

Hermione's Realization; Ginny's Instinct

Part 1

Part 1

August 1, 1997

“You really love him, don't you?”

Hermione Granger was doing what came naturally to her – thinking. She, Harry, and Ron had been pursuing their task of finding and destroying Voldemort's Horcruxes for more than a month but today they had taken the day off for that ‘one last golden day of peace’ as Harry had termed it. They were here at the Burrow to attend Bill and Fleur's wedding. Harry had just turned seventeen the day before, so from this point forward things would get more serious since he could now legally practice magic; up to now it had mostly been research.

The makeover that the Burrow had been given for the wedding was breathtaking. There were flowers absolutely everywhere. The lawn had been perfectly manicured and the yard was overflowing with tables and chairs, each decorated in color-coordinated coverings. Each table also included an ice sculpture that had been enchanted not to melt. Professor Flitwick had recreated the fairy lights that he used to decorate the Great Hall at Christmas time, and everything was sparkling with the tiny twinkling creatures.

What wasn't visible was also impressive. Bill and his fellow curse breakers at Gringotts had joined together to envelope the Burrow with wards and charms in order to make the wedding as safe as possible. By the time they were finished it was one of the best-protected structures in Britain. Probably only Hogwarts, the Ministry of Magic, and Gringotts itself were more secure.

One of the interesting side effects of weddings is that they tend to make one re-evaluate and reflect on one's own romantic relationships. And so here she was, sitting in a love seat (the irony was not lost on her) off on the outskirts of the celebration area, away from the commotion, by herself, doing just that. It was not a pleasant undertaking.

The tall redheaded subject of her musings was standing across the way, engaged in a lively conversation with Harry and two of his brothers, Fred and George. As he often did, Harry had looked up a while ago with concern on his face, his eyes searching the crowd until he spotted her sitting over here all alone.

She had responded to the questioning look on his face with a forced smile and a wave to show that she was all right, and that he didn't need to break off his chat with his buddies to come over to her. He had hesitated, evidently not believing her, until she waved again, flipping her hand at him as if to shoo him back to his discussion, which was no doubt on one of two subjects, quidditch or girls.

She noticed as she watched them that Harry was constantly scanning the area, alert for any possible threats, and he was undoubtedly aware of exactly how many Aurors were here and where they were. Probably any ministry officials and reporters as well, she thought to herself.

The question that had interrupted her introspection had come from the youngest member of the Weasley family, who had just joined her. Ginny was looking positively stunning this afternoon in her bridesmaid dress, a long flowing strapless gown with a tight fitting bodice that emphasized her slim figure, and nicely displayed the creamy white skin of her shoulders and upper torso. Quite a few of the younger unattached wizards had been casting appreciative looks at both her and Gabrielle, the other bridesmaid. Hermione looked up and acknowledged her presence and her question, then sat and pondered her answer as the petite redhead joined her on the love seat.

The painful truth was that this thing with Ron, whatever it was, was just not working out. Hermione hated to fail at anything, hated to admit that she might have made a mistake, but after nearly a year of pursuing Ron what exactly did she have to show for her efforts?

Sure, there were moments, when they were alone together, when he seemed to care for her, seemed almost to be attracted to her. They hadn't actually kissed yet, but there were some awkward hugs, some touching, occasionally he put his arm around her. She would have put it down to his shyness around girls and his inexperience, except that he didn't act that way around other girls. Just her. The fling with Lavender had proven that he had no problem making his feelings quite clear to a female interest when he wanted to.

By contrast, in public, especially when there were pretty girls around, he virtually ignored Hermione. From Fleur last summer and again this summer, to Lavender last school year, to Madame Rosmerta during their Hogsmeade visits, he was always falling all over himself to get their attention, or to try to impress them. Something he had rarely done for her. No, at times like that he forgot all about her and was only interested in them.

Like right now. Ever since the Delacours had arrived his eyes were practically bulging out of his head ogling them all. Especially Gabrielle. Honestly, the girl was only thirteen for heaven's sake. A very mature looking thirteen, but still ...

And there was Ron, over with his brothers, eagerly discussing her assets and those of the other pretty girls at the wedding. Unlike Harry, he hadn't once looked up to see where Hermione was, what she was doing, whether she was all right.

As she watched them, it was obvious that Harry wasn't really that interested in the discussion of the attributes of the various Delacours. Of course, Harry already had a pretty girlfriend. A girlfriend who had just sat down next to her and asked her a question. She noticed that he was also keeping his eye on Ginny as he scanned the crowd, just as much as he was herself, and was even now giving them a curious look as they sat here together. This time it was Ginny who smiled back and waved, letting him know they were fine by themselves.

Hermione turned her mind back to Ginny's question. The times when Ron paid her the most attention were when another guy showed any interest in her. Then the jealousy broke out big time. It would be almost comical, really, if it weren't so pathetic. Even with Harry. If she pointed out

something nice about him, as when she had told him last year he was fanciable, or when he complimented her, like he did to Slughorn, Ron sulked and pouted. Whenever the two of them were involved in something together which excluded him, like the Slug Club, Ron grew sullen.

It had been that jealousy of other guys that had convinced Hermione that Ron had feelings for her. If only he would show them at other times. Oh, he was interested in her all right. Whenever he wanted something from her, or needed her help on homework; whenever she could do something for him he was happy to have her around. But she wanted more than that.

