some of the girls had never seen on someone so young before. "He told me that I was his responsibility, and that he would not let me down. And as his responsibility, he wanted to make sure that I had whatever I needed."

The girls swooned at that, although there were several envious looks.

"He got us gym membership, so every morning we would go and work out." Ginny flexed her arms, showing off a little. She also tensed her stomach, showing off the faint outline of a six-pack, which she was extremely proud of.

"Did you do your homework?" Hermione asked, suspecting that they hadn't.

Ginny rolled her eyes at the girl, and then looked smug. "Yep, and more. Harry taught me this entire year's curriculum."

"He did what?"

Ginny grinned. "He taught me everything he learnt last year."

"You are so lucky," one of the girls in her year said.

"How did he do that?" Hermione asked, frowning.

"You saw him last year, in the D.A. He's a wonderful teacher. You think that a wizard that has done what he has would have trouble teaching anyone anything?" Ginny asked. "He's polite, patient, and clever and knows how to push you to your limits. I found that I really enjoyed all the subjects - he even made the History of Magic interesting."

The girls laughed at that.

"So, during the teaching and the working out, my crush turned into something real as I got to know the real Harry Potter, not the one we see at school. The attentive, trusting, warm, incredibly intelligent, really good looking, powerful person he really is. Then he asked me out on a date."

"Have you kissed him?"

Ginny's smile was a little wicked. "That boy can make your toes curl; you're insides screw up and your brain stops working. His lips should be banned as a weapon of mass destruction, and he does this thing with his tongue..." She shivered lightly, a faint flush appearing across her chest as she remembered. Well, what she remembered was more the last night, but they didn't need to know that.

The girls were looking at her with a mixture of awe and envy. All of them wanting something like that, and thinking it wasn't fair that Harry, Harry with the new muscle and sexy hair, should be taken off the market already.

Ginny quickly pulled on her school uniform and her school robes. She gave herself a cursory glance in the mirror, which told her she was looking amazing. She bounced down the stairs, and jumped straight into Harry's waiting arms.

"Morning," she grinned, wrapping her legs around his waist for balance.

"Morning," Harry replied with laughter in his eyes. The other girls walked downstairs into the common room more sedately.

"Fix my hair?" Harry half asked, half begged playfully.

"Course," Ginny replied with a grin. "Sit."

Harry walked over to the nearest chair, unaware of Ron glaring at him, and the rest of the house silently watching them. He had yet to let her out of his arms, and the strain of holding her up caused his muscles to bulge through his t-shirt, as he hadn't put on his robes yet.

He sat in the chair and Ginny kneeled over his lap. She concentrated for a second, using her wand to arrange Harry's hair just how she liked it.

"Thanks, hon," he grinned at her.

She dropped a kiss on his forehead. "Put on your robes, I'm hungry."

"Yes, Ma'am," Harry easily lifted the smaller girl off him and stood, saluting.

He picked up his robes and pulled them over his head, he missed the soft groan from the girls as his t-shirt rose, showing off his visible six-pack. Ginny didn't, and her glare clearly said 'Hands off.'

The two were the first out the door, heading down to the hall for breakfast.

"What did you find out?" Ron whispered to Hermione as they followed.

"Harry treated Ginny like a Princess, and taught her the entire year curriculum." Hermione replied. "What did Harry say?"

"Not much, he threatened to hex anyone who asked him any personal questions, and went straight to bed."

Hermione sighed, "That's Harry. He taught Ginny some charms that I have never heard of over the summer, I need to go to the library and look them up."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Did you find out if they have kissed?"

"Why?"

Ron shrugged, unable to say quite what was bothering him.

Hermione shook her head, and lied, "She didn't say anything."

Breakfast passed without incident, rumours of Harry and Ginny's relationship had not had chance to spread yet.

They got their timetables, Harry's first lesson was double potions, and Ginny's was transfiguration.

A light kiss on the cheek, and they departed to their first classes.

"Good morning," Professor McGonagall said, walking into the class. "Today, we are going to start by turning these cushions into porcupines, and back."

Without thinking about it, Ginny automatically pulled out her wand and tapped the cushion. Her mind flashed back to Harry teaching her this, and the week she had spent practising. Her new power made the changes easy.

The cushion obediently turned into a porcupine, which wandered around her desk curiously.

Ginny smiled at it, tapped it again, and watched it turn back into a pillow. She looked up, and blushed, as she realised that everyone was looking at her, including a stunned professor.

"Sorry for interrupting, Professor," Ginny apologised.

"When did you learn to do that?"

"Over the summer," Ginny explained. "Harry taught me everything he knew."

McGonagall was stumped; she had never come to the first lesson of a new class and pull off something as complicated as that, without an incantation. And the idea that Harry had taught raised some questions about Potter's abilities himself. The boy had experienced some trouble getting it right at the start of the year, but if he could teach it, he must know more now.

"Ms Weasley, could you turn this matchstick into a chair?" the professor asked, setting her a test that she had not yet taught Harry.

Ginny nodded, and touched her wand to the matchstick. She concentrated and released the spell. The matchstick grew rapidly, turning itself into a comfortable armchair. The girl smiled and sat down in it, curling up comfortably.

"Twenty points to Gryffindor," the professor said slowly. She walked to her desk and pulled out a textbook. "Spend the rest of the class studying this."

