Rewind

By: pop-pop-bananas

First in the trilogy. War ends, but is by no means over. Discoveries remind us that you have to cut the roots for the tree to fall. However, confronting the enemy is never as simple as it seems. TomxGinny ----- Previously titled 'The Letter P'

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Rewind

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Author's Note

P is for Prologue

A/N: Hello everyone! Some of you are new people who are unfamiliar with my writing, and some of you are my fabulous friends from The Stone Speaks. Either way, I LOVE YOU and I hope you like The Letter P. I realize that the name is a tad random, but you will understand in time. This chapter is quite short, as it is just a prologue. This is AU – about as AU as it gets. The War is over, and the Light side lost. Dumbledore, Ginny, Professor Sprout, and three under-fourteens are the only survivors at Hogwarts. All of the Weasleys are dead. This is Ginny's story – GWxTMR.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter – as I say every time, if I **did** own Harry Potter, then Fred Weasley, Lily Potter, Dobby and Dennis Creevey would have survived. And Hedwig. I loved that owl.

The Letter P

PROLOGUE

Chapter One: P is for Prologue

Sybil Trelawney weaved through the Department of Mysteries, humming a little tune to herself. She really shouldn't be so cheerful at such a grave time, but it was a very catchy song by the Weird Sisters and it really *was* stuck in her head.

Now. Where shall I put this prophecy?

Trelawney was quite pleased with herself. She hadn't made a prophecy for seventeen years – that one about that Longbottom boy had been very important, and she was very pleased to have created it… shame about Neville. Destined to be the saviour of the Wizarding World; ignored by all because of a deception of *Harry Potter* being the hero; and then fell down a flight of stairs on Boxing Day, breaking his neck in three places.

Well, it was only to be expected of such a clumsy boy.

The little old Divination teacher *knew* that Neville Longbottom was the true saviour, but had Albus believed her? Oh no. It took a huge war, the death of thousands – and, finally, the death of the 'Boy-With-Many-Self-Explanatory-Titles' (Trelawney snorted: *Boy Who Lived, My Left Buttock* . Oh, what was that on the prophecy? It seemed to have come out of her nose. Glancing around, she rubbed it off) – before anyone would acknowledge that she was right for once.

And by that time, poor Neville was nailed in a wooden box somewhere, six feet under.

Dear, dear .

The pitter patter of her small slippered feet echoed lightly through the prophecy room. *Where should this go?* Trelawney frowned through her large glasses. *Aha.* She smiled triumphantly and fitted it in a space between two slightly larger glass balls.

The prophecy foretold the terrible ducks returning. One day, very soon, Trelawney feared, they would grow teeth, and would swarm and attack Birmingham. *They should be evacuated* , Trelawney mused, but, as per norm, her pleas of vacating the city were ignored by the Dark council.

His Lord and Master of the Universe Voldemort had created a council, in place of a Ministry of Magic, though he still resided in the Ministry building. After destroying all Muggle-borns and Squibs, he had insisted on having a Dark council to ensure that everything went as evilly as he wanted.

Smiling still, Trelawney moved away from the shelf. Her satchel swung around and struck it. She gasped, turning around again. There was a tremendous rocking of glass as thousands of prophecies rolled about, but, thankfully, only one fell.

She hobbled forwards quickly, and, with reflexes that she did not ever remember having, she caught it. Trelawney shifted her glasses higher up her crooked nose and peered down at it. It was swirling oddly, and smoking. *What the…* The prophecy cooled down, and, then, humming quietly, it spoke.

" *When He rises up again,*

It will signal the very end.

Of wizards, and Squibs, and Muggles alike,

All destroyed because of His spite.

But there is one to save the world,

And that is a terribly ordinary girl.

Blessed by her ignorance,

rescued by insolence.

Born the day that He first fell,

Growing up strong, and to rebel.

The youngest and fairest and purest of seven,

His number.

A boy in black,

Becomes a man,

Lest he be saved,

Destruction planned.

To free the world,

She destroys His heart

Else, should our world

Fall apart.

Beware the girl with the signature red,

To save the world, you must heed what I said."

Trelawney's eyes were as wide as saucers. The prophecy! It had spoken to her! And – and *it had spoken of a way to defeat the Lord and Master of the Universe* ! How had she heard it, though? The prophecy could only be heard by those it referred to, or the one who made it.

Removing her glasses with her free hand, and rubbing her eyes, before returning her spectacles to their original place, Trelawney peered up towards where it had fallen from.

There !

An empty space, where a crystal ball should be.

She stood on tiptoe and read the golden-plated tag saying who it was created by: *Cassandra Trelawney III* .

Of course! Feeling smug of herself, Trelawney grinned. This incredible prophecy had been made by her great-great-grandmother. She glanced around nervously; no-one was watching. It would not be at all good if the Death Eaters found out about this before Dumbledore did.

She tucked the crystal ball into her black cloak, fixed her spectacles again, turned on the spot, and disappeared into the land between Here and There.

…

Albus Dumbledore watched the prophecy intently from above his steepled fingers. Three days had passed since Sybil had come to him with this incredible discovery. Three days he had been thinking very carefully about this, and he was now sure of whom it indicated.

The one with fiery red hair. The youngest of seven. The rebel. The one born on Hallowe'en, the day that the 'Lord and Master of the Universe' fell from power upon attacking the Potters.

He sighed, pushing a strand of wavy gray hair back from his withered old face. Today. It was precisely a year since the Great War – since so many died. The Head Girl, Granger. The Head Boy, Malfoy. The Boy-Who-Lived, the hero, Harry James Potter. Minerva McGonagall. Rubeus Hagrid, at the hand of his own (Imperiused) creatures. That nice Prefect, Dennis Creevey, who got him sherbet lemons last Christmas, and his brother, Colin. Severus Snape. Every Weasley ever to set foot in Hogwarts. Save for one.

And she, Dumbledore was certain, held the fate of the entire world in palms of her little hands.

…

A/N: Like it? Let me know if you do! Please review, tell me if you don't understand or if you think that I should make something clearer. Thank you to my beta SilverXan , and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Portkey

A/N: If you got this far – well done! You actually stuck with me! Thanks to reviewers, and enjoy this chapter!

I'd like a HUGE thank you to the anonymous reviewer named Ginny Weasley , who helped me when I really needed it. My summary was dodgy, and, to answer your question – no, 1958 is not a mistake. I know that according to J.K Rowling's website, Voldie was born in 1926, and that it would probably make more sense on a timeline for it to be set in the forties… but I already did *loads* of research on the fifties (what they wore, what music they listened to, etc) and also because I need Voldie to be a *leetle* younger than eighty in present-time, as it is crucial to the plot. Thank you again.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I am not the one living in Scotland sitting on a million pounds. This is just for fun.

The Letter P

Chapter Two: P is for Portkey

She was in the library when Fawkes flew in. The library wasn't a place for study anymore, as most of the books contained biased opinions against He-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, Mr. Ruler Of The World, so they were all burned. Only about seventeen books remained.

Hermione would be furious if she knew . The Army of Hogwarts was a mere warm-up to a book-destroyed Hermione Jane Granger, Mr. Voldemort, so look out.

Ginny was sitting in a corner, in what used to be the Restricted Section before everything was burned, staring at the ceiling and wondered how this thing called life had become this terrible hell so fast.

Within three months, the sixth-year's life was destroyed. Her best friends, her boyfriend, her *entire family* – all dead. Ron, Luna, Harry and Hermione she missed more than her 'best friends' in the sixth year – more, even than her beloved boyfriend, Seamus.

I was going to break up with him. I kept putting it off. He died thinking I loved him. He died, surrounded by a lie.

She sighed. And then the giant flaming bird landed in front of her.

The redhead blinked. "Um," she said to it, "Hello?"

It cocked its head sideways, and released a low, tuneful hoot. It lowered its magnificent plumed head and dropped a coiled piece of parchment from its beak, dark eyes twinkling.

Frowning, but curious, Ginny reached forwards from her arms looped around her tucked-up knees and picked up the paper. She unfurled it and read the words: *Miss Weasley. Please come to my office. It is a matter of rather urgent importance. Bring Fawkes with you. Professor Albus Dumbledore.*

She shrugged, and stood, stretching her cramped muscles briefly. "Are you Fawkes?" she asked the phoenix sitting on the ground at her feet. In response, it spread its wings and fluttered onto her arm, cooing softly. "Alright, then."

They headed out of the library. Ginny walked like a dream, floating, never really lingering in any one place for too long. She looked at every portrait – that which would once have been a feat to be proud of was no longer. Her beloved Fat Lady and even the annoying but lovable Sir Cadogan had been dismantled and set on fire. Few remained, and most were new images depicting the brave, powerful, and always very handsome Lord Voldemort.

You're not brave, nor powerful. You're a coward, and you don't deserve to have a painting of you. There should be paintings of

*Harry, Hermione, and Ron. **They** were the heroes, and even in death they're far more than you could ever be.*

Thinking such emotional thoughts made the corners of Ginny's eyes sting, but she fiercely pushed it aside, and all sorrow to the very back of her heart, where perhaps she could forget that it existed.

As the girl and the bird arrived before Professor Dumbledore's office gargoyle-protectors, they stopped. Fawkes hooted once, and a door slid into view, opening to reveal winding stairs. He flapped his wings, creating a gust that buffeted Ginny's red hair around her once-full - and now painfully-thin - face. Wondering what awaited her, she stepped through the doorway.

…

Fawkes soared through the twin doors, both open, and landed gracefully on his perch to preen his golden and scarlet feathers carefully. "Hello," said Dumbledore, nodding at his faithful companion, and then redirected his piercing blue gaze to the doors as he heard someone approaching quietly.

And there she was.

Ginevra Molly Weasley was not the girl she once was. Much of the feisty, carefree attitude had slowly leeched away as everyone she cared for died or coincidentally 'disappeared' due to their blood status. It was quite a surprise that the little 'blood-traitor' female was not dead.

She used to be quite a stocky little female, inheriting the genes of her mother, Charlie, Fred and George; short and podgy. Now, however, her cheekbones stuck out rather prominently in her face and those once-glittering hazel eyes lacked the cheerful life they once held. Even her hair seemed to lose its vibrant bounce, and the spring in her step was springy no more.

A year's sorrow and loneliness had destroyed her.

"Sit down," Dumbledore said kindly.

She did so, dropping down quietly into the nearest chair in a subdued manner. Her hazel stare was directed at her feet in their chunky black trainers.

"Do you know what this is, Miss Weasley?" asked Dumbledore, placing a hand over the crystal ball lying on his desk. He waited for her round eyes to flicker to it, and then picked it up, balancing it in one long-fingered hand.

"Yes, sir," said Ginny. She was staring at it. "It's a prophecy, sir."

Sir, this, sir, that. Whatever happened to the all-attitude, 'Yeah, I know. S'a prophecy, isn'it?'

Dumbledore sighed. "Indeed it is. Would you like to know who its for?" he asked.

"No, but I think that you're going to tell me anyway," commented Ginny. It was an answer she would have given a year back, but the cheeky grin and the teasing tone was missing; her words were flat and soulless.

"I am," smiled Dumbledore, but before he could tell her, the glass ball lit up and began to smoke and spark, floating a few centimetres above his palm.

So it is true. The prophetic child is Ginny.

…

Her attention was caught; she seemed to have realized the same thing as Dumbledore, at approximately the same time. Ginny was watching it quite fixedly as it spoke, and she did not lift her gaze even when it was done. When Dumbledore cleared his throat, she snapped her eyes up to him.

"That's me," she said. There was a tone of surprise in her voice. She was so used to holding everything back and feeling nothing that her voice cracked. "I'm the one to save the world."

"Indeed." Dumbledore was observing her closely. "Are you aware of the whole Neville-Harry scenario, Miss Weasley?" he inquired, raising bushy eyebrows above his half-moon spectacles.

"Yeah," she replied absently. Ginny wasn't really paying attention. She really wanted to touch the glowing, pinky-green crystal ball, but she suspected that she wouldn't be allowed, and that it would seem rude. "A prophecy about two boys. Voldie chose the wrong one. *Boom.* Wizarding world destroyed." A tiny smirk quirked the corners of her lips. "It makes my daily choice of eyeliner seem rather unimportant."

Though I am quite pleased with my green eyeliner today.

*Ginny! Pay attention to him. Pull **out** of La-la Land.*

*Oh **fine** .*

"So?" Ginny asked, folding her arms across her skinny chest. "How do I save the world? How do I help mankind? Where do I sign the application form?"

"Miss Weasley," said Dumbledore. His voice was grave, and its solemnity spooked the redhead into paying the utmost attention, "this is not a time for humour. The lives of every witch and wizard on the face of the earth is with you now."

She nodded, an ashamed flush creeping across her cheeks. "What do I need to do?"

Professor Dumbledore sighed. "I have thoroughly contemplated every possibility," he informed the sixteen-year-old. "And only one remains… you must cut the roots for the tree to fall." When Ginny

only looked blank, he leaned closer and said quietly, "Miss Weasley, I need you to go back in time."

Ginny's breath hitched in her throat. "H-how far?" she whispered.

"Far. 1958, to be precise," the elderly Headmaster explained. "His Lord and Master of the Universe will be seventeen years old. He will be in his final year at Hogwarts. Find him. Do not get close to him. And, in any way possible, *destroy* him."

The redhead gasped.

"I must sound a monster to you, Miss Weasley, but you *must* do this. Send him to Azkaban. Kill him. Even – as much as I shudder to think of it – torture him to insanity," Dumbledore said severely.

A horrified look graced Ginny's pretty face.

That's terrible !

"But – I couldn't!" she said. "As much as I hate him, I'm not going to kill him. He's a human being, and he has feelings, and when I get to him he won't even have transformed into the evil person he is now!"

"Please – listen to me. Do you remember what he did to you, five years? Do you remember how old he was? *Fifteen* , Ginny. *Fifteen.* This is two years later – he's already created the diary, created the Horcrux. He has already set something up that will, forty-eight years on, *try to kill you* ," Dumbledore said sharply.

Ginny screwed her face up, blocking back painful memories that sprouted from his words.

"Tom Riddle has murdered, emotionlessly, cruelly, *savagely* , everyone you…and *I* – love and care for. He would not stop to consider the fact that *you* are a 'human being' or that you 'have feelings'. He will murder you, like he did to the rest of your family. May I remind you what he did to Mister Weasley… *in front of you* ?"

"No!" Ginny cried. "Don't – I'll-"

Ron on the floor, squirming, screaming –

She grabbed at her head, squeezing her eyes shut until they started to water, digging her fingernails in, hard.

Blood, everywhere. It was pooling around Ginny's feet and staining her favourite trainers. His screams echoed .

Suddenly a hand was gripping her shoulder tight, and Ginny looked up, alarmed, thinking that it was Lord Voldemort. Tears were shining on her freckled cheeks, and she swiped them away fiercely. "I'm going," she said, standing, and shrugging Professor Dumbledore's hand away. "I'll do it."

A relieved and slightly worried look appeared in Dumbledore's blue eyes. "Thank you," he said softly. "I think I should, however, warn you very severely… the chance of you coming back is low. Lower than the chance of the Lord and Master of the Universe being struck by lightning."

Ginny nodded. "I don't mind. There's nothing left here for me." Her hand moved to a pendant that she had not taken off for precisely a year today. "Can I just ask… why me?" she inquired curiously.

"That," Dumbledore replied. "I cannot answer. Now, time is growing short. When will you be ready to go?"

"Now," said Ginny shortly.

The old Headmaster looked baffled. "But… don't you want to say farewell, or give it some time to think it over?" he asked, bewildered.

Ginny smiled humourlessly. "Who would I say goodbye to? And why would I think about it – it's not like a have a choice, is it? I want to go now," she replied.

With a sigh, Dumbledore nodded. "I suppose that you are right. You cannot bring with you anything except what you are wearing, but I'm sure you could ask Professor… Dippet, I believe was Headmaster at the time, if memory serves me well – to conjure you some clothes for the time period. And perhaps money, too, and schoolbooks. Whatever you need."

"Wait – won't Professor Snipped-"

"Dippet."

"-whatever – find it a *little* weird that a student forty-eight years into his future suddenly turns up and demands to be let in so that she can kill another student?" Ginny finished, holding her hands up.

"Well," Dumbledore said, moving to a cupboard. "Actually, you will completing your education in the fifties, so you will be a student there. At first, things will seem difficult, but I promise that it will get better. Also, I am going to write a letter for you, explaining the majority of the situation to Dippet – leaving out, of course, the part where you attack a seventh-year – and you will have to tuck that as closely into your clothing as possible, along with your wand. That way, it *should* hopefully remain with you through the time-travel."

The sixteen-year-old standing in front of his desk raised an eyebrow. "Do you really think that a *letter* will do the trick?"

Dumbledore picked up a quill, dipped it thoughtfully in a pot of ink, and then started to scrawl away on a piece of parchment. "Surprisingly, yes," he informed Ginny. "There is actually a section of Hogwarts Headmaster training – including a handbook, I may add – which teaches you exactly what to do should a student from the future, or past, arrive."

Her eyes boggled, but she hid her astonishment and stifled her astonished snort. *There's a* ***handbook***

There was a moment's silence, only interrupted by Fawkes shifting on his perch, and for the scratching of Dumbledore's phoenix-feather quill. Then the Headmaster picked up the letter, blew on the words lightly to dry the ink, folded it, and stamped it closed.

"If you would care to tuck that into your clothing, as close to your body as possible, please, Miss Weasley," Dumbledore said, standing and passing her the letter, "I will sort together your mode of transportation."

He bustled away, and Ginny was left staring at the crisp white parchment. She considered opening it, but decided that it would seem impolite to turn up in 1958 and present a read letter. Shrugging and choosing to find out what it said later, she lifted the hem of her jumper and tucked it, and her wand, into the waistband of her jeans. Tugging down her fleece jumper again, she watched Fawkes quietly in contemplation as she waited for Dumbledore to return.

"Here we are," he said, coming back through the doors. From one hand swung a little circular disk on a thin string, and in the other he twirled an intricately-carved wand.

"Sir, what's that?" Ginny asked, pointing to the disk.

Dumbledore frowned in confusion, before saying, "Ah," and catching on. "This, Miss Weasley," he pinched the lower half of the string to hold the swaying circle on the end still, "is a Time-Turner."

"Oh," said Ginny, as if she understood – she didn't. "What do I do with it?"

With a smile, Dumbledore stretched the string out into a circle and looped it around Ginny's neck, before letting it fall against her chest. Once it was free of the Headmaster's long fingers, she picked it up and examined it. She had never seen one before, though apparently Hermione used to own one.

It was a pretty little copper circle, and inside the circle was another circle, one that spun in all directions, with a complicated Rune located in the middle filled with sand. Ginny, who had never studied Ancient Runes, did not know what it meant and suspected that she would not know it even if she *had* studied Runes.

"Miss Weasley, you will travelling by Portkey," said Dumbledore, still twirling the strangely decorated wand. "Please, hold still." He began to wave his wand in front of her, forming complicated patterns in the air.

What's he doing? I've been by Portkey a thousand times, and I've never done ***this***

Finally he was finished.

The old man glanced at his pocket-watch. "Half a minute until you leave, Miss Weasley," he informed her, and began to bustle about with the Time-Turner, twisting the inside circle this way and that.

"Er, sir?" Ginny asked hesitantly. "Where's the Portkey?"

"You, my dear, *are* the Portkey," said Dumbledore simply.

Wow. Nice.

Dumbledore stepped back, finished. "You will be going shortly, Miss Weasley." He considered her over the top of his glasses, rather sadly, Ginny thought. Then he said, "I suppose that this is goodbye, then. Good luck, Ginevra."

This is it. This is the last thing I'll probably ever see of life as I knew it.

Feeling suddenly terrible for Dumbledore, who was now left alone with only Professor Sprout, and a scattering of under-fourteens in Hogwarts, she opened her mouth to apologize, thank him for everything he's done, and most of all: "Goodb-"

And then she was gone.

…

A/N: Like it? Let me know if you do! Please review, tell me if you don't understand or if you think that I should make something clearer. Thank you to my beta SilverXan , and enjoy the rest of the fic! Please review! PLEASE don't make me have to do the review dance.

P is for Past

A/N: This chapter is quite short. Oh well. It is certainly interesting. Well, I think so, anyway. By the way, if anyone cares, Aiobheann is pronounced ' *Ay-vahn* '. It's Irish. Like me. WOOP.

Disclaimer: I DO own Harry Potter. My name is JK Rowling and I'M SUING YOU ALL FOR COPYING MY WRITING! … Not.

The Letter P

Chapter Three: P is for Past

Dumbledore stepped back, finished. "You will be going shortly, Miss Weasley." He considered her over the top of his glasses, rather sadly, Ginny thought. Then he said, "I suppose that this is goodbye, then. Good luck, Ginevra."

Feeling suddenly terrible for Dumbledore, who was now left alone with only Professor Sprout, and a scattering of under-fourteens in Hogwarts, she opened her mouth to apologize, thank him for everything he's done, and most of all: "Goodb-" And then she was gone.

…

All was dark. Then colour started to swirl past her – green – blue – pink – white – red – so fast that it made her feel sick. Sometimes she would get a fleeting glimpse of the Headmaster's office, through the years, as she passed them.

There was Cedric Diggory, three years back, proudly receiving his Head Boy badge. Another three years, perhaps four, and there was… tears sprang to Ginny's eyes. There was a very short boy with messy black hair, glasses and an innocent look upon his thin face; a slightly taller red-haired boy; an even smaller girl with hair that

looked like it had been hit by lightning; and the smallest of all, a very skinny girl with hair that seemed to have been set on fire.

Is that… me? I look so happy. It was probably just having Harry next to me. How stupid I was then.

People that Ginny did not know… was that Harry's mum? It was, she was gleefully accepting some sort of prize, while a dark-haired, hook-nosed, oddly familiar boy in the background watched longingly. A tiny person that she knew instantly to be Neville's father, from the round, open face, and a smug boy who was very obviously an eleven-year-old Lucius Malfoy.

Feeling tears threaten to spill over, Ginny turned her face away – and then she was spinning, faster and faster, it was taking all of her strength not to vomit in the abyss of time, and her head was spinning…

With a sickening lurch, she was thrown down.

Opening her eyes blearily, and blinking past a lot of pain, Ginny found herself staring at a very shocked Headmaster. He was short and podgy, with a wispy brown goatee and large grey eyes. He closed his eyes, waited a moment, and then opened them again.

"Nope, still here," said Ginny, biting back a giggle. Realizing how she must look, and blushing, she stood, dusting off her clothes. "Hi. My name is Ginevra Weasley…"

What the hell do I say?

Having a brain-wave, Ginny said with a grin, "You know that handbook? 'What To Do If A Kid From The Future Turns Up'? You thought you'd never need it, didn't you? Well… tada!" she threw up her hands.

Suddenly the man who was presumably Professor Dippet had his eyes bulge. He seemed to be staring at Ginny's torso.

The redhead followed his gaze. She saw what he was obviously looking at; lime-green skinny jeans that seemed to glow in the gloom of the dingy Headmaster's chamber, a yellow T-shirt that was far too small and exposed her midriff, chunky black trainers, and a black jumper.

*Okay… obviously **not** the fashion in 1958.*

"Sorry," Ginny apologized, "this is the fashion in the twenty-first century." Remembering that she had not quite explained yet, she lifted her jumper and removed the letter before handing it to him.

"Indeed," he said. His grey eyes scanned the text before throwing it into the fire; Ginny's heart sank with disappointment. "Twenty-first century, was it? What did you say your name was?"

"Er, yeah. Ginevra Molly Weasley, sir."

" *Weasley* ?" Dippet echoed, and he scrutinized several sheafs of paper on his desk. "Oh dear. You'll not be able to go by that name – our caretaker is Epaphras Weasley."

*What? Granddad told me he was a **Quidditch player***

"Oh. What's the date?" the sixteen-year-old inquired.

"September the second, 1958," Dippet said, still rifling through papers. "What is your mother's maiden name?"

"Prewett," Ginny responded, looking around the room. The tins and tins of lemon drops had been replaced by thick, dusty-looking, leather-bound books; where Fawkes once sat was a large Augurey.

I studied those .

Augureys were distant relatives of phoenixes – almost identical in appearance, except that they looked scrawnier, and were greenish black. Instead of causing peace with their call, they generally made people unhappy.

Dippet's a cheerful kind of man, isn't he?

"Well, we can't have that, either," said Dippet. "We have a first-year named Christopher Prewett joining this year."

Aaand… my dead great-uncle is a first-year. This is messed up.

"So you're a pureblood, am I right?" Dippet asked; Ginny nodded. "I think I'll have you enrolled as a half-Irish transfer student named Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine. Just to be safe."

" *Aiobheann* ?" Ginny echoed incredulously. "I can barely *say* Aiobheann, let alone *write* it! And why do I have to be Irish anyway?" she folded her arms across her chest.

"Because I say so!" Professor Dippet snapped. "What year are you in?"

"Sixth."

"What OWLs did you pass?"

"I took most of the classes. I got an Outstanding in Defence Against the Dark Arts… four Exceeds Expectations, I think, in Charms, Transfiguration, Potions and Muggle Studies… three Acceptables in Herbology, Arithmancy and Astronomy…" Ginny's voice trailed away, before adding lamely, "and I failed Divination, History of Magic and Care of Magical Creatures."

"An 'E' in Muggle Studies, eh?" Dippet asked, writing something down. "I think I'll have you as a Muggle-born, yes. And… you were home-schooled in London, previously… but, due to the Irish Muggle-born genocide bombs-"

Oh yeah… that was around now, wasn't it?

"- and henceforth, need to finish your education… and have chosen Hogwarts," Dippet finished, dotting a full-stop on his parchment, folding it, and tucking it away. He looked up to meet her gaze. "That,"

he said, swirling his wand; a trunk engraved with the letters G.A.P appeared (Ginny giggled, thinking of the Muggle brand, but was quickly silenced by one of Dippet's already famous glares), "is for you. It contains school robes that will change according to which House you are placed into, and a few casual clothes. I daresay you can buy some later with the gold provided in the trunk."

Ginny nodded. "Thank you, sir," she said politely.

"Come, now," said Dippet, "we are going to the Sorting."

The Sorting. Would she be in the same House, or a different one? Would she make any friends? 'Transfer' wouldn't have fooled her, and, as she changed into the standard school robes, she doubted it would fool the students here.

Surprisingly, few eyes turned to Ginny as she entered with Dippet. She quickly hid in the crowd of first-years, clustered in the middle aisle. She was quite a lot taller than all of them, but she bent her knees and tried to stay down.

"What are you doing?" asked a dark boy about half the height of Ginny, with thick brown hair. "Aren't choo supposed to be sat down or somefing?"

"Yes," whispered Ginny in reply, "but I'll give you a Sickle if you keep quiet about the big girl hiding here."

The boy's eyes widened. "Done," he nodded proudly, and ushered other people's gaze away from the redhead.

The Sorting Hat completed its speech, and called up the first-years. They ambled towards the front, and a petrified-looking girl with startlingly blue eyes moved forwards at the call of "Marianne Augustine".

The list moved on… came to 'P', with little Christopher Prewett going to Gryffindor, and the little boy who Ginny had made a deal with,

Dominic Philips, going to Slytherin… and moved on. Slowly the crowd of first-years diminished, and Ginny had to stand taller, to stop herself from looking ridiculous. *Now* people were looking her way, and leaning sideways to whisper to their neighbours. Ginny quite pointedly ignored them, and stared ahead, until, at long last-

"Do not lift your cutlery yet!" called Dippet. "We have one more to be Sorted. This year we welcome our first ever transfer-student, joining in sixth-year. May we all welcome… Miss Ginevra Peregrine!"

Her heart was beating fast as she walked up towards the raised dais. Five years since she had been up there. She had forgotten how terrifying it was to walk past so many people, all staring and whispering.

Ginny took a deep breath, turned slowly, and sat on the stool. Her hazel eyes crossed to look upwards at the rim of the Sorting Hat as it was lowered, and then it was over her eyes, and she could not see.

You have been to Hogwarts before, Miss 'Peregrine'.

A feeling of dread sunk through Ginny. *Please don't tell anyone, Hat!*

You may call me 'sir'. And trust an old hat – not a soul shall hear it from me.

Thank you , Ginny thought, before hastily adding, *sir* , and thinking how stupid it was to call a hat such a formal title.

Now where to put you? You are loyal… but Hufflepuff is not the place for you, oh no. Intelligent… but you are rash and quick to make foolish decisions… I do not think that Ravenclaw would suit you. Brave… braver than most people I've ever met, for you have seen horrors they cannot imagine… definitely bravery, and that streak of reckless loyalty - but somehow… I am not sure.

Unable to help herself, she started to panic. What if the Sorting Hat couldn't choose, and it sent her away? It had been so quick to select

Gryffindor in the twenty-first century… perhaps it had chosen due to her family, and now, confronted with her personality, was at a loss.

Just go with your first instinct , Ginny begged of it.

"SLYTHERIN!"

…

A/N: Ooh, who saw *that* coming? I did. Lmao. Anyway. Please review! Thank you to my beta SilverXan , and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Peregrine

A/N: This chapter is also still rather short. Anyway. Thank you to reviewers, and I hope you like the input character of Grace Hartwin – as she is 100 based upon me. 'Cause that's how I roll.

Disclaimer: I don't own Ginny Weasley, or Hogwarts, or Professor Dippet, or Tom Marvolo Riddle. I DO, however, own Claude Felina Bastet, Alden Philips and Grace Hartwin. Teehee.

The Letter P

Chapter Four: P is for Peregrine

Unable to help herself, she started to panic. What if the Sorting Hat couldn't choose, and it sent her away? It had been so quick to select Gryffindor in the twenty-first century… perhaps it had chosen due to her family, and now, confronted with her personality, was at a loss. ***Just go with your first instinct,*** *Ginny begged of it.*

" *SLYTHERIN!"*

…

Ginny blinked in shock. Whatever she had been expecting, it was *not* this.

Slytherin? But that was impossible. She was a Gryffindor through and through. She was *not* cunning. She was *not* sly. She was *not* a mean person. And she *only* hexed people who deserved it. And maybe some who didn't.

Maybe.

Are you sure that you chose correctly , Ginny started to inquire desperately, but the Hat was lifted away and now it was her time to

scurry to her new green-clad table – staying on the stool, wailing and demanding to have another go might look a little odd.

Oh well. At least the colours don't clash with my hair , was all that she thought as she began the long trek to the Slytherin table.

As she walked, Ginny felt someone's eyes upon her. It felt as though an interrogation searchlight was being shone brightly, burning a hole in her – but try as she might, she could not find the piercing gaze that watched her.

Giving up on finding the mysterious watcher, she sat in a vacant space between a smiling girl and a subdued-looking boy waiting patiently for the food to arrive.

"Hi," said Ginny, sitting, and smoothing out her knee-length black skirt. "What's your name?"

The girl had a big smile. Her light brown hair was in untidy waves, as if the tresses could not decide whether to be curly or straight, and from under a fringe sparkled blue eyes. "I'm Grace Hartwin," she replied. "Where did you transfer from?"

Oh, hell. What was my story? "London," Ginny responded, trying to make it sound as effortless as possible.

"Ooh, where?" inquired Grace, eagerly ladling potatoes onto her plate as they appeared.

"The… East," Ginny said smoothly, while her brain was secretly charging into gear creating facts and figures for her 'life'. *I'm going to have to write this down* .

"My nan lives in the East!" Grace exclaimed. "Maybe they're near each other. Whereabouts?"

OH. GOD.

"Um. Enfield."

That's in the East, right?

The boy beside Ginny leaned into the conversation, frowning. He had dark hair, dark eyes surrounded by long thick lashes that any girl would be jealous of, and freckles on his naturally tanned skin. "Enfield's in the North," he told her.

Oh. Well. Crap.

"Really?" Ginny gasped. "Oh, God! No wonder I was always so bad at finding my way around!" she let out a giggle, and hoped fervently that her useless cover-story would work.

Grace burst in laughter, slapping her hands to her mouth so as not to spray her half-digested potatoes (Ginny decided inwardly that she liked Grace a lot, plus their shared initials), and the boy grinned.

"So, who are you?" asked Ginny to the boy.

"Alden Philips," he replied, cutting up a piece of steak.

Philips… Philips… PHILIPS!

"D'you have a little brother?" asked Ginny.

"Only the most annoying little bugger in the world," Alden replied. "Why?"

"He joined this year, didn't he? I met him," said the redhead. *I knew that Alden was familiar! He's the brother of the kid I made a deal with!*

"So why did you transfer here?"