And really, if she were successful at winning him over, what would a relationship with him be like? They had almost nothing in common. Except Harry. When she was honest with herself Hermione had to admit that without Harry she and Ron wouldn't even be friends. He couldn't stand her when he first met her. There were times even now when he barely tolerated her. The things that were important to her like reading and studying, and house elf rights, he despised. And he wasn't shy about letting her know that, either.

She also had to acknowledge that she wasn't all that fond of the things he enjoyed, like quidditch or chess. She never played chess with him, she thought guiltily. Sure she loyally went to all the Gryffindor quidditch games, but that was mostly to root for Harry, and later also for Ron when he made the team. She supposed that if they weren't playing she might have attended the games in a show of house unity, but she couldn't guarantee it.

So, when it came to their relationship, Ron was immature, jealous, inconsiderate, and unable to commit. What a wonderful combination in a boyfriend, she thought sarcastically. For a while after he had nearly died from Slughorn's poisoned mead, Hermione had thought the shock of it would mature him. That he would grow up and make more of an effort to get along with her, and stop drooling over every pretty girl that caught his eye. But it hadn't happened.

The worst part, of course, was their arguments. He would do or say something that annoyed her, and she would snap at him. Or she would do or say something that irritated him, and he would insult her. Then they would be off again. The only things that stopped them were the times when she wasn't speaking to him. Or if Harry stepped in.

Hermione remembered with shame the time during fifth year when he had finally snapped and yelled at them to stop the bickering, that it was driving him crazy. From then on she had made an effort to keep it under control when they were around Harry, and she thought Ron had, too, at least a little, but when Harry wasn't around the gloves were off. And, she thought sadly, if you liked someone, let alone loved them, did you deliberately do things to try to hurt them, like both she and Ron had done to each other last year?

The real eye-opener had been her mother. Last month when she had been at home visiting for a few days she had tried to explain her relationship with Ron. Her mum's response had really caught Hermione by surprise. "Looks like you picked the wrong guy friend to fall for." Hermione had to admit that Harry would have made a much better boyfriend. Just look at how well he treated Ginny. Well, before he tried to push her away and break up with her at least.

But then, her mother had bought her a book on relationships and sent it to her last week. Specifically, it was a book on abusive relationships. Hermione refused to believe that Ron would ever physically abuse her but the book also went into detail on mental and emotional abuse. It talked about how abusive relationships started, and why and how girls got into them.

Hermione was horrified as she recognized the symptoms and how well they described her and her situation. Girls who lacked self-confidence. Girls who had few close friends. Girls who were desperate for approval. It all came down to low self-esteem, both on the part of the girl *and* on the part of the guy. And, Hermione thought glumly, she and Ron both had self-esteem issues. To top it off, the descriptions of the early stages of mental and emotional abuse were uncomfortably close to the mark.

No, she finally had to acknowledge. A relationship with Ron, even if she would finally be able to force him into one, was probably not a good idea. She looked up at Ginny who was still waiting patiently for an answer.

"I thought I could, but it's just not working out," she admitted at last. We're just too different. He doesn't like the things I like and I don't particularly enjoy the things he likes. Not to mention his complete lack of understanding of all things muggle. Plus, I don't think he's really interested in me. If he were he wouldn't forget about me every time a pretty girl walked by." She sighed and her shoulders slumped as she stared down into her lap, where she was twisting her hands together. Even though she had already come to this conclusion, saying it out loud somehow made it more official.

"I wasn't talking about Ron."

Hermione's head snapped up and she stared at Ginny in surprise. *Not Ron? Who then?* Hermione's eyes followed Ginny's gaze back over towards the boys. *Surely not Fred or George. Harry?* She turned back to Ginny in shock and repeated his name to herself, mouthing it at the same time. *Harry?* Ginny nodded.

How could Ginny think she was in love with Harry? Of course she cared for him deeply. Her affection for him had begun in first year and grown quickly, then kept growing steadily over the years they had known each other. Of course she would do anything for him. It was unbelievable how many things she had done that she had never dreamed that she would be either willing or able to do, only because he needed her to do them. Of course she was never happier than when she was around him. He was her best friend after all. Well, she thought guiltily, Ron was her best friend too. But it was true that she was happier when Harry was with them than when he was not. And, she realized, she was also happier when it was just her and Harry together.

Of course, Harry was a nice guy. He was also considerate of her feelings. More so of her feelings than just about anyone else's, come to think of it. He looked out for her, always checked to see how she was doing. Like right now at this wedding, actually. Of course, Harry was 'fanciable'. Not just because of his fame either. He was certainly good looking, and his body had filled out nicely so that he was no longer the scrawny little boy she had first met. Lots of girls mooned over what a catch he would be.

Of course he was the most important person in her life right now. Of course she was willing to put aside the thing that had practically defined her existence for most of her life, her studies, in order to help him in his quest. She had to. It was a matter of life and death. Yes, it was a matter of life and death for everyone else in the wizarding world too, and except for Ron, no one else was this dedicated to him. Actually, not even Ron was as dedicated to him as she was.

Of course she loved him – as a friend, right? As a brother even. As someone who would always be there for her whenever she needed him. And for whom she would in turn be there whenever he needed her. As someone who she would trust with anything, including her life. Someone who was practically her entire reason for being.

Of course she ... she wanted more than anything to spend the rest of her life with him. Hermione's eyes widened as this realization hit her like a bludger to the face.

But she couldn't be in love with Harry. He was in love with Ginny. And Ginny was in love with him. The same Ginny who was sitting next to her right now and had just asked her if she was in love with Harry. Hermione put her head in her hands and moaned. This couldn't be happening.

"You need what I have and I need what you have."