Ginny nodded and pulled out the book. She smiled as she had already read it, and it was one of her favourites, and settled down comfortable.

The rest of the class spent the lesson learning the basic of the transfiguration.

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Harry sat next to Neville in potions; the boy was taking potions because it was a sister-subject to Herbology. As much as he wanted to drop the subject, he had been persuaded by McGonagall to take it. This left Hermione and Ron together. He decided that Snape was not going to terrorise the boy this year.

"I would say that it is a pleasure to teach such an advanced subject, but this year we appear to have dredged the bottom of the barrel," he sneered disgustedly. "If you thought that your OWL's were hard, then the next couple years will be absolute hell."

"Now, what is the main usage of snake's tears?"

The class looked at each other, puzzled. They hadn't looked at this yet.

"A poison," Draco stated firmly, with a smug voice.

"Excellent Mr Malfoy, take twenty points for Slytherin, and ten points from Gryffindor for not studying over the study."

Harry smirked for a second, and then said loudly, in a formal voice. "Student objection, points awarded for an incorrect answer. I request independent adjudication."

There was complete silence, before a disembodied voice replied, "Objection noted. Points have not been awarded or detracted. Hogwarts Headmaster is to adjudicate."

"What was that Potter?" The potions professor demanded, stalking to Harry's desk.

"Abuse of power and favouritism," Harry responded coolly. "Snake's tears are used to counteract poisons, and are a central part of the Living Life draught, which cures the Living Death potion."

Severus Snape gaped at him for a second. "My office, Potter. Now!"

Harry nodded, and stood, ignoring the snickering of the Slytherins.

"I don't want to hear a word from any one. If I do, there will be fifty points taken from BOTH houses." Snape snarled. "Follow the instructions on the board in absolute silence."

The Slytherins went deathly quiet; as Snape slammed shut the door of his office.

"There is no such thing as the Living Life potion."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "There is. It's pretty complex; I found the recipe over the summer."

The professor growled, and was about to tear Harry's head off, when the boy interrupted him, "Whose side are you on?"

"What?" Snape asked flabbergasted.

"You carry the Death Eaters mark on your arm, yet you work for Dumbledore. Whose side are you on?"

Snape collapsed into a chair, his eyes searching Harry's. What he saw there confused him. There was no hate, no malice, just a calm confidence that belied his years.

"Voldemort is back, the war is starting again. You need to pick a side, and I need to be sure which side you are on.

"You have to choose now. Hating me because of my father is childish, and I won't stand for it. Hating me for myself is fine, it tells me where you stand, and I can deal with you." Harry reached out and touched the wall; he concentrated for a second, and then smiled slightly.

"There, I've turned the Headmaster's monitoring of the dungeon off. Anything you say will be kept secret."

"WHAT?" Snape bellowed.

"The walls have ears in Hogwarts, how else do you think the he knows so much?"

Snape stood, and walked to his desk. He pulled out a bottle of Firewhiskey, and took a deep slug. He sat back down again, unable to keep up his temper.

"What happened to you? You've changed too much."

"Which side are you on," Harry replied. He wasn't going to explain anything till he got an answer.

"Life," Snape said simply, honestly.

"Good." Harry frowned for a second. "Can you get over what happened between you and my dad?"

Snape smiled twistedly, "I'm beginning to realise that you are not your father."

"Good," Harry said again. "This summer, I decided I would never let anyone control my destiny again. I have taken steps to ensure that I won't be caught unprepared for anything that happens. Voldemort no longer trusts you, meaning your role as a spy is no longer necessary."

"How did you know that?" Snape gasped.

Harry grinned slightly, "You know me, sir. I can't keep my nose out of anything interesting."

Snape almost laughed for a second.

"Now, Professor, we are going to make a deal. I'm going to do you a favour, you're going to do me a favour."

"Oh?" Snape said, regaining enough control to sneer at the boy, "Something about Occlumency?"

"No," Harry said firmly. His wand appeared from nowhere, and he cast the *Petrificus Totalus* spell.

Snape's eyes were the only things moving, as Harry approached him and grabbed his forearm. "I can only do this because you've been fighting Voldemort for years," he said calmly.

Harry concentrated hard, entering into the Dark Mark. He started to feel its influence; it pulsed with hate and anger. Black tentacles went all through Snape's body, into his mind and his heart.

He followed each tentacle, and then slowly worked backwards, killing it as he went. He used bright white light, like a laser beam, to burn the dark magic out of his Potions Master.

Snape would have been immobile, even without the spell on him. He could feel his spirits lifting, as the corruption he endured on a daily basis slowly leaving him.

Carefully, Harry removed the tentacle to the heart, then the mind. He concentrated especially hard and poured all his energy into the core. It writhed and pulsed under him, trying to survive.

Harry collapsed, exhausted, against the chair, releasing the spell at the same time.

Snape stood, and picked up a bottle. "Here."

Harry looked at it tiredly.

"Pepper-up potion," Snape explained.

Harry nodded and swallowed it in one go. It showed how tired he was, that no smoke came out of his ears.

"Thanks," Harry said.

"Thank you, Harry."

Harry looked up in surprise; it almost appeared like the professor was smiling.

They walked out of the room silently, just in time for the end of class.

Ron and Hermione instantly flanked Harry.