Ginny looked up at a voice behind her.

Standing there was a girl, her age, maybe a little older. A bit heavier than Ginny, and curvy, she was staring down at the redhead with cool, calculating green eyes like a cat's. Her tight blonde curls were

cut short and tamed into a neat little halo around her face. Her lips were lined with pink and they were pressed into a thin line. Her robes were fitted, in pristine condition, and adorned with many badges showing how wonderful she was.

"Hey," said Ginny, smiling, despite the girl's cold greeting.

"Hey *yourself* ," the girl replied snidely. "Why did you come to Hogwarts? Usually people join when they're eleven. You're a little big to be eleven, don't you think?"

Feeling a rush of dislike towards the snooty girl, Ginny retorted, "I'm not eleven. If you'd paid any attention to Dippet before I was Sorted, you'd know that I'm sixth-year. Or is that a problem with your ADD?"

The girl frowned. "What the hell is 'Ay-Dee-Dee'?" she demanded, settling her white-gloved hands on her shaped hips.

Damn. Time period. "Sorry. I thought that Attention Deficit Disorder might be a bit long for you," Ginny said, mocking kindness. "What I meant was… you're stupid. And another message to pass along here would be 'I don't like you'."

A smirk grazed the girl's lips. "I like your attitude," she said, extending a hand. "I'm Claude Felina Bastet, sixth-year, one-hundred percent pureblood, boyfriend of the hottest guy in school, and your new best friend."

Best friend.

Two girls, sitting at the bottom of a willow tree, laughing and dipping their hands in the water, the redhead flicking water at the bushy-haired brunette .

Ginny's eyes hardened to hazel steel. "I'm sorry," she said loudly, standing, "but I think you didn't hear me correctly. *I don't like you* . And I don't think I ever will. So go and sit back down with your make-up and your smug retorts, because standing up here is going to get

you *demolished* ." She snapped the final word, taking a threatening step forwards.

Claude and Ginny were up close now, noses almost touching. They were precisely the same height, and, staring into each other's eyes, neither would back down. Finally a teacher began to come over to see why everyone was jeering and placing bets, and Claude turned away, her emerald eyes narrowed dangerously.

Someone was watching her again. That piercing stare that seemed to burning a hole in her face. Not about to give the watcher the satisfaction of knowing that she did not know who he/she was, Ginny sat down again and, triumphant and pleased, continued to eat her peas.

"Oh. My. God." Grace's mouth was open. "In five minutes of being here, you've said to Claude what I've been wanting to say for *six years* ."

A grin made its way onto Ginny's face, and she started to chat happily to Alden and Grace, learning things about them and about Hogwarts (everything, of course, that she already knew). They were both Purebloods, though Grace had a Muggle ancestor many years back. Alden had a younger brother, Dominic, whom Ginny had already met, and a baby sister called Leah. Grace had an older brother called Jacob, who left Hogwarts last year and was training to be an architect for the Ministry of Magic.

Ginny hoped that the two Slytherins would not inquire about *her* , but as dinner disappeared, the conversation turned to her.

"Are you unlucky enough to have any brothers or sisters?" Alden inquired.

Bam. Ginny's heart stung. *Unlucky? Alden, you have no idea how lucky you are.* For a few totally ridiculous seconds, she even contemplated telling them, but then she came to her senses, and said quietly, "No."

"Lucky," Grace said sourly, and grabbed a last piece of cake before the food disappeared, her hand flying out so fast that it effectively sent the platter flying into a second-year's chest. "Oops!" she cried. "I'm really sorry!"

"Gra- *ace* ," Alden moaned, whipping out his wand. " *Scourgify* . Sorry about that," he apologized to the second-year, grimacing.

Why do I get the impression this happens often?

Cheerfully eating the chocolate cake, Grace at least had the decency to look a bit ashamed, but then focused on the wondrous food in her hands.

"Students!" called Dippet, stepping up to the podium. "I hope you have enjoyed your dinner-"

"Yep!" trilled Grace, dusting her hands off on her skirt.

"-and now, if you could continue to your dormitories. Prefects, if you could show the… oh. Bother." Dippet stopped, frowning. "Head Boy and Girl, if you could show the first-years to your houses. Tom, if you could show the Slytherins and Hufflepuffs? And Eleanor, the Gryffindors and Ravenclaws, please."

Ginny paid no attention to this, as she was continuing to chat amiably with her two new friends. She only acknowledged Dippet when he called across the Hall, "Miss Peregrine!"

Remembering who she was, Miss 'Peregrine' journeyed across to the Headmaster. "Yes, sir?" she asked politely.

"I seem to have forgotten to assign the Prefects. The Slytherin female Prefect has remained the same for two years, and I think it would do good to have a new one," said Dippet, observing her through hooded eyes. "Perhaps, if you would take the honour?"

The sixteen-year-old smiled. "Thank you, sir, I'd love to!" she said, and pinned the shiny golden badge onto the front of her robes.

"Your trunk will have been taken down to the Slytherin dormitories. I trust you know where it is. If not, ask a fellow student to help you. Tomorrow, after breakfast, before your classes, you will need to report to the Head dormitories for your assignments. That, which you will not know, is on the third floor, behind the portrait of Robin the Rich – the one with the tall hat," Dippet informed her. "The Head Boy and Girl will ensure that you settle in."

"Thank you," Ginny repeated. Then a thought struck her. "Oh – what are their names? The Head Boy and Girl. Just so I know who to find if I have a problem before then."

"Oh yes. Good thinking," said Dippet. He surveyed a piece of parchment, and then returned it to his pocket, looking again at the new Prefect. "They are Eleanor Fionn, Head Girl, in Gryffindor – I think you'll find her more accommodating – and then the Head Boy, in Slytherin. But you needn't worry about him."

"Well, what's his name? If he's in Slytherin, he might be easier to find in a time of trouble," Ginny pointed out.

"I suppose… though he is generally very difficult to find, even in an empty room," Dippet sighed. "Tricky lad. Very well, then. His name is Tom Riddle."

…

A/N: Dun dun DUN! Mwahaha. Haha. Hah. Ha. H. M. Please review and tell me what you thought! Thank you to my beta SilverXan , and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Pathetic Fights

A/N: This chapter is longer. I also warn you – this is not a happy fic. Everyone Ginny loves has died, and she's not getting off that easily. Beware of extreme angst.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish I did.

The Letter P

Chapter Five: P is for Pathetic Fights

" *They are Eleanor Fionn, Head Girl, in Gryffindor – I think you'll find her more accommodating – and then the Head Boy, in Slytherin. But you needn't worry about him."*

" *Well, what's his name? If he's in Slytherin, he might be easier to find in a time of trouble," Ginny pointed out.*

" *I suppose… though he is generally very difficult to find, even in an empty room," Dippet sighed. "Tricky lad. Very well, then. His name is Tom Riddle."*

…

The dreams returned.

Blood, pooling around her feet. Ron's screams echoed and echoed, of absolute agony, his face draining of all colour as his body rapidly emptied of blood onto the floor around her... her, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Charlie screamed out. "Ginny… go…" he ground out, before it twisted into another scream. His hands twisted in horrific, demonic shapes as he battled his own mind. "GO!" he howled, and then a blood vessel burst in his temple and it was on Ginny and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

The green light flashed brighter than anything, and a single tortured scream rose up from everyone present as their only saviour fell. Ginny was screaming louder than anyone. The green eyes of her first love widened, bulged, and then his glasses fell. And Harry tumbled forwards lifeless; Ginny ran to him, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** –

"Hit her!"

"Shut her up!"

"God, she's a freak."

"Ginny? *Ginny* !"

She launched herself forwards so abruptly, gasping for breath as she sat up, that the person straddling her was thrown sideways and onto the floor.

Blinking past a film of sleep on her hazel eyes, Ginny saw a group of sixteen-year-old girl staring at her. On the floor was a sprawled-out Grace, who was untangling her limbs; Claude was at the foot of her bed, lips pursed in disdain, with by two other girls; a few others clustered around, clinging to each other.

The redhead was terribly hot. She felt her face, and her fingers met a greasy combination of sweat and tears mingled together. She closed her eyes slowly in dread. *I knew this would happen* .

The nightmares had been plaguing Ginny ceaselessly for exactly now one year and a day. Or… rather, minus forty-eight years and a day.

"Are you alright?" Grace asked, scrambling back to her feet and straightening her nightdress. "You were screaming like mad." Her blue eyes were wide as marbles.

"Of course she's fine," snapped Claude. "She's just an attention-seeker."

"Like you, you mean?" Ginny muttered under her breath, wiping her face on her quilt – *I can't believe they have **quilts*** – before looking up again. "Honestly, Grace, I'm fine. Thanks, though."

Grace didn't look certain, but she didn't push it, and said, "Come on, get dressed. It's time for breakfast. Time to show off your shiny badge."

Ignoring her queasy stomach, Ginny grinned, and bustled over to her trunk, sorting through it. Last night, she had put on what she was told, and, at bedtime, ignored the neatly-folded clothes and grabbed her yellow twenty-first century T-shirt (at which Claude and her friends had winced and gossiped) and tugged it on. Now, however, she could have fun.

*Oh. My. God. I **love** the fifties' Hogwarts uniform.*

Lying there neatly was a plaid-skirt with a fashionable flare, in black, and a white blouse with kimono sleeves and a soft collar, with tidy, almost invisible buttons. Also there were flats – neat, plain black shoes similar to the ballet pumps that Ginny loved back in the twenty-first century – and little white socks that did, admittedly, make her cringe.

"Can't you wear tights?" she asked.

Grace stared. She had a look on her face that made it seem almost comical. It was as if Ginny had suggested they wear rainbow Wellingtons and a moose-head hat.

Obviously a no, then .

They both dressed, and Ginny tweaked the ends of her straight red hair. People had been looking at her and giggling. Straight, long hair was clearly not cool. *Well, screw them. I'll eat my own head before I*

willingly apply a Claude-look to my hair. Watching in amusement as Grace despaired of her messy hair (bushy today), Ginny slipped her golden pendant under her blouse, and hid the Time-turner at the bottom of her trunk.

"Let's roll," said Ginny, and Grace gave her an odd look.

Alden wasn't in the common room, so Ginny and Grace continued to breakfast with another girl in their dormitory, Flora Roosevelt, a girl with soft blonde curls and latte eyes, and a habit of always having a flower or plant of some sort in her hair.

"How's your darling, Gulistan?" asked Grace interestedly as they ascended the cold steps from the dungeons.

"Sshh!" hissed Flora frantically, looking around. She remembered that Ginny was there, and panicked. "Does Ginny know who he is?"

"Yes, I do," lied Ginny, pokerfaced. "And I'm going to tell him."

Flora's mouth fell open in horror, and Grace burst into laughter. "Ginny, that's horrible," she reprimanded, slapping the redhead on the arm before turning to the brunette and saying, "Don't worry, Flo, she doesn't know him, and she won't tell him you like him even if she did."

A feeble laugh escaped Flora's cherry-coloured lips, but she shot Ginny a suspicious look as they entered the Entrance Hall; the redhead gave the blonde a friendly, and hopefully reassuring, smile.

"Oh, look what the cat dragged in," sneered an irritatingly familiar voice.

Ginny raised an eyebrow. "Look what the toad coughed up," she replied, hands on hips in a posture that made her look uncannily like her late mother. She then noticed the boy beside Claude. "Oh, and here's the toad himself."

The boy stepped forwards angrily.

"Jack," said Claude sharply, and he retreated. It was obvious who was the boss of their relationship, though Jack, in appearance, was not one to be bossed about.

He was broad-shouldered, as if he played many sports, and tall. He was also quite handsome, with straight, strawberry-blonde hair combed into a ducktail-cut, spiking out at the back of his head, and sporting a moustache to make any World War One soldier proud.

Claude stepped forwards. "This is my boyfriend, Jack Swithin. Captain of the Slytherin Quidditch team, the best Beater there ever was, one-hundred pureblood, school Prefect, and the most sought-after guy in school. Jack, this is the transfer bitch I was telling you about."

"Nice to meet you, Jack. When's try-outs? I happen to be quite a good shot at Chaser," Ginny said, smiling. She knew that there was nothing that would annoy Claude more than if she made friends with her boyfriend.

The big Slytherin frowned. "But you're a girl," he said.

"Thank you, Captain Obvious," Grace drawled from the sidelines, smirking.

"I may be a girl, but I can probably play better than most people," Ginny said, stifling giggles at her friend's wry comment.

"What percentage blood status are you?" Claude suddenly butted in.

Ohh no. I knew this was coming.

Ginny pursed her lips together, knowing the response that her reply would get.

"Well?"

"I'm Muggleborn."

There was a silence. "No way," said Grace. "There hasn't been a Muggleborn in Slytherin since… like, ever."

"There's only one half-blood," cut in Flora, staring, wide-eyed at Ginny. "Everyone – *everyone* here is pureblood. Some have Muggleborn blood somewhere in their ancestry, some have half-blood somewhere. Few people are one-hundred percent pureblood-"

Claude and Jack smirked triumphantly.

"- but there's never been a… a zero percent in Slytherin before… there are barely any Muggle-borns in *all* of Hogwarts," Flora concluded, her lips slightly parted in awe and bewilderment.

Another awkward hush.

"So, now that's we've finalized that the transfer bitch is a *Mudblood* transfer bitch, can we move on?" Jack asked, looking longingly towards the Great Hall, from where scents of fabulous food was wafting out.

" *Don't* call her that!" snarled Grace, stepping forwards, teeth clenched.

"D.D.T," snapped Jack.

"What, and look like *you* ?" Grace retorted. "Ew, no thanks." She shot Claude and Jack a filthy look, before marching away, indicating for Ginny and Flora to follow.

"I *hate* her," Flora grumbled, sitting down and plucking some grapes off a bunch. "She's so annoying."

"What does 'D.D.T' mean?" Ginny inquired, still confused about what was clearly an insult, selecting the crispiest pieces of bacon and sliding them onto her plate.

"Don't you know?" asked Grace in surprise. "It stands for 'Drop Dead Twice'."

"No – I'm Irish, and we don't have that saying there. And in London, I didn't really get out much," Ginny lied, twisting a part of her worked-out story into it, to sound convincing.

It's a bit like saying 'get a life'. Drop Dead Twice. I might use that on someone back home.

If I ever get home .

Banishing such gloomy thoughts, Ginny happily forked a big piece of bacon into her mouth and munched on it happily.

The owls started to fly in, flapping their beautiful wings, speckling the Great Hall with shadows as they blocked out light from the windows and from the enchanted ceiling, dropping post, or landing delicately on the tables.

Thump .

"Astor!" Grace complained, fishing a small barn-owl out of her cereal. "Stop *doing* that every day!" She flicked some cornflakes off his wings, and then uncoiled the letter from his leg. Turning to Ginny, she said worriedly, "Did he get you wet? I'm really sorry if he did! He's just as clumsy as me, he *always* targets my cereal and splatters milk everywhere. I'm sorry."

Ginny laughed. "It's alright," she said, and buttered some toast.

"Where's *your* post, then, Peregrine?" taunted Claude, a few spaces down.

"Nasty little Mudblood parents can't afford an owl?" sneered Jack.

People were staring at her, after the word 'Mudblood'. Ginny could hear whispers of *'Muggle-born? Surely not* ' but she cast it aside. The watcher was back. And more piercing than ever.

"Or maybe they're *scared* of owls," cackled one of Claude's friends – it was clearly very un-wizardly to be frightened of owls.

"So where is your owl, Peregrine?" Claude simpered.

" *Pigwidgeon! Good boy – what's wrong?" Ginny asked. The tiny owl was flapping around in circles very fast, shrieking and screeching in obvious distress. Just as the redhead reached up to pluck it from the air, it abruptly stopped. Ginny wondered why… until she saw the short, red-soaked point of a knife sticking out of the fluffy owl's chest –*

"I don't have an owl," said Ginny calmly, taking another bite out of her slice of buttered toast.

Blood-

"Be realistic, now. Even if she *did* have an owl, who the hell would she write to? No-one likes her. No-one loves her. No-one-"

Pain-

"Okay, *shut up* !" shouted Ginny. She suddenly found that she was on her feet, glaring down the table at Claude, her piece of toast on the floor, forgotten and fallen from her fingers. "Shut. *Up* . You do not know what the hell you're talking about."

Screaming-

"Oooh," the entire Slytherin table chorused, looking on eagerly for a cat-fight.

They won't be disappointed.

"You have no idea what you're on about, Bastet. My best friends are a *million* miles away, where I can never see them, or contact them again," Ginny snapped. "And if they're not unreachable, then they're dead. My entire family – *everyone* in my family – my friends – everyone I have *ever* cared about – is *dead* . If you'll excuse me, I

think that right now, not having an owl is not *exactly* on the top of my priority list."

The sixteen-year-old girl didn't know what she was expecting in reply, but it wasn't this: Claude rolled her eyes, and said loudly, "Oh, pur- *lease* . It's not like the lack of your family is going to *matter* . No-one gives a damn about them. They're ***Muggles*** . Spilling their blood… it's like spilling mud. It doesn't matter. They don't matter. And *you* don't matter either."

Ginny's blood was boiling. She knew that her face was turning red, but she didn't care. All of her bodily strength was going towards not flying across the table and beating Claude to a pulp – she did not notice nor care when she reached down, picked up her plate, hefted it in one hand…

And threw it.

The smash resounded through the hall. Anyone who was not already watching was now, their attention drawn by the shouting and the noise.

Claude had thrown her hands up in front of her face just in time, so instead of cutting her pretty little features to pieces, her robes were torn and the back of her hand was scratched. "You…" she gasped. "You ripped my robes, you little *bitch* !"

"You have no idea," Ginny said, her voice quiet and dangerously low, "how it feels to lose *everything* ."

She felt Grace grab at her arm but she tugged away, snatched her schoolbag up, and stalked out of the Great Hall. Cheering and applause followed her, as well as the same mysterious stare, but Ginny didn't care. She ran up to the nearest bathroom, threw open the door, slammed the door shut and screamed. Screamed long and loud and high-pitched until it echoed all around the small room and threatened to drown her.

Then she picked up her bag and hurled it at the mirror. Glass flew everywhere and so did the contents of Ginny's schoolbag, but she soundlessly collapsed to the floor, not caring about her bag, and sobbed into her hands.

What would my friends and family think if they saw that?

Fred and George would high-five me and ask me to record it next time. Percy and mum would lecture me. Dad would say he was disappointed in me. Charlie and Bill would tell me to apologize. And Ron would say whatever I wanted to hear so that I would cheer up and feel better… Seamus and Harry would cheer. Hermione would sigh and tell me not to do things like that. Luna would make a strange comment. Neville would quietly say that he loved it, but would pretend that he hadn't if anyone else asked him. Dumbledore would-

God, I miss them all so much.

Ginny cried harder, feeling a year of pain wash out of her, out through her eyes and into her hands. She cried for her family, she cried for her friends, she cried for her brother's friends, she cried for her boyfriend, she cried for Dumbledore, abandoned, she cried for being trapped in 1958, she cried for hating Claude, and, most of all, she cried for herself.

*I hate… **hate** Voldemort for what he's done. I have to stop him. I have to help. I have to…*

… *meet him in the Head dorms after breakfast! I'm late!*

She jumped to her feet, and stepped on her bag, along with a lot of shattered glass. Seven years' bad luck.

I have enough bad luck for twenty.

"Scourgify," Ginny muttered, cleaning up the ink from her smashed ink-pots. "Evanesco." She Vanished the broken glass, and then, with

a sweep of her wand, her books flew untidily back into the bag. She peered into what was left of the mirror, fixed a bit of smudged green eyeliner, and then hurried away, hoping that her blotchy eyes weren't noticeable.

Up the stairs… around the corner… down the stairs… through the tapestry-hidden corridor that Hermione had shown her… and there it was! The painting of Robin the Rich.

"Er," said Ginny. "Can I go in? I'm a Prefect."

Robin dismounted his strong, white horse, and sauntered towards Ginny. "Do you have the password?" he inquired in a deep, high-and-mighty voice.

"But I'm a Prefect. And I'm already late."

"Does it look as if I care? I want the password."

"I won't be able to find it, it's in my pockets somewhere. It'll take me years."

"I suggest you start looking, then."

With a groan, Ginny started to dig in her pockets. Robin the Rich gave a dignified *humph* as she emptied her robes, and then Ginny found the slip of paper. "Er… conda… no, condel…? *Condolesam* , that's it," Ginny said triumphantly, beaming.

"Yes," said Robin, and his got back onto his steed before saying, "you may enter."

Ginny wiped at the skin under her eyelashes, just checking for any stray eyeliner, and raked a hand backwards through her red hair, pulling it nervously over her left shoulder as she waited impatiently for the Head dormitories' door to open.

The painting swung forwards. And Ginny stepped inside.

…

A/N: OMG! NO, GINNY, DON'T! RIDDLE'S IN THERE! Hehe. Review, please! Thank you to my beta SilverXan , and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Prefects

A/N: Wow! We meet Tommy-boy! GAHH the excitement!

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish I did.

The Letter P

Chapter Five: P is for Pathetic Fights

Chapter Six: P is for Prefects

Ginny wiped at the skin under her eyelashes, just checking for any stray eyeliner, and raked a hand backwards through her red hair, pulling it nervously over her left shoulder as she waited impatiently for the Head dormitories' door to open.

The painting swung forwards. And Ginny stepped inside.

…

Her brow furrowed as her eyes strained to adjust to the change of lighting. It was brighter in here than in the corridor.

Immediately, there, standing right in front of her, was a boy. With a Head Boy badge gleaming on his chest. That meant that he was Head Boy. And that meant that he was Tom Riddle. And that meant that he was Voldemort.

Her breath stopped in her chest, and her heart skipped several beats as she stared up at him in fear. He was the one who'd haunted her childhood nightmares, though he had always, in dreams, had crimson eyes and vampire-like teeth. Now he was before her, living and breathing and very *real* .

And he was very tall.

Ginny had always been short, and Tom Riddle was tall, even for tall people. He was quite literally towering over her – but he was not how she had expected him, or remembered him.

I'm sure that the Tom Riddle who possessed me was shorter. Maybe its because that was when he was fifteen. Did he grow a mile in two years?

He was tall, as said previously, and lean. His hair was not in the standard fifties' ducktail-cut that every other boy sported, but rather combed neatly in thick waves, and it was very dark – but Ginny knew that it wasn't black. A few strands fell into his eyes; sharp, dark, and calculating. Ginny couldn't tell the colour, but there was a sudden pang inside of her that told her something she did not need nor *want* to hear.

Tom Riddle was good-looking.

Not something I needed. Fancying the Dark Lord? Excuse me, but ***ew***

"You're late," he said. It was impossible to describe the way he spoke; cold, rather formal, quiet, and as though he uttered every word carefully, getting each syllable out with perfect pronunciation. He had an accent, too, though it was not one that Ginny could place, and with every letter, silver flashed in his mouth, something strangely intimidating and distracting at the same time.

Breathe, Ginny, breathe. In – out – in - out. Now reply.

"I got lost," she said, "I'm new."

Riddle was watching her, his eyes scrutinizing her face. In an instant, Ginny knew – he was the watcher. He had been staring at her through the Sorting, and through dinner, and through breakfast. Why?

Finally, the Head Boy said, "I know."

"Um. My name's Ginny Peregrine," she offered, attempting to force her facial features into something resembling a smile.

Again the stare. "Riddle," he replied, silver glinting, and then turned away, walking back towards the squashy sofas around the fire, where others sat. There were the Prefects from every House, male and female, and the Head Girl.

"Hey, you must be Ginevra Peregrine," said the Head Girl, standing. She was average height – not a midget, like Ginny, but not a giant, like Riddle – and pretty. Her blonde hair was softly curled around in her ears in what Ginny recognized as the famous fashion of the fifties, with a gentle fringe curving into her twinkling eyes, rather like Dumbledore's own sparkling blue.

"Ginny," she corrected, with a smile.

"Oh, sorry. I'm Eleanor Fionn, Head Girl," the older girl replied, and gestured around. Everyone introduced themselves.

The Hufflepuff Prefects were a slim black girl with fabulous eye make-up called Antonia Durrell, and a friendly boy named Gareth Coville with shocking platinum hair in resemblance to the Malfoys' legendary tresses. Gryffindor had a brown-haired beauty named Mia Brown (Ginny knew without a doubt that this must be an ancestor of Lavender, and felt a paroxysm of loss inside her), and a quiet, chunky boy named Robert Harris.

The Ravenclaws bore Olive Hornby, a snide Welsh girl with a superior attitude, and a friendly boy with an Italian appearance to his handsome features named Scott Reeve. And, finally, to Ginny's displeasure, the male Slytherin Prefect was Jack Swithin, who smirked his greeting across the coffee table to her.

"So, where'd you transfer from?" asked Eleanor interestedly as Ginny sat down beside Antonia.

"Er," said Ginny. "London. But I'm actually Irish," she added for good measure, and grimaced as she pointed towards her flaming red hair.

Eleanor's eyes widened. "Really? Oh, me too! Did you learn Wizarding Gaelic? Ego can non put out illic est denique alius alio ex Irlanz! Nos ire habeo adeo funes, fides mihi!" she chattered delightedly, in what was obviously Wizarding Gaelic.

Come again?

"Sorry," said Ginny, trying to look sincere and disappointed, "I haven't lived in Ireland since I was a baby, so I don't actually know Wizarding whatever. Gaelic. That."

"Oh." The Head Girl looked put-out.

"Once you've *quite* finished," Riddle interrupted. Ginny stared pointedly at the ground to avoid having her eyes drawn to the annoying sparkling metal. "This was not called as a social session. We have matters to discuss."

He looked at Eleanor. It was not a frown nor a glare, but even a casual glance was aloof and frosty. The Head Girl on the receiving end of the look cleared her throat. "Of course," she said. "Hallowe'en is fast approaching, and, as we do every year, we need to think of an event to mark it. Last year's Hallowe'en bake sale raised the Galleons for our new Quidditch hoops, which we are very proud of. However, I'm thinking that we need something more fun, more exciting, for this Hallowe'en."

Robert Harris' mouth fell open. "What could be more exciting and fun than *food* ?" he exclaimed.

Well, we have the Neville Longbottom of 1958.

"How about a dance?" suggested Antonia Durrell, tossing her silky black hair over her shoulder. "A big fancy ball like Durmstrang had at the last Triwizard Tournament. That'd be fun."

"Yes, it would be, but it has to be something for all years, and any ball has age restrictions," Eleanor mused.

"We could have a disco for the under-fourteens," Ginny suddenly said. All eyes turned to her. "A Hallowe'en disco, for anyone under fourth-years, while the seniors have their ball. It would keep the younger ones from trying to gatecrash, and it would keep them out of the way. We could have everyone in costume, and a competition for the best."

"I think that's great!" Eleanor said enthusiastically. "All in favour for the ball-and-disco idea?"

Ginny, all the girls, Scott Reeve and Gareth Coville raised their hands. Jack Swithin and Robert Harris did not – Ginny smirked to see that neither did Riddle.

"Majority rules," declared Eleanor. "Now, let's have two teams. One works on the ball, and the other works on the disco. *Equal* teams, please."

Riddle took a piece of parchment for his bag, wrote *Hallowe'en Ball* on it, and then his name underneath. His handwriting was very small, neat, and precise, with tidy flicks at the end of every letter. He sat back, as if to show that his decision was final. "I'm not working with glitter and fashion parades for the younger ones," he said.

"So you choose the Ball," teased Eleanor. "Glitzy dresses and fabulous dancing? Didn't see it as your kind of thing, Tom."

The seventeen-year-old did not reply, but it was obvious from the eye-narrowing and lip-curling that he did not appreciate the mockery, and even less did he like being called by his first name.

Scott Reeve, Gareth Coville, Antonia Durrell, and Mia Brown, signed their names; Eleanor wrote another paper for the disco, her writing as different from Riddle's as possible – big, bubbly, and bright –

which was signed by Eleanor, Olive Hornby, Robert Harris and Jack Swithin.

Ginny allowed her eyes to flick over the alternating pieces of paper. She did not take in the decision, merely looked at the letters of *Tom Riddle* . Pursing her lips together in distaste, she picked up the quill and scrawled her name beneath Jack's, on the Hallowe'en disco form. Away from he who had made her life hell.

"Alright, then, Ginny, you're with us," said Eleanor cheerfully. These words caused a flicker of something unreadable in the dark, alert male eyes on the main sofa, which no-one but the redhead noticed. "Any ideas?"

"Just a few little sketched-out thoughts ," said Ginny, leaning forwards. She began to describe in detail her plans for the disco – the orange-and-black paper chains, the enchanted plastic-skeletons dancing around the room, the fabulous music playing, the dance routines taught to the students, and the food, at which Robert's eyes lit up.

It's my birthday, so I want it to be the best party ever.

And also , she contemplated, her eyes resting on the lean dark-haired boy across the room, *the day that, forty-eight years from now,* ***you*** *will fall – the final fall before the climb that will destroy life as we know it.*

Unless I get to you first. And believe me ***, I will*** .

…

A/N: Wow. Not very interesting. What did you think of Riddle? Sorry that it's so short. I hope that you liked it. REVIEW! Thank you to my beta SilvANXan (See? I can say it right if I want to), and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Potions Notes

A/N: More TMR-GAP action. Haha. Gap. Anyway. This is a HILARIOUS chapter. Or at least I thought so. But I laugh at my brother going 'boom-cha-boom-cha', which isn't very funny, so I suppose I'm not one to pay attention to humour. Anyway. Continue to the fic, now. DO IT.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Seven: P is for Potions Notes

" *Just a few little sketched-out thoughts ," said Ginny, leaning forwards. She began to describe in detail her plans for the disco – the orange-and-black paper chains, the enchanted plastic-skeletons dancing around the room, the fabulous music playing, the dance routines taught to the students, and the food, at which Robert's eyes lit up.*

It's my birthday, so I want it to be the best party ever. And also *, she contemplated, her eyes resting on the lean dark-haired boy across the room,* ***the day that, forty-two years from now, you will fall – the final fall before the climb that will destroy life as we know it.***

Unless I get to you first. And believe me, I will.

…

The weather was already cooling, and Ginny took to wearing her green-and-silver Slytherin scarf everywhere, against the cold of the dungeons, where she now resided, as opposed to the high Gryffindor tower, which was close to the sun and therefore always warm.

Scratching down quickly the final notes of her Potions homework, someone tugged on the end of said green-and-silver scarf. Ginny whirled her head around – but no-one was there. A piece of crumpled paper, she now realized, was inside her loosely-curled fist.

What on earth…?

Glancing around to check that Professor Slughorn's attention was not upon her, Ginny uncurled her fingers and opened the parchment.

Don't return to the Slytherin common room immediately. Bastet, Swithin, and Ramira are planning to ambush you. Go somewhere else. –Scott Reeve.

Ginny looked around the dank classroom. Surrounding her were the greens and blues of Slytherin and Ravenclaw. She scanned the blues, and found that, a few rows behind her, the Italian-English boy was looking at her. She held his gaze, and then nodded, to say that he understood.

Scott flashed her a dazzling smile, and then returned his dark eyes to his work. Ginny followed suit, and as the bell rang, she was confused as to where to go. Grace was not in her Potions class – they had agreed to meet in the common room, but she couldn't go there – and Alden was in her class, but he was sick.

She could go and see Alden in the Hospital Wing, but she didn't feel like it. Plus, he'd probably be asleep. She tossed her things into her new schoolbag (her old one had been pretty much destroyed after she had lobbed it at the mirror. Dippet had made an announcement about the broken mirror at dinner that day. She did not own up) and slung it onto her shoulder.

"Thanks," she said gratefully to Scott as she passed him, smiling.

The Ravenclaw winked, and headed off with a cluster of his friends. He was obviously quite popular. *I thought that he was a bit of an arrogant idiot* , Ginny thought to herself. *He's nice. Not many*

Ravenclaws would help the fierce Slytherin transfer. He's smart, as well. And the fact that he was extremely handsome, with his softly curling dark hair and warm brown eyes, had not escaped her either.

Feeling her face heat up, Ginny shook her head and hurried away, up the steps, away from the dungeons. *Where to now?* Feeling the weight of her homework, she decided on the library, and headed there, glancing over her shoulder nervously to check that Claude and Jack were not following her.

Stop being so paranoid , she scolded herself, and pushed open the wooden oak doors. She automatically moved towards the tables, and stopped dead when she saw that they were all full.

Except for one.

And that table was mostly occupied by Tom Riddle.

For one ridiculous moment, Ginny was paralyzed by fear. Then she reprimanded herself that he was just a teenage boy, like any other.