Hermione looked back up at Ginny, puzzled. Somewhere deep inside her brain she knew what Ginny meant, but she needed to hear her say it.

"We each have half a relationship with Harry. I have the physical part, but you have the emotional part. It may have looked like he and I made the perfect couple, and would fall in love and live happily ever after, but there's something very important missing from our relationship. We don't talk. Not about the things that are most important to him. He doesn't confide in me, doesn't share his concerns, his troubles, or his hopes and dreams. It's all shallow; he won't let me see the things that he hides deeper inside of him. He doesn't trust me." Ginny's eyes locked with Hermione's, and Hermione saw what was coming next.

"He does all of those things with you. It's always been you. You're the one he goes to with the important things; you're the one he turns to when he needs someone to help him sort things out. You're the one he looks up to, admires more than anyone he knows. You're the one he'll trust with anything. Except his heart. And the only reason you don't have that is that he didn't want to risk everything else he had with you if it didn't work out." Hermione opened her mouth to object that Harry had never thought about her that way, but Ginny held up her hand to silence her so that she could continue.

"I've been watching him, both of you really, for years. Studying you. I'm sure he didn't even realize he was doing it. He doesn't understand what love really is. How could he, with the way he was raised? He doesn't realize that the feelings he has for you are part of what real love is. But it's only a part. And what I have is only a part." Ginny looked back at Harry again, where he stood talking with Ron and Fred and George. Standing there, saying something occasionally, but not really part of the conversation, his mind filled with other concerns – large among them the two girls sitting over here on the loveseat discussing him. In a far off voice she continued.

"But now he wants to put that part on hold. Or maybe end it entirely. We never even talked about that. He's being noble of course. He's trying to keep me safe. But at what cost? Even if we do get back together after it's all over, I'm afraid it won't last. I'll have missed too big of a part of his life. He'll be closer to you than ever, having shared it all with you. And he'll be torn, even if he doesn't realize it. Because he doesn't understand all there is to love, not yet anyway. And by the time he does it may be too late for us." Ginny turned back to Hermione again.

"I don't want to take that chance. And I need to do something about it now." She took a deep breath. "I want the kind of relationship with him that you have. The question is, whether you want the kind of relationship with him that I have."

Hermione looked back at Harry once more, looking at him in a way that she had never permitted herself to look at him before. She imagined him looking into her eyes the way he looked into Ginny's. She imagined him drawing her into his arms, moving his head slowly down to hers as she tilted hers back and parted her lips, ready to receive him. She imagined weaving her fingers into his hair as she lost herself in him, her lips hungrily attacking his. She imagined her body molding itself into his as his hands caressed her back, pulling her ever closer.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Then let's do it. The only other question is if we'll both be able to marry him or if one of us will have to settle for concubine status." Hermione stared at Ginny as her jaw dropped. "But I'm sure you'll be able to figure that out," Ginny concluded with a smirk. She so enjoyed startling Hermione with something the studious witch didn't know about. But she suspected that reading about wizarding marriage laws had never been high on Hermione's to-do list. She was willing to wager that it would be now.

"What ...? How ...?" Hermione's mouth opened and closed several times as her mind processed this paradigm shift. Apparently this was one more aspect of wizarding society that she wasn't aware of yet. She realized what was behind Ginny's smirk, and she knew exactly what the redhead was thinking. And furthermore, Ginny was absolutely right about the new item on her research agenda. Finally she gave the younger witch a mock glare and punched her playfully in the arm, then gathered herself for a more coherent question.

"How are we going to make this work?" she asked in a low voice. She was gradually starting to convince herself that this could actually be for real – that the possibility that Ginny was suggesting might even be attainable.

"Well, I see two major obstacles, and they're both standing right over there. One of them is even now wondering what we're plotting over here and the other is totally oblivious." Hermione raised her hand to her mouth to stifle a giggle. The quick-witted Ginny had been spot on with her description of the two boys. "Ron will be easier, although he'll make the most noise," Ginny continued. "But between the two of us we can handle him. You back me up when he goes off on me about not being old enough or mature enough to join you guys, and I back you up when he goes into a jealous rant about you and Harry."

Hermione nodded and looked around furtively, feeling like two conspirators hiding their scheming. Ginny had evidently been thinking about this for

a while, and leaned forward to resume outlining her plan. "Harry will be trickier. We'll both be fighting against his noble instincts. You'll have to help me convince Harry that he needs me like he needs you and I'll help you make him realize that he wants you like he wants me."

Hermione had been keeping an eye on Harry the whole time. His curiosity now finally got the better of him and he broke away from Ron and the twins and headed their way. She gave Ginny's arm a squeeze to alert her and the redhead sat up straight and gave her a wink.

"Deal?"

Hermione swallowed hard, then nodded. "Deal."

"So, what are you two so busily plotting over here by yourselves?" Harry asked as he approached them.

"Oh, just trying to come up with something that can help you get what you want," Ginny responded quickly. A slight frown creased Harry's face as he considered that statement, then he turned to Hermione with a question in his eyes. Surely she hadn't been telling Ginny about their mission?

"Happiness, Harry," Hermione added as her mind raced to come up with an appropriate explanation. "We think you deserve to be happy and are talking about ways to accomplish that." Harry looked back and forth between the two of them, trying to work out exactly what that would entail.

"You can start out by dancing with the two of us this afternoon," Ginny announced, as she and Hermione rose to their feet. Harry couldn't help glancing over at Ron, his thoughts obvious to the two girls. Before Hermione could say anything Ginny spoke up again. "Ron looks like he's otherwise occupied. You know very well who's been on his mind all day." She shot a glare over at her brother before turning back and cocking her head at Harry with a grin and a challenge. "So it seems to me that it's up to you to entertain your other best friend. You owe it to her to make sure she has a good time, don't you think?"