"What happened, how did you get the points given back, what did Professor Snape say in his office, why was he threatening Slytherin house?" Hermione asked in one breath.

Harry looked at her tiredly, and then yawned. "I read Hogwarts: Rules and Regulations over the summer. What happened in his office is up to him." He walked off slowly, wishing he could just go to bed.

Severus Snape felt wonderful, better than he had in years, but was now worried as well, and knew that the only thing to do was talk to the Headmaster.

As fast as he could, he walked towards the office, meeting Minerva McGonagall at the entranceway.

"I need to see the Headmaster, Minerva, urgently."

"So do I."

Snape thought for a second. "Harry Potter."

Minerva sighed, "Ginny Weasley and Harry Potter."

Snape grinned for a second. "After you."

The Gryffindor head of house looked surprised, and then smiled a thank you.

They entered the large office together, and sat down.

"Would you mind if I go first," Snape asked courteously. "I think you will want to hear this as well."

"Go ahead," Minerva replied. She had never seen Snape act so, well, human.

"Headmaster," Snape began. "Can you tell me what is going on in my dungeon at the moment?"

Dumbledore looked at him curiously, and then jerked as Fawkes gave a high-pitched trill, that sounded like a laugh. He concentrated for a second and frowned. "No," he replied. "The walls are silent."

"What about me, Albus. Can you sense anything different?"

"You mean apart from the smile?" Dumbledore's eye twinkled irrepressibly.

"Indeed," Snape replied dryly.

It was then that the two head of houses saw something they never thought they would see. Pure shock and amazement was visible on his face.

"Your Dark Mark, it's, it's gone."

Snape nodded, "Completely."

"How?" Minerva gasped, shocked.

"Potter."

Dumbledore seemed to slump against his chair. "Can you tell me what happened please, from the beginning?" It may have been phrased as a question, but was definitely an order.

"I started the class with a question, Draco Malfoy answered it, and I awarded him house points. I took off a few for the Gryffindor's for not studying

the question. I was about to move on, when Potter said 'Student objection, points given for incorrect answer. I request independent adjudication.' I didn't even know there was an appeal structure for house points."

"Nor did I," McGonagall said with a frown.

Dumbledore nodded, "There is, it was set up by the founders, it hasn't been used for centuries."

"I asked him what that was, and he told me, to my face, it was an abuse of power and favouritism, and then claimed that the answer that Malfoy gave was incorrect because the ingredients were used in the draught of living life."

"Living life?" Dumbledore inquired curiously. He had guessed already, but wanted confirmation.

"A cure for the Living Death," Snape explained.

"That doesn't exist."

"Yeah, that's pretty much what I said; I dragged Harry into my office, and questioned him. He ignored it and asked me what side I was on."

"What do you mean?" McGonagall asked.

"He told me the war was starting again, and that he wanted to know what side I was on, the light or Voldemort's. He wasn't worried about which side I chose, he just wanted to know. I said life, and he cast the *Petrificus Totalus* spell on me and removed my Dark Mark. It must have taken over 90 minutes, because the next thing I knew, Harry is exhausted and looks like he is going to fall asleep there and then, and it's the end of class. I came here straight afterwards."

Dumbledore was now sat upright again, things were changing in the game, and he needed to know what.

"Minerva?" he turned to his deputy headmistress.

"I walked into my fifth year transfiguration class this morning, and instantly saw that Ginny Weasley was day dreaming. I told the class that we would be studying transferring inanimate objects into animate, and mentioned turning a cushion into a porcupine.

"Ginny hardly even looked up, just touched her wand to a cushion, and smiled faintly. It was as if she had done it many times before. She transformed it perfectly. The porcupine wandered around her table happily before she turned it back."

She took a deep breath, "Ginny didn't use an incantation, Albus. She just touched her wand to it. She suddenly realised that everyone was watching her, and she apologised and said that Harry had taught her how to do it over the summer. Well, I decided to test her out, and asked her to transform a matchstick into a chair. You know how difficult that is; the difference in mass alone is a major challenge.

"She just did it."

"What the hell happened over the summer?" Snape asked, with a frown. "I thought it was just supposed to be the two of them and Potter's guardians?"

Dumbledore sighed softly. "I failed to check a basic fact, Severus that Harry's guardians would be there. They weren't, they had gone on holiday."

"They did what?" McGonagall demanded.

Dumbledore looked at her reproachfully, "They left Harry alone to fend for himself, while they went on holiday."

Snape looked shocked; he had always believed that Harry lived with fawning relatives who took care of his every need.

"It seems that Mr Potter decided that, as we had forced Ms Weasley on him, that he would take complete responsibility for her."

"In what way?"

"Health, wealth, and happiness," Dumbledore said dryly. "According to Mrs Weasley, Harry has even given Ms Weasley a duplicate key to his vault."

A sharp knock on the door interrupted them, and a harried looking Professor Flitwick entered.

"Sorry to interrupt," he apologised.

"Quite alright," the headmaster smiled reassuringly. "What can we do for you?"

"It's Ginny Weasley," The charms professor explained. "She can do my entire year's worth of work." He had no idea why wry smiles suddenly appeared on the face of the headmaster and two heads of houses.

"I think," Dumbledore, said slowly, "that we should have a little talk with Mr Potter and Ms Weasley. Would you go back to class and ask Ms Weasley to join us here?" the professor said to the charms professor. "And can you go and get Harry, Minerva?"