Aside from the fact that most teenage boys aren't evil masterminds by the age of fifteen.

Stop that!

Ginny cleared her throat loudly.

Riddle did not look up.

"Um. Can I sit here?" she asked, after a pause to ensure that he knew she was there.

Only then did his eyes flick up to her – and they did, so swiftly that had they been solidly landing upon her, she might have staggered. Unlike most people, Riddle did not look at one's face; he looked directly into her eyes. Something he had not done when he first met her.

It was like being under a spotlight. Ginny did not waver; she raised her eyebrows, as if to say: 'Well?', along with to prove to herself that she was scared of this tall, frightening seventeen-year-old.

"I'm not stopping you," Riddle said, silver glinting in his mouth, though he didn't sound remotely inviting. There, however, the contact broke, and he looked down again at his book – an extremely thick one, and one that, Ginny smirked to remember, Hermione would have finished in an hour.

She didn't say anything though, and pulled back the chair opposite him. On a spur of the moment, she childishly made as much noise as possible when dropping her bag onto the ground and slamming her books onto the table.

As Ginny picked up her quill, her parchment, and the book assigned to write about, she looked up at Riddle. He was watching her, irritation evident in every muscle in his face, shining especially in his dark eyes.

"Yes?" she asked sweetly, smiling as innocently as possible, biting back laughter.

Riddle's lips thinned. "I didn't say anything," he replied curtly, and lowered his gaze to his book.

Inwardly cheering, Ginny opened her Astronomy book and began to write her opinions on the text, and, using her wand and the window nearby, which showed the dimming sky, she made a prediction of the stars' movements in the next few days.

As time passed, hunger dawned on Ginny's stomach, and she fished in her robes for her half-eaten chocolate bar.

*Fifties' chocolate is **so** good* , she mused as she munched absent-mindedly through it.

The words "What are you eating?" broke through Ginny's train of thought. She looked up and saw Riddle, frowning at her.

"Oh." She reddened, remembering that food and/or drink was banned from the library. She quickly hid it back in her robes pockets, rewrapping it in her pocket. "Nothing," she lied.

One of Riddle's slim dark brows raised slightly (*the height of sophistication* , Ginny thought dryly *, to possess the ability of raising* ***one*** *eyebrow. It must come with Parseltongue*), and then he told her sardonically, "If that's the case, then you have quite a lot of *nothing* smeared on your cheek."

Ginny flushed red, and, tugging her robe sleeve over her fingers, wiped each of her cheeks in turn. "Anything else?" she said heatedly, trying to hide her embarrassment.

"Yes," said Riddle.

Yes? Who says 'yes'? It's so formal. What happened to 'yeah, whatever'?

And will he stop making his mouth flash? It's ***so*** *distracting! What, does he have a tongue piercing? Unlikely.*

"Why are you in here?" he continued, resting his elbows on the arm-rests of his chair.

"Erm, because I'm doing my homework?" Ginny pointed out, gesturing towards her books and parchment.

"Don't you have a common room to do homework in?" Riddle said.

"Don't you have a Head common room to *read* in?" demanded the redhead in return, getting cross with the future Dark Lord's attitude.

"Yes, I do, but it's currently being used by the Head Girl to hold one of her ridiculous girl-talk, toenail-painting, hair-curling parties,"

responded Riddle, his disgust obvious. "Excuse me if I don't wish to take part in such activities."

"What, no pretty pink toenails?" simpered Ginny, smirking.

"No," said Riddle flatly.

*Perfect irritation opportunity. And I'm **taking** it. If it comes to this, I think I'll **annoy** you to death. Hah!*

" *My* toenails are pink," Ginny informed him, though this was not true. "Want to see?" she fluttered her eyelashes at him.

"No, I do *not* ," replied Riddle, his lip curled in repulsion.

"Aw, I bet you do," grinned Ginny. " *Here it cooooomes* !" she sang. She removed her shoe and pretended that she was preparing to take off her sock as well.

" *Move that sock one inch further down your foot and I will jinx your head off* ."

Ginny looked around in shock at Riddle. His voice was a low growl, and his wand was out, pointing across the table at her face. His eyes were narrowed dangerously, and he looked deadly serious.

"Okay, okay," she said, eyes widening, and, trying to hide her fear, she put her shoe back on. "Jesus Christ, Riddle. Couldn't you just threaten to take off House points?"

Now he lowered his wand, and returned it to his pocket. "I'm in your House; I'd be removing my own points," he replied shortly. "Besides," his eyes flickered back up to hers, scrutinizing her face, before darting away, "jinxing off someone's head is immensely satisfying."

The redhead smirked. "My thoughts exactly."

There was a silence.

"You still haven't told me why you're here," said Riddle. Ginny saw his gaze flash to her face again, briefly, from under his thick fringe. "I had a feminine party to avoid. What's your excuse?"

She sighed. For one crazy moment she actually *considered* telling him.

*Don't be stupid! If he hears that people are trying to ambush you, then he will presume that you are **weak** and an **easy target.***

"Nothing," she replied.

"Or have you come merely to irritate me and distract me from my work?"

"Now why would I do a childish thing like that?"

"Childish basically sums up everything you've done so far at this table, Peregrine. Don't sound so shocked."

"I'm not shocked."

"Why are you here?"

"To annoy you. Isn't it obvious?"

"Why!?"

"Because you're infuriating!"

"I'm infuriating. *I'm* infuriating? Says she, ' *Want to see my toenails* '?"

"Part of the master plan, Riddle."

"I agonize to think how you became a Prefect."

"And I, of you Head Boy!"

" *What the hell is **that** supposed to mean* ?" Riddle growled, his eyes flashing dangerously again.

"CHILDREN!" Madam Crofton moved into view between the rows of bookshelves. She was a tiny, but very intimidating specimen of librarian. She bore beady eyes that could cut you down at ten paces, and a voice that never whispered.

The sight that met her was of two furious teenagers, both standing, either side of one of the library tables, looking as though they would be quite happy to leap, throttle, and kill the other. They each had their own way of showing anger – one towering threateningly, eyes narrowed lethally under a fringe of what looked night-black but probably wasn't; the other, face coloured and screwed up, eyes glowing like coals, chin tilted up so that flaming hair spilled back further down her back than normal. The comic thing was that the female barely came up to Head Boy's shoulders.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THE LIBRARY CLOSED AN HOUR AGO," Madam Crofton bellowed at them. "YOU'LL MISS CURFEW IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL. HONESTLY. TEENAGERS THESE DAYS."

Ginny turned away from Riddle, and said apologetically to Madam Crofton, "I'm terribly sorry, miss. I must have not noticed the time fly by, what with all our," her eyes flew sideways in a hazel glare that would have terrorized even Professor Snape, yet the boy at whom it was directed seemed unfazed, cold as ever, " *sweet-talking* ."

With that, she swept her things into her bag, tossed it onto her shoulder, and left the library.

Arrogant toe-rag.

So thought the redhead as she stormed down the dungeon stairs. It was growing dark, and the only breaking of the gloom was the flickering torch-light that cast dancing shadows on the cold stone walls.

If I had my way , Ginny thought crossly, *then the Hallowe'en disco would just be for my birthday. And Tom up-himself Riddle would* ***not*** *be invited.*

She folded her arms across her chest as she trotted the last few steps, and then turned the corner to the Slytherin dormitory. "Ophiuchus," she told the bust of Salazar Slytherin, speaking the name of the famous star constellation that depicted the serpent-bearer.

The stone Salazar tilted his head. The stone snake around his neck uncoiled and lifted its head until it was level with Ginny's face. Then, in spoke, in Parseltongue, " *You are being watched* ."

Ginny was not particularly surprised. " *I know* ," she replied, in the same tongue – she had woken up in the Chamber of Secrets, aged eleven, covered in blood, and talking to Harry, not in English, it seemed. " *I am not worried by it* ."

The snake nodded. " *Very well, my Lady.* " It returned to its place on Salazar's shoulders, and then the bust creaked downwards, into the floor. An iron grate whooshed over where it now hid, so that Ginny could pass easily; and she did so, a doorway pushed its way out of the stone. She stepped through, and knew that Riddle would be astonished, hiding in the shadows, by her language skills.

"Ginny!" shouted Grace, jumping to her feet. She scrambled from the circle of armchairs by the fire, running –

No, no, ***slow down*** –

Foot caught on carpet. Foot staying still – body continuing forwards.

"Wah!" rang through the common room, attracting everyone's attention just in time to see Grace land spectacularly on her face. There was a silence. Then: "I'm okay."

" *Grace* , stop doing that!" Ginny said, hurrying over to her. "For heaven's sake, slow down."

The sprawled-out brunette picked herself up off the ground, demanded, "Yes?" to a group of staring second-years who scurried away, and then turned back to Ginny. "You promised you'd meet me here!" she said crossly.

Glancing around, Ginny grabbed Grace's elbow and tugged her away from everyone else's view. Then, in whispers, she said, "Be careful. I got a message saying that Claude was trying to ambush me, so she might try you as well."

Blue eyes widening, Grace exclaimed, "That nosebleed paper-shaker!"

"Sorry, what?" said Ginny incredulously.

"Like…" Grace searched for a word to explain. "Nosebleed… like stupid. Paper-shaker… sort of… a stupid girl. An annoying girl." She rolled her eyes. "It's so hard having you not understand anything."

*Well, sorr **y***

"Who gave you the note?" Grace suddenly asked. "It might have been a set-up."

"Scott Reeve."

The other Slytherin's eyes glittered mischievously and a smirk spread across her lips. "Is he a Prefect?"

"… Yeah."

"Ravenclaw."

"Yeah."

" *Totally hot* ?"

Ginny went red. "I don't know," she muttered, swallowing hard.

Again Grace's eyes turned into wide orbs of astonishment. "You – you – *OhmigodyoufancyScottReeve* !" she babbled delightedly, clapping her hands together.

Heat flooded Ginny's features. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said stubbornly, and marched away to her room.

…

A/N: TEEHEE. Was that a funny chapter or WHAT? Well, I thought it was funny. Scott? And Ginny? Who saw that coming? I did. REVIEW! Thank you to my beta SilvANXan (See? I can say it right if I want to), and enjoy the rest of the fic!

P is for Plans

A/N: Hm. Some TMR-GAP action. And some SR-GAP action (that's Scott Reeve, by the way). Grace is very random in this chapter. Teehee. It's SO fun to write random things.

ATTENTION: I received loads of reviews asking if, in the last chapter, Ginny was flirting with Riddle. The answer is EW NO! Sorry. I mustn't have been clear enough. I was setting their relationship up – Ginny thinks Riddle is an arrogant arsehole, Riddle thinks Ginny is immature and annoying, and they basically hate each other and argue all the time. That is all.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Eight: P is for Plans

Ginny turned away from Riddle, and said apologetically to Madam Crofton, "I'm terribly sorry, miss. I must have not noticed the time fly by, what with all our," her eyes flew sideways in a hazel glare that would have terrorized even Professor Snape, yet the boy at whom it was directed seemed unfazed, cold as ever, "sweet-talking."

Again Grace's eyes turned into wide orbs of astonishment. "You – you – OhmigodyoufancyScottReeve!" she babbled delightedly, clapping her hands together.

Heat flooded Ginny's features. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said stubbornly, and marched away to her room.

…

Alden soon returned from the Hospital Wing, paler than usual, but healthy nonetheless. Still colder the weather grew, much to Ginny's

chagrin, but she was used to it after six years in Hogwarts (or one month, depending on what you knew).

Grace, Ginny and Alden had decided to go for a walk, to celebrate the coming of autumn; kick through the crisp brown leaves; generally enjoy the outdoors.

"Brrr," said Ginny, hugging herself. "I wish it was warmer."

"I don't!" chirped Grace, flinging her arms out and twirling in a circle. "I hope it gets colder and colder and colder until it snows, and then we'll have snowball fights and make snow angels, and then it'll be Christmas, and they'll be mistletoe, so Gin can get snogged by Scott Reeve and-"

"Oi!" shouted Ginny, and aimed a swift kick at the brunette's shin.

"-and – *ow* ! – that was unfair, Ginny, you know you want to – *OW* – seriously, that hurts – *what was that one for* ?" screeched Grace. She pouted. "That time, I didn't even say anything!"

"I know," Ginny grinned.

Rolling his eyes, Alden said, "you two are so childish."

"That's what Riddle said," Ginny made a face. "I quote: ' *well, childish basically sums up everything you've done so far, nya nya nya, I'm a retard and I'm gay and I* -'"

"Ginny!" a voice called across the grounds.

The trio looked around and saw a familiar handsome Italian Ravenclaw heading towards them. Ginny shot Grace a warning look; the brunette's hands were already clapped over her mouth and stifling hysterical giggles.

"If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all," Ginny hissed.

Grace opened her mouth… paused… opened again… "I…" paused… she shook her head, messy curls flying. "I got nothing," she said with a shrug.

With an exasperated sigh, Ginny turned away from Grace and towards Scott. "Hey Scott," she said with a smile.

The other Prefect grinned in return. "Hey, cat," he said –

"Ooh, *cat* , is it now?" hissed Grace gleefully; Ginny whacked her in the ribs with her elbow.

… and Scott, seemingly unaware of this exchange, continued, "I don't know if you were told, but the date of the next Prefect meeting changed."

"Oh!" Ginny was surprised. "Really? To when?"

Scott grimaced. "Now."

The redhead's mouth fell open. " *Damnit* !" she gasped. "I'm really, really late, aren't I?"

"Just a little," Scott said. "Don't worry. Eleanor loves you; she won't tell you off."

"Any bets on Riddle?" said Ginny dryly. Knowing the answer before Scott could answer, she turned back to Alden and Grace. "I'm sorry, I'll catch up with you later, 'kay?"

"Sure," Alden nodded. "Bye, then."

"See ya later, alligator," Grace said.

Ginny gave her an appraising look. *See you later, alligator? I used that when I was about* ***five*** She shook her head slightly. *Some things I will* ***never*** *get used to.* "Alright, bye."

"Oh, and Ginny?"

She turned back to Grace. "Yes?"

A wink and a thumbs-up were cast in her direction. Glaring, and feeling her cheeks grow hot enough to fry eggs on, Ginny followed Scott into the Hogwarts building.

"So, when were you told about the change of date?" asked Ginny.

"I was told by Professor Selene this morning. I've been trying to find you since breakfast to tell you – I know that Slughorn doesn't really remember messages like he did a few centuries back," joked Scott.

He thought of me! Aaaahhhh…

*He's so cute when he's talking. And when he's walking. He's cute **all** the time. But especially now. With his curly hair and his bright eyes and his shiny teeth and his –*

"Hello?" Scott waved his hand in front of Ginny's face. "Anyone home?"

Ginny started. "Oh – yeah. Sorry. Different planet," she laughed feebly, humiliation seeping through every bone in her body.

Scott laughed. "I know how it is," he tossed her a dazzling grin, before turning to Robin the Rich, before them, and said clearly, "*Condolesam* ."

Before Robin the Rich could even dismount his horse, the painting clicked open, and the wealthy, portly painted-man was clearly affronted by this rudeness. Ginny stuck her tongue out at him cheekily, and at that precise moment the painting opened.

Her tongue quickly retreated back into her mouth as she stared up at Riddle. "Um. Hello," she said, trying to keep her breathing steady. It was not helping by Scott having a wheezy – and adorable – laughing fit beside her.

Riddle stared down coldly at her, not speaking.

"I wasn't poking my tongue out at *you* , it was Robin the Rich, and then the painting opened, and you were there, so it was really bad timing, and now this is sort of awkward…" Ginny said lamely.

The seventeen-year-old ignored this comment, and instead said frostily, "Is being late for everything a habit of yours?" His eyes glinted, and Ginny could tell that he was dying to add more, but was – wisely – keeping it to himself.

"Oh yes," said Ginny cattily. "We all have our little habits. Mine is being late, and yours is being an obnoxious up-yourself arsehole ninety-nine percent of the time."

Then she froze.

Oh God. I didn't mean to say that out loud. I just called the Dark Lord up-himself. Oh. ***God*** *. Kill me now. He's going to eat me alive. Oh hell. Oh* ***hell*** *. Oh hell oh hell oh hell –*

Apparently, everyone else in the Head common room was thinking along the same train of thoughts – Scott looked panicked, and Eleanor was rapidly miming slashing her throat. *That helps.*

Strangely, however, Riddle did not 'eat her alive'. His eyes momentarily flashed with anger, but was replaced by something unreadable, and then, mouth glittering metal, he said coolly, "Touché."

Wow. He didn't kill me. I should slap myself to check I'm awake. Except that if I am, it'll hurt, and I'll also look very stupid. Bad idea.

Riddle turned sharply on his heel and returned to the sofas. He sat in the same spot that he sat in every week, sitting as though he was in a hard-backed chair as opposed to a squashy settee.

Ginny sat between Scott and Antonia Durrell. She opened her mouth to try and spark some conversation between her and Scott, but Riddle interrupted and said, "Today, as those intelligent of us would

know, is the fifteenth of October. The time to prepare for our delightful ball-and-disco is growing short."

He didn't speak the word 'intelligent' any differently from the others, nor did he look at Ginny, but the redhead knew where the emphasis lay. Her lips pursed, and she glared down at her feet.

Arrogant git.

"I think that we should each nominate the leaders of the teams, as a sort of president of the decisions," said Eleanor.

"Very well," said Riddle, and wrote down *President* next to his name. "If the ball could come this way, and we could be quite separated so that each party will be unique." He cast a glance at Eleanor.

Basically translating as: 'everyone over here, we don't want them to copy and spoil our ideas'. Ginny rolled her eyes. ***I'm** childish?*

Ignoring Riddle, Eleanor cast a thoughtful glance about the members of her group, and then said, "I nominate Ginny."

The female Slytherin Prefect blinked. "But-" she stammered. "What? You're Head Girl! It should be you."

Eleanor laughed. "Ginny, I'm not Riddle. Just because I'm Head Girl doesn't make me Ruler of Universe. Plus," she shrugged delicately, "you came up with the idea in the first place."

Agreeing, the group leaned in and started to animatedly discuss their ideas. A few minutes later, Riddle called them all together to outline what would be happening on Hallowe'en.

"Who is the leader of your group?" asked Riddle, leaning back in his seat.

"Me," replied Ginny smoothly. She cocked her eyebrows, a smirk playing across her lips, and was pleased to see a look of irritation flash through the dark eyes fixed on her. "Happy?"

"Very," Riddle responded, his voice flat, and it seemed as though he was gritting his teeth, though he wasn't.

"So what's your plan?" Eleanor prompted.

"A masquerade ball," said Scott, holding up a sheet of parchment with detailed and very artistic sketches. He winked at Ginny, before returning his gaze to the Head Girl, and continuing, "it will be for the fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-years, and because there will only be three years of students attending, as opposed to the four years of students going to the disco, we will be holding the ball in the Room of Requirements, which leaves the Great Hall free for the disco."

"Works well with us," said Eleanor, looking around her team. "Now. Ginny?"

The redhead scanned Scott's drawings, before saying, "I'm working here from your ideas. The dinner feast should be cancelled. This gives us time to clear the Great Hall. Food can be given at the ball and the disco. We'll need to arrange that with the house-elves. At seven o'clock, the first-, second-, third-, and fourth-years can go in there. At nine o'clock, the seniors will go the Room of Requirement. The disco should end at ten, I think." She glanced at Eleanor for approval, and received a nod.

"What about the ball?" inquired Antonia, looking towards Riddle.

"Midnight."

Ginny chuckled. "Like Cinderella," she explained with a grin to the blank faces around her.

No-one replied.

… *No-one understands. Is this such a pureblood school that* ***no-one*** *has heard of Cinderella? I don't believe it – none of them get it* .

However, that was not entirely true. Ginny looked over and was surprised to see that Riddle's lips were quirked slightly upwards in a small smirk of dry amusement.

But… why did *he* understand? He was a pureblood above all others – what did he know of Muggle fairytales?

Pushing the unimportant matters to the back of her mind, Ginny said, "Never mind," to the still-staring Prefects and Head Girl, and the meeting continued, leaving only a vague notion that Ginny was not as sure about Riddle as she thought.

…

A/N: Shalala. Review review review. –does review dance- Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic!

By the way, Ginny DOES NOT know that Riddle is a half-blood. Just thought I'd add.

P is for Pointless Wishes

A/N: Some TMR-GAP action. A lot of angst.

ATTENTION: This is ANGST coming up here. Lots and lots of it. This is a very serious chapter, so be warned.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Nine: P is for Pointless Wishes

… ***No-one understands. Is this such a pureblood school that no-one has heard of Cinderella? I don't believe it – none of them get it.***

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…

The dreams continued.

George. Snape cursed his ear off. Then his nose. Then, suddenly, horrifically, half of his face was gone. It was as if God had decided, 'no, I don't think his face came out quite right, hang on, give it back'. Except, what kind of God would do this? And Ginny was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

" *Hermione? Mione, did you hear the news? Harry got a-" the words were never finished because Ginny ran into her best friend's room and came to see the bushy-haired Muggleborn on her bedroom floor, red and sticky and somehow a lot smaller than Ginny ever remembered, because her arms were in the corner, and her legs were mutilated, and her head was GONE and her best friend was in pieces, and she was screaming, screaming,* ***screaming*** *–*

"GINNY!"

Slap .

Hazel eyes wide open, panting, sweating, tears streaked on her face. She stared down at her sodden sheets for a moment before looking up into Grace's worried face.

At first she did not recognize the fellow Slytherin's features. All that she took in were the concerned eyes and the bushy brown hair. "Mione!" she gasped, tears springing to her eyes.

"What?" frowned Grace. "What's a 'my-nee'? I'm Grace. Graaaace."

Of course. No. Not Mione. Mione… gone. Gone forever. The bushy hair was bedhead, and the concerned eyes was the look of any worried girl. It didn't *necessarily* have to be that of Hermione Granger.

"I think you need to talk to Madam Royce," the brunette said.

"I'm fine," Ginny muttered.

"No, you're not," replied Flora.

"I'm *fine* !" the redhead shouted angrily.

"Ginny, listen to reason!" said Grace hotly. "You hardly ever sleep. I knew that you always slept late, so I stayed up one night; I was curious about why it was that whenever I woke up in the night, you were up. I was *hell* tired, but you know what I found it? At four – in

the *morning* – you finally fell asleep. And at five minutes past four, you started screaming."

Having no response, Ginny fell into silence and stared down at her sheets.

"You've been doing it *every night* since you got here," said Flora exasperatedly.

And a year before, actually.

"Either there's a reason, or you need to see Madam Royce… or you're just – just attention-seeking," said Flora.

Ginny stared, mouth slightly open, at Flora. *Attention-seeker? That's what you think I am?* "I am not…" she said slowly, "an attention-seeker."

"Then there's a reason," prompted Claude, eyes glittering maliciously at the thought of some juicy gossip.

"I'm fine," said Ginny, dodging the question.

"Tell me," pleaded Grace. "I can help – we can *all* help."

"What could you help with?" Ginny shouted. "What's done is done! What's happened has happened! It's *over* !" She was shaking, and her hands were curled into fists.

"What happened?" asked Grace softly.

"Nothing. That's my bet," snorted one of Claude's friends, an Indian girl named Avani who excelled in Herbology but failed just about everything else.

Grace's sapphire eyes flickered over Ginny's face, searching for something, with a look of motherly concern deep in the observant orbs gliding over the redhead's features. Then she sighed. "I'm sorry," she said to Ginny.

Clearly disappointed at the lack of gossip, Claude hissed, "attention-seeker" at Ginny, before flouncing back to her bed and pulling the covers up to her pointed chin.

Unable to meet Grace's eyes, Ginny climbed out of bed and started to dress. It was a Saturday, and she wanted to be early for breakfast so that she could snag a few of those elusive pancakes.

She selected a dark green 'swing'-skirt - a big knee-length poofy skirt that stuck out in a large flare – that she had become very fond of, and the first shirt that her hands met.

Grace cringed at the mirror before turning away, and Ginny flipped her hair back over her shoulder unbrushed. She didn't look in mirrors anymore. The days when she would pamper herself before it for hours and complain about her hair and her face endlessly were long gone. It seemed so stupid now to pace through flowers, choose the most colourful flower in the field, or the brightest stars in the sky and wish for Hermione's latte eyes, or Luna's wavy hair, or a clean complexion.

Wishes wasted. Wishes that could have been spent securing the lives of everyone I love.

Banishing such gloomy thoughts on a day of fun, Ginny waited patiently for Grace, and they headed down to the common room, where Alden was waiting, in his usual shirt and slacks.

"Why are you all dolled up?" he asked, frowning.

"We're not," grinned Grace. "Just you wait 'till Ginny's ball."

"It's not *my* ball," corrected Ginny for the thousandth time. "It's the Spawn of Satan's ball."

"Who?" Alden said, blinking thick eyelashes. "Riddle?"

Ginny raised an eyebrow. "Do we know any other Spawn of Satans?" she smirked.

"Claude," Alden shrugged.

"Wouldn't that be Spawn *ette* of Satan?" frowned Grace. Alden and Ginny exchanged glances. Grace saw this and cringed. "I just made myself sound like an idiot, didn't I?"

Suddenly Alden became very interested in his shoes, and Ginny cleared her throat, before saying hurriedly, "So, think we're early enough for pancakes today?"

…

" *Turn me loose, turn me loose I say* ," sang Grace, skipping on every alternative step as they made their way down to Hogsmeade. " *Gonna rock and roll, as long as the band's gonna play* !"

"Shut *up* ," groaned Alden. "That stupid song came out ages ago, I've had to listen to it a thousand times."

"Play a different tune," agreed Ginny.

"Fabian's hot," said Grace stubbornly. "So I shall sing him and him only," as an after-thought, she added, "and Frankie Avalon."

"Please stop it," Ginny begged. Grace had a good singing voice, but she adored the latest teen idols, Fabian and Frankie Avalon, with quite a scary stalker-like attitude.

"Fine, I'll change the subject. How about… Scott?" Grace chirped, grinning.

" *No* !" Ginny and Alden shouted together.

Grace pouted. "You're just jealous 'cause he fancies me," she declared.

" *What* ?" Ginny choked, her eyes widening in her thin face.

The brunette burst into laughter, and had to lean against a tree for support. "You – you hahahha… you – *hic* – thought that – *hic* – hahahaha – *hic* – I was… ahahahahaha… *serious* – you're so – hahahahahahahaha!" she giggled.

Ginny glared. "That wasn't funny."

"It *was* !" she laughed. "I *told* you that you fancy him. You should pin him a wall somewhere and snog his face off," she advised solemnly.

Alden cleared his throat loudly. "Grace, I did not need to hear that," he told her, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Bad mental images…"

"Maybe you should ask him to the ball," said Grace. "Then you could pirouette through the Room of Requirements and dance and dance until it's past midnight and Riddle will be shouting 'cause I bet he's jealous and he secretly fancies you-"

"Yeah, and Alden's stupid."

"Oi!"

"-so he'll do whatever's in his power to pry Scott's lips away from his one true love, so you'll be broken up and all sad, then Riddle'll snog you-"

"EW! Grace!"

"-and you'll realize that he's perfect and who needs Scott anyway, so then poor Scott'll be really depressed and then suddenly I will *quite coincidentally* find him, and cheer him up, and we'll be like best friends-"

"And what are we, brooms?"

"-yeah, yeah, whatever, Alden, and you guys as well – and then Scott will one day realize that he's actually in *love* with me, and we'll

snog and everything-"

"GET A ROOM!"

" *Grace, shut up* !"

"-and then we'll leave school and get married, and live in a biiiiig house behind a white picket fence, and we'll have like five kids and call them Natasha, James, Oliver, Rachel and maybe I'll name one Tom, after Riddle because it's thanks to him that I got together with Scott, and then me and Scott will have three cats, and maybe a dog, but no gerbils because I'm allergic to them-"

"Really? What happened?"

"ALDEN! We're supposed to be discouraging her from talking!"

"Sorry!"

" *She won't stop now* ! Look what you've *done* , Philips!"

"-oh it was really bad, because I went to my cousin's house and he had two gerbils, and I thought *aw cute* 'cause they were, so I patted them and then I got MASSIVE warts all over me in really uncomfortable places and-"

"On three. One… two…"

" *THREE* !"

"-and I actually had to go to St. Mungoes' for – *mmmpghff!* "

Grace slammed down onto a nearby bench, pinned down by Ginny, Alden's hands welded across her mouth tightly. For a moment the brunette squirmed, and then she gave up, looking irritated at being interrupted.

I cannot believe she actually just planned out her entire life with ***my*** *Scott! Well. I mean. Scott. Not* ***mine*** *. But. Yeah.*

After making sure that Grace was well and truly silent, Alden and Ginny released her. "What's the time?" asked Ginny.

The boy burrowed in the pockets of his Oxford slacks, before coming up with a pocket-watch, and inspecting its face. "One o'clock," he replied.

Ginny paled. "Damnit! I'm late for the Spawn of Satan!" she gasped. "I'll see you guys later, I have to arrange things for the ball. Bye!" With that, she hurried away, wishing fervently that she hadn't worn these uncomfortable shoes after all as she wobbled up the road, her heels click-clacking noisily as she summoned a Threstral-drawn carriage.

As she swung into it, she wondered if Alden or Grace could see Threstrals. *Probably not* , she decided. *Their lives are perfect. They've never had to see death. They've most likely never even felt true pain.* Sighing and staring out of the side-window, Ginny watched the landscape slide by. She had a vague awareness of seeing a tall brunette chasing after the carriage, and a short dark-haired chasing after the brunette. She smiled.

…

When Ginny entered the Head dormitory, Riddle did not look up. However, still looking at his work, he commented, "There's a word on the tip of my tongue right now. It starts with 'L' and ends in 'ate'."

"Levitate?" asked Ginny coolly, sitting down opposite him.

Only then did his eyes flit up to her. "Not quite," he replied, metal-mouthed, and held her gaze for less than a second before returning to his paperwork. "I've written a basic summary of what will be needed at the ball. Meaning food, drinks, music, catering, teachers; everything that I require. You need one for the disco. It is to be handed in to Professor Dippet tomorrow morning, but, perhaps, for once, you could hand it in early. Just to break *habit* ."

"I'll break my habit when you break yours."

"I happen to enjoy being a… what was it? An ' *obnoxious up-myself arsehole ninety-nine percent of the time'* , I believe it was," Riddle replied, and again a smirk twisted the corners of his lips.

"Word for word? My, my, Riddle, you are a talented little boy, aren't you?" said Ginny absently, pulling a piece of parchment towards and started to scrawl across it in her messy cursive.

"I hardly think you're anyone to speak of 'little'."

"The best things come in small packages," Ginny said with a grin and a cheesy wink.

*Take **that** , Mr. Sparkly Mouth.*

Riddle raised an eyebrow at her, before returning his eyes to his parchment and they wrote in silence.

I'll ask Grace and Alden to help me decide on some music. All I want to hear is the Weird Sisters, but they haven't even been born yet. Come to think of it, their parents probably go to Hogwarts. That'd be something for the scrapbook.

The only sound was the scratching of quills and the tick of the clock on the wall when Ginny started to daydream. She stared vacantly at the wall, wondering what was for dinner, what was going on with Grace and Alden, what was going on back in the twenty-first century, if Dumbledore was alright, if Hogwarts was still standing, and if everyone was dying right now because she hadn't killed Riddle yet…

" *Hermione? Mione, did you hear the news? Harry got a-" the words were never finished because Ginny ran into her best friend's room and came to see the bushy-haired Muggleborn on her bedroom floor, red and sticky and somehow a lot smaller than Ginny ever remembered, because her arms were in the corner, and her legs*

were mutilated, and her head was GONE and her best friend was in pieces, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Blood, pooling around her feet. Ron's screams echoed and echoed, of absolute agony, his face draining of all colour as his body rapidly emptied of blood onto the floor around her... her, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Charlie screamed out. "Ginny… go…" he ground out, before it twisted into another scream. His hands twisted in horrific, demonic shapes as he battled his own mind. "GO!" he howled, and then a blood vessel burst in his temple and it was on Ginny and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

The green light flashed brighter than anything, and a single tortured scream rose up from everyone present as their only saviour fell. Ginny was screaming louder than anyone. The green eyes of her first love widened, bulged, and then his glasses fell. And Harry tumbled forwards lifeless; Ginny ran to him, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

George. Snape cursed his ear off. Then his nose. Then, suddenly, horrifically, half of his face was gone. It was as if God had decided, 'no, I don't think his face came out quite right, hang on, give it back'. Except, what kind of God would do this? And Ginny was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Luna shouted out, shaking. Ginny ran to her side, but she felt immediately as though she would be sick when she saw that her close friend was having a brain haemorrhage. Blood poured from the blonde's ears, matting her shiny hair, as well as from her nose and mouth, and she was gagging on some sort of white foam. "Luna – Luna!" Ginny cried, but then her friend's eyes bulged out, one downwards and one sideways, and then Luna keeled forwards, collapsing on top of her. Blood was on Ginny, on her hands, on her clothes, in her MOUTH, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

"PEREGRINE!"