Harry looked back at Hermione who was smiling at him shyly. Before he had a chance to think about it any more she declared, "You have two girls on your hands today and you're just going to have to deal with it."

Harry's eyes darted back and forth between the two of them as he took in a pair of brightly smiling faces, then widened his field of vision to take in the rest of them. Ginny was a vision with her bright red hair flowing across her shoulders and down her back, framing all that bare skin that ended where the strapless gown teased him with just the slightest glimpse of her small breasts, and then hugged her slender curves down to her hips. Hermione had used the Sleakeasy potion on her hair to make it fall in soft waves to her bare shoulders. She was wearing a halter style gown that drew attention to her nicely tanned back and arms as well as to some attractive cleavage. Harry was startled to realize that Hermione had a very nice figure. *How is it that I never noticed how sexy she looks before?* he wondered to himself. *And is she flirting with me?* Well, as long as Ginny didn't seem to mind, he could play that game too.

"Hmm, I think I can manage to deal with the task of spending the day in the company of the two most beautiful ladies present," he grinned. Hermione and Ginny shared a grin of their own, then surprised him yet again by coming up to him and giving him a pair of kisses, one on each cheek. As he fought to control the astonished expression on his face they smoothly moved to either side of him, pressing up against him and each putting an arm around his back, prompting him to put his own arm around each of their backs. Finally he gave each of them that lopsided smile that made their stomachs flutter and proclaimed,

"OK, let's do it."

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Hermione's Realization; Ginny's Instinct

Part 2

Part 2

15 Years Later

Hermione sat out in the back yard of the Potter estate, looking out over the lawn and gardens. It was another hot summer day and she was dressed in a light sleeveless blouse and shorts. Right now the blouse was unbuttoned, exposing an impressively large, full pair of breasts. Ordinarily Harry would be sitting beside her appreciating the display, but he was otherwise occupied at the moment.

Currently attached to one of her breasts was the head of the infant she was cradling in her arms. Her son was enthusiastically enjoying his meal, if the slurping noises he was making were any indication. Hermione was not at all shy about her exposure since, between her and Ginny, one or the other of them was nearly always nursing a baby, making the sight rather commonplace in the Potter household. Hermione had long ago determined that seeing babies nurse was healthy for children, both boys and girls, and helped counteract the idea that breasts only had a sexual function. Ginny liked to joke that the times that she was nursing were the only times that her breasts were as big as Hermione's, and she wanted to make sure everyone noticed.

Harry himself loved to watch his wives nurse his children, and every chance he got he would sit with either of them while they did it, with one arm around her and the other hand stroking the baby, gazing with an overwhelming feeling of love and satisfaction at the bonding between mother and child, and participating in it as best as he could. Right now, though, he was out in the back yard playing with his other children, and the giggles and shouts of the latter indicated that once again he was being swarmed under in the kids' favorite game, affectionately referred to as 'beat up dad'.

Hermione smoothly moved her baby to her shoulder as Ginny sat down next to her on the love seat and they watched the spectacle before them. The love seat had been a wedding present from the Weasleys, although they had no idea why Ginny had asked for the old item of furniture that had sat out in the Weasley back yard for years. Just as no one really knew why they celebrated Harry's birthday on this date every year, which was actually Bill and Fleur's anniversary, rather than on July 31. The explanation that they gave everyone was that they wanted this to be a private time, with just their family, after the big party that always took place on the day before. Only Hermione and Ginny knew that it was on this day that they celebrated the pact between the two of them that had brought this family about.

A burp indicated that her son was ready for round two, and she and Ginny smiled to each other as she transferred him to her other breast. She and the younger witch were as close as any two sisters could possibly be, and shared everything with each other, not just their husband. On that long ago day they had both dedicated themselves to making Harry as happy as possible.

Of course, what made Harry happy generally also made them happy, so it wasn't exactly an onerous burden. One of their goals was to give him the large family he had always dreamed of, and they were now more than halfway towards fulfilling Trelawny's prediction that Harry would have twelve children. They had been alternating, each giving birth every three or four years, which gave them plenty of time to recover in between. Ginny's last delivery had been twins, however, and the early indications were that they had another Fred and George on their hands, so it might be a little longer before *her* next one.

Hermione's oldest child, Lily Jane, was at Hogwarts now and Ginny's oldest, Jimmy (James Ronald), would be starting this fall. But all of the children were equally loved by all three of their parents, and other than their hair color there was little indication of which one was birthed by which mother. Harry and Ginny made sure that all of them were excellent fliers, although some were better at quidditch than others, and Hermione made sure that all of them enjoyed reading and learning, although some were more brilliant at their schoolwork than others. It was a point of pride among all three parents that the children who were the best fliers and the children who were brilliant students were not necessarily the offspring of Ginny and Hermione, respectively.

As she did every year on this day, Hermione thought back on the decision they had made, and how it had unfolded, bringing them to this point.

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The 'break-up' with Ron had been accomplished first. When the wedding festivities were drawing to a close, she and Ginny had dragged him out to a secluded spot by the paddock. Both girls had noticed the glares they were getting from him as they kept Harry fully occupied the entire afternoon, taking turns dancing with him, talking with him, laughing with him, hugging him.