The two teachers nodded and walked out of his office.

"How do you feel, Severus?"

Harry followed his head of house back to the headmaster's office. He was started to think that it might be a good idea to come clean about a few things. If only to stop the invertible punishment when someone found out that there was no way he was going to stop sleeping with Ginny.

He walked in, to find that Professor Snape and Ginny were already waiting for them. He moved over to his wife, lifted her up casually, sat down, and placed her firmly on his lap.

Ginny curled against him, as normal. They might have looked like teenagers in love, but there was a very good reason for acting like they did. It redirected people's attention away from the obvious, and it allowed them a form of silent communication.

"Is there anything you want to tell me, sir?" Harry inquired, curious to see if his opening gambit would reveal anything.

Severus Snape struggled to hide a sudden smile. The look on Dumbledore's face was out of place, yet very familiar. It was the same look of chagrin that was normally seen on the faces of people sat opposite him, when the headmaster asked that same question. Harry had out Dumbledore'd Dumbledore.

"What I can, and what I can't say, Harry, is not always up to me."

"Ahh, of course." Harry let the silence grow just slightly uncomfortable, before continuing.

Ginny and the two Professors all had the same thought at once. To stay out of the way, something was going on between the two of them, and only Ginny knew what it was. "What can we do for you?"

Albus frowned a little; he wasn't sure where to start. His musing weren't helped when Fawkes gave another twilling little laugh, and flew over to Harry's shoulder.

"How did you teach Ginny the fifth year transfiguration and charms?" The opening question was the easy one.

"By explaining the theory behind the lessons, showing her how to do the spell, then letting her do it." Harry response was extremely accurate, and extremely unhelpful.

"You can't do magic outside of school," Professor McGonagall interrupted.

"Of course you can," Harry replied. "Unless you mean that we're not allowed to do magic, which is a totally different thing."

"Enough games Potter. How did you do undetected magic over the summer?" Snape said forcibly. He recognised the tactics Harry was using, and while he approved "it was a very Slytherin thing to do" he felt it was time for some answers.

"I removed the tracking spell on our wands. The Ministry didn't have a clue we were doing anything."

"How did you do that?" the deputy head asked. "You need magic to remove the spell, and the removal itself would be picked up by the ministry."

Harry laughed softly and unwrapped an arm from around Ginny's waist. He pointed to a small pile of food next to Fawkes perch, and summoned it. The food floated through the air towards the green-eyed boy. He caught it, and fed it to Fawkes, who sung his gratitude in a way that left no one in any doubt that he was very amused.

The two standing professors had the same thought at the same time. They both sunk into the nearest chair, their legs no longer able to support them.

"Wandless magic," Dumbledore stated.

Harry nodded in agreement. "I'm surprised that Professor Snape is surprised, after all, I used wandless magic to remove his Dark Mark earlier." He felt it was time to get to throw that little tidbit out.

There was another uncomfortable silence. Well, it was uncomfortable for the adults in the room; the two teenagers were too amused to be uncomfortable.

"Would you mind if we have a drink?" Harry asked, hiding a smirk. It was time to up the ante a little more. He was trying to pursue a strategy of revealing a little at a time, and keeping his professors so off balance that they couldn't form an effective attack against him.

"Of course not," Dumbledore responded. He prepared to call for a house elf, when he spotted Harry moving, and paused.

"Ginnnnn, make us a drink?" Harry pleaded with a teasing grin.

"I should teach you to do this yourself," the amused witch responded.

"I can do it; you just make it better than I do."

"Flattery will get you everywhere, honey," Ginny grinned. She waved her hand in front of her, conjuring a teapot and five cups. She smiled brightly at the materialised objects and they seemed to bow to her, then the teapot poured its contents into one of the cups, a milk jug added its milk, then several cubes of sugar jumped enthusiastically into the cup. It twirled vigorously; dissolving the sugar evenly, before floating over to Harry's outstretched hand. "Professors?" She offered with a polite smile.

The three of them were staring at her dumbstruck. The idea that Harry could do wandless magic, while shocking, wasn't in the realms of impossibility. The boy had always had powerful magic, but the idea that Ginny could do it was almost beyond reason. None of her family had ever been able to, so there was no reason the girl should be able to.

"No?" Ginny asked them calmly. Inside, she was struggling with hysterical laughter. When there was still no response, she had her tea set pour her a cup, and then banished it back to where it came from.

Harry and Ginny shifted slightly, so that they could both drink comfortably.

"You make the best tea," Harry praised the girl with a smile; he couldn't remember when he had enjoyed a conversation as much as this one. "When can Ginny take her OWLs?"

"What?" McGonagall recovered enough to demand.

"It's going to be pointless her staying in the fifth year, as she knows the entire curriculum, and has taken the practical tests for the OWLs anyway."

"I have?" Ginny looked surprised.

"Yeah, last week. Those tests I made you take were the exact same as I took at the end of last term. You did a lot better than I did."

"But they were easy, they couldn't have been the OWL's," Ginny protested.

Harry grinned at her. "They were, and I'll put the memories into a Pensieve, so that the examining board can see that the tests were done fairly."

He looked up at the teachers. Snape had an amused look in his eyes, as if he had decided that it was better now to just enjoy this, than try and understand it. He met Harry's eyes, with a look that clearly said he understood what Harry was doing, and that he approved.