Ginny's eyes snapped open and she suddenly found herself on the floor of the Head dormitory, with Riddle kneeling beside her. She must have been still hallucinating, because briefly, just for a second, the redhead saw fear, shock and *concern* in the Head Boy's dark, flashing eyes.

"Peregrine, can you see me? Can you hear me?"

She nodded slowly. Her forehead was beaded with sweat and her cheeks were stained with tears. Her heart was beating at a hundred miles an hour, and she was having difficulty breathing. Pain was crawling through her back, which led her to suspect that she had fallen out of her chair very sharply, and she was trembling.

"What in *shit's* name was that?" demanded Riddle. It was the first time that Ginny had ever heard him swear, and she knew that she must have really freaked him out.

"I… I…" Ginny couldn't speak. Her voice was shaking terribly. It hadn't been so bad for a long time. She hadn't been struck by such vivid nightmares since the first week after the War. "W-what happened?"

"Do you think *I* know?" said Riddle incredulously. "That, genius, is why I'm asking *you* !"

"No… I mean…" Ginny paused to regain her breath. "To… *me* ."

Riddle's jaw tensed, and Ginny almost felt guilty for having an attack in front of him. "I don't *know* ! I was writing, and I wasn't really paying attention… and then you started muttering, really fast, to yourself. I just thought that you were re-reading your letter or something! But then there was a massive *thump* , and I looked around, and you were on the floor, twitching and shaking like mad with your eyes rolled back inside your head. I came over to see if you were joking and then you started *screaming* …"

Ginny's heart plummeted. She'd *never* had an attack like that. She'd *never* made her eyes roll back inside her head. Suddenly she realized who she was talking to, and skidded backwards on the carpet, away from Riddle.

"What?" said Riddle. "What's going on *now* ?" he sounded cross at the possible start of more drama, and was beginning to act like the normal Riddle that Ginny knew.

She did not reply. She simply stared up at him with wide, fearful eyes, heart pounding in her chest. *He killed them. He killed them all.*

"Peregrine, what the hell's going on?" Riddle raked a hand roughly backwards through his neat hair. "Why are you looking at me like that? Why are you-"

Run. Ginny did not wait until the seventeen-year-old had finished his final sentence; she leapt to her feet, and, abandoning her bag, ran from the Head dormitory.

"What the-?" she heard behind her as she slammed through the portrait of a very affronted Robin the Rich, and before it swung closed, she heard bellows of, " *Peregrine* !"

She did not stop. Nor did she respond, or even acknowledge that she had heard. Heart beating a tattoo on the inside of her chest, feet eating up the stone-cobbled floor, she sprinted faster.

Away. Away from *him* .

…

A/N: DUN DUN DUNNNN. Review review review. –does review dance- Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic!

o00Bubbles00o: Thank you! And I'm not going to tell you that answer, because Ginny doesn't know, so neither should you! Nyah!

Ginny: Yeah, I thought about that as well. However, Ginny didn't take any time to research or get ready, she left immediately, so she couldn't have done any research. And I like to think that Riddle wouldn't have told her in the diary, because he was worried that she, a pureblood, wouldn't trust him, because he was half-Muggle. Or something like that. Thank you! I loved that part too, teehee.

P is for Pitiably Stunted Conversation

A/N: Some SR-GAP action here. And lots of angst and fluff. YAY!

ATTENTION: This is ANGST coming up here. Lots and lots of it.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Ten: P is for Pitiably Stunted Conversation Input

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…

She skidded around a corner, barrelled through a group of frightened-looking first-years, and continued to sprint forwards. Tears were threatening to consume her, and then she slammed through the door of the nearest girls' bathroom.

It was not the same bathroom as last, the one that she had broken the door to. A cluster of make-up-applying third-years were leaning into the mirror with their pastel lipsticks, but they all turned to her, astonished. Their shock grew more intense as they saw her, and tripled in size when she screamed at them, " *Get out* !"

They scurried away, whispering among each other as they departed. Ginny stared after them, heart battering her ribcage. Then the door closed, separating her from them, and she turned away. The sixteen-year-old looked in the mirror for the first time in a year.

Ohmigod. Is that… me?

Staring back at her was a devastating figure. Ginny had been withered by depression and anxiety. She had always been small but was smaller than ever, and skinny with it, as the bereavement of everyone she loved had been taking its toll on her stomach, making her feel full when she had not eaten much. Her normally-rounded face was snow-white, thin and her cheekbones were angled, as opposed to soft curves. Her round hazel eyes were wider than was usual, as they were emphasised by her lean face. Her hair had not been brushed today and was in a wild state of disarray, and it wasn't quite the vibrant red it had always been. Her uniform was bedraggled, forming a crude oxymoron against the proud Prefect badge on her chest, and her eyes were swollen with tears.

No wonder the third-years ran away.

… I hate this. I hate this world, and I hate 1958, and I hate Riddle, and I hate ***myself*** *for not being able to save them, or even to avenge them.*

Feeling her shoulders to shake, Ginny screwed up her face, fighting back a combination of a scream and sob.

Don't. Don't. Don't.

" *Flipendo* !" Ginny shouted, flinging her hand forwards sharply.

For a moment nothing happened, and then purple light flashed, burning an image of a glowing wand onto hazel retinas. Then the mirror exploded outwards.

The redhead closed her eyes to protect them from flying glass, but did not fling her arms up. She felt glass glide over her cheeks, and felt blood turning her face sticky. She remained still for a moment, breathing hard, her eyes still closed, before swallowing past the lump in her throat and cleaning her face with a simple spell. She checked her appearance in a shard of mirror; twisted the ends of her messy red hair, and then brushed it backwards over her skinny shoulders with her fingers.

"Grace'll send me to Madam Royce for sure this time if she sees me like this," she muttered to herself. She combed her hair with her fingers and pulled it up into a messy bun, sponged at her eyes with toilet roll until the swelling went down, and then officially vowed to eat more, even if she felt as though she would be sick.

Deciding that her appearance was as good as she could make it at such short notice, Ginny left the bathroom. The urge to break everything that she saw, to scream out loud, or to start sobbing on the floor was almost drowning her, but she kicked her way to the surface of it and fought it back.

I will get past this if it kills me.

"Ginny!" someone fell into step with her.

Looking up and seeing Scott, a genuine smile flickered onto Ginny's lips. Maybe not everything about 1958 was so bad. "Hello," she said

softly.

Scott peered down into her face. "Gin, are you okay?" he asked. "You don't look too good. D'you want me to take you to Madam Royce?"

The sixteen-year-old girl shook her head. "No, I'm fine." Suddenly feeling brazen and confident, she grinned up at him, fluttered her cinnamon eyelashes, and said cheekily, "However, I could do with an escort to dinner…"

Holding out his arm in a gentlemanly way, Scott said, "There is no way I could refuse, m'lady."

Blushing profusely, Ginny shyly put her hand on his arm. He set his other hand on top of hers, and shivers ran up her body, started from her very warm left hand. Then, together, they walked down the Great Hall, chatting amiably, though Ginny's input in the conversation was rather pitiably stunted due to the fact that all of her being was focused on the feel of his hand on hers.

"So, d'you like Hogwarts, then, Lady Peregrine?" asked Scott formally, with a grin on his face, still pretending to be a proper ceremonial escort.

"Very much, Sir Reeve," replied Ginny with a giggle that was slightly higher pitched than normal (Scott gave her an odd look that made an embarrassed flush deepen the colour of red on her cheeks). "I only wish I could have began to attend sooner."

"Why did you come here, my Lady Peregrine?" Scott inquired as they descended the main stairs.

To kill the Head Boy.

"Um," said Ginny, concentrating hard on not saying her first line of thought. *What was my cover story?* "I was home-schooled, but when I had no-one to teach me any longer, I moved here."

"You were home-schooled?" asked Scott interestedly, dropping the official demeanour. "What was that like?"

"Um. Home-school-y?" Ginny guessed, having no idea. She desperately hoped that Scott would fall for it, and luckily he seemed to think it was a joke, and laughed uproariously.

*And spec **tac** ularly saved, Ginevra.*

"Ginny, you're so-" Scott said, laughing. Suddenly words seemed to fail him, and he turned to look directly into Ginny's eyes. It was a soft, studying gaze. "So… you."

"I suppose that's a compliment?" breathed Ginny. A smile dashed across her thin lips, but it was drowned by the beating of her heart and by her hurried breathing. Her lungs seemed to have halved in size, and her stomach was doing the salsa with her spleen.

"Probably," replied Scott, and a flustered tinge of pink grew on his tanned cheeks. He averted his gaze from her eyes, cleared his throat slightly, and then said, "So, should we… go and eat, then?"

What?

*OH YEAH! Food! Great Hall! That's why we're here. Hehe. I **knew** that.*

"Yes," said Ginny, very quickly. "I'll just. Go. Yeah. Thanks for bringing me. Yeah." She held up both of her hands, as though she was about to wave, before clenching them into fists, opening them, and then allowing them to move to the back of her head, nervously fixing her hair. "See you."

Scott leaned forwards, sort of hovering in an embarrassed way, before rocking backwards on his heels, apparently having deciding against whatever he had been thinking, scratched the back of his neck, said, "Yeah," and then hastened in the Great Hall.

Therefore leaving Ginny in a stunned, confused, and slightly giggly state in the Entrance Hall. Someone stormed angrily past her, but she did not pay any notice, as she was staring at the wall in a state of shock.

For a few seconds she stood stock-still, dazed. Then she burst into hysterical mirth. She hurriedly contained herself and entered the Great Hall; she found Grace and Alden easily.

"What's with you?" said Grace suspiciously.

Ginny helped herself to scrambled eggs; she was suddenly ravenous. Piling them onto her plate, she ground salt and pepper over it before starting to fork it into her mouth.

Grace's eyes narrowed. "You're acting odd," she informed her friend. "What's wrong?"

Desperately she tried not to, but before she could resist, Ginny turned her head to look at the Ravenclaw table. She located Scott quickly; he was watching her. He grinned, before returning to his food and conversation. Reddening, she turned away. "Nothing."

However, Grace had already followed her gaze. " *Oh* ," she said, a beam spreading across her face. "I see. *Nothing* ."

"Shut up," grumbled Ginny, feeling colour surge to her cheeks.

"So how is *nothing* these days?" inquired Grace mischievously, eyes sparkling.

Alden looked utterly confused. "Wait. What? I don't understand," he said flatly.

" *No way* !" gasped Ginny in mockery. "Alden doesn't understand something!"

"No, really," he insisted. "I'm confused! What's happening?" he was becoming more and more anxious, which only increased Ginny and

Grace's hilarity.

"What happened?" asked Grace in a low voice. Alden craned in to hear, still trying to comprehend what the two Slytherin girls were talking about.

Ginny blushed. "He just walked with me to the Hall," she mumbled, selecting some nicely-browned sausages from a golden platter and starting to cut them up.

"And?"

"And that's *all,* Miss Nosy!"

"He walked you to Hall? That's all he did, and it gets you into a state of red-cheeked giggly girliness?" Grace said incredulously, her voice several amplitudes louder than Ginny would have preferred.

" *Sssshhh* !" the red-haired sixteen-year-old hissed frantically, glancing around. "Not so loud – *genius* !" she playfully smacked her friend upside the head.

"Ow!" Grace rubbed her head. "You must have it bad, Ginny, if that's all it takes," she said seriously.

"I do not have anything *bad* , thank you," Ginny responded, finishing her sausage and buttering a slice of toast.

"Are we talking about Scott?" asked Alden, his eyes widening slightly in understanding. At least he had the sense to say it quietly.

"Yes," chirped Grace. "And our little freckled-face friend here in is *denniiiaaaaaaaaaaaaal* !" she sang loudly.

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Try to draw a *little* more attention to yourself, Grace," she said sarcastically. "I think there's someone in Wales who didn't quite catch the end of your look-at-me-I'm-publicly-humiliating-myself charade."

"They'll find out soon enough," said Grace mysteriously. "Scott can tell them for us."

And, so happy and giddy in her emotions was Ginny, that she did not notice the burning glare fixed upon her by dark eyes glazed green.

…

A/N: Who do you think it is? Oooh. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic!

Storm-brain: Aw, thanks!

SwirlyL: Well, actually, I've got ALL of the chapters written up, all the way to Chapter 31, I think it is. But I'm doing it slowly, so that its not like a big word-vomit that you can't understand. Well, sorry that you didn't really see any of Riddle's reaction, but we caught a glimpse of him. Try to work out where! It's sort of obvious, what whatever.

XxRandomHeartxX: Thanks! I love your reviews, they make me all hyper inside… aw. And I love your pen-name. I'm glad that you like Grace, as she's pretty much 99 based on MOI! I love, love, love, love YOUR REVIEWS! I know, I'm getting really good at these cliffies, aren't I? –grin-

P is for Paradox And Tom's Dental Care

A/N: Some TMR-GAP action. Lovely. It's Ginny's birthday! WOOOOP! And there's quite a funny bit in here. Dumdeedum. Enjoy.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Eleven: P is for Paradox (and Riddle's Dental Care)

" *He walked you to Hall? That's all he did, and it gets you into a state of red-cheeked giggly girliness?" Grace said incredulously, her voice several amplitudes louder than Ginny would have preferred.*

" *Are we talking about Scott?" asked Alden, his eyes widening slightly in understanding. At least he had the sense to say it quietly.*

And, so happy and giddy in her emotions was Ginny, that she did not notice the burning glare fixed upon her by dark eyes glazed green.

…

Hallowe'en. Everyone was excited about it, and rumours were floating around school that the It Couple were not going with each other, and that so-and-so and whats-her-face were going together, and so on.

It being Ginny's birthday, she was more excited than most people. From Grace she received a silver bracelet and a stick of purple eyeliner (they shared the same love for bright eyeliner), and from Alden a heavy book on Quidditch. From Flora was a new quill, and from Alden's little brother was a box of Honeydukes sweets.

*I don't have **that** many friends. How much was I expecting?*

Ginny thought sadly of the presents she would have received at home. Eight presents in total, from her family. From Hermione, Luna, Harry, Neville, Seamus, Dean, Lavender, Parvati… all those presents had been destroyed, however, or left behind, and none would replace them, as the givers were gone as well.

"Are you going to wear the bracelet and eyeliner to the ball?" asked Grace.

"Yeah, I will," agreed Ginny. "But I'm not *going* to the ball, you know that. I'm going to the little peoples' disco. I have watch over it. I'm sorry, I can't help you get ready either."

"Oh, poo," pouted Grace.

"Oh poo'?" sneered Claude, passing by. "Your insults and curses truly astonish me with their maturity, Hartwin."

" *Crawl back to the gutter from whence you came* !" Grace bellowed at the offending blonde. "Scum," she added for good measure, as Ginny leant against the wall for support from her laughter.

"You are so random sometimes," giggled Ginny.

Grace shrugged. "Been said before," she said. "Don't you have to go?"

The sixteen-year-old looked at the clock on the wall. "Crap, yeah," she muttered. "Alright, Grace, Alden, have a really good time, 'kay? I'll see you in a while." She embraced each of them, grabbed her box of disco-work, and hurried away.

Please don't let me be late. Riddle won't let me live it down. Then she remembered when she had last seen Riddle; she shivered. *I hope that doesn't happen again. Oh, I* ***really*** *don't want to have to see him…*

She skidded in through the doors of the Great Hall. "No fear, I am here!" she shouted.

In response, Eleanor called a muffled 'hey' from the other side of the room, on a rickety ladder, halfway up the wall, pins in her mouth; Jack groaned; Robert grunted; and Olive continued with her work.

"Well, you're cheerful," scowled Ginny. "So, what needs doing, Eleanor?"

The Head Girl replied with, "Hmmg mn."

Come again?

Then Eleanor climbed down, and, removing the pins from her mouth, said, "Right. We need the stage setting up for the band. We need the stage amplified with the Sonorus charm, but the rest of the room dimmed so that the chatter of the students isn't deafening. Try a combination of spells to get it *just* right. Test it by shouting in different areas."

"Okay," said Ginny, writing it down on a slip of paper, forming a checklist. "And?"

"Get someone to talk to the house-elves. Set up a buffet-table for the food to go on. I recommend that it's placed on the raised dais where the teachers eat. Sprinkle the floor with black and orange sand. Just get normal sand and Transfigure it. Er. Black and orange paper-chains. Dancing plastic skeletons. Black drapes around the room. Set up the ceiling for a dark and stormy night. Dim lights for an eerie look…" Eleanor cast her eyes upwards, as if thinking hard. "That's all, I reckon."

"Got it."

…

"You know what this reminds me of?"

Ginny heard Olive Hornby voice the question as they were pinning up the black drapes. She discreetly listened in, hoping to learn something.

"The Yule Ball, two years ago. Remember that?" Olive asked. "And how stupid Moaning Myrtle Tristanebury screwed it up because she accidentally set the teacher's table on fire. She was *such* a loser."

"Olive!" snarled Eleanor. The abrupt change in demeanour was frightening, and her eyes glowed with anger. "I'd think that you of all people would an *ounce* of respect for Myrtle, considering that your bullying was the cause of her death," she said, her voice low and cold with anger.

Myrtle… Myrtle… ***Myrtle*** *! The ghost of the girls' toilets. The one who hid from taunting and was killed by the Basilisk… her death was* ***Olive's*** *doing!*

"Puh- *lease* ," snorted Olive. "Someone was bound to snuff her."

It just so happened that ***Riddle*** *got there first…*

"A week's detentions with Dippet," said Eleanor icily, drawing herself up to her full height. "How *dare* you, Hornby."

Maybe I can find something out…

"Who's Myrtle?" Ginny asked suddenly.

Eleanor seemed to remember that she was in the middle of doing something, and picked up her checklist again, before turning to Ginny. "One of the worst things to happen to Hogwarts was Myrtle Tristanebury's death," she said quietly.

"Someone *died* ?"

"It happened last year. A fifth-year. A Hufflepuff. She was teased mercilessly since she first set foot in the castle. No-one liked her. Someone who *particularly* hated her was Olive Hornby," Eleanor

looked over at the offending Prefect. "She was dubbed 'Moaning Myrtle' because she cried so often, in the abandoned girls' toilets on the second floor. One day, Olive was being especially horrible. Myrtle ran away."

Ginny shivered. She knew the end to this story, and it wasn't happy. And it was only a *year* ago that it happened.

"For all we knew, she was just crying somewhere. After a few hours though, we started to worry. Myrtle never stayed away so long. Dippet told Olive to search for her, and apologize. I was a Prefect; I didn't trust her to do it," said Eleanor, "so I went with her. We got there, and, to prepare her, incase she was in a total state, Olive called in, ' *Myrtle, Professor Dippet says to come out. Honestly, this is just ridiculous, even for you* '. But no-one replied."

"And then?" Ginny asked anxiously.

"We went in." Eleanor hugged herself tightly and looked at the ceiling. "I've never forgotten it. She was in the middle of the bathroom floor. She *had* been crying. There were tearstains on her cheeks. The only difference was that she was dead."

The redhead listener suppressed another shudder. She had seen enough deaths, and regretted asking to hear about another.

"Her parents were informed, and she was taken away. No-one found out how she died. Dippet knew, but he didn't tell anyone… it still creeps me out, thinking that this castle holds death inside it," Eleanor finishes.

And in the next forty-eight years, the deaths would times by ten in number.

"On a more cheerful note," said Robert loudly, coming through the door, "the food is here."

Hoards of house-elves poured through the doors, a large wooden table hovering above their heads. Each held a platter of food, or a tray of goblets, or a jug of various drinks, and one held a massive folded tablecloth. Leaving them to their own devices, Ginny checked her list again. In her small, familiar writing, only one sentence remained unticked – *set up ceiling for dark and stormy night* .

That'll take some complicated spells to momentarily re-enchant it from showing the weather outside. Maybe Eleanor knows. Or I should probably just go and ask Dippet.

"I'm going to see Dippet about the ceiling!" called Ginny to the Head Girl, and then left.

As she climbed the familiar stairs to the Headmasters' office, she hummed under her breath a Weird Sisters' song, and then rapped sharply on the wood of the door. "Professor?" she called, cutting off the chorus of 'Supernatural'.

"Enter."

Ginny pushed through the door and stepped inside. "Hello, sir."

"Ah. Miss Peregrine. I was wondering when you would come to see me next. Close the door, please," said Dippet, removing his very large reading glasses and sliding a dusty volume aside. "How have you been?"

Doing as instructed, Ginny replied, "Alright. I made friends with Grace Hartwin and Alden Philips. And sort of friends with Eleanor Fionn and Scott Reeve. Not so much with Claude Felina Bastet, though."

"Hmm. I can't say I expected you to."

A short laugh pulled from Ginny's lips. Then she recalled why she was there, and said, "Sir, the Hallowe'en ball and disco is tonight.

We're setting up, and I need you to help us to change the enchanted ceiling's image to one of a dark, stormy night. Are you free?"

Dippet glanced at a heap of paperwork beside him, and then at the heavy book he had been reading. "I shouldn't be free," he mused, "but I am rather bored, and I think that a trip down to the Great Hall would do me nicely."

They set off to the Great Hall and when they arrived, Ginny's face slipped in a hostile expression – a frown and pursed lips of anger, antagonism, and fear.

Riddle was standing in the center of the room, observing everything.

She was sorely tempted to try glaring a hole in the back of his head, through his neatly-combed wavy hair, but decided instead to pretend that he wasn't there.

Memories of the last time they had been together flooded Ginny and fear gripped her heart like a vice. Feeling its pulse start to pound hurriedly faster, she turned away and looked for something to do.

"How is everything?" Ginny asked Robert Harris.

"Oh, hi Peregrine," said Robert in reply. He wasn't frowning at her, but the Slytherin-Gryffindor relationship still stood (despite Eleanor and Ginny's friendship) and he wasn't overly friendly. "It's fine, I suppose."

"Call me Ginny," she corrected with a small smile. "I hate my last name. It means *traveller* and I don't intend to travel anywhere. Not yet, anyway."

The irony of my false name.

"The Ugly Basilisks will be Apparating to Hogsmeade soon. They'll send us a Patronus when they're there, and then someone has to meet them," Robert informed her.

*Basilisks? Does a sarcastic paradox surround **everything** today?* Again she thought of poor Myrtle's fate, and felt pity for the poor, unloved girl. *Who am I to speak of someone's poor fate? Here I am, trapped in a different world to my own, destined to eventually murder someone, having seen everyone I care for killed in front of me, yet never granted it myself.*

There it is again. Irony.

I need to stop talking to myself. Robert's waiting for an answer.

"Oh, alright. D'you want me to meet them? Or maybe it should Eleanor. It seems better if the Head Girl greets them than a scrawny Prefect," she joked.

Robert didn't laugh. He nodded, and then, giving her a glance out of the corner of his eyes, muttered, "Scrawny's a good word", before moving away.

" *Fine!" Ginny snapped. "Be that way. 'Cause I don't like you **either** !" With that, and a **humph** of irritation, she flounced away to where Scott was waiting, and he flung his arms around her and lowered his face to hers…*

…aaaand back to reality. Shaking off the last threads of the daydream, Ginny went to tell Eleanor that she needed to be prepared to meet The Ugly Basilisks. Unfortunately, she was talking to Riddle.

*I am not going to be scared of him. I refuse. I **refuse*** Ginny sucked in a breath to fill her lungs, and walked over to the Head Boy and Girl.

"… and I don't think they'll destroy everything if I leave them for ten seconds-" Riddle's effortless, emotionless flow of words crashed to a halt, as if the first carriage of a high-speed train had unexpectedly stopped, and the other carriages had all collided like dominoes. Ginny felt his eyes on her, but she stared determinedly at Eleanor;

he quickly picked up his sentence again, making an effortless transition from staring at Ginny to speaking.

"Oh, alright. I suppose you'd better get back to them, then," Eleanor replied. "Ginny! Hello!" she then noticed the Prefect beside her. "What's up?"

"The Ugly Basilisks are coming soon," Ginny said.

She allowed her eyes to flick swiftly over to Riddle. He did not react noticeably to the name, and if you had not been specifically looking, you would not have known that he had reacted at all. However, Ginny *was* looking, and she saw a muscle in his jaw tense, as well as a variety of emotions flash through his dark eyes.

"Really?" Eleanor frowned. "They're early. You're here to tell me that I need to be ready to fetch them from Hogsmeade, right?"

Ginny nodded. "Just thought I should prepare you. They'll send a Patronus when they've turned up."

As if on cue, a large wispy polecat came running through the Great Hall doors. It opened its sharp-toothed mouth and spoke in a deep, gravely human voice: "We have arrived".

"Good timing," said Eleanor with a grin. She fluffed her blonde hair, smoothed her skirt, and then hurried away, stiletto heels clacking on the marble floor that showed scarcely through the black and orange sand that was spread evenly across it. "Be back in a minute!" she called over her shoulder. "Gin, you're in charge."

Will people stop calling me ***Gin*** thought the redhead with a frown marring her forehead. *I am not alcohol.* Memories of a long-lost voice speaking that name brought a sudden pang piercing her chest, and she closed her eyes, to fight back the tears she knew were threatening to spill.

"Don't get *too* lost in thought, will you?" said a sarcastic voice behind her. "You might not come back."

Her face hardened into a look of hostile aversion, and, though she wanted nothing better to ignore him still, Ginny turned to face him. She glared up into Riddle's arrogant, slightly-smirking face. "What do you want?" she said icily.

"The childish pleasure of annoying others that you seem to divulge in," replied Riddle coolly, his dark eyes glowing like coals with amusement.

"Grow up," Ginny bit out, her glare not wavering under his gaze.

"Bit rich, don't you think? Coming from you?" Riddle's mouth closed, cutting away the glittering metal that plagued Ginny's thoughts and distracted her permanently; flicked his gaze over her. "Aren't you supposed to have a costume, Peregrine?"

"I *do* , thank you very much," retorted Ginny.

"What are you dressed as? The cheap, irritating drama-queen?" Riddle said coldly. "I tell you, the fashion parade prize is yours."

His words stung more than they should have, and Ginny scolded herself for leaving her heart so unprotected. Building a temporary wall around it that she could make whole and proper at another time, she snarled in reply, "You're an arsehole. I do not give a damn if you're the Head Boy. I would throw you out of the Astronomy Tower if I had my way. *And* , I may add, I am a vampire."

With that, she dug in the pockets of her dungarees and pulled out a pair of inexpensive, plastic vampire-teeth. She pushed them into her mouth and snapped at Riddle, her teeth making a satisfying *clink* as they met.

"They're not that childish."

"If I *was* a vampire, that would have been a compliment, you realize," Ginny informed him smoothly. "Try better insults."

"The term, Peregrine, is vampress – and you are not one. Vampressi are famed for charm, wit, power and extraordinary *beauty* ," said Riddle icily.

No. No, he did not.

Walls. Crumbling. A stab through Ginny's heart. It was impossible that Riddle, of all people, could know – yet he seemed to have *known* , known exactly what was Ginny's soft spot, and how to slice her heart, like a warm knife through soft butter.

" *I'm sorry, Ginny. I just… we can't be together anymore," Harry said quietly. They stood together on the grounds, in spring, a few months before his death. It was a beautiful day, and it seemed to mock the break-up that was tearing Ginny into pieces.*

" *You're seeing Luna," Ginny said, trying not to choke her words on sobs. It wasn't a question. She knew that it was true. Red hair fell into her face, but she did not brush it away. She let it hide the pain that she knew was glowing in her eyes.*

" *I'm sorry, Gin. Luna's just so beautiful. So beautiful and perfect," Harry whispered. His eyes grew vague and the way he spoke her name was exactly how Ginny had imagined him saying* ***her*** *name, a thousand times, every night. Full of admiration and* ***love*** *. And not just a grudging respect for his best friend's fierce baby sister with a silly crush on him. "She's so beautiful, Ginny. I'm sorry."*

" *I get it," Ginny found herself saying, though she was screaming at herself, and she didn't understand at all. "She's perfect, and she's all that you've ever wanted."* ***And I'm not.***

Harry didn't read her sarcasm, her strained, don't-worry-I'm-fine tone. "Yeah," he said happily. "I'm so glad you understand, Gin. See you at dinner, okay?" He walked away, humming a song. Ginny's favourite

*song. The one that he said reminded him of **her** . The one that she could never be.*

"You *bastard* ," Ginny choked out, and then her hand flew higher and higher to meet his face, and leave an imprint of her fury and sorrow upon his cheek.

A red mark, shaped like a hand, stood out on Riddle's pale, flawless face, which would undoubtedly sting in the morning – *I want it to sting **now** , that stupid, arrogant MURDERER* – but, strangely, he was holding his mouth. "Are you *mental* , woman?"

"Oh, it's nice to know that you now consider me a woman!" snarled Ginny, and she was horrified to hear that her voice was an octave higher than normal, and wobbling.

"Are you *crazy* ?" Riddle hissed, spitting out a glob of blood. "That *really* hurt – I have a retainer, for God's sake!"

What?

One second. Two seconds. Three seconds.

What? Ginny stared up at Riddle. Staring.

The flashing metal.

The strangely muffled voice.

The odd accent.

The Dark Lord had a retainer!

Her dark mood momentarily evaporating, Ginny burst into laughter. That was an embarrassing moment for the scrapbook if there ever was one!

"What?" said Riddle, clearly irritated. He had been expecting compensation, or something. One moment, they were screaming at

each, and fighting, and slapping or being slapped, but instead Ginny was laughing her head off at him. What had the world come to?

Imagine the Dark Lord! "Afada kedafa!" HAHAHAHAHHAHA!

Ginny clutched at her stomach, her imagination bringing fresh peals of laughter. "You – hahahha – have – a – *hahahahahah* !"

"What?" demanded Riddle again.

"HAHAHA! You have a *retainer* !" she giggled hysterically.

Riddle glared. "And what, pray tell, do you find so phenomenally funny about my dental care, Peregrine?" he snapped, his aloof and cold demeanour returning to defend his teeth.

Ginny assumed a face suitable to the grave of a respected gentleman. "Nothing," she said innocently, straight-faced, and then burst into loud laughter again.

"If all that you are going to do is show rude derision and mirth towards dental problems that are not my own fault, then I think I'll leave," said Riddle, his voice almost glacial.

"I'm being rude? *I'm* being rude? Says he, 'you couldn't be a vampress'! By all means, leave, Riddle – it would automatically make the party a hundred times better!" snarled Ginny.

"It took you a long time for that comeback, didn't it?" Riddle's voice was still arctic, and his teeth were gritted. "Careful, Peregrine. Your brain's too small to be let out on its own; it'll hurt itself."

"I assure you that it has company. My brain is babysitting *yours* !" Ginny growled. Her eyes suddenly narrowed as she realized that Riddle was totally out of place in the Great Hall. "Why are you here, Riddle?" Ginny said coldly. "Don't you have a ball to attend to? Or were you lying about liking the glitzy dresses?"

"I never said I liked the 'glitzy dresses'," replied Riddle scornfully. "It was the lesser of two evils."

"You're avoiding the question."

"What was the question, remind me?" Riddle – get this – *Riddle* was teasing her. Except that teasing was fun and light-hearted. And his sole purpose was to aggravate her endlessly.

"Why are you here?" snapped Ginny, losing her temper. She drew herself up to full height, and tilted her chin up in that angry way that her mother did – *used to* .

Riddle was silent. His dark, calculating gaze was flickering over her face, and then he looked into swirling hazel. There was a cold expression in them that chilled Ginny to the bottom of her spine. The insults were just about tolerable; the gaze struck more fear into her than her fear of time-travel, and she had been near petrified.

When he did speak, his voice was so surprisingly quiet than Ginny nearly missed it. "If you must know," he said, his voice low and barely audible, "I actually came to ensure you didn't have another spontaneous seizure in front of everyone, due to the fact that Madam Royce is stopping alcohol poisoning in the ball upstairs, and you would only be treated by a group of infantile and naïve twelve-year-olds."

Ginny knew in an instant that she would have much preferred to hear a lie, an insult, a quip, *anything* – than have him confess to her that he was real and human and had a heart and even *cared* for her.