Once in private Hermione laid it on the line and told Ron that while it sometimes seemed like there was some sort of spark between the two of them, it would never work. She cited their constant bickering and their lack of common interests, and the fact that he often seemed more interested in other girls than in her. Before he could object Ginny jumped in and pointed out that his obvious jealousy of Krum, and any other guy who paid attention to Hermione (specifically not mentioning Harry) was exactly the same way he treated her and any boy she ever took an interest in.

Hermione had thought that it was a brilliant move by Ginny, in that it got Ron thinking of Hermione more along the lines of a sister. Ginny continued that furthermore she and Hermione were both tired of this behavior and he should keep his big nose out of both of their love lives. The double team approach worked like a charm and Ron was left standing there with his mouth open wondering what had hit him.

Hermione's campaign to change the way Harry thought about her began more subtly, with more physical contact. She hugged him more often, and frequently took his hand to lead him somewhere then 'forgot' to let go and they ended up holding hands for several minutes. If Harry noticed and worked up the nerve to point it out she merely smiled and let it drop, like it was no big deal. If he became embarrassed or nervous about the physical contact while Ginny was around, the smaller girl also just smiled and acted like it was perfectly normal.

It took a while before Harry noticed that Ginny and Hermione would not permit any *other* young witch to engage in that sort of contact with him.

When Ron noticed this increased physical contact between his two best friends and his eyes began to narrow, Ginny was right there to smack him down.

With regard to working Ginny more closely into Harry's confidence, Hermione had pulled him aside for a serious talk the evening of the wedding, and again several times over the course of the next month. She first convinced him to confide more in Ginny about what they were doing, noting that trust and openness were essential in a relationship. Then the two of them mentioned that Ginny could be a big help in the research for the Horcruxes, and that her experience with the diary might be invaluable in figuring out how to handle them once they found some. Finally, they persuaded him that she should join in their training, as it would be good for her to be able to fight and defend herself, regardless of whether she was involved in the Horcrux hunt and the battle. Harry eventually agreed to all of this, but drew the line at Ginny accompanying them on their searches.

The first breakthrough had come when they found the locket at Grimauld Place, and it was a team effort. Ron commented on the name of Regulus Black when he was looking at the tapestry one day, Hermione made the connection with the locket that they had found two years previously, and Ginny figured out where Kreacher might have hidden it and crawled into the hiding place in the cupboard under the boiler to retrieve it.

Ginny's big opportunity accompanied an apparent disaster when Ron was seriously injured on the mission to retrieve Hufflepuff's cup. Although he survived, and they got him back to Madame Pomfrey on time, he required an extended stay in the hospital wing, and then a long recovery period before he was able to resume training. At this point Ginny moved smoothly into his place, and when it was time to go after Ravenclaw's dagger, she had become an integral part of the team, and Harry relented and allowed her to accompany them.

That mission took them to Albania, which required them to be gone for several days. Previously, whenever the trio had taken an overnight trip, Hermione had conjured up three sleeping bags. This time, she conjured one large one, and before he knew what was happening Harry found himself lying between two witches, each snuggling up to him. After a bit they worked out that it was best if all three slept on their sides and Harry put his arm around Ginny while Hermione curled up behind him. By morning they found their positions reversed, but again the two girls made it seem like it was no big deal.

The major breakthroughs in both endeavors had occurred when Hermione found a spell to destroy the Horcruxes. Harry and Ginny were sitting in the Heads suite common room (Harry and Hermione had been named Head Boy and Head Girl, of course) when Hermione came bursting through the portrait hole overflowing with excitement. Recreating the scene that had brought Harry and Ginny together, she raced across the room and flung herself into Harry's arms, kissing him passionately. Fortunately, he kissed her back.

When he finally regained his senses and panicked about having just kissed Hermione in front of Ginny, the redhead immediately took him from Hermione and gave him a passionate kiss of her own, while Hermione hugged both of them. Once Harry was thoroughly dazed and bewildered, the two girls led him to the sofa and sat him down between them, and explained the situation.

To their delight, a grin appeared and steadily grew on Harry's face as he began to understand what was going on, and a pair of ecstatic squeals burst out when he acknowledged their actions by putting an arm around each girl and hugging them to himself. He had confessed his relief at the way the whole thing turned out, and admitted that he had been confused at the feelings that he had been developing for Hermione and the conflict he felt with his similar feelings for Ginny.

The girls apologized for the devious way in which they had gone about getting him to realize how he felt about them both, but he happily forgave them, agreeing that their method had probably been the only way it would have worked. Their penance, he declared, would be that since they had caught him they now had to keep him – no returns allowed. The rib-crushing hugs he received in response enthusiastically communicated their intentions in *that* regard. That day ended with them sitting there and talking long into the night.

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A hand on her arm brought Hermione's thoughts back to the present. She turned to see Ginny smiling at her, and when the younger witch had her attention she nodded at the sleeping baby in her arms. Hermione smiled back and began to carefully detach his mouth from her breast, now emptied and back to a more normal size, so as not to wake him. Then she laid him in the portable crib that was sitting out in the yard next to the loveseat, and cast some protective charms and a ward that would alert her when he awoke.

"You were really lost in thought there for a while," Ginny commented, still smiling. She knew exactly where Hermione's mind had been, since she always did the same thing on this day. "Reminiscing?"

"Yes, you're right. You probably could even guess the exact sequence, since you know me so well," Hermione sighed. "Even today I sometimes still have trouble believing it all happened the way it did."