The look surprised Harry a little, and made him realise that, without the Dark Mark, there was a chance that the Professor might not be an arsehole.

Professor McGonagall was still looking shocked. She had no clue what was going on, but understood that things had changed dramatically. She had the feeling that Harry had known what he was doing all summer, and that it would be better to get out of his way, so that she didn't get run over.

Professor Dumbledore nodded slowly. The realisation that he had lost Harry was hard to take. He always felt that he had acted in the best interests of everyone, but accepted that Sirius' death was the catalyst for what he was seeing now. This conversation had been conducted on two very different levels. The underlying theme had been small points to prove that Harry and Ginny had their own plan and would be following it. It wouldn't stop him trying to guide Harry; he just recognised that it would be near impossible. He just prayed that the boy was on the side of the light.

"Ms Weasley can take the tests this afternoon," the headmaster offered.

Harry smiled at him, and then decided to drop the largest bombshell into the room.

"Mrs Potter," he corrected with a false detachment.

Dumbledore froze; half way through moving for a lemon drop. "Excuse me?" he croaked.

"Mrs Potter," Harry repeated. "We would like that information to be kept private until we are ready to reveal it."

â€œWell, that explains why they are so comfortable with each other,' Snape thought to himself. This conversation was going to be replayed in his mind many times in the future. He had wanted to see Dumbledore human for longer than he could imagine. There was nothing more frustrating talking to someone who never told the whole truth and always seemed to know what you were thinking.

"You're too young to be married," McGonagall said, sound both outraged and shocked. "No one would have performed the ceremony, not without parental approval."

"*Aeternus Iugum*," Harry said distinctly.

Dumbledore flew to his feet, his act of a genial headmaster dropped in an instant. "You irresponsible children, do you have any idea what you have done?" he demanded.

"Tied our immortal souls together? Performed a ceremony so old that no one is quite sure where it comes from. Joined us together on a level so deep that if one of us dies, the other will die shortly afterwards?" Harry replied calmly, with a small hint of steel in his voice.

A small movement later he was standing as well, his own act of a student dropped as he matched his professor glare for glare. "I do not appreciate you taking that tone with me," Harry snarled. "You created me; you manipulated me, made me play in your little games, all so that I could be the golden boy, no matter what the cost to me.

"You taught me that magic was either good or evil. You knew there was darkness inside of me, and you helped me lock it up. You drove me to the brink of insanity. I lost everything that I cared about, any chance for a normal life, and you told me that it was for the best.

"It might have been for the best for everyone else, but it was not for the best for me. After all, what's one boy when compared to the rest of the wizarding world?"

"Magic is neither good nor evil. It simply is. It's the humans behind magic that are good and evil. The darkness inside me wanted to help, but I

ignored. It tried to warn me about the Ministry, but I ignored it again. Sirius died because of it. It's a mistake I won't make again.

"Ginny is now my wife, on a level that you can not understand. No one who hasn't performed the eternal soul bond can. The universe herself married us. You know how we did the spell? There was no spell, just a verbal acceptance between us that shared something that no one else on the planet could ever understand. Our magic took it a step further. Perhaps if we had been encouraged to learn about our darkness before hand, we wouldn't have done it. Who knows? All that matters now is that we have a connection that can not be separated by anything, even death."

"There was no vision, was there?" Dumbledore whispered, suddenly realising that he had been manipulated.

"No, I knew that you would instantly send Ginny to the safest place, Privet Drive. I paid for my relatives to go on holiday the same day I sent you that letter. I gave Ginny a choice. I gave her the complete facts and allowed her to make the decision herself. It's called honesty, something you should try sometime." With that final dig, Harry took a deep breath and sat down, regaining control over himself.

Ginny took his place, she understood the frustrations that Harry had just unburdened himself with, and needed to do the same. Unconsciously she took the exact same pose he had, hands on the table, leaning forwards so she could look her headmaster in his eyes.

"After I was possessed by Tom, you told me to ignore the darkness: that it would fade over time. I spent three years fighting it listening to everyone telling me that I should be a good little witch follow the rules. No one would tell me anything, despite the fact that I have been possessed by pure evil, I've had my mind raped and nearly destroyed by the one that you were supposedly protecting us from.

"It was slowly driving me insane, as I tried to lock up a part of my brain, with no one to talk to, no one who could understand. When I arrived at Harry's, he confessed instantly that he had manipulated you into sending him to me. He laid the facts on the table, and told me he wanted heart, mind, body, soul, and me. He gave me the choice to do what I wanted.

"I spent the whole day thinking about it, and then accepted. I pledged everything to the one person I felt I could trust, could understand. When I did so, Harry pledged back and his magic flared out of control, and mine tried to help. In that instant we gave each other our souls, without hesitation or worry.

"Harry then helped me unlock the darkness. He pulled me back from the brink of insanity and held me so tightly I knew I had made the right decision.

"You know what the darkness is? The darkness that you had both of us try and suppress. It's power. Nothing else. It's a part of our minds, a part of us, something that now we have it back in place, we understand the damage it was doing before. You tried to lock up a part of us for eternity, unmindful of the pain and suffering it was causing us.

"You created us, now you have to live with what happened. We are not puppets; we are individuals that have one major priority in life. Each other. Everything else comes way below that."