Because that would make murdering him so much harder.

"I'll manage," replied Ginny shortly, locking her icy stare onto his in a challenge of dominance. Shockingly, he retreated almost immediately, and walked away without a glance backwards.

…

A/N: Ooh, cat-fight. Did you like the insert of memories? I love adding those. –squee- Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

o00Bubbles00o: Wow! Thank you! Two massive reviews! I feel so loved. –hug- Well, bub, I can't tell you the answer to that (did you like me saying *bub* ? Get it? Cos it's short for Bubbles… and cos it's a cool word?). HAHA! Er, *yes* , it is a romance fic (-squee-) And by the way, I am giving you the honour of all honours – I will include your words, later, in the fic! LOL! It's just because I have a *really* random chapter planned, and your words are funny. They'd fit well. Teehee. Thanks for the review!

Intricacy: Thanks so much! And, I'm not going to, sorry, because he doesn't like her. Well. You're not really supposed to know that yet. Because he *does* technically… but him being all *loner-get-lost* vibey, he is in a huge state of denial that he likes her (kind of like Ginny denying that she has a massive crush on Scott. But I didn't tell you that, either) and also he doesn't even know that he likes her. Because he doesn't recognize liking a girl… since he's never actually liked anyone before. Yeah. Thanks for the review, though!

SilvanXan: Teehee! Oh, fine, here – XXXX. Just to cheer you up. Lol. Anyway, if you've run out of betaing material, tell me.

vlucia : Yeah, I know! There seems to be this vibe saying: T/G WRITERS! UPDATE SLOWLY! All other good T/G fics are painfully slow. Meh. Thanks, I was really worried that Ginny was too OOC. I'll check out the fictionalley thingie. And yeah, I won't make them all quick in love. Don't you just hate the fics when they're like: 'hot guy. MEEP! Snogsnogsnog'. Bleurgh. Don't worry, this is about as slow as it gets.

XxRandomHeartxX: Thanks! Yayness! Same with my pen-name. I thought of it when I was ten. It was my username for neopets. LOL. Actually, I think it still is. Oh well. I know, isn't Scott just so dreamy? –sigh- Lol. Hope you like the rest of it!

P is for Party Pooper

A/N: Some SR-GAP action. Yay! Ginny's birthday continued. The Ball/Disco majiggerthingy. And yes, that is a word. I GOT SO MANY REVIEWS! THANK YOU! –dance dance dance- Quite a funny chapter.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Twelve: P is for Party-Pooper

Riddle was silent. When he did speak, his voice was so surprisingly quiet than Ginny nearly missed it. "If you must know," he said, his voice low and barely audible, "I actually came to ensure you didn't have another spontaneous seizure in front of everyone, due to the fact that Madam Royce is stopping alcohol poisoning in the ball upstairs, and you would only be treated by a group of infantile and naïve twelve-year-olds."

Ginny knew in an instant that she would have much preferred to hear a lie, an insult, a quip, anything – than have him confess to her that he was real and human and had a heart and ***cared*** *for her. Because that would make murdering him so much harder.*

" *I'll manage," replied Ginny shortly, locking her icy stare onto his in a challenge of dominance. Shockingly, he retreated almost immediately, and walked away without a glance backwards.*

…

His words stayed with her during the whole party. Even when she shook that to the back of her head, the words were still there, echoing and ringing in her mind.

Despite this, Ginny managed to enjoy it. The only bad part was how surreal it was to see her brave, confident great-uncle terrified of her, and only half her size. She licked crumbs of chocolate cake from her fingers, rocking from side to side with the music that was still playing on.

The piece of heavy, slow music was drawing to a close, and shy, reluctant juniors were drawing away from their first slow-dance, hiding their blushes behind monster-masks. Eleanor stood on the stage, and called, "Alright! That's a wrap! I hope that you enjoyed the party. We may have another one at Christmas if you thought it was good! And congratulations to: Henry Oliverwill, for winning the costume contest, and Annabeth Campbell, for winning the fashion parade!" She started to clap, and soon the room filled with applause.

Slowly, but steadily, the students began to pour out of the Great Hall, and, in their place, in the doorway, was a fabulous-looking Grace. Nodding at her to acknowledge that the brunette had been seen, Ginny quickly finished up – cleaned the room, levitated the tables back in, and sent The Ugly Basilisks to the Headmaster for payment.

"Hey, Grace," said Ginny, smiling as she escorted the Wizarding fifties' band to the door of the Great Hall. "Wow. You look *amazing* ."

And she did. The klutzy Slytherin had cleaned up nicely. She wore shimmering floaty blue robes that were tight across her chest, and then swirled loosely around her ankles, revealing flashes of dainty silver-slippered feet. Her make-up was applied beautifully, and her hair was behaving itself, in a simple bun at the back of her head, though much of her wavy fringe had fallen out. Her eyes sparkled with glee and it was obvious that she'd had a fantastic time.

"Thanks," said Grace modestly, going red. "You coming up to the ball? There's still two hours left."

"Yeah, why not. I don't have a dress, though. Screw it. If my attire isn't good enough for the arty-farty ball people, then they're missing out on having an amazing guest," said Ginny dramatically.

"And a modest one, too," chipped in Grace, grinning.

"Oh, shut up," Ginny said, elbowing her friend in the stomach as they headed up the stairs to the Room of Requirement.

They arrived, and Ginny did not even hesitate, nor worry about her lack of a dress. She did not wish for one – *wishes wasted* came to mind, and she pushed through the door.

The room hit her immediately, like a hammer. It was beautiful. The floor was glossy marble, and the walls sparkled. The band sang a sweet serenade, and the swoosh of many skirts was dazzling from each flash of silk, satin and glossy velvet. The food smelled delicious, and the most romantic paintings were put up around the walls.

"You and Eleanor really outdid yourselves on this," Grace said with a grateful smile.

Ginny was still stunned. Finally she said, "I didn't do this. Riddle did."

Grace's eyes widened. "Are you serious?"

"… yeah."

The brunette snorted. "Pouf."

Her companion gave her an appraising, shocked look. "Grace!"

" *What* ?" Grace said, as if she really couldn't see what was wrong with her comment. "No straight guy could make something so beautiful."

"You'd be surprised…" mumbled Ginny, and again she saw the words *will you marry me* written in roses on the Hogwarts grounds, in the most fabulous cursive, with a heart on the question-mark. It had been beautiful, serene, and perfect… and not for her.

Grace frowned. "What was that?"

"Nothing." Ginny walked towards the drinks table. Riddle's words still echoed, and, deciding that since she was coming of age today, and feeling bitter, she took a glass of Firewhiskey; downing it in one.

Immediately she felt as though her throat had caught fire, and her eyes were burning in their sockets. "Ow," she gasped out, clutching her neck. When the burning subsided, she licked her lips, grumbled, "Yummy" and stared out gloomily onto the dance-floor.

"Oh, couldn't the Mudblood afford a dress?" sneered Claude, appearing in front of Ginny, elegantly dressed in a gown that was, admittedly, beautiful, but did nothing for Claude's shape or colouring.

"I'd rather be a Mudblood than a pig forced into pink lace," Ginny said smoothly, taking another glass of Firewhiskey and sipping it – the flaming sensation from gulping it down was not favourable.

Claude's lips thinned and her eyes narrowed. "I'll get you later," she hissed, having no comeback, and stalked away with Avani and Ramira, her two right-hand idiots, before striding across the room and demanding a dance with Jack, seemingly to make Ginny jealous; the redhead was anything but.

Smirking to herself, Ginny drained her glass, shook her head to clear the smoke-coming-through-ears feeling, and sighed deeply. Everyone was dancing. There was Alden and Grace (a slightly odd couple, considering the height difference); Jack and Claude; Eleanor had come up and was dancing with a tall blonde young man with whom she looked totally smitten; Robert and Mia Brown were twirling around the room endlessly…

" *I'm so glad we're going together, aren't you?" asked Neville excitedly, grinning his enthusiasm. He took Ginny's dampening palm and walked her out onto the dance-floor. They pirouetted once, and then twirled and swirled away on the marble floor.*

" *Yeah…" Ginny mumbled; though with every turn she looked over the fourth-year's shoulder and found the face of an awkward,*

flustered, bespectacled boy with Parvati – found the flickering glances to Cho Chang. ***Never good enough***

"I still can't get over the fact that Riddle's gay," said Grace, appearing beside Ginny and taking a glass of punch.

"He's *not* ."

"Why are you so adamant? Fancy him, d'you?" she sipped her punch, smirking. "Scott won't be pleased."

"No! Pigs will fly before I fancy that tosser," retorted Ginny. "Where is said tosser, anyway? I think I'll compliment him on the room…"

"See! You *do* fancy him."

"Actually, I'm giving his ego a chance to inflate before I burst it…" Ginny scanned the room. "Where *is* he?"

"I dunno." Grace too looked around. "He's not a very social person."

Ginny frowned. "Really?"

I'd have thought he was really popular. He's got so many Death Eaters; he must have loads of friends…

But Death Eaters are followers – not friends.

"I'd have thought he was quite popular," mused Ginny to Grace.

The brunette snorted. "Whatever gave you *that* impression?" she guffawed. "With his charm and wit? Oh yes, he's the bee's knees."

However, Ginny wasn't listening. Her eyes were closed as Grace's snort had just landed a large quantity of punch on her face. "Grace," she said irritably, opening her eyes, "I wanted the news, not the weather." She tugged her sleeve longer and wiped her face.

"Hm," said Grace. "I'm going to find Alden. I'm in the mood for a tango." With that, she set her punch glass down (empty – the contents were on Ginny's cheeks) and strode away through the crowd, swaying and humming.

She's mental. She's like a feminine Ron.

Blood, pooling around her feet. Ron's screams echoed and echoed, of absolute agony, his face draining of all colour as his body rapidly emptied of blood –

Ginny squeezed her eyes closed, trying to block out the memory. When it was gone, she grabbed another glass of Firewhiskey and downed it, gasping as the contents seared her stomach.

"Well, well, what do we have here?"

"A scrawny, short-tempered redhead without a dress who really needs to either sleep or get drunk," Ginny replied, not looking at who'd addressed her. "Either one. I'm not picky."

"Party-pooper," said Scott, pouting. "Come on, let's dance."

Ginny's heart pounded in her chest. She really wanted to, but dancing lead to hugging which lead to kissing and then she'd be left on her own again… but she *really* wanted to. "Nyes," she blurted out, combining her battling emotions.

Scott's eyebrows raised. "Nyes?" he teased. "Is that a 'scrawny, short-tempered redhead without a dress' way of answering?" he grinned at her, before offering his hand.

The hand. Outstretched, towards her. Ginny stared at it, her feelings clashing inside her heart. She apologized to herself, before shaking her head. "Sorry, Scott… not tonight."

She could have *sworn* that his face fell – it must have been a trick of the light, because he didn't like Ginny that way… did he? "Okay," he

said, smiling. He walked away.

Shoulders sagging with disappointment, but her heart telling her it was for the best, Ginny took another glass of Firewhiskey. She was lifting it to her lips when suddenly a dark-haired Italian face was beside her.

"Dance with me?"

"Sure!" Ginny burst out, before she could even think. Before she knew what was happening, they were on the dance-floor together, one of his warm, soft hands at the small of her back, the other holding her own petite hand. Her stomach in her throat, she slid her arm around his neck, and they began to waltz.

Ah – I'm going to fall – no – that's his foot! – ***sorry*** *, Scott – whoops – AH! – was that a banana peel? – no. It was his foot – AHHHH!*

"I'm really sorry about this," apologized Ginny, face red as she collapsed into him for the hundredth time. "I'm not much of a dancer. Anyway, you brought this upon yourself, you know."

Scott grinned. "You're a *brilliant* dancer, Ginny. We're all brilliant dancers. You just happen to be the *least* brilliant in the room," he teased.

"Oi!" she gasped, and playfully slapped his arm.

"Ah – the lady wounds me," Scott lowered his head, attempting puppy-dog eyes.

'Attempting' being the operative word.

Eyes glowing with happiness, Ginny twirled out in a circle, her full swing-skirt flaring out effectively, Marilyn Munroe-style. She stumbled on something. And fell.

"Ow," Ginny complained. People started to laugh, and she turned onto her back, from where she was, flat on her face. "Some help,

Scotty-boy?" she lifted her hands.

"Ohh, so now it's *Scotty-boy* ?" the Ravenclaw laughed, before pulling his fallen dance partner to her feet. "I must say, Ginny, even in a state of disarray flat on the dance-floor… you look really nice."

Frozen.

S o, with Bill and Fleur's marriage-sealing kiss, the party began. The music blared, and the dancing started. Ginny searched the crowd for Harry, and, as a professional with five years of Harry-crowd-searching, found him immediately. He looked incredible…

… and he was looking at her. "You look beautiful!" he yelled across the crowd to her. "I love you!"

Her eyes stung with tears. Her only dream. She was Harry's love. Harry, the famous Harry Potter, loved her. "Harry," she breathed, and started to move towards him when a yellow blur ran past her.

Ginny didn't acknowledge the yellow blur until she saw where it was going, and what it was… or rather, who. Luna, clad in a fabulous yellow gown, running to Harry – throwing her skinny arms around his neck – kissing him heatedly – "I love you, too" – ***pain***

"Are you okay?" Scott said worriedly – after his compliment, Ginny had gone stiff and had stared blankly at him with eyes full of pain and horror.

His words snapped Ginny back to reality. "I'm… I'm fine…" she said, breathing hard.

"D'you want to keep dancing?" Scott inquired kindly, holding out his arm.

"No," Ginny choked out, and she walked away, holding her head between her hands and squeezing it hard. She grabbed another

glass of Firewhiskey, downed it, and collapsed onto a chair, pinching the bridge of her nose.

There she sat, for so long that she lost track of time. She heard people making announcements; Claude in front of her, taunting her; but all that she focused on was swirling her Firewhiskey in its glass with her eyes tightly closed.

Someone tapped on her shoulder.

Ginny ignored them.

Someone tapped harder.

Ginny ignored them.

Someone shook her shoulder. "GINNY!"

The redhead opened her eyes blearily and stared up at Grace. "Whaddyou wan'?" she grumbled.

Grace eyed Ginny for a moment, taking in her slurred speech, over-emotional state, and hooded eyes. Then she commented, "You're drunk."

"Oh! Am I really?" snapped Ginny. "And today, on 'Geniuses R Us', we have Grace Hartwin – and her speciality, ladies and gentlemen, is the *bloody obvious* !"

"Geez, okay," said Grace, looking offended.

"Can we go?" demanded Ginny, slamming her glass down onto what she thought was the table – she heard a smash, and stared down at the broken goblet, wondering how it had gotten down there.

"Er. Sure." Grace bit her lip. "D'you need any help getting down to the dungeons?"

" *No* ," said Ginny, looking affronted. "I am not a *baby* , Grace, I assure you that I'm fine to walk down to the-"

THUD.

"…that's the wall, Ginny."

"I am *aware* of that, Einstein."

"Who's Einstein?"

The redhead picked herself up from the floor by the wall, and, giving Grace a haughty look, stormed through the door, and started to head down to the dungeons.

When Ginny walked into her fifth wall, and started shouting and swearing at it get out of the way, Grace deciding that it was time for her to support her friend as best she could. She wrapped her arms around Ginny's skinny body and lugged it down the stairs.

"GraceIamfinenow *getoff* !" Ginny yelled, slapping feebly at the brunette.

"Okay, okay!" Grace let go. "Ow…" she massaged her stomach, where she had been struck.

"See?" Ginny stuck her tongue out. "I am fi-"

Suddenly there was a sensation of the ceiling and floor being mixed into each other, and jolting pain, and Grace shrieking, " *Ginny* !" and then all went dark.

…

A/N: Haha. I love writing drunk people. It's so much fun. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

o00Bubbles00o: Caffeine is indeed lovely, isn't it? I'm glad you liked it, and I hope you laughed a lot on this one too, because I certainly did. Teehee. Lol, Canada is even further for me, because I live in the UK. Lol. Thanks for the review!

LunarEclispe: Thank you, I loved that part, too!

midnightblue17: Thanks! I had *so* many plot-bunnies for this fic, it gets really complicated very soon. I'll give you a hint – I didn't know what to classify it as. Mystery, thriller, supernatural, drama, romance. DUN DUN DUNN! Yeah, I think I will update it, because writing her memories are a bit gory. Thanks on the whole.

storm-brain: Thanks! Well, Riddle's a half-blood, so he thought that he was a Muggle, and therefore he had Muggle dental treatment while he was in the orphanage. Ginny isn't a murderer, so her heart's not really into it, and she's trying to delay having to kill someone. Thanks for the review.

SilvanXan: Okay, then. Thank you, you know that you're wonderful. –huggle-

vlucia : Thanks! Yes, there will, but not very many. Because, yes, it is a bad memory of how she was possessed, but she has so many much worse memories that it sort of gets blocked – like, she still has to get over the fact that her first and supposedly *only* love was murdered.

XxRandomHeartxX: Ooh, thank you! I know, I just wanted to add something that no-one would expect Voldie to have, to really send across the message that he's not a weird diary-Horcrux, or a freaky snake-eyes; he's a normal person, with feelings (though he hides them all) and, yes, dental problems. I loved the ending, too. It took me AGES to work out how to phrase his 'I came here to look after you' speech. Lol. Same with the neopets thing! I was obsessed with it for about two years, lmao.

P is for Place Of Sanctuary

A/N: Some SR-GAP action and some TMR-GAP action. A very nice chapter, with an ending that I think you'll like. Sorry that this has taken so long to update – my laptop was confiscated for three days. Should be back to daily updates, though.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirteen: P is for Place Of Sanctuary

" *No," Ginny choked out, and she walked away, holding her head between her hands and squeezing it hard. She grabbed another glass of Firewhiskey, downed it, and collapsed onto a chair, pinching the bridge of her nose.*

Grace eyed Ginny for a moment, taking in her slurred speech, over-emotional state, and hooded eyes. Then she commented, "You're drunk."

Suddenly there was a sensation of the ceiling and floor being mixed into each other, and jolting pain, and Grace shrieking, "Ginny!" and then all went dark.

…

"Mmmpffgh."

Ginny opened her eyes blearily. She was in her own bed, and she had been having a blissfully nightmare-free sleep – her room-mates were also enjoying the bliss of no screams, and sleeping soundly. She did, however, have a massive headache.

What happened?

She suspected that she had been drunk at the disco, but couldn't really remember much. She could remember the smashing of glass, and dancing with Scott, and Riddle being gay… but that was all. Holding her head, Ginny sank back into her pillow.

Nostalgia and loss suddenly hit her, and she was crying before she even realized it. Turning over to muffle her sobs into her pillow, so as not to wake the other girls, she clenched her hands into fists and cried.

Little, thin fingers found the golden amulet that she never removed, and she was astonished to realize that, being so busy, she had not looked inside it for weeks. With trembling, fumbling fingertips, she clicked it open, and swung open the heart-shaped doors.

And there they were. Smiling back at her, and waving, and laughing together. There, in the middle, was her, aged fourteen, grinning; surrounded by her family, which had just come to include Fleur, taken at the wedding. Also squashed into the picture were Hermione, Harry, Luna, Neville, Colin Creevey, and Padma Patil, who was dating Ron at the time.

"I miss you all so much," she whispered to them, eyes brimming with another round of fresh tears. "I wish you were here… I wish I could bring you all back."

She touched her lips to her fingers, and then touched her fingers to the tiny, perfect photograph. Then she closed it, slipped it back under her night-shirt, and tried to go back to sleep.

…

The afternoon sunshine on Ginny's skin was like poison as she walked down the Head dormitories. It gleamed through each window she passed, blinding her with its false cheer. She wanted darkness – darkness and nothing but darkness.

" *Condolesam* ," said Ginny quietly to Robin the Rich.

The painting swung open, arguing at her to speak up and be brave, but she ignored it, and stepped through.

"Fionn, the meeting isn't for ten minutes," called a cold male voice. "You can return to your silly friends."

Ginny didn't respond.

At the silence that met him, the speaker turned around. The person he least expected to see was standing there, looking as though the world had ended.

"Peregrine," said Riddle, frowning. "You're… early." He looked at the clock on the wall, as if to check that his eyes weren't lying.

Oh. I was hoping someone else would be here. No, I have to leave. Now. I don't want to be alone with him – not now or ***ever*** *. He's a murderer, and I don't want to have another nightmare in front of him.*

"I'll go," said Ginny immediately, and turned.

"Why did you have a seizure?" asked Riddle suddenly.

"Why weren't you at your own ball?" Ginny replied.

"Looking for me, were you? I'm touched."

"Looking for something to *throw* at you," snapped Ginny, actual venom dripping from her words. "I'm leaving."

"You're dodging the question – and you have to stay here for the Prefect meeting, unfortunately."

"Oh yes, how unfortunate, to be stuck with a stupid little sixth-year who occasionally has screaming convulsions on the floor," spat Ginny. "I apologize for any inconvenience it causes *you* ."

"Why don't you just go to the Hospital Wing, if you're that unwell?" snapped Riddle.

"Because it's not something that Madam Royce can fix," said Ginny icily.

Riddle opened his mouth to return with a comeback, but at that moment, the rest of the meeting members entered. He suited himself by fixing Ginny with his strongest death glare.

"Hello, Ginny!" Eleanor smiled. "You're early." She, too, glanced at the clock, before sitting down. "I convene this Prefect meeting, the fourth of November, 1958," she said once everyone was seated.

Everyone nodded.

"Right. We're here to discuss the ball and disco then. I thought it was brilliant, and I reckon we should have another one at Christmas!" said Eleanor happily.

" *No* !" snapped Jack, Riddle, and Robert.

" *Yes* !" cried Scott, Gareth and the girls.

"Seven-three! We win, you lose!" yelled Mia, punching her fist into the air – just the reaction that Lavender Brown would probably have had in that situation.

"We have to run it by Professor Dippet first, so don't get your hopes set too high, Brown," said Riddle coldly.

"Just destroy every happy feeling," said Ginny abruptly, her voice arctic and quiet. "Riddle, you're like a *Dementor* , for God's sake. You feed off everyone else's misery, don't you?"

"What is your problem, Peregrine?" snapped Riddle. "One moment you're an annoying brat and the next you're like a bloody *cobra* , spitting poison!"

"Do you really think that you're in any position to talk to me about *poison* , Riddle?" Ginny spat.

"Poison, yes, but also comes the antidote," said Riddle darkly. "And what good that got me."

The others looked bewildered, but Ginny knew exactly what Riddle was getting at – he had come down to the Hallowe'en disco to check that she was okay. He was saying: *I may be unpleasant, but yesterday I came down to the Hallowe'en disco solely to see if you were alright, and I got shouted at.*

Ginny's eyes narrowed to hazel slits. If he wanted to talk Dark poetry, then he had it coming. "Then fool you for playing with snakes," she hissed at him.

" *I'm scared* ," Scott whispered to Eleanor.

" *We all are* ," the Head Girl whispered in reply.

" *Stay very still, and maybe they won't eat us* ."

" *Good idea* ."

For a moment, Ginny and Riddle merely glared at each other – flashing dark against glowing hazel.

"Like the view?" Antonia Durrell chirped, giggling.

Overcome with disgust and absolute loathing for the seventeen-year-old across the room from, Ginny stood, seemed to battle for something to say, before storming out of the Head dormitory.

"Obviously not!" Eleanor shrieked with laughter, and then the portrait door swung closed, and Ginny's hearing of the Head meeting was cut off.

Sighing, Ginny sat down heavily on the Astronomy staircase. All that she wanted to do was curl up somewhere and be alone.

I think I will. I'll save Grace, Flora, Claude, Ramira and Avani my screaming for another night. I'm going to sleep in the Astronomy

Tower. My haven, so close to the stars. My place of sanctuary.

Raking a hand through her long, red tangles, Ginny leant sideways into the wall. "I hate it here," she whispered to the cold stone against which her cheek was pressed. "It's terrible. I miss my old life. I miss you all so much…" Feeling tears threaten, she closed her eyes.

Her eyes had barely been closed five seconds when she became immediately aware of someone nearby. Watching her. It wasn't the harsh stare of Riddle, nor the quiet gaze of Alden. It was not Grace – she wouldn't have the subtlety nor the patience. It was also familiar, so it was someone that Ginny knew. It was not the soft gaze of Eleanor; it was:

"Scott," said Ginny quietly, not opening her eyes.

An awkward shifting of feet told her that she was correct. "How did you know I was here?" he asked.

Then did Ginny open her eyes and look at him. "I felt it," she murmured, with a weak smile.

"What's wrong?" asked Scott softly. He moved to the stairs and sat beside her, looping his arms loosely around his bent knees. "You don't seem happy here… I heard you-" he paused, as if worried for the reaction his words might gauge, before continuing gently, "I heard you say 'I miss you all so much'."

Ginny sighed, looking at her hands. She could not be involved with Scott, because he would only hurt her. Yet his soft-spoken words and comforting aura were willing her to speak…

"Who are they?" inquired Scott. "What… what happened to make you so… upset all the time?"

I don't want to go into this… However, she needed to talk to someone, and to cry on someone's shoulder, and if it happened to be a very handsome Italian shoulder, then she was all for it. Closing

her eyes so that she didn't have to look at him, Ginny said quietly, "I moved here because those who taught me previously were killed. I stood and watched, helplessly, as everyone I cared about and… and *loved* … was murdered."

Nothing but a silence met her, and Ginny felt a lump growing in her throat, harder and harder.

"Oh, Ginny, I'm so sorry," whispered Scott, and then he took her in her arms.

The sixteen-year-old, who suddenly felt that she was five again, and that all she wanted was to be held and coddled by her mother, turned to Scott, leant into him, closed her eyes and allowed her tears to flow unchecked as she silently cried into his chest.

"I miss them so much and I didn't think I could live without them but I have and I don't want to anymore and I want to go *home* ," she sobbed breathlessly, vaguely aware that she was rambling and that she wasn't making much sense.

"Don't worry, Ginny," soothed Scott gently, stroking Ginny's wild red hair and patting her back to stop her from getting any loud and, knowing Ginny's past experience with them, embarrassingly frog-like hiccups, for which the redhead was extremely grateful.

Her tears were a well that took a long time to dry up, but she didn't mind, because she was safe in Scott's warm, strong arms, being rocked gently back and forth, having reassuring comfort murmured into her ear.

"Thank you," Ginny whispered, lifting her face from Scott's now tear-stained, smudged eyeliner-coloured shirt.

Scott looked down in surprise, thinking that Ginny was asleep. His astonishment turned into a smile. "It's okay," he replied softly, looking down into her hazel eyes.

Unsure what was coming over her, and probably influenced by her emotional, tearful state, Ginny tilted her face up to Scott's, fluttered her eyes closed, and before she could kiss him, he kissed her.

Tentative, sweet, and shy. It held no passion, but was merely lips pressed softly against each other, supporting Ginny physically, emotionally and mentally.

A moment passed, and then another; and then Ginny drew back, feeling embarrassed, but extremely pleased, as if a pink balloon with a smiley face drawn on it had just inflated somewhere near her appendix. "Sorry," she mumbled, and made to stand up."

"Ginny," said Scott quickly, standing up. He was a few inches taller than her, now that they were both standing, and Ginny needed to tilt her head up to look straight into his face. He curved his left hand around her chin. "You don't have to be sorry for anything."

The redhead tried to speak, but Scott had already lowered his lips to hers again; already began to kiss her. She responded for a moment, moving her lips softly under his, before drawing away and saying quietly, "I have to go… thank you for everything, Scott."

Smiling, Scott nodded. "Come on, I'll take you…" he frowned, "wherever it is that you're going." He kissed Ginny's nose gently, before lacing his fingers gently through hers, and together they walked away down the corridor.

A small sigh came from the shadows, and then the watcher returned to his dormitory.

…

A/N: Aww… someone is sad. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .
Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

o00Bubbles00o: Thanks, I researched for ages to get everything all fifty-ish. I know, I found that chapter a bit boring too, but this one was

hopefully more interesting for you.

KayRose: Oooh, I love your pen-name! Thanks for the review!

midnightblue17: Yes, I will unleash said plot-bunnies, and they will sink their little teeth into Riddle's brain… metaphorically, of course. Yes, he will be coming to save the day soon. Mwahaha.

SilvanXan: I'm still working on your fic, be done soon. Sorry it's taking so long.

vlucia : Thanks! I'm sorry, I hoped you liked the T/G in this chapter. I just have to build up Scott and Ginny's relationship. 'Tis very important, ya. I'm really trying to put in something that she knows about him, but I don't know how I can, because I have a really complicated plot set out, and for it to work she needs to know close to zilch about him. Meeeh. I'm trying, though, I'm trying.

crazedreader: I love your pen-name! Thank you for the review!

XxRandomHeartxX: Thanks so much! Yeah, I know, I was obsessed with it for years. Had about a million dollars or whatever it was called there. I'm trying to force as much *sympathise with her* on you as possible – it's working! –squee- Thank you thank you thank you, I hope you liked this chapter. What a weird coincedence.

P is for Public Displays of Affection

A/N: Some SR-GAP action. A VERY interesting chapter. Well. It's important. That's the main thing. And it has a cliffie. Yay! Scottie and Ginny…ie are now dating. –swoon-

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Fourteen: P is for Public Displays of Affection

Smiling, Scott nodded. "Come on, I'll take you…" he frowned, "wherever it is that you're going." He kissed Ginny's nose gently, before lacing his fingers gently through hers, and together they walked away down the corridor.

A small sigh came from the shadows, and then the watcher returned to his dormitory.

…

Five minutes. It was time enough to see Scott before Muggle Studies, wasn't it?

Ginny glanced indecisively between the stairs to Muggle Studies and the stairs to Divination, which Scott had next. *Mmmm… Scott* , she decided, and hurried up the Divination Tower steps, vibrant red ponytail bouncing on her shoulders.

It wasn't as if Professor Gladwyn would be cross with her star pupil; she wasn't in any danger of a detention. At least, she hoped not.

"Scott?" she called, looking around. *Oh, I hope he hasn't already gone up to class* , she thought crossly, peering up the ladder to the attic classroom. "Scott, where are you?"

Suddenly tanned hands came over her eyes, and she squealed happily. "Scott, stupid," she said, turning around, "couldn't you just say, *here I am, my love* or something?"

"Here I am, my love?" tried Scott, a grin on his handsome features. "Hey, Gin."

The redhead's eyes narrowed. "I've told you a thousand times, *don't* call me that," she said quietly.

"Sorry." Scott lowered his head to hers and kissed her. "Aren't – you – supposed – to – be in – class?" he asked between kisses.

"Aren't you supposed to be keeping your hands off me in public, due to Dippet's warning on PDA?" retorted Ginny, smirking.

"Public Displays of Affection, my arse," said Scott, rolling his warm brown eyes. "Where else am I supposed to snog you?"

"Not here, apparently," replied Ginny. She quickly burrowed into Scott's robes pocket and dug out his pocket-watch. "Hm," she flipped it open and looked at its face.

Late! Damn!

Ginny swore under her breath. "Gotta go, Scott. Later, alligator," (she winced inwardly – *I hate saying that. It annoys me endlessly. I can't wait until that greeting goes out of style*) she said, standing on tiptoes, brushing her lips against his quickly, before scurrying down the stairs.

The Slytherin thundered down the steps, back up more steps to the Muggle Studies classroom, and then through the door. "Sorry I'm late, Professor," she apologized, and hurried to her seat, beside Alden.

"You really shouldn't see Scott before classes," Alden hissed. "You're going to be late for everything."

"Mr. Philips, Ms. Peregrine? Please, quiet," said Professor Gladwyn. She was new that year, and the best Muggle Studies teacher that Ginny had ever had – she would say the best all-around teacher, except that she was tying with the late Remus Lupin. She was young, and slim, and she also looked beautiful. Nothing she did was dull, and she still managed to gain respect from the rowdier students with her fierce, feisty side.

"Sorry, Professor," Ginny and Alden chorused, getting their books out.

"No, no, put your books away," said Professor Gladwyn. "We are beginning a new topic. I trust you are all familiar with the Tales of Beedle the Bard?"

There were noises of general agreement, while some muttered things about immaturity and that they didn't want to learn about Beedle the Bard.

"Muggles have the same sort of thing. They call them *fairytales* ," said Gladwyn. She flicked her wand and the word 'fairytales' appeared on the board. "We will be learning the fairytales, and at the end of the two-week project, a fourteen-inch essay will be due in concerning your favourite Muggle fairytale, the summary of it, and why it is your favourite."