"I know what you mean," Ginny agreed. "Could we ever have guessed that it would turn out so perfect when we made that pact fifteen years ago?" She hesitated briefly. "Well, nearly perfect," she amended wistfully, remembering the family members and friends she had lost. Hermione pulled her into a one-armed hug, which she returned.

"I still can't believe we got away with sleeping together in your rooms," Ginny recalled, bringing another smile to Hermione's face.

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The night of the 'revelation' had ended with Hermione transfiguring the sofa so that they could all lie down, while Harry summoned some blankets from the two bedrooms and they all curled up together as they had on the Horcrux mission to Albania. After that, Ginny spent even more time in the Heads suite and the threesome began sleeping together every night.

As they became more comfortable with each other and with their relationship, and as the weather grew warmer, their sleepwear gradually lessened. Harry first switched from pajama pants to shorts, and eventually discarded his tee shirt. Ginny started out with a long nightgown, then moved to a nightshirt, then a long tee shirt, and finally ended up with only a short tee shirt and a pair of knickers. Hermione initially wore long flannel

pajamas, then pajamas with shorts, then a short pajama set with a camisole top, and finally just the camisole top and a pair of knickers.

In this situation, of course, it was not unusual for one of the girls to wake up in the morning with something hard pressing against their lower backs. They always reassured Harry that it was perfectly natural and that they weren't offended in the slightest. By the end of the year the girls felt that the relationship had progressed far enough that it was time to take the situation in hand and move things to the next level.

One morning in May Ginny woke to discover that Harry was not only poking Hermione in her backside, but his hand was under her top cupping her breast. Noticing that Hermione was also awake and enjoying the experience, Ginny quietly sat up and removed her tee shirt, then snuggled up behind Harry and reached her hand around him and into his shorts to take hold of him. Hermione, realizing what she was doing, held Harry's hand to her breast so he wouldn't let go, and Harry awoke to the best morning he had ever had in his life, even if it was a bit messy.

Once he had recovered, and the girls had cleaned him up while looking *very* pleased with themselves, Harry was determined to repay the two witches, so they spent the rest of the morning showing him how and where to touch them for their maximum enjoyment. He discovered how to tell what they particularly liked by listening for the loudest gasps and moans. Hermione, it turned out, liked to have her breasts fondled but didn't particularly enjoy having her nipples played with. By contrast he could always get a gasp out of Ginny by giving one of her nipples a little pinch with one hand while his other hand was engaged further down.

Both girls loved to have their backs rubbed, and it soon became Harry's regular duty to give massages every night before they cuddled up together and went to sleep. Harry's only condition was that the back rubs had to be on bare skin. After a while it became a common occurrence in the Heads suite for one of the girls to come up to Harry while he was sitting on the sofa, give him a saucy smile, and pull off her top and turn around and sit in front of him. This was always followed by their contented moans while he worked his strong fingers into the soft skin of their shoulders and backs.

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"It's hot," announced Hermione, standing up and feeling rather flushed from what she had just been thinking about. "Let's go for a swim." She walked away and Ginny rose to follow her, both of them looking over at Harry rolling around on the ground with their children and smiling again. Harry waved at them to indicate that he and the kids would soon be joining them. Hermione pulled her blouse the rest of the way off as she reached the pool area, exposing her breasts completely now, then removed her shorts to reveal a small bikini swimsuit bottom. Ginny, who had been wearing a coverup over her own string bikini, followed suit. Hermione was already in the pool by the time Ginny finished untying her top and laying it on one of the lounge chairs before she jumped in, splashing her best friend and co-wife.

It had not taken Ginny too long to become used to Hermione's preferred swimming attire. Hermione had picked up the habit of topless swimming and sunbathing on her trips to the south of France with her parents during the summer. Ginny had wondered why Hermione always returned from those trips so tan, and when she shared a room with her older friend at the Burrow or Grimmauld Place had noticed the lack of tan lines. Since the two girls had always confided in each other in everything, Hermione had clued her in, but made her swear not to tell anyone, especially Harry or Ron.

At the time, Ginny had put it down to just another muggle thing. It was only after she was introduced more fully to the muggle world by Hermione and Harry that she realized that relatively few muggle women in Britain followed that practice. But by then she had grown comfortable enough with her own body, and with being topless around Harry and Hermione, that she was ready to give it a try. Of course, Harry was delighted with the idea.

Even after the children came, Hermione insisted that it was healthy for children to grow up seeing their parents unclothed occasionally, and becoming familiar with the adult body, so they had continued the practice. Their daughters especially found it fascinating to watch the changes the women's bodies underwent during pregnancy, and were almost as attentive as Harry was while they were nursing their babies.

A large splash followed by several smaller ones announced the arrival of Harry and the children. Harry immediately swam over and gave Hermione a long kiss, while cupping one of her breasts underwater with his hand and stroking it softly, just the way she liked it, then moving on to Ginny and repeating the process. A gasp from the redhead let Hermione know that he had finished Ginny's fondling with a little pinch of her nipple, just as *she* liked it.

Hermione turned toward the children at the other end of the pool. Most of them were in the 'Ewww gross!' stage where their parents' displays of affection were concerned and turned away and made faces, but Hermione had noticed that Lily had begun to show more interest in the activity. She knew that it was probably time that they had a 'talk' before her oldest daughter headed back to Hogwarts for her second year.

She smiled to herself as she envisioned the scene. Hermione would come to the talk equipped with lots of notes and charts and Lily, who like both her namesake and her mother was a voracious reader, would announce that she had already read about 'those' things. Then they would have a long, frank, open discussion, ending with her daughter hugging her and hoping she would be able to find a guy as wonderful as Daddy.