Ginny exhaled slowly; she had no idea that her eyes had dimmed during her tirade. She walked back and sat down on Harry's lap again, curling up and resting her head on his chest. As always, a feeling of peace and love floated around her as Harry held her close and kissed her hair.

There was silence in the room as Dumbledore slumped back into his chair.

"Why don't we stop for today," Harry said quietly. His exhaustion suddenly returned with a vengeance. "Professor McGonagall, can you please set up the written tests for Ginny this afternoon? I'll provide the practical like I said. Professor Snape, if we can meet in your dungeon in a couple of hours, after I've had a nap, we'll go through that potion I talked about. Professor Dumbledore, I think we should continue this conversation in a day or two, when we've both had a chance to digest and calm down."

He picked Ginny off his lap, and stood. Together they walked out, neither noticing that Fawkes showed no sign of moving from Harry's shoulder.

Snape and McGonagall moved together, sitting in the place that Harry and Ginny had just vacated, so that they could talk to the headmaster. They were shocked to see a very old man in the place of the most powerful wizard in the world. One who seemed to have just realised he placed everything on red and green and by strange chance the roulette wheel came up black.

"At least he didn't destroy my office this time," Dumbledore half whispered.

"What are we going to do?" Snape asked quietly.

Dumbledore sighed slowly. "What Harry suggested. I didn't expect this."

"You are only human, Albus," McGonagall said quietly.

"That's what Harry said yesterday," the headmaster replied quietly.

"What are you going to do?" Snape asked.

"The only thing I can do, Severus. Tell Harry everything and hope that I can eventually regain his trust."

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Rumours spread through the school with their standard speed that afternoon. Harry and Ginny were not in the classes, or anywhere to be found. Professor's Snape, McGonagall and Dumbledore had not been seen either.

The reality was a little more prosaic. Ginny was with McGonagall in her office, taking exam after exam, against the Professor's advice. The girl decided to just get them done; Harry had taught her everything she needed to know, so there was no need to hang around.

Harry was with Professor Snape, in his private laboratory, going through the potion for Living Life. It was surprising for both of them that they could work together so well.

Professor Dumbledore was in his office, staring idly in to his fire, as he reviewed what he had done in the past. He could honestly claim to have had the best intentions, but had to reluctantly admit that he had treated it like a game, and that some of the decisions he had made had not been the best for the individual involved.

Harry put the results of Ginny's practical tests into a Pensieve, and they sent both to the Ministry of Magic immediately. They were careful to avoid mentioning Harry anywhere, merely telling the examining board that a student had missed the end of year exams due to illness and was taking them now.

They didn't get together again till eleven pm, and as it was so late; they spent the night in the Room of Requirement. They both laughed when they had entered, the room had taken their wishes perfectly and recreated Harry's room back at the Dursley's perfectly.

The next morning, they showered and went straight to Dumbledore's office, so that they could be escorted to breakfast. Both groups felt it would be easier if it looked like the two students had been with the teachers all night.

Every eye in the hall flew to them, as they entered together, hand in hand. The three professors followed them closely. None of the two groups had an expression that looked like they would be willing to offer any explanations.

Harry paused suddenly, and turned to hold a whispered conversation with the professors. After he received three nods of agreement, he pulled his wand out and pointed it to his throat and cast the Sonorous spell.

"As some of you know, last year we formed a club to help practice skills in Defence that were not available in our normal Defence lessons.

"With Professor Dumbledore's approval, we are going to expand the club this year, throwing membership open to any student from any house that would like to participate.

"Every single member last year received an Outstanding on their Defence OWLs, or NEWTs, which proved the educational aspect of the club.

"The purpose of the club is simple. To give the members a third option when Death Eaters attack. The ability to fight to protect what is yours, so that you don't have to either die or run away.

"The first meeting of the Defence Association will be on Friday, and will be an open house. On Saturday, sign up sheets will be available in your common rooms."

Harry cancelled the spell with an idle wave of his wand and walked with Ginny over to the breakfast table. He ignored the silence that followed his announcement. A silence that vanished as he sat down as everyone started to talk about it.

"The Defence Association is going to be an official club?" Hermione asked excitedly. "There hasn't been an official school club like this before."

Harry smiled slightly, "Yes, I spent yesterday talking things through with Professor Dumbledore, Snape, and McGonagall."

"I can't believe your inviting Slytherins to take part," Ron complained.

"The joining remains the same, Ron," Harry refrained from rolling his eyes. "Everyone has to swear an oath of allegiance. I've got a few ideas I want to talk through with Hermione to try and make the oath a little more powerful." No one noticed that he didn't say whom they would be swearing the oath to. Or that he had only ever referred to it as the Defence Association, not its more accepted colloquialism of Dumbledore's Army.

"Harry," Hermione said quietly, trying to avoid being overheard. "We really need to talk, too much has changed over the summer and we don't know what is going on."

Harry nodded slowly, "We do need to talk. I've been really busy since I got back to school. As soon as I get some free time, we'll talk."

Professor McGonagall returned and asking to speak with Ron in private interrupted any further conversation.

Harry watched them go with a slightly wistful smile. He knew what was happening, and while it was his decision, he regretted that he had to make it.

"What's going on?" Hermione asked as she watched Ginny give Harry a comforting smile.