Many groaned; Ginny smiled. She was a 'Muggle-born', so she knew all about it (actually, she had just borrowed a Hans Christian Anderson book from Hermione and read all the fairytales in advance).

"Does anyone know of any Muggle fairytales?" asked Gladwyn.

Ginny shot her hand into the air.

"Ms. Peregrine?"

"'East of the Sun and West of the Moon', Professor," Ginny said. "It's a Norwegian tale, telling of a prince who was turned into a beast, and could only be healed if a young girl lived with him for a full year of her own free will."

"Excellent. Five points to Slytherin," said Professor Gladwyn. "Any others?"

Alden raised his hand.

"Yes, Mr. Philips?"

"I think there's one called 'The Little Mermaid'," he said uncertainly. "Muggles imagine mermaids as beautiful creatures with an incredible singing voice, and a young mermaid princess ignores her six older sisters' warnings and falls in love with a human… but then she kills him. I forgot why."

… *that's impossible. I'm called the Weasley Princess. The red-haired princess, the youngest of seven… and I killed my love.*

Shivering, Ginny stared determinedly down at her desk.

"Well done. Five points to Slytherin. Anyone else?" inquired Professor Gladwyn.

A Ravenclaw offered 'Cinderella' and a Hufflepuff answered with 'Thumbelina'; a Gryffindor raised his hand, but got the answer wrong.

Take that, lousy Gryffindor!

Realizing her thoughts, Ginny was shocked.

I'm really turning into a Slytherin!

Or were you just a Slytherin all along…?

"Now, those answers were very good, thank you to those of you, but none of guessed the fairytale that we will be doing," said Gladwyn.

"We will be doing 'Sleeping Beauty'."

Someone at the back of the room moaned and started to complain quietly to someone nearby.

"We'll be acting it out today, so that can really understand the plot, and then next lesson we'll be going over it in our books, before starting on 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves'." Gladwyn brushed a strand of curly mahogany hair from her eyes, and handed out scripts. She returned to the front of the classroom, and looked around at her students. "I'll be playing as the narrator. Who would like to be Prince Charming?"

Abraxas Malfoy, the father of Lucius, raised his hand lazily. He was an arrogant toerag and wanted nothing better to have the ladies' swooning for him.

"Very well. Mr. Malfoy as Prince Charming. And who as Sleeping Beauty?" asked Gladwyn, putting on her reading glasses and looking down at her script.

The majority of the girls in the class raised their hand – including one of Claude's friends, the beautiful Avani Mohana. When she saw Ginny looking, her chocolate-latte eyes narrowing to slits, and she shot a rude hand-gesture at the redhead before flicking her long, effortlessly shiny, dark hair over her shoulder and raised her hand higher.

"Hm," said Professor Gladwyn, observing each candidate girl. Then her eyes rested on the non-candidates, the ones who had not put up their hands.

Her eyes were resting on Ginny.

Oh no. Not me. Not me. Not me not me not me, please, please, if there's such a thing as angels, HELP ME-

"I think Ms. Peregrine would make a fine Sleeping Beauty," said Professor Gladwyn, smiling.

Angels? SCREW YOU!

"What?" cried a Hufflepuff whose name Ginny didn't know. "But – but Professor, Sleeping Beauty's *blonde* !" She tugged hopefully on her strawberry-blonde plaits, fluttering her eyelashes.

"Ex *cuse* me?" snapped Avani. "What's *that* supposed to mean? I can be as much a Sleeping Beauty as you!"

"Whatever," said the Hufflepuff, rolling her large grey eyes expressively. " *Professor* , choose me!"

"Alright then," said Professor Gladwyn, smiling at the Hufflepuff. "What did you say that your name was?"

"Rosalind Keefe," said the girl, a triumphant air to her tone.

"Thank you, Ms. Keefe, I feel you'll be perfect for the role of the Evil Witch," said Professor Gladwyn with a warm smile.

The blonde, namely Rosalind, gasped. "But – but *Profeeeessoooorr* !" she whined.

"Quiet, Ms. Keefe, if you will," reprimanded Professor Gladwyn.

Sensing a perfect opportunity, despite her loathing for her own acting part, Ginny turned and flashed a smug grin to the blonde.

…

"Oh, but I wonder where this staircase leads," read Ginny, flinging her arm out dramatically to where the 'staircase' was. "I think I'll climb it – whatever could await me atop it must surely be an adventure."

She moved across the conjured stage, which she had thought couldn't fit in the classroom, and pretended to walk up the stairs.

Knock, knock, knock.

Ginny looked over at the door, where someone was asking to enter the Muggle Studies classroom.

"Ignore it, Ms. Peregrine," instructed Professor Gladwyn, before going to answer the door.

Looking down again at her script, Ginny opened the 'door' and stepped into the 'room' where the spinning-wheel was waiting. "Well, what is this?" she asked, trying to make her voice sound as full of childish wonder as she could make it.

"Professor Gladwyn?" said quietly a very familiar, cool voice.

"Yes, what can I do for you?"

"I apologize for interrupting your lesson. Professor Berthold asked me to come and ask for a Grade B Advanced History of Magic textbook," said the familiar, cold, formal male voice.

*What the hell is **he** doing here?*

Determinedly ignoring him, and the tiny part of her brain that was now strangely conscious of embarrassing herself by being Sleeping Beauty, she said, "Oh, look! A spinning-wheel! I do love to spin," and clasped her hands (and script) to her chest.

A very cross-looking Rosalind stepped onto the stage. "Try spinning, my darling," she said, looking extremely resentful and murderous towards 'Sleeping Beauty'. "It will create whatever you most desire."

*Will it create my best friends and my family again? Will it create a portal to take me home? I **doubt** it.*

"It sounds fabulous – I think I shall begin to spin at once!" Ginny exclaimed with false joy.

Professor Gladwyn said something to Riddle and left the room.

Suddenly she was hit by a pang of wooziness. Her head filled with pain, and it was a struggle to keep her eyes open. Ignoring it, she continued; looking delightedly at the spinning-wheel.

"Then *spin* ," snapped Rosalind angrily, folding her arms across her chest.

Blood-

Ginny moved to where the conjured spinning-wheel stood.

Pain-

Her head was swimming, and her vision was blurring.

Ron-

She raised her hand to the spinning wheel.

Harry-

Riddle was speaking. She could no longer make out his words.

Hermione-

She was aware of someone calling her name worriedly.

Luna-

She touched her finger to the spindle.

Mum-

" Hermione? Mione, did you hear the news? Harry got a-" the words were never finished because Ginny ran into her best friend's room and came to see the bushy-haired Muggleborn on her bedroom floor, red and sticky and somehow a lot smaller than Ginny ever remembered, because her arms were in the corner, and her legs were mutilated, and her head was GONE and her best friend was in pieces, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Blood, pooling around her feet. Ron's screams echoed and echoed, of absolute agony, his face draining of all colour as his body rapidly emptied of blood onto the floor around her... her, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Charlie screamed out. "Ginny… go…" he ground out, before it twisted into another scream. His hands twisted in horrific, demonic shapes as he battled his own mind. "GO!" he howled, and then a blood vessel burst in his temple and it was on Ginny and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

The green light flashed brighter than anything, and a single tortured scream rose up from everyone present as their only saviour fell. Ginny was screaming louder than anyone. The green eyes of her first love widened, bulged, and then his glasses fell. And Harry tumbled forwards lifeless; Ginny ran to him, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

George. Snape cursed his ear off. Then his nose. Then, suddenly, horrifically, half of his face was gone. It was as if God had decided, 'no, I don't think his face came out quite right, hang on, give it back'. Except, what kind of God would do this? And Ginny was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Luna shouted out, shaking. Ginny ran to her side, but she felt immediately as though she would be sick when she saw that her close friend was having a brain haemorrhage. Blood poured from the blonde's ears, matting her shiny hair, as well as from her nose and mouth, and she was gagging on some sort of white foam. "Luna – Luna!" Ginny cried, but then her friend's eyes bulged out, one

downwards and one sideways, and then Luna keeled forwards, collapsing on top of her. Blood was on Ginny, on her hands, on her clothes, in her MOUTH, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Molly Weasley was clinging to her husband, fear etching onto her features as she screamed. "Not my children!" she sobbed. "Not my children! Please!" Tears streamed down her face; Lord Voldemort laughed at the display of emotion. He waved his wand – with a twisted scream and in an explosion of blood, Bill fell. "NOT MY CHILDREN! PLEASE!" Ginny's mother screamed. Ginny stood watching, tears flowing. "Mum!" she screamed. "Mum!" Then the screaming rose up, higher and higher, and Ginny could only distinguish two phrases: from her mother, "Take me instead" and from Lord Voldemort, "Very well". Then the blood was everywhere, and the kitchen of the Burrow was destroyed by it and parts of the Weasley family were everywhere, and Ginny was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

Vaguely, echoing in some distant chamber of her brain, she heard, " *Professor* !" shrieked. Then all went dark.

…

A/N: DUN DUN DUNN! Bwahaha cliffie of doom! Mwahahahharr. The next chapter will be VERY interesting. You'll all like it. That's a promise. And if you don't like it then I'll eat yoh skinny ass. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

o00Bubbles00o: I know! The normal ones are always the crazy ones. People are always like: "Aw, I remember Bob. He was also such a quiet and sweet boy." And then Bob comes back and eats everyone. ARGHHH! Holy hallway snogging, indeed, my friend.

KayRose: Nyanyanya. I can't tell you that. Then I'd ruin the plot. – pokes tongue out- Aw, my name's weirder than yours. KayRose is a really pretty name.

AppleC0re: Thank you! I hope you liked this chapter!

midnightblue17: Yeah. Poor little emo Voldie in the darkness. No-one likes him. –sob- I LOVE HIM! –hughughug- Anywayyy. Thank you.

storm-brain: I've got loads of P names ready, don't worry. Thanks though, I'll probably use them. And I wasn't sure whether to rename the previous chapter "Poetic Poison" because it fits in with it, and also I might use "Place of Sanctuary" later. Whaddaya think? Thank you!

Sakura999: Thanks! I might try that. Maybe when I've finished the fic on FanFiction first.

Saene: I love your pen-name. And yes, actually, it *is* supposed to be 1946… but I already did the research for the 1958 instead, and also it's crucial to the plot that in present-time, Voldie isn't like seventy or something. Because that would just kind of be like pedophilic. And I didn't just give away part of the plot. –shifty eyes-

P is for Passing Out

A/N: This is a very very interesting chapter. Do you know why? Because, my friends, IT'S NOT TOLD FROM GINNY'S POINT OF VIEW. Oooooh.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifteen: P is for Passing Out

Ginny raised her hand to the spinning wheel. ***Harry-*** *Riddle was still speaking. She could no longer make out his words.* ***Hermione-*** *She was aware of someone calling her name worriedly* ***. Luna-*** *she touched her finger to the spindle.*

Vaguely, echoing in some distant chamber of her brain, she heard, "Professor!" shrieked. Then all went dark.

…

TOM

"Get out your textbooks, please," said Professor Berthold, in his usual monotone, moving to his desk and flipping through his paperwork.

Tom dug his hand into his schoolbag and pulled out his books. Looking through each one, he realized that he did not have a new History of Magic textbook.

Oh yes, that's right. I can't afford one.

"Sir," said Tom, raising his hand. "I don't have a textbook."

The elderly Professor eyed the seventeen-year-old Slytherin for a moment. Then, with a sigh, he waved his hand. "Go and find one, Mr. Riddle. Hurry."

Teachers were used to this now. Tom Riddle was an orphan. He had no money, and what little money he attained was from the part-time job in the Leaky Cauldron that he had been working, during the holidays, since he was twelve, and from the fund that Hogwarts ran for the poorer students. He generally was missing books and quills. The lacking of these items was not helped by his unpopularity, which lead to people stealing them.

"Where should I find one, Professor?" Tom asked.

"Er, Professor Gladwyn should have some for you. I believe she's in the room down the hall, up the stairs," Berthold said absent-mindedly, gesturing towards the door.

Tom left without a thank-you.

He slipped almost silently through the door, and started down the corridor. He was a quiet person, and he preferred to be on his own. Being around large crowds of people unnerved him, and that was why he usually ate in the kitchens, as opposed to the clustered Great Hall.

*As if any large crowds of people would even **want** to be with me* .

Unfortunately, his *lovely* room-mate, Fionn, was the exact opposite of him. She was bubbly, bright, friendly and was definitely a people-person. Tom's definition of a nice day consisted of sitting somewhere quiet, usually the library or the Head dormitory, and reading. Fionn's definition of a nice day consisting of sitting in the same sort of quiet, peaceful places as Tom – except that her concept of nice involved many, many girls, all giggling and talking loudly and eating and doing their hair.

Needless to say, the two 'nice days' conflicted.

And, much to Tom's distaste, Fionn usually won.

There. A staircase. A nameplate beside it read *Professor M. Gladwyn.* Tom headed up the staircase, hoping that this new teacher, this Gladwyn man, would have the textbook, otherwise he'd fall behind, and he didn't want to fail any of his classes. It simply wouldn't do for the Head Boy to fail.

The door at the top of the staircase again bore the teacher's name. Just in case you had forgotten, in the past ten seconds. The Slytherin heard loud noise inside and decided that he shouldn't simply walk in. He raised a hand and rapped smartly on the door, before standing back and waiting, wondering what on earth was going on inside.

The noise stopped.

"Ignore it, Ms. Peregrine," was heard from inside.

Tom frowned. Oh, brilliant. Peregrine.

With a creak, the wooden door swung open, and a warm female face appeared. She was quite tall, with curly mahogany hair and limpid eyes. Was this Gladywn? Hm. He had expected a man.

"Professor Gladwyn?" he inquired, keeping his voice flat, distant, and formal, as always. It was polite, and teachers seemed to like it.

"Yes, what I can do for you?" the woman said, smiling warmly, moving backwards to indicate that he could come in.

"I apologize for interrupting your lesson. Professor Berthold asked me to come and ask for a Grade B Advanced History of Magic textbook," Tom said, stepping into the room.

Keeping his face turned to Professor Gladwyn, Tom flickered his gaze sideways to see what was going on – the desks were empty.

A stage was at the front of the room, not looking as though it would fit, but still somehow managing to. *The wonder of magic.* On the stage, were two people. One was a female with a snub nose and bright blonde hair, who doubtlessly would be called 'pretty' by eighty percent of the male population. The other was Peregrine.

Ah. Well, that explains the noise , Tom thought dryly. *Any noise is usually sourced to her.*

Peregrine seemed totally oblivious to the fact that he was there. Knowing her, she was probably completely aware, and ignoring him. "Oh, look!" she cried, a look of awe coming onto her freckled face. "A spinning-wheel! I do love to spin." She put her hands to her heart, and looked wonderingly at the cheap, wooden spinning-wheel in front of her.

Sleeping Beauty. You wouldn't have thought they'd have chosen a hot-tempered redhead as the tranquil princess.

"Will you need anything else?" asked Professor Gladwyn.

Tom's eyes returned to the female Muggle Studies teacher. "I don't think so," he said. "Just the textbook."

"It sounds fabulous – I think I shall begin to spin at once!" said Peregrine from the stage, her voice happy in all falseness.

"I'll be back in a minute," said Professor Gladwyn. As she left the room to get a textbook, Tom allowed to eyes to flash sideways and looked to the stage again.

Peregrine moved across the stage. Abruptly she stopped, and her eyes lost focus. Seeing this, Tom turned his head fully to the stage now, a sense of foreboding filling him.

"Then *spin* ," said the blonde girl, looking vehement towards Peregrine.

Tom knew what was going to happen before it did.

The younger Slytherin stumbled across the stage, and, swaying, raised her hand to the spinning-wheel again.

Okay, time to go.

In an instant, he decided that he had seen enough. Tom didn't want to be caught up in this again. If anything happened, *Reeve* could rescue her. It wouldn't be him.

He turned, and opened the door. Tom was closing it behind him when Peregrine started screaming, loud, long, and terribly high-pitched.

"What the hell – stop it! STOP IT!" shouted another female voice, probably the blonde. She turned to the door. "Shut up, or I'm telling! I mean it! *Professor* !"

Ignore it. Tom's hand was still on the door. *Ignore, Damnit, ignore!* He tore away from the door and hurried back to the stage. *Do you call this ignoring?* "Peregrine! Peregrine, can you hear me? PEREGRINE!" he said urgently.

She was looking at him, but her eyes weren't taking anything in. And before Tom could even reach the stage, she keeled forwards.

THUD .

"You didn't need to fall *that* hard," commented the blonde girl boredly.

Peregrine was on the floor – off the stage. She was sprawled out, on her stomach; Tom couldn't see what was going on. She wasn't shaking this time… she was perfectly still.

"Oh, hell no," muttered Tom, moving quickly to her and ducking beside her. "Peregrine?" he called. "PEREGRINE?"

"Ginny!" cried a short dark-haired boy, who Tom often saw with Peregrine. He fled over to her and dropped to his knees next to her, across from where Tom was kneeling.

"Hello, loser, we have to keep practicing. I don't *want* a detention, thank you," the blonde said irritably.

Other students were poking their heads out from behind the stage-curtains.

"Peregrine, answer me!" Riddle hissed.

"Ginny?" asked the dark boy worriedly.

"Ohmigod." The blonde paled. "She's not pretending, is she?"

"I thought you'd have realized that when she pitched forwards off the stage," snapped Riddle.

The blonde girl jumped down from the stage, crouched, took hold of Peregrine's face and started slapping it. "Wakey wakey, drama queen," she yelled, as the other sixth-years started to pile onto the stage, watching with a mixture of interest and anxiety.

Nothing. Peregrine didn't respond to the slaps; didn't move.

Not good.

"Shit," Tom muttered, losing his control over the reflexes that kept his language polite and formal. Screw polite. As Head Boy, he needed to sort out this problem – even if it *was* just Peregrine. "You. Stay here," he commanded to the other students. "I'm getting Gladwyn." He got to his feet and left the classroom, trying to ignore his heartbeat and how terrifyingly small Peregrine looked when she was unconscious. Also trying to ignore why he cared.

"Professor!" Tom called down the hallway. "Professor Gladwyn? *Professor* ?"

The Muggle Studies teacher emerged through a little door. "Yes, Mr. Riddle? What's wrong?" she asked, frowning at the expression of Tom's face. She had seen him a few times before, but she had never seen anything like this on his smooth, masked features.

"I…" Tom suddenly knew that he shouldn't tell Gladwyn that Peregrine had a seizure previously – it would mean him losing his Headship if there was a serious medical issue with a younger student and he had failed to tell someone. He was not losing his long sought-after position as Head Boy just because of some spastic sixth-year. "I'm not sure. I think that Peregrine had a seizure."

Professor Gladwyn paled. "Has anything like this happened before?" she asked Tom as she hurtled down the corridor.

"No," Tom lied easily, effortlessly.

They entered the Muggle Studies classroom again; the female Professor tossed the textbook aside and crouched immediately next to the pale redhead on the ground. "Ms. Peregrine, can you hear me? Ms. Peregrine!" she shouted into her ear.

A few feet away, Tom hissed, " *Ow* " and looked down at his palm. He had not been aware of even clenching his fists – however, he must have been, because, bleeding, on his hands were now tiny half-moons from his fingernails.

"She needs to be taken to Madam Royce," said Professor Gladwyn urgently.

"I'll take her," said Peregrine's friend, standing to full height – which of course, still left him a midget.

"No, we need to continue with our lesson. Ms. Keefe, I believe you wanted to play Sleeping Beauty? Get on the stage, and start acting. Everyone else, behind the stage curtains," instructed Professor Gladwyn. "In *clu* ding you, Mr. Philips."

"But, Professor-"

"Mr. Riddle?" asked Gladwyn, looking up at Tom.

No. No. I am not taking Peregrine to the Hospital Wing. No, okay? Get the midget to take her, he seems keen. Get ***Reeve*** *to take her, I bet he'd come in and snog her stupid lifeless body and I'm not taking her, so stop looking at me like that and-*

"Could you please take Ms. Peregrine to the Hospital Wing?" asked Professor Gladwyn with a smile, a note of pleading in her voice.

Tom met the Professor's gaze coolly. "I have to get back to class," he said.

Gladwyn chuckled for a few seconds. Then she turned a narrow-eyed, lips-pursed glare on Tom. "Let me rephrase that," she said to him. "Take her now."

You… Anger flooded Tom's system, but his face remained an aloof, clear mask of no emotion. The only hints to his fury were his flashing eyes and the forced 'f' when he said, "Fine."

Fully aware of the death-glare that the midget sixth-year was sending him, Tom returned to where Peregrine lay. "Move," he said icily; the students scattered out of his path. He stared down at the redhead, eyes flickering over her unconscious… and totally limp… form.

How the devil am I supposed to take her to the Hospital Wing?

"It's not that difficult, Riddle, just pick her up," said Peregrine's friend angrily. "Professor, I really think that I should-"

"Philips! Get to your place on stage!" Gladwyn said sharply.

The Head Boy turned a cold look on the small, dark boy, to hide his true thoughts: *pick her up? You have to be joking.* He wiped his bloody hands on his robes and then ducked down next to the invalid.

"You'd better be grateful for this," he muttered darkly to her unconscious figure, before awkwardly scooping her up in his arms. It would have been a lot easier to sling her over his shoulder, but somehow he didn't think that Professor Gladwyn, or the glaring midget – or Peregrine – would appreciate it.

All eyes were upon him as he straightened up. "I'll be back in a moment to get my textbook," he said glacially, addressing the Professor. "Assuming that none other of your students spontaneously pass out, my work here is done."

Not waiting for a reply, Tom turned and exited the classroom, cloak snapping around his ankles.

Peregrine was light, Tom found, as he walked down the stairs from the Muggle Studies classroom. It was hardly surprising, however, as she was extremely thin. Not in an anorexic-I'm-trying-not-be-fat way. She just… was.

There's something not right with her, and I'm going to find out.

Tom had done it a thousand times, as with everyone else - he quietly, to himself, observed her. He watched everybody. He enjoyed seeing people's personalities, qualities, and traits. Most people were very simple, and easy to read. Peregrine…

Ginevra Peregrine was different. She didn't wear her heart on her sleeve. Almost all of her emotions were hidden, apart from joy. When she laughed, the world laughed with her. Everything else, however, was totally concealed, and veiled behind those round hazel eyes. Those rare times when she showed other emotions, such as anger or sorrow, were fired out at high-speed, in explosions that no-one could handle, or understand.

And therefore she was a mystery to everyone, and her feelings twice so.

Tom knew a few things about her, though. She liked Quidditch, and was going to try out for the Slytherin team. She rarely brushed her hair, unlike the million other girls who spent hours curling it to perfection. She didn't mind getting dirty or mucking up her nails. She liked eyeliner. When she was irritated at him, she flicked her fringe out of her eyes without using her hands. She often became extremely cynical when she was drunk. She liked chocolate. And she was dating Scott Reeve.

So deep in his thoughts was Tom that he was startled into almost stumbling when Peregrine stirred. With the same stiff grace that he always maintained - he never fell, stumbled, nor slipped anywhere - he continued walking, unfazed.

His dark eyes were now fixed upon Peregrine's tiny form, suspended uselessly between his arms. She had barely moved an inch, but she had moved all the same. Tom watched her suspiciously; watched her short cinnamon eyelashes flutter softly; watched her turn slightly in his arms… and then become still.

She's waking up. I should drop her here. I should leave her behind a statue and get back to class. I'm falling behind already on Muggle Studies; I have to get back.

Tom wasn't sure why, but he kept walking. As he began to walk the long, final corridor to the Hospital Wing, Peregrine stirred again – and shuffled sideways, tilting her head down and sideways.

Down and sideways.

Into his chest.

Oh, hell no. No, you don't. Get the hell off me. Just because I have been forced to carry you doesn't create a neon sign above my head saying: ***I am a pillow. Cuddle me*** *So you can just -*

However, rather unluckily, his train of thought was broken, because then Peregrine stirred for a third time – and opened her eyes.

…

A/N: Ooh. Did you like it being from Riddle's POV? I had to make everything more cycical, like calling Alden a midget and calling Ginny a spastic and stuff like that. I hope you enjoyed it! Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

WARNING: Approaching plot-twists to make your head spin.

chimis: Thanks! I love yours, too.

storm-brain: What do you mean, what's with Riddle? D'you mean her always passing out when he's around? Thank yew!

crazedreader: Thank you so much!

creative-writing-girl13: Thank you! Wow, I must be doing well if I made someone tear up. –grin- Thanks again!

Asta-Amkis: I love your pen-name! I might use it as a name in here, it's really cool. Thank you and thank you! Enjoy the rest.

P is for Pillow

A/N: OMG! NINTEY-NINE REVIEWS! Give me ONE more! Just one! I'll have 100 and I'll be so so happy that I might – I MIGHT – post the next chapter really quickly. Thank you! Some SR-GAP and some TMR-GAP. Should be fun.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixteen: P is for Pillow

Tom wasn't sure why, but he kept walking. As he began to walk the long, final corridor to the Hospital Wing, Peregrine stirred again – and shuffled sideways, tilting her head down and sideways. Into his chest.

Oh, hell no. No, you don't. Get the hell off me. Just because I have been forced to carry you doesn't create a neon sign above my head saying : I am a pillow. Cuddle me. So you can just-

However, rather unluckily, his train of thought was broken, because then Peregrine stirred for a third time – and opened her eyes.

…

Head. Hurting.

A lot of darkness.

What happened?

Warmth. Something warm and nice.

What's that?

Oh no… I must have had another attack. Did I pass out? ***Brilliant*** *. Now Riddle's going to never give up on the idea of me being a spastic. And the* ***entire school*** *will know by lunchtime, because of stupid Rosalind Keefe.*

Hmm. Warm. Did someone take me back to my room? Mmm… pillow…

Ginny opened her eyes.

Riddle was staring down at her, dark eyes wide, mouth slightly open, lip curled in horror. Her pillow had been moving – Riddle was carrying her – but now it had stopped.

Wait. Pillow?

Oh, please no…

Ginny turned her head and looked at her 'pillow'. She was met by the sight of Riddle's school jumper.

I JUST ***SNUGGLED*** *THE FREAKIN'* ***DARK LORD***

"ARH!" yelled Ginny, and she leapt out of Riddle's arms, landing with a crash, in an untidy heap, on the marble floor.

That was smart. Ow.

Angry at hurting herself, and angry at having unconsciously cuddled Riddle, and disgusted with herself, she did the angriest, most disgusted thing she could think of doing. "What the hell was that for?" she shouted at Riddle. "That HURT!"

Now Riddle just looked bewildered. "What- Peregrine, I didn't do anything!" he snapped.

"You dropped me!" she yelled.

"No, I didn't!" Riddle retorted. "You flung yourself onto the floor!"

A furious and embarrassed flush fired up on Ginny's cheeks. "Well, it's your fault," she snapped, even though it wasn't.

"Oh, of course," said Riddle icily. "You pass out off a stage, I carry you all the way to the Hospital Wing, you wake up, throw yourself out of my arms, and it's *my* fault."

"Hello? You didn't take me to the Hospital Wing! You *missed* ! The door to the Hospital Wing is ten metres *that way* !" Ginny shouted angrily, pointing towards it. "And it's *your* fault!"

"It is *not* ," said Riddle coldly. "I refuse to partake in this childish argument. It is *not* my fault, and if you want to get to the door of the ever-elusive Hospital Wing, then you can go yourself. I don't care if you pass out, or if your legs won't support you. I don't care if you're having a *baby* , I am not taking you any further." His dark eyes were flashing dangerously in that way that made Ginny's knees feel weak and heart pound faster. "You can take yourself."

"Fine," snapped Ginny. "I will."

"Do you know something? I was actually fool enough to think that you might say *thank you* , that you might actually be *grateful* ," said Riddle, eyes narrowed to black slits.

"Why should I thank you for dropping me on the floor?" Ginny sneered, her blood boiling.

" *I didn't drop you on the floor* !" Riddle snarled. He was close to shouting – which would be a feat. Mr. Laid-back And Unfazed By Anything didn't shout. It would be a record. "That. Was Not. My Fault."

"It *was* ," said Ginny, lips pursed.

"Look, Peregrine, it's not my fault that you're such a spastic, but I have a life to live, and I'd prefer if you'd let me go and live it," Riddle

spat, malice and poison dripping from every syllable, pure hatred in his words.

Pain ripped through Ginny's chest as if she'd been hit by the Cruciatus Curse.

*Spastic? **Spastic?** If you had seen a **quarter** of the things I've seen, you'd scream sometimes too, you sick, twisted man.*

"You bastard," she whispered.

Riddle looked at her, eyes still narrowed, but there was something new in those dark pits… as if there was a bottom to a pit that had once been bottomless. Something sincere. Ginny didn't understand it and didn't want to.

"I thought you knew that," Riddle replied coldly, his voice soft. The strange, sincere, sort of strained tone in his voice didn't seem to fit his tall, I-don't-give-a-damn stance.

"You're right," Ginny said. "At first, I did think that. But first-impressions are mostly wrong. I started to think that there might be more to you than what meets the eye – meaning the cold-hearted, arrogant arsehole. This is a special case, though. Because my first-impression was *spot-on* ."

Surprise flickered in Riddle's eyes, as well as something else that hurt to look at, but it was shut down immediately from the seventeen-year-old's face. "I'm shocked," sneered Riddle. "Most people understand within the first ten seconds of meeting you. There's never before been a girl that took a month to get the message."

"There's also never before been a girl who has seizures and spontaneously passes out screaming," replied Ginny quietly. "You learn something new every day."

"Why does that happen?" demanded Riddle. "Why?"

Ginny stared defiantly up at him. "D'you really think I'm going to tell you after how… how *pleasant* you've been to me?" she said coldly.

"I already have a vague notion," continued Riddle, ignoring her completely. "You said that you couldn't help it. You said that it wasn't Madam Royce could fix. I know that you do it every night. I know that random things spark it – random words, random actions, random nicknames. And I also know that you refuse to talk about your old school or what happened to it. It's traumatic memories."

Oh, what do you want me to say?

Congratulations?

"Yeah." Ginny looked up at him, allowing the tears to well up in her eyes unimpeded. "You're right, Riddle. Well done. Because, after all, you must feel *so* triumphant and *proud* of yourself, knowing that something so bad has happened in my past so that I've barely slept in a year and have screaming seizures. Congrats."

With that for him to contemplate, Ginny turned and headed on towards the Hospital Wing. Her head still hurt, and she didn't want to pass out again.

"…Peregrine-"

"Riddle, I thought we agreed that you weren't going to take me to Hospital Wing," snarled Ginny, turning around to face him, so fast that her scarlet hair flew like molten fire, and that it made her head swim.

He was staring at her. His eyes were totally unreadable, which frustrated Ginny. She'd wanted to see shame – guilt – *anything* . His face was always smooth and emotionless, and his body language sold nothing; his dark eyes were the gateway towards seeing any feelings that showed he might actually have a heart. However, most of the time, Riddle's eyes were devoid of anything, and this was one of those times.

"Get lost," she bit out at him, and swirled away, disappearing through the Hospital Wing doors.

…

Her sobs, fading to snuffled breathing.

Her tears, dried on her cheeks…

Someone's eyes upon her…

A sigh…

" *I'm sorry* …"

Gone.

…

"Morning, darling," said an elderly voice.

With a lot of effort, Ginny opened her eyes. "Mm?" she mumbled, yawning.

Damn those Sleeping Draughts.

*So very, **very** tired…*

Wake up!

"How lon' I been out?" Ginny murmured, kneading her eyes with her knuckles and sitting up.

"Half a day, give or take a few hours. I believe, if you hurry, you'll be in time for breakfast in the Great Hall," said Madam Royce.

That's my cue to leave . Ginny started to get out of bed, but was stopped by a hand from the matron.

"Sit, Ms. Peregrine," she commanded. "I need to assess your health. Now, when did you say this attack occurring, and what happened?"

"I was in Muggle Studies, last period of school, and suddenly my head felt weak. I couldn't see very well, and I was stumbling a bit. Then I passed out, shouting. I woke up and came here," Ginny said, skipping the bit with Riddle.

"I see," said Madam Royce, writing on a clipboard. "And do you have any ideas as to what might have prompted this attack?"

"No." Ginny didn't hesitate. She'd learnt to lie from the best – from Fred and George, when she was seven, and they were ten, already mischief-makers. She had eight years of practicing on her mother with *who stole the cookies from the cookie jar* , and then, when she was fifteen, she had the War, where she had to sneak around behind-the-scenes, telling lies, getting involved, and pretending to be on the side of everyone she met to learn information.

"Has this ever happened before?"

"Never." Again, effortless.