Jimmy, on the other hand, was as uninterested in girls as his father and the best friend whom he resembled and from whom he had received his middle name had been, when it took them three years to realize that their other best friend was a girl. It would be some time yet before Ginny and/or Harry would need to embarrass *him* with The Talk. At any rate Lily would be sure to keep him in line, as she exhibited all of the classic traits of a firstborn, and was almost as bossy as Hermione had been at that age.

Eventually Hermione and Ginny left the pool and stretched out on the lounge chairs, soaking up the August sun and waiting patiently for Harry to finish playing in the pool with the kids. Hermione closed her eyes and her thoughts drifted back to the more dangerous part of their seventh year at Hogwarts.

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During the period that the students were locating and destroying the Horcruxes the more visible side of the fight against Voldemort was also

progressing. After Dumbledore's death, the leadership of the Order of the Phoenix passed to Alastor Moody and Remus Lupin, and the two of them decided that they needed to go on the offensive instead of waiting to be attacked. Accordingly, the Order members began training more for combat, especially the younger members and Aurors, and began seeking ways to strike back.

Their breakthrough came when the same Death Eaters that had invaded Hogwarts were all captured or killed in an attack on Diagon Alley two weeks later. Their target had been Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes and that had been a fatal mistake, as the twins' store was heavily layered with defensive wards and traps. Then Scrimgeour, feeling the necessity of making a dramatic move to counter the shock that still gripped the wizarding community at the death of Dumbledore, had the surviving Death Eaters executed rather than merely locking them up. This action initiated a change in the tide of the battle, and things began to turn against Voldemort and his minions. The attack and its aftermath finally made everyone realize that 1) the Death Eaters could be defeated if people fought back and 2) that there weren't really all that many Death Eaters in the first place.

This offensive strategy on the part of the Order and the Ministry was perfect cover for Harry, Ron, and Hermione (and later Ginny) as they searched for and collected the Horcruxes. As they gradually succeeded in this preliminary mission, the tension among the group had mounted as they moved toward the final task, killing Voldemort himself.

Hermione always avoided spending much time dwelling on that part of the story. There had been bitter debates about whether she and Ginny would be by his side during the final confrontation with Voldemort. The two girls insisted that they would never leave him and had sworn to stand by him to the end. Harry countered that their presence might prove a fatal distraction for him, as he would be constantly worried about their well-being. The conflict had not been acrimonious, because both sides knew that the other was motivated by love, but the tears had flowed freely.

Finally the question had been resolved when Hermione found a ritual that would enable her and Ginny to transfer their magical power to Harry for a short time. This would enable them to contribute even more than if they had been present, giving Harry his best chance of defeating his older, more experienced, and more powerful foe, while keeping them safe from attack.

The ritual left them lying weakened in the Hogwarts infirmary during the final battle, lapsing in and out of unconsciousness. Voldemort had finally attacked Hogwarts directly and Harry, the professors, and the sixth and seventh year DA members had gone out to meet him. Dennis Creevey had been ordered by Harry to stay in the infirmary by Ginny and Hermione with a portkey, to transport them to safety if the Death Eaters made it into the castle.

Ron and Neville had been right at Harry's side during the battle. Ron was the first to fall, being hit with a Cruciatus curse by Bellatrix Lestrange. In a moment of poetic justice, Neville caught her unawares with a slicing hex that opened her jugular vein while she was being overly enthusiastic watching Ron screaming in agony. Shortly after that Neville was dropped by Dolohov, using the same curse he hit Hermione with at the Department of Mysteries. Unfortunately it was fully powered this time. A second later Harry blew Dolohov's head off with a triply powered explosion hex.

Finally it was just Harry and Voldemort. Just as they had in the graveyard, their wands locked up. Voldemort, who evidently had anticipated this, pulled out a sword and charged forward to kill Harry while they were connected. But fueled by the 'power of love' as he termed it, Harry sent a surge of magic back into Voldemort's wand that was so intense that the wand exploded, taking the dark lord's hand with it. While Voldemort stood looking down at his hand in shock, Harry exploded his chest with a *Reducto*, while at the same time summoning the Sword of Gryffindor and beheading the evil wizard, ending his dark reign once and for all.

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Hermione shuddered as she tried to push those thoughts away. The losses on their side had been horrendous. Neville, Dean, and Lavender from Gryffindor, and many students from other houses, as well as Hagrid and a few other teachers. Also Moody, Shacklebolt, Charlie Weasley, and, proving that the Sorting Hat had *not* made a mistake by putting him into Gryffindor, Percy Weasley. Remus had been seriously injured, but had finally been nursed back to health by Tonks. And then there was Ron.

The extended Cruciatus curse from Bellatrix had sent him to St. Mungo's just like it had the Longbottoms. But Luna Lovegood had brought him out of it. Day after day she sat by his side, talking to him for hours on end, telling him tales of the most fantastical magical creatures, and occasionally singing '*Weasley is Our King*'. After a month he started to respond to her and by the end of the summer he was released, just in time for Harry and Hermione's wedding.

Ron and Luna were inseparable from that time on, and the two of them were always off on some journey or other seeking yet another of Luna's mythical creatures. (Molly Weasley was not thrilled by these adventures, feeling that they should settle down and give her some grandchildren. Ron countered by declaring that Ginny, Harry, and Hermione were covering his share.) Hermione was never again critical of anything Luna came up with, no matter how farfetched. Ron still often affectionately called her Looney, but she always smiled and retorted that *she* wasn't the one who had spent two months in a psychiatric ward. This loving exchange never failed to bring a tear to Hermione's eye when she witnessed it.