"You're going to have a very happy boyfriend in around three minutes," Harry predicted. It was the first time that he had acknowledged that the two were a couple, yet no one realised they hadn't told him. He stood, with Ginny, and they walked out together.

A few minutes later, Ron came charging back into the Great Hall. It was mainly empty now, with Hermione being the only senior Gryffindor left at the table. "I'm the Quidditch captain," he told her, as he swept her up into a huge hug and span her around.

"Ron! That's wonderful," Hermione, said, unable not to smile.

"McGonagall just told me, she gave me the Gryffindor book of moves, and it's got nearly five hundred years of moves and plays in it."

"Where's Harry?" Ron asked.

"I think he wanted to give us a few minutes alone, he knew you were getting it."

"Let's go find him," Ron started dragging her out of the Hall.

"What about his ban? Does that still apply?"

Ron stopped. "I hadn't thought about that. To be honest, as soon as she asked if I wanted it, I kinda tuned out completely. She might have said something."

"Ron," Hermione chastised him gently. "You are going to need to work really hard if you are going to be Captain as well as studying for your NEWT's."

"But they're not till next year," Ron responded with a grin. "They'll be plenty of time later for that."

Ron spent the morning in his Divination class, Hermione in Ancient Runes, and Harry was in his first Arithmancy class.

At lunchtime, more rumours were sweeping the school. All of them focused on Harry. The third year Gryffindors and Ravenclaws had shared a double Potions class that morning. While that was nothing unusual, what was unusual was that Snape had not only been in a good mood, he had awarded points fairly to both houses, and even cracked a joke or two.

Everyone knew that Snape had been his normal self before his argument with Harry, and that they had been gone all day together, and now it seemed like the professor had experienced a massive personality transplant.

The rumours increased when Harry and Ginny didn't turn up for any of their meals. Wild theories abounded, with the favourite being that Harry was blackmailing Snape with something. No one was quite sure what, but it was the only thing that made sense.

The Slytherins were shocked as well. The last thing they had expected was their head of house to be able to be normal, and it worried a lot of them. They could see that things were changing; they just had no idea how.

Harry and Ginny spent all their spare time in the Room of Requirement, planning the first open lesson. They both wanted to make a show of it, with all the professors being invited, so were carefully examining everything they could do.

The next morning, Ginny woke up incredibly nervous. Harry had already returned to his own bed. She was due to receive her OWL results today.

She climbed out of bed and got dressed in silence, then walked down to meet Harry.

As always, he seemed to know what was going on inside her mind, and pulled her into a deep hug.

They stood together, in the middle of the Common Room, hugging for five minutes. Harry's cheek was on the smaller girl's head, as he held her tightly, letting her know that he loved her, and was convinced that she had aced the tests.

"Thanks," Ginny whispered after a while. "I needed that."

Harry smiled, and the two of them turned and walked down to breakfast. They didn't deliberately ignore the rest of their house, who had been watching them with undisguised curiosity, it's just that they still weren't used to people.

Ginny could hardly eat breakfast, and was constantly looking around. Her behaviour puzzled Hermione immensely.

There was the usual flurry of Owl's, and Ginny looked disappointed when she didn't receive anything.

A few minutes later, a solitary owl flew into the hall.

"That's a ministry owl," Colin noted loudly, drawing people's attention to it.

Ginny went completely white, while Harry looked amused.

The owl landed in front of the girl, and offered its leg with a pompous air.

With trembling hands, Ginny untied the letter, and held it in her hand. The whole school was watching her now, sensing something was happening.

"I can't look," she whispered, looking pleadingly at her husband.

Harry smiled and took the envelope from her. With out any hesitation, he ripped it open and glanced down the results.

Ginny held her breath, she wasn't so scared about the results themselves, she just didn't want to let Harry down, not after all the work he had put in to make sure she knew her subjects.

Professor Dumbledore spotted the twinkle in Harry's eye first, and he was relieved to see it. Just the fact that the boy cared about something was a huge relief for him.

"Congratulations," Harry said simply, a look of immense pride on his face.

Ginny blinked, took a deep breath of relief, and then squealed with delight.

Harry vaulted the table in a single movement, picked up his love, and span her around in a way vaguely reminiscent of Ron and Hermione the day before, then kissed her hard.

Ginny wrapped her legs around Harry's waist and kissed him back as hard as she could, thanking him for everything.

The piece of paper fell to the floor, where Hermione picked it up.

Ron was glaring at the two of them.

The attention in the room switched from the two kissing teenagers to Hermione, everyone willing her to look at it and tell them what was going on.

Eventually, curiosity got the better of her, and she looked at the letter.

"Ordinary Wizarding Levels Results for Weasley, G," was the title. What followed was a list of Ginny's owl results, which looked very familiar to Hermione, because they were identical to the results she had received a few weeks earlier.

"Well, Ms Granger," The silky tones of Professor Snape said loudly. "Do you think you could inform us as to why we have to watch Ms Weasley searching for Mr Potter's tonsils in public?" There was no bite in his voice – he almost sounded amused.

Hermione gulped, before whispering in a stunned voice. "They are Ginny's OWL results, Sir."

"Yes," Snape drawled. "I had gathered that, as Ms Weasley took the exams two days ago. Perhaps, if it's not too much trouble for someone with your great intellect, you could tell us exactly what they are celebrating." For the second time that day his sarcasm was more humorous than cutting and caused a few students to start giggling.