Madam Royce frowned. "Very well," she said. "I suppose I can let you go, if you are telling the truth…" she set down her clipboard. "You're quite popular, considering that you're new. You're a lucky girl."

Er. Thanks?

"You had three visitors in the night, you know," continued Madam Royce.

"Really?" asked Ginny, sitting straighter in interest, though she already suspected who they would be. "Who?"

"A Mr. Philips and a Ms. Hartwin, I believe," said Madam Royce.

"And?" Ginny frowned. "You said that there were three."

"The third asked specifically to keep their identity anonymous, though I can't for the life of me understand why," said Madam Royce, shaking her head and patting her grey curls.

What? Why would Scott… "Was it Scott Reeve? An Italian-looking Ravenclaw?" asked Ginny, puzzled.

"Ah - no," said Madam Royce. "Now, I suggest you hurry along, then, Ms. Peregrine, if you intend to catch breakfast."

"Thanks, Miss," said Ginny, hopping out of her bed. She hurried away down the hall, hoping that she would never have to wind up in there again.

*Why **does** it happen to me? Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't. I know that it has something to do with Riddle, but I'm around him loads of the time, and I don't have attacks all the time…*

Deciding to make it a personal project to find out, Ginny hurried away to the Slytherin dungeons to get some clean clothes before breakfast.

…

As Ginny came up from the dungeons, ravenous and ready for many helpings of bacon and eggs, she saw a familiar, curly-haired, Ravenclaw head.

"Scott!" she cried, running towards him.

The Italian-English boy, searching for whoever had called his name, turned. Before he could see Ginny, she flung her arms around his neck and hugged him tight.

"Ginny," he said warmly. "How are you?"

Remembering what Madam Royce said, Ginny pulled away. "How am I?" she echoed. " *Terrible* , Scott! Why didn't you visit me in the Hospital Wing?"

"You were in the Hospital Wing?" said Scott incredulously. "I didn't know! What happened – what did you do?"

He… he didn't even realize. Let alone miss me.

"…you… you didn't even notice?" she whispered.

Scott's brown eyes met her hazel eyes. Ginny searched his… found the confusion, the not-understanding… those emotions were shallow like a pool, and at the riverbank at the bottom was the guilt.

Lie.

With a cry of frustration, Ginny slapped him.

" *Ow* !" yelped Scott. "What was that for?"

"You *did* know!" Ginny cried, her voice wavering. Scott was her anchor, her angel. He held her to safety, in his arms. He was someone who knew *everything* about her, about what had happened at Hogwarts, and who would always be a shoulder to cry on. And in her gravest time of need, he had ignored her and turned away. "Why didn't you come – Scott, I needed you!"

The Ravenclaw sighed. "Ginny, I'm sorry. I really am. Okay, I did know that you were in the Hospital Wing," he explained. "I just… I didn't think that me visiting would be important to you, Gin."

"Not important? *Not – freakin' – important* ?" she shrieked. "After all that I told you, after I told you about how I sometimes burst out screaming because of the things I remember, after I told you how I could never sleep because of it? And I had a *seizure* – a freakin' *seizure* , Scott! – and I was lying there in that stupid Wing, lonely and frightened and crying myself to sleep… *and you didn't think it would be* ***important*** ?"

"Gin-"

" ***Stop calling me Gin*** !" Ginny yelled. "I am not alcohol, and you are not… not… Harr- *you didn't think it would be important* ?"

"Ginny, please, calm down!" Scott pleaded, glancing around. People were starting to stare. "It was just one night, cat. I didn't see any other girls."

The upset redhead turned narrowed, suspicious hazel eyes on him. "I never said you did…" she said slowly.

A nervous, high-pitched laugh escaped from Scott's lips – it was very uncharacteristic of him and made Ginny more suspicious. "Well, I didn't!" he laughed, scratching the back of his neck and staring quite fixedly at the floor.

He's lying. He saw a girl. Girl ***s*** *, maybe.*

He can't lie to save his life. If there was a War in 1958, Scott would be screwed.

How could he?

"Okay," said Ginny. "I believe you." She threw her lie back into his.

Smiling, Scott lowered his head down to hers, lips slightly puckered for a kiss. Also smiling, Ginny turned away and walked into the Great Hall, leaving Scott stranded in the centre of the Entrance Hall, lips pouting outwards and generally looking stupid.

…

A/N: Awww. Poor Ginny. She has an idiot for a boyfriend. And a meanie making fun of her traumatic experiences. She needs a hug. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Enjoy the rest of the fic! REVIEW! DO IT! NOW!

WARNING: Approaching plot-twists to make your head spin. Closer – closer – closer -

o00bubbles00o: Aw, thanks. And how do you know? Have you ever been to 1958? They could say that, for all you know. –pout- Well, in my twisted, weird little mind, they say "hell no". HAH!

SilvanXan: Okay. Email me, and I'll send you the goods. –shifty eyes-

SwirlyL: Yeah, well, in real life, I'm actually hugely – as in abnormally – tall, like Tom, so I call everyone midgets as well. I know how his mind works. Glad you liked that, I loved it too! Poor kitty! Thanks!

Lady Amberlia of Goldenlake: Thank you! I love your pen-name.

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks!

chimis: Thank you so much. Yeah, I just can't imagine the popular, cool Riddle that so many picture.

storm-brain: Thank you! It was fun to write. Um, I don't know. Well, I suppose it's because being around Riddle alone sort of… triggers the memories? I don't actually know. I'll fit it into the plot somewhere. Lol. I think that also, deep down, Riddle doesn't want to invade her privacy. So he doesn't Leglimens her. Or whatever verb I'm supposed to use.

Saene: Yay! Another pacifist! –high five- I'm a pacifist, too, but I like slapping my friend, and I like writing about dead people/torture/fights/wars/death. I'm a cheerful kind of person, you see. Awkward, indeed. Thank you!

XxRandomHeartxX: Wow, how weird. The Little Mermaid is my favourite Disney movie, but my favourite fairytale is the one that Ginny says in the part two chapters ago: East of the Sun, West of the Moon. It's really cool. Thanks so much! I love your reviews.

vlucia: Thanks.

KayRose: HAHAHAHAH! I officially LOVE YOU! "always reminded me of some evil demented teddy bear waiting to chop your head off when you tried to cuddle with him". LMAO HAHAHHHAA. "He just seems to pop up all of a sudden it's like lalalala(Prancing through a meadow) then pop rain"! HAHAHHAHA. I love you… thank you so much for your review, I needed a laugh.

P is for Point Your Wand

A/N: Yayyyyyy! Over a hundred reviews! –happydance- Thank you thank you! Enjoy this chapter. It's nice. Nice nice nice. OOooooohhhhhgle.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Seventeen: P is for Point Your Wand

A nervous, high-pitched laugh escaped from Scott's lips – it was very uncharacteristic of him and made Ginny more suspicious. "Well, I didn't see any other girls!" he laughed, scratching the back of his neck and staring quite fixedly at the floor.

" *Okay," said Ginny. "I believe you." She threw her lie back into his.*

Smiling, Scott lowered his head down to hers, lips slightly puckered for a kiss. Also smiling, Ginny turned away and walked into the Great Hall, leaving Scott stranded in the centre of the Entrance Hall, lips pouting outwards and generally looking stupid.

…

"Hey," said Ginny, sinking into a seat beside Alden. She leaned further forwards to address Grace, on his other side. "Hey, Grace!"

"Are you feeling better?" asked Grace.

"It was so scary, Ginny. We didn't even know what happened! One minute you were acting, and the next you had collapsed – off the stage! Rosalind thought that you were pretending, but me and Riddle were next to you, and she could see that we were both panicked, and-" Alden started to say.

"Wait." Ginny cut him off, staring at him. "Riddle was panicked?"

Alden nodded, slathering a piece of toast with butter.

" *I told you so* ," sang Grace. "He fancies you. You should chuck Scott so that I can marry him, and then you should go with Riddle."

"When – pigs – fly," said Ginny very clearly, and started to heap bacon onto her plate.

I love bacon.

"So is it true?"

"Is what true," replied Ginny, without looking up at where she knew Claude was sitting, across the table from her.

"That you collapsed in Muggle Studies," sneered Claude. "I mean, I *know* that anything to do with Muggles is repulsive, but considering that you *are* one, I think you should be able to hold back."

"Shut it," snapped Ginny.

" *Oh* !" said Claude, pretending to swoon onto her friends. " *Oh* , help me! I feel *faint* !"

"I said *shut it* !" Ginny snarled.

"Claude…" whined Ramira, a pale, dark-haired beauty, Claude's right-hand idiot. She was 1958's Cho Chang. "I don't feel comfortable."

"Me neither," agreed Avani, shivering.

"What?" snapped Claude. "Pull yourselves together." Then she looked around. "What *is* that?"

"It's like someone's *watching* us," whispered Ramira dramatically, pulling on one black tress.

Instantly, Ginny knew what was going on. She looked sideways and scanned the Slytherins sitting at the table. No – no – no – no – *yes* .

At the very end of the table, by himself, isolated from everyone else, was Riddle. He was quite far away, but Ginny knew that he had acute hearing… and he was staring at Claude angrily.

*But she's insulting **me** . Not him.*

Then he suddenly looked at Ginny. His eyes bored into her, glowing dark coals across the majority of the Great Hall.

*No. **Screw** you. I'm **not** talking to you. I'm not even going to **look** at you.*

"I'll see you in Charms, 'kay?" said Ginny quietly to Alden and Grace.

"Why? Where are you going?" Grace frowned.

"Just going to get my stuff, for class. My schoolbag. I didn't bring it down," Ginny lied, standing quickly and walking away, hoping that neither of her friends would notice her schoolbag slung over her shoulder and bouncing against her hip.

Well done. Think of a better one next time. You're getting out of shape with this lying.

*I shouldn't have to lie! I should be eating bacon. But I'm leaving. It's all **his** fault. **Stupid** Riddle. **Stupid** Tom **stupid** Marvolo **stupid** Riddle. **Stupid** Head **stupid** Boy.*

Ginny kicked the doorframe of the entrance to the dungeons before she continued through. Each step of each of the stairs landed hard, stomping her anger out onto the marble.

*How **dare** he speak to me like he did yesterday! I'll curse his head off. I'll curse his arms off. I'll curse his legs off. I'll curse his nose off. I'll curse his-*

"Peregrine."

*What. The. **Hell.** IS HE DOING HERE?*

Pretending that she hadn't heard anything, Ginny kept going. She stared pointedly at the floor and continued moving. Maybe if she walked fast enough, she could get to the Slytherin dormitory and slam the door on him.

I hope he doesn't have the password.

"Peregrine, wait."

An idea suddenly struck her. She needed to kill Riddle. They were alone in the dungeons. No-one would suspect sweet, ill, innocent little Ginny Peregrine, Prefect. She was in the perfect Head-Boy-murdering mood.

Resisting the urge to run and rip Riddle's evil little head from his massive body, Ginny turned, making she had the nastiest of death stares fixed on her face. "Yes?" She slipped her hand silently into her robe pockets and curled her fingers around her wand, holding it tight and running over the words *avada kedavra* in her head.

Pull it out and kill him… *now* –

"Look, Peregrine, I… I apologize for what I said last night," said Riddle, and for the first time in the whole time since Ginny had known him – and probably, she suspected, for the first time in his *life* – he sounded uncertain of himself.

*Kill him **! Do it** ! Now!*

WHY ISN'T MY HAND MOVING?!

"I realize that my words may have been," he cleared his throat, "rather harsh." As he spoke his apology, his dark eyes were set – not on her – but on the ceiling, not moving from a spot just behind the glowing candle-lamp.

"Rather?" said Ginny coolly, raising her ginger eyebrows.

Irritated, Riddle's eyes flashed down to Ginny. "Peregrine, if I were you, I'd shut up and take the apology," he said, his voice cold again. "They're rare things, coming from me. Somewhat like a solar eclipse; they only occur once every seven years."

Seven. Seven Horcruxes.

"Why seven?" Ginny demanded suddenly.

Riddle eyed her for a moment, his calculating gaze flickering over her face, as if gauging her solemnity. Then, he said, "it's my favourite number."

"Oh."

Ginny met his gaze. He cleared his throat again, swallowed, and then he turned away, and walked back down the corridor towards the stairs.

*Kill him! Kill him **now** ! No-one's looking, for God's sake!*

However, instead of firing the Killing Curse directly at the retreating back of the Head Boy, Ginny called, "Riddle?"

With a melodramatic swoosh of billowing dark robes, Riddle stopped. He didn't turn around completely, but tilted his head slightly, as to indicate that he was listening.

"Um. Thanks," she stammered, her stutters echoing through the stone corridor. "For taking me to the Hospital Wing. And… and it *might* have been my fault that I fell. Maybe."

Now did Riddle turn his face mostly to her, though his body stayed facing forwards (he couldn't turn his whole face, as he would either have to turn around or dislocate his spine). He said nothing, but inclined his head in a short nod, acknowledging what she had said, and then continued up the stairs.

Kill him! MURDER! ***NOW!*** *Point your wand at him AND KILL!*

Ginny gripped her wand tightly, flourished it from behind her back, and pointed it at the back of Riddle's head… and lowered it. She could kill him later.

Later.

…

A/N: Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh. Did you like it? Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review. Review. Do it or I'll stalk you and eat you.

WARNING: PLOT TWISTS! –manic giggle-

o00bubbles00o: YAY! ONE HUNDRED! Thank you! –glompsquiggle- Aww. Tell your dad I say thanks. –thumbs up- Tralala.

SilvanXan: The goods have been sent. Enjoy. xxx

creative-writing-girl13: Thank you!

chimis: Thank you! Evil die Scotty stab. –tiptoes away-

storm-brain: Thank you! Yeah, Scott's basically an asshole.

Saene: Ooh, I feel so loved now with all that love. WOO! Go vegetarianism-pacifisim-ism. I eat seafood though… anyway. Nah, we're all just masochistic on the inside. I'm considering maybe changing my pen-name to Masochistic Bubblegum. Hmmm. I love fairytales! And yeah, I hate how Disney takes good fairytales and screws them up. The Little Mermaid – a girl mourns after her prince and then stabs him. The Disney version – she turns into a human, loses her voice, flutters her eyelashes at him, and they get married. And have a mermaid baby, no less! Anywho. It's my favourite Disney movie, so I'm not complaining. –grin- Annnnyyyyway. Time to move on. Thank you!

midnightblue17: Thank you! You'll see.

XxRandomHeartxX: Oh, we all just love angst. If you want some REAL angst, go to my other fic, Montol (yes, that is indeed a shameless advert). It has three whole chapters of torture. –manic giggle- Well, Scott's a loser. –kick- Thank you!!

P is for Phantom Phaeton

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers. There's mostly SR-GAP action in this, and a little TMR-GAP. And, by the way, a phaeton is a horse-drawn carriage.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Eighteen: P is for Phantom Phaeton

" *Um. Thanks," she stammered, her stuttering echoing through the stone corridor. "For taking me to the Hospital Wing. And… and it might have been my fault that I fell. Maybe."*

Now did Riddle turn his face mostly to her, though his body stayed facing forwards (he couldn't turn his whole face, as he would either have to turn around or dislocate his spine). He said nothing, but inclined his head in a short nod, acknowledging what she had said, and then continued up the stairs. ***Kill him! MURDER! NOW! Point your wand at him AND KILL!***

Ginny gripped her wand tightly, flourished it from behind her back, and pointed it at the back of Riddle's head… and lowered it. She could kill him later. Later.

"You ready to go, cat?" asked Scott.

Smiling, Ginny nodded. She looped her arm through Scott's elbow and walked with him down to the carriage. The second Hogsmeade outing of the year, and she was going to have *so* much fun.

She regretted not being able to go with Alden and Grace – they were fun to be around, and she was getting very close to them. However, Ginny was determined to:

A) Make Scott fall for her, so that she could flaunt it in the face of whichever girl he had been seeing while she was passed out, or

B) Dump him publicly.

The latter choice seemed rather mean, and the first rather bitchy, so Ginny decided that she was just going to have as much fun as possible with her boyfriend.

Scott climbed into the carriage first, and sat down, waiting for Ginny to get in.

" *Ladies first, m'dear," said Seamus in his lilting Irish accent, holding the Hogsmeade carriage door open, and bowing low. Ginny giggled, and curtsying ridiculously, hopped in-*

Don't think about that!

Ginny slid in across from him. She didn't feel like being cuddled today.

"You look really nice," commented Scott, winking. "D'you do something to your hair?"

I never do anything to my hair.

Every day, Ginny looked the same – hair slightly wild, dark eyeliner, clothes that sold nothing – but Scott always said that she looked especially beautiful and special.

"Why?" Ginny demanded, her eyes flashing across to Scott's. "What's so nice about me today? I want to see you if you notice," she lied, "what I did." She fluttered her eyelashes and twisted her lips into a flirtatious smile, letting her red fringe fall into her eyes.

Looking flustered, Scott bit his lip. "Um." He scanned her face, and her clothes. "New clothes?"

"No."

"You… did something to your hair?"

"No."

"Make-up?"

"No."

"You seem to have less freckles?"

"Is that an insult?!"

" *No, no* ! Of course not, I love your freckles, there's so many of them, and they're so… freckley," said Scott nervously. He coughed a bit, then patted the seat beside him. "Come here, cat."

"Why should I?" Ginny said. "I'm fine here."

Rolling his eyes, Scott stood. "You dolls are so hard to please," he joked, and then sat beside Ginny, sliding his arm around her waist.

I can't believe I ***like*** *you.*

"Mwah," said Scott, tilting his face down to Ginny's.

"What the hell is 'mwah'?" asked Ginny incredulously as he smirked into the corner of her mouth.

"Shut up and kiss me, cat," said Scott, pressing his lips to hers.

I. Am. Not. A. ***Cat.***

Scott's hands were dangerously travelling south when Ginny spied the town of Hogsmeade through the windows, creeping towards

them. Smirking into Scott's mouth, she was conjuring up a plan, judging by what she knew from experience.

One…

Two…

Three…

The carriage lurched to a stop, and using the momentum, Ginny tucked her legs up, and kicked Scott hard in the stomach, sending him flying across the carriage and hitting the chairs on the other side.

"Ohmigod, *Scott* !" she 'cried'. "Are you okay?"

The Ravenclaw grunted, "M'fine," before staggering out of the carriage.

Score one-up to Ginny Peregrine, I believe?

"Where to, Scott?" Ginny asked. Now that she'd had more than her revenge for not seeing her in the Hospital Wing, she was happy to enjoy the day with him.

"Hm. Shall we go to Honeydukes?" Scott suggested hoarsely, still massaging his abdomen.

"Sure!" Ginny chirped. She laced her fingers through his and tugged him there, like a six-year-old eager for the pony-ride.

Bells ringing as they stepped through the door, Ginny immediately made for the chocolate counter. Dippet had provided her with some money for her stay, and she was delighted to think of wasting most of it on glorious, *glorious* chocolate.

"I'll have that one and that one and a few of these and maybe I'll try on of these and what's today's special?" babbled Ginny happily to the lady behind the counter.

I can barely understand myself , Ginny thought shamefacedly, but the woman seemed to comprehend her chatter, and handed her a bag filled with goodies.

"Scott, you finished?" called Ginny through the crowd. "I'll meet you outside."

She headed out of the stuffy sweet-shop, pulled a piece of sour sweet from her bag, and chewed on it happily. She was delving into the bag for her second piece when Scott emerged.

"Mm, what did you get?" asked Ginny, peering into her boyfriend's sweet-bag. "Oh, I *love* those! I couldn't find any though…" she looked devilishly up into Scott's eyes, and then crowed, " *Mine* ", dived into the bag and stuck a piece of pink taffy in her mouth.

Grinning in return, Scott bit the half of it protruding from between her lips and quickly kissed her around the taffy before pulling his half away and eating it.

" *Oi* !" said Ginny, swallowing her half. "That was mine! And I'll get it back, thank you," she grinned and captured his mouth with hers, sliding one arm around his waist.

"Should – we-" mumbled Scott between bouts of fierce tongue-wrestling, "find – a – bench?"

"Mm-hmm."

Ginny giggled as they climbed out of the Threstral-drawn carriage, her hair mussed and her lips swollen. She glanced over to the front of their phantom-drawn phaeton, and considered saying hello to the Threstral who had attended to their transport-needs - but if Scott couldn't see them, then he'd probably think that she was mad, and if she explained it to him… well. An invisible omen of death didn't do much for the romance.

"I had a fabulous time, thank you so much," sighed Ginny as they headed up to the castle together. She linked her fingers with Scott's and swung their hands back and forth in time with their steps. "Why does it have to end now?"

"Because its curfew in ten minutes and I'll get a huge telling-off from Dumbledore, saying that I'm a Prefect and I 'should know better'," pointed out Scott, raising his eyebrows. "And so should you, Ms. Peregrine."

"Nyah," said Ginny childishly, jutting out her lower lip in a cute pout.

"Don't *do* that," whispered Scott. "It's irresistible."

Yes, Scott, and I have you in the palm of my hand…

"Come on…" said Ginny, fluttering cinnamon eyelashes with a flirtatious smile.

"I am going to ignore how damn cute you look when you do that, and listen to reason," said Scott firmly. "Let's go, cat. Up to the castle."

" *Fine* ."

The two sixth-years headed up the winding path from the carriage pick-up, when someone came from a meeting path from the greenhouses and they met, rather awkwardly.

"Oh. Hi," said Ginny, abruptly letting go of Scott's hand. "Riddle."

Riddle's eyes were flaring dark fire. "Peregrine," he said, inclining his head to her in greeting. Since the apology-thanks moment at the dungeon stairs, his tone towards her had warmed slightly from sub-zero to freezing. His gaze then flashed to Scott – who his greeting to wasn't quite as warm. "Reeve," he said stiffly, his voice cold.

"Sir," said Scott sardonically, and he smoothly wrapped an arm around Ginny's waist, pulling her close to him, so that she was fitting neatly against his chest. Marking her as his.

Ginny flushed, and suddenly found that she couldn't meet Riddle's eyes, which were trained upon her. What was worse than her obvious avoiding of Riddle's gaze was when Scott spontaneously took hold of the side of her face, turned her to him, and pressed his lips firmly against hers.

For a moment, the seventeen-year-old redhead was too dazed and confused to pull away. Then she did; ripped her head away, and - unsure why she did – immediately looked over at Riddle.

The tall, dark Head Boy was staring at them. Again, the unreadable eyes.

How strange.

Those eyes weren't unreadable because they held no emotion…

… but unreadable because they held so *many* .

His gaze flashed up to directly above her head; without a word, without anything, Riddle turned and left.

Ginny watched until his back had disappeared from sight, before turning in Scott's arms, and hissing, "What the hell was *that* about?"

Her boyfriend wore a smug smirk on his lips that Ginny didn't like at all, which he instantly dropped when he saw that she had noticed it. "Nothing, cat," he said, with a smile that was supposed to be reassuring but instead angered her. "To the Great Hall?"

"Whatever," Ginny muttered, pulling away from his hold on her waist and walking up the path.

"Cat, what's wro-"

" *Stop calling me Cat* !" shouted Ginny, spinning back to face him, crimson tresses and lime-green dress flaring out. "I am not an animal, Scott, I am a person. I suggest you start treating me like it!"

"Cat – I mean – Ginny – doll, wait – *Ginny* !" Scott yelled after her, chasing her up the path.

By the time he had caught up to her, she was in the Entrance Hall, and making her way to the Great Hall doors.

"Ginny," he panted, grabbing hold of her elbow.

" *Scott* !" said a girl coming down the Entrance stairs - Gryffindor princess, Isabella Mackenzie; eyes such a shade of blue that they almost seemed lavender, thick curly dark hair cut in the latest fashion, the most flattering and expensive clothes; Charms extraordinaire. " *So* good to see you! Thanks, by the way, for Wednesday night… you were *brilliant* ."

A pause filled the air.

I passed out on Wednesday.

The Slytherin redhead turned slowly to Scott. "So, Scott. What were you brilliant at?" she asked sarcastically, her tongue sharp with anger and her eyes narrowed.

"Oh, hey Ginevra… what was it? Peh-something. Mudblood. The screamin' freak. Whatever," she dismissed Ginny with a wave of one manicured hand, and then sashayed up to Scott. "You know…" she said in a low, sultry voice, "you could do *so* much better than her."

No. Freakin'. Way.

"Ex *cuse* me?" Ginny demanded, swirling around to Mackenzie, eyes turning to hazel steel. She could feel Scott growing uncomfortable beside her, but she ignored that – *for now* .

"Well, of course he can do better than you," sneered Mackenzie, eyeing her in disgust. "A hot-tempered, redhead, Mudblood with spastic tendencies?" she laughed. "How could you do *worse* ?"

Spastic.

Again, that word.

How dare she!

And then, realization.

*Oh my God. Scott told her. He told her. He **told***

"Scott," said Ginny, turning back to him. Her words were strangled, and she fighting desperately to keep her voice even and from wobbling. "You *told* ."

"Cat, it's not that big a deal," said Scott, trying to make his voice low and soothing.

*Not. That. Big. A. **Deal** ?! Who the hell does he think he's dealing with?*

Ginny was struck by an overwhelming urge to curse him into oblivion, to rip his head off, to throw herself at him, to tear his hair out, to claw at his eyes, to stab him, to cut him to pieces, to *scream* –

However, as much as she wanted to, she couldn't. Because if she even gave him the tiniest scratch, she'd lose control and kill him.

And the only person I am supposed to be killing is Riddle.

Refusing all of her desires, Ginny stuck up a rude hand-gesture at both of them, the Gryffindor and the Ravenclaw, and walked away to the Great Hall.

No-one here is trustworthy! Ravenclaw arseholes, Hufflepuff bitches, and Gryffindor tramps! Only Slytherin is safe for me to befriend people.

The notion made Ginny laugh. Back a few months (or forwards a few months, and forty-eight years), her thoughts would have been precisely the opposite. And so, laughing hysterically, and still with the urge to kill, the redhead entered the Great Hall.

A/N: -GASP- Evil evil Scott! Sorry about the really bad snogging scenes, I'm rubbish at writing those. Meh. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review. Review. Do it or I'll stalk you and eat you.

WARNING: PLOT TWISTS!! –manic giggle- THIS IS THE LAST CHAPTER BEFORE THEY ARRIVE! ARRRRGH!

gmmstoleurlife: Thank you!!

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks!

megs: Thank you! Um, I hope that this chapter answered your question. Lol. No, Grace is only joking. She's just trying to annoy Ginny, and she thinks that Scott's cute. You know. 'Cause he is. –wink-

storm-brain: Yeah, Ginny's basically slowly losing it. Lol. Thanks!

Intricacy: Ooh, thanks! Yeah, it's supposed to be a little OOC, because it's so un-Ginny to kill someone. Because she can't. She's too much of a good girlie. Sort of.

Saene: Oh, I just hated the sequel because Melody pissed me off. Sorry to swear in a review reply. She just really annoyed me. Thanks! Someone gets it! I mean, DUUURRRR. Lol. Anywho, thank you!!

midnightblue17: Thank you! I have continued. See? Lol. And about the undying love thing… probably never. Hahahaha. Hahahaha. Hah. YAY! COOKIES! –dives on them-

vlucia : Thanks! Well, I thought about that as well, but, like you said, the War kind of made her more reckless. Plus, she doesn't really want to kill him (for reasons –wink- unknown to us yet). She was just kind of using her pissed-off-ness to… I dunno. Lol. And, as to the Horcrux question, I don't think so. I haven't got that deep into the plot yet. I'm working on it. Thank you!

P is for Pranks Unsuitable

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers! Not really any GAP-TMR action in this. Or anyone else. But it's important. And sorry that it's so short.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Nineteen: P is for Pranks Unsuitable For The Sensitive

" *Scott," said Ginny, turning back to him. Her words were strangled, and she fighting desperately to keep her voice even and from wobbling. "You* ***told***

Refusing all of her desires, Ginny stuck up a rude hand-gesture at both of them, the Gryffindor and the Ravenclaw, and so, laughing hysterically, and still with the urge to kill, the redhead entered the Great Hall.

All eyes fixed upon her as she entered, and the room fell silent.

What did I say?

As she moved uncertainly to the Slytherin table, the staring continued, and the whispers started. Ginny couldn't hear individual comments, but she knew that every gossiping mouth was whispering her name.

Ginny found Alden and Grace's familiar faces and walked towards them. As she grew closer to the tables, she heard what was being said, and blanched.

" *I heard they all died* ."

" *I heard that she killed them all.* "

" *Where was she from again?* "

" *I bet **she** killed them. And next… she's going to kill **us***

Her hands were clenching into fists. Scott. She would murder him. She would rip him to pieces. This is precisely why she hadn't wanted to tell anyone. She had told Riddle against her will… and Scott.

Well. I'll just get someone to tell him not to go to sleep tonight.

"Hey," said Ginny quietly, sitting beside Grace. "What's going on?"

They didn't reply. Alden looked horribly ashamed, and was concentrating very hard on his food; Grace was pale, shamefaced, and sympathetic.

"I'm sorry," the brunette Slytherin whispered.

Then Claude appeared on the other side of the table. "Can I have this seat?" she asked the second-year sitting opposite Ginny, and without waiting for a reply, said sweetly, " *Thank* you."

Sensing the dangerous waters, the second-year and his friends got up and scurried away.

"So," said Claude. "Here's my theory. You were in a Wizarding school, filled with purebloods – much like this one, actually. And you felt under-appreciated because of your blood status, so, poor jealous thing, you went and murdered them all." She smirked. "Hot or cold?"

Ginny swallowed. "I… I don't know what you're talking about," she lied, fighting to keep the stammer from her voice.

Claude smirked. "Sure you don't. What was your old school called again? Might be able to dig up some interesting gossip on what happened," she said casually.

Good luck with that.

"I don't…" Ginny's voice was strangled. "How – how do you know?"

" *Oh* !" gasped Claude mockingly. "But *I* thought that you didn't know what I was talking about…"

"Hello… it's Ginevra, right?" asked a third-year Hufflepuff, coming up behind her.

"Ginny, but yeah…" said Ginny slowly.

"Did you kill them?" demanded the Hufflepuff.

"I… no, I… I-" Ginny stammered, her face draining of all colour.

"Hey, leave her alone!" snapped Grace at the Hufflepuff, for which Ginny was grateful – however, this did not deter 1958 Hogwarts students.

It only encouraged them.

"Did you really see your friends die?"

"What's it like to see someone die?"

"Can you see Threstrals?"

"What exactly happened at your old school?"

"Who died?"

"What's your name?"

"I feel so sorry for you…"

"Why did you collapse in Muggle Studies?"

"What blood-status are you?"

"Did you kill them?"

"Is it weird seeing someone die?"

Ginny was trying not to shake. Her head was throbbing with painful memories threatening to drown her, and the questions and jeering were ringing in her head.

Holding her head in her hands… massaging her temples… *make it shut up make it stop* …

"SHUT UP!" yelled Grace, standing up to full height in all of her tall, terrifying glory. "Piss off, you insensitive arseholes – *all of you* !"

"What is going on?" demanded Professor Dumbledore – the Transfiguration teacher, identical to the twenty-first century Dumbledore, save for the auburn hair and beard – rising slightly in his seat to see what was causing the commotion.

"Thanks, Grace," said Ginny quietly. "I really appreciate it, but, you know, it's okay. I just… I'm going to go. Just… I can't take it. I'm sorry, but thanks."

Grace nodded. "Is there anything I can help with?" she tried.

"No, it's fine. Thanks," Ginny muttered, and stood. The jeering followed her, getting louder with every person she passed, like a horrible Mexican wave.

"HEY, PEREGRINE!"

She was at the door when she heard it. She turned, though her head was shouting, *No good will come of it.*

A Gryffindor was standing in the aisle. With a sinister grin on his lips, he threw a tomato directly into his chest. With a sickening *flump* it splattered crimson all across his upper torso.

Tears streamed down her face; Lord Voldemort laughed at the display of emotion. He waved his wand – with a twisted scream and in an explosion of blood, Bill fell –

The terrible Gryffindor let out a mock scream and fell to the floor, writhing and twisting in 'death throes'.

Blood, pooling around her feet. Ron's screams echoed and echoed, of absolute agony, his face draining of all colour as his body rapidly emptied of blood onto the floor around her...

Tears blurred her eyes, and with a cry of dismay, Ginny whirled around and fled the hall.

Her footsteps were pounding in her ears, thrumming in time with her fleeting heart. She ran blindly, totally unaware of where she was going. Her feet took their own path, thundering up and down stairs, dashing along the corridors.

You can't run forever .