Her attention was diverted when she felt Harry kneel down behind her to straddle her and start to massage her back, now nice and warm from the sun. Leaning close he whispered, "You look a little sad. Remembering?" Hermione nodded as all other thoughts were pushed from her mind by the sensations that were flowing over her. She could never concentrate on anything else while Harry was giving her a back rub, and she was quickly reduced to a series of incoherent moans.

When she was totally relaxed he switched over to Ginny, who was waiting impatiently on the adjacent lounge chair. "We must be the two luckiest witches on the planet," Hermione commented to Ginny, "to be so fortunate to have our own private masseuse at our beck and call every time we take off our tops." Ginny, who was now as incapable of speech as Hermione had just been, could only moan and nod.

"I disagree," Harry objected. "I think I'm the lucky one here."

Hermione raised herself up on her elbows, turning toward him to give him a good view, and said in a low, husky voice, "Not quite yet, but soon." Ginny managed a giggle and then raised and twisted her hips, wiggling her bum into a part of Harry that had suddenly stiffened. Harry groaned, but

managed to finish Ginny's backrub before collapsing on the lounge next to her, muttering under his breath about teasing wives.

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With a motivation that now dwarfed her passion for *any* other subject, Hermione quickly found a marriage law on the books that allowed for a wizard to have a concubine. It was intended for use by pureblood wizards who needed heirs and were unable to have any with their wives. When she read this Hermione found herself reminded of the biblical story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. Thinking further along this line, she decided that a good way to explain the situation to her parents was to cite the example of the biblical patriarch Jacob, whose twelve children, born to two wives and two concubines, became the tribes of Israel, and later the Jewish nation.

The way they finally worked it out was that Harry and Hermione were married in a small muggle ceremony in Hermione's parents' church at the end of the summer after they finished their schooling. They returned to Hogwarts that fall as temporary instructors to help fill some of the teaching vacancies caused by the final battle. Harry, of course, taught Defense Against the Dark Arts and Hermione taught Transfiguration. Since they were married they had private quarters. Fortunately Ginny was named Head Girl, giving her a private room of her own (the Head Boy was from Ravenclaw). She made very good use of Harry's invisibility cloak that year, and virtually never slept in her own room.

Harry married Ginny the summer after she finished Hogwarts in a much larger wizard ceremony, and immediately legally took Hermione as a concubine. This meant that in the wizarding world Hermione kept her maiden name, but she had always intended to do that anyway. Ginny, of course, had dreamed of being Ginny Potter since she was a little girl. Just to make sure all possible loose ends were tied up, Harry and Hermione legally adopted all of Ginny's children in the muggle world.

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With all the teasing that had been going on, the three adults could hardly wait until the kids went to bed that night. An hour later they were lying in a naked tangle of limbs, exhausted but very satisfied. The two witches had different preferred lovemaking positions. Hermione liked having Harry enter her from behind, and on this night he had bent her over the bed and was into her almost before they had finished removing their clothing.

Her favorite fantasy involved him making love to her in the Hogwarts library, bending her over a table far in the back out of sight of everyone. Harry and Ginny both knew of this fantasy, and played along. Harry leaned over and whispered in her ear, while also fondling her breasts, about how naughty she was being and what would happen if someone walked back and discovered them. Ginny sat on the bed and pretended to ignore them, reading a book.

This particular book, however, was not one found in the Hogwarts library. It was *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, and Ginny read aloud one of the particularly good parts that Hermione had bookmarked. It didn't take long before Hermione exploded with passion. She and Harry collapsed on the bed and they lay there still joined while Hermione gradually came down from her high. Eventually after a nice long cuddle Harry withdrew and turned his attention to Ginny.

Ginny preferred to be on top of Harry, riding him, well, like a broomstick. She had told Hermione that she sometimes fanaticized about being on top of Harry while she was flying, and Hermione supposed that even *she* might enjoy quidditch with that kind of image in her mind.

Ginny's hand had been busy between her legs while Harry and Hermione were going at it, and she jumped on him as soon as he was ready for her. In no time she was bouncing excitedly on top of him while he ran his hands up and down her slender hips and waist. After a while she sat up, giving him a chance to reach out and play with her breasts, which began to bring her to a frenzy. When he could tell from her breathing that she was approaching her peak, he rolled her nipples between his fingers and then gave them a little pinch, which, as it invariably did, sent her crashing over the edge.

Both witches also liked having Harry finish up face to face with them, as they loved looking into his eyes and seeing his desire for them build up and overwhelm him. This time, Harry finished with Ginny, loudly releasing himself into her. In fact, all three of them had put the silencing charms on the room to the test this night. Hermione smiled to herself as she wondered if tonight would be the start of Ginny's next baby. Harry's magic was easily strong enough to overwhelm any contraception charm if he put his mind to it.

As the three of them lay cuddled together, totally spent, Hermione and Ginny beamed at each other across Harry's chest from their positions under each of his arms. Another year had passed, and their shared life just kept getting better and better. Eventually, they knew, they would stop having babies and when the kids were grown all three of them had teaching positions waiting for them at Hogwarts.

The two women knew that they had made Harry happier than he had ever dreamed was possible. Ginny was living almost exactly the life she had fanaticized about for so long, and Hermione, even though she had never imagined her life being like this, was also happier than she could have ever imagined being. While she had her doubts at the beginning, now she couldn't conceive of how it could have ended any other way. The agreement she and Ginny had made on that long ago day had indeed turned out perfectly.

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