"Fifteen Outstanding, Sir. She got perfect marks on everything."

Ron froze. He ran that last statement over in his brain again and again. It didn't seem to make sense. His little sister had received the same marks as Hermione, only a year early. It just didn't make sense.

The other students were coming to the same conclusion, as an awed hush swept through the room.

Harry eventually stopped kissing Ginny; basic biology required some form of breathing after a while.

"I knew you could do it," he whispered, stroking her cheek with the back of his hand, a strangely intimate gesture.

"Only because you taught me everything," Ginny whispered back, love bright in her eyes.

Dumbledore rose to his feet and smiled at the two of them. Whatever the differences they were suffering through at the moment, the two teenagers were both still students of his, and the girl had done something astounding.

"Congratulations Miss Weasley," he said formally. "You are the first student in over two hundred years to pass their OWLs a year early, and one of only fifteen students in the history of Hogwarts to get perfect marks."

Ginny blushed, she was being held tightly by Harry, who was beaming with more emotion than anyone could remember from him.

"Perhaps if you were to go to my office, we could inform your parents."

Ginny nodded, and almost pulled Harry out of the Great Hall in her excitement.

Dumbledore stayed on his feet, and addressed the whole school. "Ms Weasley spent some time with Mr Potter over the summer, and felt that she had learned enough to pass her OWLs. Professor McGonagall organised her written tests, while Mr Potter supplied evidence of her practical tests. As you can see, she has passed, and will be moving up a year, joining the sixth years. Ms Weasley puts her ability down to Mr Potter's teaching skills, skills which I hope he will be bringing to the D.A. class this Friday." He sat down again, and hid a smirk.

Professor Flitwick was looking stunned, it was badly enough that Hermione was in Gryffindor, and had received the highest marks, but for another student to get them as well, and not be in his house, just didn't seem fair. His mood wasn't helped by the smirk on Professor McGonagall's face.

The students themselves were buzzing, apart from Ron and Hermione. For different reasons they were both stunned. Hermione was stunned because someone else had matched her, and done it a year younger than her. Ron was stunned because his little sister had just wrapped her legs around her boyfriend and given him the sort of kiss he'd never even seen before, let alone experienced.

Ron knew that Harry and Ginny were close, you never saw one without the other out of school, and now he found out that his best friend had taught his sister a whole bloody years classes in less than a month, and his sister had gotten higher marks than Percy. It wasn't fair!

And neither of them had managed to even bloody talk to him yet.

Professor Dumbledore joined them in his office, and had to cough several times to draw their attention from a rather deep snog session to him.

He used floo powder to call Arthur from his office, then Molly from the Burrow to his office. The two arrived quickly, identical looks of worry on their faces.

"What's the problem, Albus?" Arthur asked, smiling at the two kids.

"I think that you both should sit down," he advised gently.

With a supporting look to each other, they sat down, and then watched as Fawkes flew across to Harry's shoulder. The bird hadn't wanted to interrupt their kissing session earlier, but felt free to move now.

Professor Dumbledore smiled slightly, and looked at the two adults. "I had several teachers come to my office on the first day of school, complaining about a student. It seems that the student knew their entire course for the year, and claimed another student had taught the courses over the summer.

"Of course, I agreed to investigate immediately, so invited the two participants to my office. It soon became clear that the students had indeed spent the summer studying, and made a request that the younger student be allowed to take the OWL's test immediately.

"I'm sorry," Arthur said with a slight frown. "What has this got to do with us?"

The headmaster smiled and leaned forwards, handing over the same piece of paper from earlier.

Arthur took it, and moved it so they could both read it together. They read it. They read it again; to make sure it hadn't changed. They read it a third time, not sure that they could believe their eyes.

"Is this a joke?" Arthur asked softly.

"Not at all," Dumbledore responded. "Believe me when I say that the results are directly from the Ministry of Magic's examination board."

Molly jumped to her feet and literally pulled Ginny out of Harry's lap and engulfed her in a huge hug, she was almost sobbing with happiness.

She passed her daughter to her husband, and grabbed Harry, giving him the same huge hug.

For a few minutes, Harry and Ginny felt normal.

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"We're going to have to talk to Ron and Hermione soon," Ginny said, as they walked arm in arm to the Gryffindor Common Room.

"Yeah, but what are we going to tell them?"

"Everything?" Ginny asked, "I think that we could tell exactly what happened, then let them decide if they want to be friends with us or not."

"You do realise that Ron will try and hit me?"

"Don't be silly," she laughed, "he wouldn't do that."

Harry smirked, "I bet you ten galleons."

"Done," Ginny stopped and held out her hand.

Harry shook it, then used it to pull her against him, and kissed her hard. He smiled against her lips, "have I ever told you that I love how you taste?"

"Nope," she mumbled with her lips still against his.

"Your strawberry lip gloss is a nice start, but once you get past that, I can't really describe it, but you taste better than butterbeer."

She laughed softly. "Very poetic," she mocked with a little smile.

"Wench," Harry grinned, as he kissed her once more.

Ginny smiled sweetly, and punched him in the arm. "Git."

They continued to walk up the stairs, pausing only to give the password to the Fat Lady. Inside the Common Room, an awed hush fell across the room, as everyone turned to look at them.

Harry sighed. "What?" he asked with his tone just light enough to not be threatening.