The words spoken by both her brain and heart spoke the truth, and a stitch was forming in Ginny's abdomen. She slowed down, her breathing ragged, and leaned against the wall to clear her thoughts and her vision from tears.

Unbeknownst to Ginny, the wall just beside where her elbow leant was a door, and it silently opened.

She did not hear the opening of the door – Ginny heard someone breathing behind her.

Alarmed, Ginny spun to see who had snuck up on her.

A tall, dark silhouette in the dark corridor that had opened up behind Ginny. It held a knife.

Ginny, eyes wide with terror, let out a loud, piercing scream, but before she could turn and run, a cold, long-fingered hand clamped

painfully over her mouth and –

PAIN.

Black.

A/N: OMG! Who is it? Who attacked her? Why? Will she be okay? Find out tomorrow on The Letter P, BBC Two. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review. Review. Do it or I'll stalk you and eat you.

WARNING: THE PLOT TWISTS HAVE ARRIVED. HAHAHAHA.

KayRose: Can I have a great big hug and a nice big double, chocholate chip, dutch, fudge, brownie? –grin- Just joking. Well, Scott's hot. Haven't we all at some point stayed with a asshole because he's hot? Lmao. Thank you!

o0Bubbles0o: Ooh thank you! I'd love to check through your fics. I'm already betaing SilvanXan. Lol. (Which, by the way, if you're reading this, SilvanXan, I'm still getting onto. I think I lost the file. Oops) And thanks, I'm glad someone liked the snoggy bits.

LittleNK: Thanks! Yeah, don't worry. She'll hex him at some point. –evil grin-

Saene: Yeah. Boys suck. I don't bother either. Partly because I just want a sort of fairytale romance like the ones in my fics. Meh. Yeah, she will. Later. Latttteerrrr. –sinister eyes- Bwahaha. ?? Even I don't have dreams about them. Oo Weiiird. Thank you!

XxRandomHeartxX: Scott's evil. I should stab him. But he's kind of important, so I can't. Thanks. I love Tom as well. He's just sort of… *get the hell away from me, I don't like you* all the time. Yeah, I know what part you mean. –wink- We'll be seeing more of that. I love sugar-highs. I had one yesterday. Just eat the burnt marshmallows. Sure, they give you cancer – but they taste good. :D

Intricacy: Lol, don't we all? Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: No, you can't, sorry. Not only is he kind of important, but also there's a queue to kill him. LOL. Everyone wants to. Thanks!

P is for Perfectly Capable

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thank you! Lots of TMR-GAP. Well. That's basically all this chapter IS so… yeah. Teehee. I left you on a cliff-hanger. –clap hands gleefully-

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty: P is for Perfectly Capable

Unbeknownst to Ginny, the wall just beside where her elbow leant was a door, and it silently opened. She did not hear the opening of the door – Ginny heard someone breathing behind her. Alarmed, Ginny spun to see who had snuck up on her.

A tall, dark silhouette in the dark corridor that had opened up behind Ginny. It held a knife.

Ginny, eyes wide with terror, let out a loud, piercing scream, but before she could turn and run, a cold, long-fingered hand clamped painfully over her mouth and – PAIN. Black.

Eyes open.

The first thing she saw was darkness – a gloomy sort of chamber, with water dripping from the stalactites, suspended on the roof of the chamber. Statues of snakes, curving around the walls.

And Riddle, leaning over her.

Ginny screamed.

Riddle must have realized that he was not exactly a paranoid teenage girl's favourite thing to see looming over her when she wakes up, and backed off.

Panting, breathing ragged, and covered in a sheen of sweat and tears. Ginny sat up.

What the hell happened?

"How did you get here?" demanded Riddle, his dark eyes flashing like fire and lighting up the gloom. His words were laced with anger and – could it be possible? – edged with fear.

"What… I… get where?" croaked Ginny, still frightened. She looked around.

And instantly recognized where she was.

The pools of black water. The stalactites and stalagmites. The face of Salazar Slytherin, carved into the feature wall at the end of the dark chamber. The snakes weaving across the other walls.

The Chamber of Secrets.

" *Tom, where are we going?" asked Ginny childishly as she walked down the long, narrow chamber. She was scared and she didn't like it down here. What was going on?*

The tall, handsome fifteen-year-old ahead of her turned and flashed her a comforting smile. "Don't worry," he said, his voice soft and soothing. "It's safe. You're with me, remember?"

Oh yes. Ginny had forgotten. With her amazing friend, Tom, this older boy with an interest in her, and the answer to all of her problems with Harry – he'd never hurt her. He'd never let her be hurt. She would safe with him. Smiling still, Tom extended a hand. Blushing, Ginny slipped her thin fingers into his palm – she felt safer already.

" *We're here," said Tom. He turned to her, letting go of her hand. His eyes were suddenly cold. "I'm sorry, Ginny."*

" *Sorry for what, Tom?" Ginny asked. She didn't like this chamber that Tom had brought her to, and was frightened by how Tom was looking at her. "Tom?* ***Tom?"***

His mouth snarled foreign words, and then pain was tearing through her. She was crying harder than she'd ever cried before, and screaming, "TOM!", screaming "TOM!", ***screaming "TOM!" –***

"What? What – PEREGRINE!"

Ginny's eyes snapped open again. She was lying down again, fresh tears on her cheeks, and Riddle's angry, fearful eyes had only increased in expression – there was now bewilderment and curiosity.

"What did you say?" he asked, frowning.

"Er. Did I say something?" stammered Ginny.

" *Yes* ," snapped Riddle, "if you hadn't, I wouldn't be asking about it. Now why did you say my name?"

Oh God. Please tell me I didn't ACTUALLY scream "Tom".

"I said your name?" asked Ginny fearfully.

"Yes," said Riddle, grinding out the word coldly from between his teeth. "'Tom'. You said 'Tom'." He stared at her, his calculating gaze scrutinizing her face carefully. "Why?"

"Look…" Ginny held her face in her hands and then roughly raked a hand backwards through her hair – in doing so, realizing that her hair had come out of its ponytail that it had been in at breakfast. "I… I don't know. Okay? I have no idea why… why I said that," she lied quietly.

Riddle's lips twisted; as if he was trying to work something out – he was nearly there, but it lay *just* out of reach… "How did you get here?" he asked, his voice scathing, but not cold enough to hide an edge of fear.

Ginny let loose a bark of cold, derisive laughter that held no humour. "D'you think I have any idea?" she said bitterly.

"We should get out of here," he said, standing smoothly and looking around.

Yeah, before your pet snake comes and decides its hungry? Good thinking.

Wisely reasoning that it was better to keep that line of thought to herself, Ginny leant back on her arms to push herself up –

PAIN

She let out a cry and fell back onto her back. Squeezing her eyes closed from automatically-created tears of pain, Ginny wrapped her hand around the source of throbbing fire on her arm.

"What's happening?" Riddle asked, moving towards her. "Peregrine, are you alright?"

" *No* ," she bit out angrily. "If I was fine, d'you think I would have yelled and fallen over?"

Very irritatingly, Riddle looked almost amused by this sarcastic outburst. "Let me see," he said.

"How about *no* ?" said Ginny snappishly.

"Peregrine, just because I'm a half-blood doesn't mean that I'm not decent at Healing," snapped Riddle, his voice turning cold again.

Forgetting her pain, Ginny stared at the Head Boy.

What?

But… Voldemort's a pureblood. He's paranoid about getting rid of Muggles and Muggleborns. He's a pureblood… I'm confused.

"You're a half-blood?" echoed Ginny incredulously.

Riddle's eyes narrowed. "Yes…" he said slowly. "Muggle father, witch mother. Is there a problem with that?"

*… I'm **so** confused.*

Muggle father… witch mother… he must be lying.

But he's not Voldemort yet. He doesn't hate Muggles yet, so why would he lie about his blood-status?

His steely gaze flickered down to where her hand was; rested on it for a moment, before his eyes widened slightly. He looked back up at Ginny, this time grave. "Peregrine, I really think you should let me see."

"Wh-" Ginny started, looking down at her clutching hand on her arm. Then she noticed what Riddle had – her blood-stained fingers; thick red liquid seeping through them.

The seventeen-year-old gasped, and pulled her hand away. It was covered in blood.

*The knife. The guy who attacked me had a knife. But who the **hell** knocks me out, drags me down here, attacks me, and then leaves me alive? Something isn't right here.*

Riddle knelt, moved her hand away, and gingerly looked at where it had been.

There was a long slash through the sleeve of her robes, and now her entire sleeve was stained crimson. Riddle peeled the cloth away

(Ginny whimpered and bit her lip hard to stop from crying out again at the pain), revealing a long, deep, very straight cut on her forearm.

Why is that familiar , Ginny wondered, staring at it.

Then it hit her.

That precise place, on the forearm, was where the Dark Mark lay on Voldemort's followers.

Ginny looked up in alarm at Riddle, but then remembered. He had no idea how she had come here – it couldn't be him.

Well, I didn't remember nearly murdering Hermione, Colin Creevey or Justin Finch-Fletchey, either. Maybe he was possessed.

Who the hell would possess the junior Dark Lord? Hell ***o*** *, I* ***think*** *its supposed to be the other way around.*

With a sharp inhalation, Riddle drew Ginny's attention back to reality. He roughly licked his lips, before saying darkly, "I don't know what did this, and I don't think we want to." He pointed his wand to the cut, and, non-verbally, wiped the blood away. Then he fished from inside his robes a pack of tissues and held it over the wound.

"D'you always carry tissues with you," asked Ginny, smiling weakly, "just in case you come across a copiously-bleeding Prefect?"

"Always," said Riddle. The corners of his lips curved into a wry smirk. Then he lifted his wand and, also non-verbally, as if to show off his intelligence, cast a charm to keep the tissues in place.

"Thanks," Ginny said weakly. She suddenly felt extremely tired, and got the feeling that more than ten minutes had passed since she had been attacked in the corridor.

Riddle stood – calm, smooth, and distant, as ever – and looked down at her. And then, just as Ginny was preparing for the struggle to her feet, he extended his hand loosely.

Momentarily bewildered, Ginny stared at it. There was a moment where she forgot everything except the ridiculousness of Tom Riddle – future Dark Lord, epitome of evil, cold-hearted *arsehole* – offering to help her up.

He was still waiting, though, and Ginny snapped back into reality. An unexpected and puzzling shyness colouring her cheeks, she reached up and curled her fingers around Riddle's long ones, and then his arm went taut as he pulled her to her feet.

"Can you walk?" inquired Riddle softly, and Ginny was surprised – *alarmed* – to hear concern ridging his slightly-accented voice.

"Mm-hm," Ginny mumbled. It was hard to talk; hard to think. She felt fatigued, and wanted more than anything to lie down with a squashy pillow and sleep for a thousand years. "M'fine."

"No, you're not."

"Riddle!" Ginny snapped, forcing each syllable out roughly past the haze in her head. "I am *perfectly* capable of walking."

The seventeen-year-old Slytherin's eyes flashed over her. "Okay," he said, but he didn't sound convinced. He made no move to start walking, and Ginny realized that he was waiting for her to walk first.

She was swaying, and she focused all of her concentration into not collapsing when she lifted her foot.

*Foot… **up** … Good. Now. Foot… **dow – crud.***

Silently, Ginny crumpled. She screwed up her face in a wince, preparing for the pain that would doubtlessly come when her fragile, weak skull met the hard, polished obsidian. Briefly she pondered if she would actually smash her head in. However, gratefully, long arms swooped around her and she was caught, before being pulled back onto her feet.

"See, Peregrine, *my* definition of walking is being able to safely manoeuvre on your feet," said Riddle dryly, "preferably without collapsing."

Ginny wasn't taking any of it in. She was frozen in shock – she was in the future Dark Lord's arms. *In* his arms. Being *held* by Lord Tom Marvolo Evil-Arsehole-Horcrux Riddle Voldemort. That in itself was astonishing, but what really and truly shocked her into a state near that of being petrified was…

She was enjoying it.

What in the name of Merlin has this world come to?

Too tired to tear away from him, too tired to remind herself that it was Mini-Voldemort that she was practically cuddling – too tired to *think* – Ginny sighed, closed her eyes, and let Riddle guide her through the Chamber of Secrets.

There was nothing. Nothing - there was just the muted shuffle of Ginny's feet, the slow, deliberate, supporting steps of Riddle, his breathing ruffling her dark auburn hair, and the heavy silence that seemed to choke her in all of its dangerous serenity.

Creeeeak .

Wearily, Ginny opened her eyes. They were moving through a doorway that lead into a small, cramped room, filled with dusty books, darkened by the night sky outside, the silvery moonlight casting an eerie glow on every book, every shelf, and on the clock face that spoke one-fifty-nine in the morning.

Wait…

Ginny glanced behind her, over her shoulder. The door that they had just come from was closing – attached to the front of it was a bookcase, the same as every other, identical in every way, apart

from the tiny, signature serpent carved into the wood on the third shelf.

To anyone who doesn't know what it means… it's just a piece of graffiti.

They were in the Restricted Section of the library. A feeling of age-old paranoia washed over Ginny, of waiting to be caught by Filch or Madam Pince. However, Filch was still a child in these times, and Madam Pince, as well.

Who knows? She might even be a student.

Promising to find out later as a little personal project, Ginny turned her thoughts back towards scanning the library for the current librarian Madam Crofton. "Is anyone here?" she whispered.

"I don't think so," Riddle replied, still looking around. He didn't lower his voice in amplitude at all, although it wasn't a problem because his normal manner of speaking was low and quiet. "It doesn't matter. If anyone does find us, I can say that you, on patrol, had reason to believe that a student was in here, after curfew, without permission, however didn't have the password to let yourself and sort the situation out yourself so called the nearest Head or teacher – namely, myself."

He came up with that himself? In what, half a minute? He's a better liar than I am, and that's saying something.

"Nonetheless, I would prefer not to be caught, as that would involve a long explanation and a thorough search of this level of the castle… and that is not something I can fit in my schedule," said Riddle coolly as they exited the library.

Why – what else in on your schedule at two in the morning? Ginny thought incredulously. *Aside, of course, from venturing down into the Chamber of Secrets and finding mugged Prefects.*

A thought struck her – nearly bowled her over – like lightning. Riddle had chanced upon her. But why did he want to go to the Chamber of Secrets in the dead of night? And was he really a character that she wanted to be wandering around in the dark with?

Hell no . Ginny thought of how, a few minutes ago, she had been snuggled up against him like he was her personal *pillow* , and shuddered.

"I can make the rest of the way on my own," said Ginny, though she was quite afraid of passing out in a hallway somewhere – more afraid of passing out where her mysterious attacker could find her. It was very dark, and Ginny wasn't sure if she had her wand.

"No, you can't, Peregrine. You're a total mess. May I remind you that I had to drag you in the right direction to the door of the chamber?" Riddle said coldly as they descended the dungeon stairs.

Red rose on Ginny's pale, gaunt cheeks.

*I **knew** that would come back to haunt me.*

Finally they both stopped before the bust of Salazar Slytherin that marked the entrance to the common room. Ginny was secretly glad that Riddle had accompanied her, though the trip had been uneventful.

" *Ophiuchus* ," Ginny told the stone head, and the doorway slid open. Turning to Riddle: "You know, I was perfectly capable of coming on my own."

"Yes, Peregrine, and if my memory serves me well, you were also ' *perfectly capable'* of walking," Riddle said derisively, a mocking tone on the quote from Ginny. "I'm going to come with you."

"Aw, d'you love me really?" sneered Ginny, being overcome with a sense of loathing that probably could be traced back to her self-anger and having enjoyed cuddling him.

" *No* . The fact of the matter, Peregrine, is that I'd rather make sure that you got back to your little common room safely than have to deal with a mess in the morning after you get attacked again."

. What?

Ginny stopped dead in her tracks.

Riddle turned. "What's wrong?" he asked, eyes narrowing.

Her breath was hard in her throat. "Riddle," she said slowly, "I don't think that I ever mentioned being attacked before."

Now the Head Boy stopped as well. His dark, glacial eyes flashed to her as quickly as a spark of flame and stared into her own eyes; whatever civility they had maintained during their after-hours 'trip' had just gone down the toilet.

How the hell did he know? I never told him that I was attacked…

It was him

Don't be stupid! He had no idea how I got into the Chamber of Secrets!

It was him

When he finally spoke, his narrowed, almost-black eyes locked onto her, and his voice was hard and glacial. "Unless, of course, I am to assume, that you knocked *yourself* out and dragged *yourself* down into a secret chamber that no-one knows about, and sliced open your own arm for good measure?"

"You're right. Nobody knows about that place," Ginny replied. "How did you? Was it chance, you knowing that I'd be down there, and that I had been attacked?" Ginny's lip curled, loathing Riddle and his attitude.

"I didn't *know* that anyone would be down there. Anyway - it's simple logic," he said scathingly, folding his arms across his chest.

Eyes icy, and not believing a word of it, Ginny hissed, "Is it?" and then disappeared through the doorway.

A/N: Dun-dun-dun. Mahhahaa. Another lovely cliffie. Well, as not as big a cliffie as the last one, but…. WHA-E'VAHH!

Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review! Your only other option is death.

SwirlyL: Thank you! Aw, you love me really.

AppleC0re: I think we all hate Scott. He's just annoying and pointless. –stab- Thanks!

XevenOf9: Yeah, it is kind of un-wizardly. But it's less gross and mysterious and exciting to find a grubby wand. Lol.

LittleNK: Teehee. Tom did help her! Supposedly… Thank yew!

Spats: Thank you! Um. Mandatory make-over?

Saene: Lol. Interesting… -shifts away- Yeah, Scott did tell. 'Cos he's a loser. Anyway, here's the thing about saying that whole: "Lord Voldemort killed my family" thing… WOULD he understand? Oo Thank you! Meh. Goodbye. Lmao I'm on a Hogwarts forum thing as well. I'm a Slytherin halfblood. Like Riddle. YOU can go with Ginny, but I bags Riddle. Nyahaa!

ricekrispies: You can keep that theory, but watch out. Because you're kind of going to get owned. LOL. Thanks!

storm-brain: Dead? I don't think so. –poke- Scott told everyone. Thanks for the review…-squee-

XxRandomHeartxX: This chapter had lots and lots of Tom, I hope you liked it! Yummy. Burnt marshmallows. Isn't it true that our lives mainly consist of longing to give fictional characters a hug? –sniff- And these are the best days of our lives… kind of pathetic, really. LOL. Thank you!!

midnightblue17: Hm. Maybe. I can't tell you though. Lol. So you have to keep guessing. Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: Yeah. Everyone hates Scott. What about the mysterious attacker, though?

P is for Puzzles

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: OMG! I got TWELVE reviews! I AM SO HAPPY! Mehehehhh! –coughcough- Anywayyy. Here's lots more of TMR-GAP. Though technically he doesn't know… Anyway, lots of you wanted Ginny to slip up on something. She does in this chapter… Enjoy.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-One: P is for Puzzles

" *No. The fact of the matter, Peregrine, is that I'd rather make sure that you got back to your little common room safely than have to deal with a mess in the morning after you get attacked again."*

Her breath was hard in her throat. "Riddle," she said slowly, "I don't think that I ever mentioned being attacked before."

" *It's simple logic," he said scathingly, folding his arms across his chest.*

Eyes icy, and not believing a word of it, Ginny hissed, "Is it?" and then disappeared through the doorway.

The dreams got worse and worse with every passing day.

" *Hermione? Mione, did you hear the news? Harry got a-" the words were never finished because Ginny ran into her best friend's room and came to see the bushy-haired Muggleborn on her bedroom floor, red and sticky and somehow a lot smaller than Ginny ever remembered, because her arms were in the corner, and her legs*

were mutilated, and her head was GONE and her best friend was in pieces, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming***

The green light flashed brighter than anything, and a single tortured scream rose up from everyone present as their only saviour fell. Ginny was screaming louder than anyone. The green eyes of her first love widened, bulged, and then his glasses fell. And Harry tumbled forwards lifeless; Ginny ran to him, screaming, screaming, ***screaming***

Molly Weasley was clinging to her husband, fear etching onto her features as she screamed. "Not my children!" she sobbed. "Not my children! Please!" Tears streamed down her face; Lord Voldemort laughed at the display of emotion. He waved his wand – with a twisted scream and in an explosion of blood, Bill fell. "NOT MY CHILDREN! PLEASE!" Ginny's mother screamed. Ginny stood watching, tears flowing. "Mum!" she screamed. "Mum!" Then the screaming rose up, higher and higher, and Ginny could only distinguish two phrases: from her mother, "Take me instead" and from Lord Voldemort, "Very well". Then the blood was everywhere, and the kitchen of the Burrow was destroyed by it and parts of the Weasley family were everywhere, and Ginny was screaming, screaming, ***screaming***

Someone breathing quietly behind her. Ginny spun. A tall, dark *silhouette in the dark corridor that had opened up behind Ginny. It held a knife. Ginny, eyes wide with terror, let out a loud, piercing scream, but before she could turn and run, a cold, long-fingered hand clamped painfully over her mouth and, she was screaming, screaming,* ***screaming***

Ginny sat bolt upright. Her hair was matted with hot sweat, and her hazel eyes were blurred with tears. Looking over, she saw that roommates were still sleeping. She obviously hadn't been screaming for very long.

No. A faint buzzing informed Ginny that they were not sleeping deeply… they were ignoring. The throbbing of a Silencing Charm

was the only noise in the room.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, and then climbed out of bed. She glanced at the clock sitting on her bedside table, and it spoke four in the morning. Running a hand through her greasy, sweaty hair, she stumbled towards the bathroom and turned the shower on.

Ginny stepped out the bathroom, holding a fluffy towel around her. She dressed in her school uniform, though she knew full-well that she wouldn't be going to class today. She was going to skive off and try to find something out about the Chamber of Secrets.

She shook her sodden hair out, before scraping it into a high ponytail to dry. Impatiently brushing away the longer strands of her fringe, she donned her black leather flats and gathered her books.

As she collected her Transfiguration book from the bottom of her trunk, she noticed a thin black book that she had been given for her birthday by Dippet and had been long since forgotten about. Plucking it out, she rifled through the crisp pages, looking thoughtfully at it.

*I might as well do **something***

Ginny picked up her favourite eagle-quill and an ink-pot, dipped the tip of her quill in, and started to scratch down her thoughts.

5 th November 1958

It's been a week since I was down below the dungeons with Riddle. I'm still trying to work out why he was down there and who took me there. I suppose my being dragged there in an attack was rather obvious, though I still think that there's more to Riddle than meets the eye. Everyone sees him as 'a dark, cold character, who all he needs is a bit of love to make him whole again'. He's not. He's a piece of a puzzle that adds up to nothing. Perhaps the pieces of the

puzzle have been mixed up, and to find his picture, I need some pieces from other puzzles. He is Riddle, and he is one.

The redhead surveyed her words. To anyone who didn't know what she was talking about, she would seem to be speaking nonsense, or perhaps crazy. It was perfect.

Furrowing her brow in thought, Ginny wrote one more line before closing the book with a snap, and throwing it back into her trunk.

The lull before the storm; he waits.

Ginny selected the nicest-looking bagel and slathered some rich butter on it. "Did we have any Transfiguration homework?" she asked Alden and Grace innocently, pretending that she would actually *turn up* at the class.

"Yeah, I think so," said Grace. "Lemme check." She started rummaging in her bag.

"Seven inch parchment on your views on Transfiguring objects into people, whether or not it's good, and if its legality should continue," said Alden, not looking up from his scrambled eggs.

Grace stopped. "Fine, I won't check."

"Did you memorize that *word for word* ?" asked Ginny incredulously.

Alden shrugged, grinning.

The food was starting to disappear so Ginny crammed the last of her bagel into her mouth, quickly grabbed another, and then drained her glass of pumpkin juice before all evidence of food ever existing vanished.

Grace, apparently, had thought similarly. Her arms were laden with food, to the point where she had to put it into her bag to stop it from falling everywhere. She felt Alden and Ginny's boggling eyes upon her and coloured slightly. "I'm *hungry* ," she said defensively.

As they walked up the stairs towards Transfiguration, Ginny chose her wording carefully, before asking, "What's the Chamber of Secrets?"

Immediately, as if a button had been touched, Grace and Alden tensed. Grace looked over her shoulder nervously, checking that no-one was nearby, before saying quietly, "I wouldn't shout that if I were you."

"Why not?" Ginny asked, making her eyes as wide and innocent as possible.

Avoiding her question, Alden said, "The Chamber of Secrets in a secret place Hogwarts, created by Salazar Slytherin himself. No-one knows where it is – people had been looking for it for thousands of years, but no-one's ever found it. Everyone thought that it was a myth; that it didn't exist."

"Until two years ago," said Grace softly.

"What happened two years ago?" inquired Ginny, though she already knew the answer.

"Someone opened the Chamber of Secrets, for the first time in over five-thousand years," Alden said.

"They released the monster," whispered Grace.

Alden gave her a withering look. "There was a legend, that – *allegedly* ," he shot another look at Grace, confirming Ginny's theory that he didn't believe in the monster, "- that a monster lived in the Chamber of Secrets. I don't think that's true, but – regardless of whether there was a monster or not – when it opened two years ago… a girl was killed."

Ginny gasped.

"Myrtle Tristanebury," said Grace, her voice shaking. "She was a Hufflepuff. She sat next to me in Potions and Divination. One day, she never turned up for Potions. I didn't think anything of it – everyone knew that she often skived off class to skive. I…" her voice cracked. "I made fun of her. To Flora. I said that she was probably crying somewhere, all by herself, thinking of ways to kill herself." Tears appeared in her eyes. "It was only a joke! But… but then Olive Hornby found her, dead, in a bathroom… it was only a joke!"

Grace gulped, and then buried her head into Alden's shoulder, fighting back tears. The boy awkwardly patted her shoulder, throwing a *help me what do I do* look at Ginny. The redhead shrugged in return.

"Grace, it's fine, you didn't know," said Ginny reassuringly, briefly giving the tearful, over-sensitive brunette a squeezing hug. "I need the loo – I'll catch up with you in a second, okay?"

"'Kay." Grace lifted her head, gave a watery smile, wiped her eyes, and then headed away with Alden.

The seventeen-year-old redhead waited until they had gone around the corner before hurrying away to the library. She ran quickly but stealthily, not wishing to be caught out by suspicious teachers. She pushed through the large oak doors to her destination, and glanced about. A week ago she had been here in very different circumstances, though coincidentally the two trips were related.

Avoiding the stare of Madam Crofton, Ginny ducked into the Dark Arts section of the library and started to scan the labels, eyes flicking sideways for anyone approaching. The theories on her being at Hogwarts to kill everyone would not be muted if she was discovered searching through the Darkest area of the library.

Chamber of Secrets… Chamber of Secrets…

Nothing.

"Hm." Ginny's lips twisted into a thoughtful pout. She slid the last book that she had pulled out back into place with a *bang* , and then lifted her wand to her head. Concentrating hard on what she had learnt last year at the old Hogwarts, *her* Hogwarts, she Transfigured her skin several shades darker to that of a smooth, even olive, and her hair dark and curly. Satisfied, she weaved back towards the librarian's desk.

"Madam Crofton?" called Ginny, and waited for the librarian to arrive.

She moved into view from behind a shelf on first-year textbooks. "YES?" she asked loudly. "DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, MISS…?"

"Akakios," Ginny informed her in what she hoped was a convincing Greek accent. "My name eez Petra Akakios. Ay am a NOOT student, and ay 'ave been assigned a Defence Against The Dark Ayrts project, involving zee study of Dark creatures. Could ay be allowed eento zee Restricted Secteeon, pleez?"

"DO YOU HAVE A PASS FROM YOUR TEACHER, MISS AKAKIOS?" inquired Madam Crofton, writing the information down on a clipboard.

"Ack," said Ginny, and released a string of nonsense that she hoped sounded like a Greek swearword. "Pleez, excuz my terrible language. Eet eez just zat ay *knew* ay 'ad forgotten somezing een my classroom. Eet waz zee *pass* !" she slapped her forehead. "Could ay not be let een wizout zee pass?"

"NO, I CAN'T. I'M SORRY, MISS AKAKIOS. I MUST HAVE PROOF THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED SUCH A PROJECT."

"Oh, but *zurely* you believe me?" said Ginny, widening her eyes. "Ay am a trustworzy person! You may ask my Profezor, my Profezor Devin! 'E weell tell you zat ay speak zee truth!"

Madam Crofton eyed Ginny warily, for a moment, before saying, "NO PASS, NO ENTRANCE."

'Petra's' lip curled, and she stormed angrily from the room, heading back towards Transfiguration, her plan momentarily foiled. She made something up to tell the Professor about being delayed by another teacher, and the day proceeded. Alden and Grace bugged her about what had *really* delayed her, and she said honestly, "I had to go to the library," but said no more.

Darkness fell. The Slytherin sixth-year girls' dormitory was pitch-black, and Ginny rolled out of bed, hoping that Grace was not lying awake as she sometimes did. The stillness in the room informed her that she was not, and Ginny pulled off the nightdress that had covered her night attire.

She had donned her twenty-first-century clothing – black skinny jeans, a black hoodie jumper, and the chunky trainers that she had arrived in. Her hair was still in its high ponytail, but Ginny undid and tied it up again, to make sure it was secure. She didn't want hair flapping in her face for this dangerous mission.

Snatching her wand from her bedside table and slinging her empty school-bag over her shoulder, to carry any books she found in the library. Ginny crept down into the Slytherin common room. It was empty, save for one of Abraxas Malfoy's friends, who was keeled over, asleep, with his face on his homework.

Ginny poked the male with her wand. He didn't move, but Ginny used a Full Body-Bind Hex on him, just in case. Then she moved swiftly from the common room.

The dungeons were black as night – blacker, because the night would have had a moon and stars. The only source of light were the flickering candles set into the walls, and Ginny kept away from those, to hide in the shadows. She tiptoed as quickly as possible past Professor Slughorn's office, and then sprinted up the stairs, her feet making tiny, muted thumps.

Up the grand Entrance Hall stairs, through a secret tapestry, up another set of stairs, and then she was at her grand destination. Gingerly Ginny tested the door handle. Locked. She drew her wand. " *Alohamora* ," she whispered, and, with a spark of faint blue light, the door clicked unlocked; Ginny slipped in.

Pressing her back against the wood of the door on the other side, she lifted her wand and Transfigured herself into 'Petra Akakios' again – if she was caught, then she would probably be reported to Riddle, and didn't want to have to explain to him why she had been sneaking around in the forbidden section of the library, looking at Dark books.

Flipping her dark curly ponytail over her shoulder, she hurried towards the chain-gate that separated the Restricted Section from the rest of the library. Leaping lithely over the gate, Ginny landed in the forbidden area of the library like a cat, crouched on tiptoes.

*And she's **in***

Straightening up, Ginny moved between the shelves.

It was darker here than anywhere else – darker, even, than the dungeons. No moonlight landed from the distant windows, and the dancing shadows seemed to whisper, a thousand monsters scurrying out of sight.

Ginny peered at a book's spine. It was written in Ancient Runes, and she couldn't understand. The next – a harsh, brutal-looking language that she didn't even recognize.

*Chamber of Secrets… where **are** you?* Ginny scowled, still searching for the ever-evasive book, and lit the tip of her wand with a muttered, "Lumos".

Pale light shone over the dusty, dark books, and blood-stains jumped out at Ginny's vision like monsters from the gloom, standing out and sending chills down her spine.

There.

Ginny hurried to the book, and cast her wand-light over it. It was coated in cobwebs, and was emblazoned with the yellow letters - The Chamber of Secrets: The Secrets of the Chamber . Gleefully triumphant, Ginny pulled it out and flipped open to the first page, glancing over her shoulder warily before leafing through.

The Chamber of Secrets resides in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; where, exactly, is unknown. Placed there by Salazar Slytherin himself when founding the school with Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Helga Hufflepuff, it is suspected to be underground – hence the name 'Chamber', as a chamber generally indicates a room underground – and, though every inch of the Hogwarts dungeons have been searched, nothing has been found.

Ginny thought to herself how foolish and narrow-minded the searchers must have been.

It is said to be guarded by a massive, blood-thirsty monster. The most suitable would-be guardian, theorists say, is the basilisk. A snake of monumental size, it can only be commanded by an Heir of Slytherin, in Parseltongue, the language of snakes, with Salazar Slytherin spoke. Its fangs are deadly poisonous, and if it is looked in the eye, instant death is assured. It also has the ability to petrify, if it is not seen eye-to-eye (for example, a reflection of it). However, no basilisks have been sighted in Great Britain for over two-thousand years, and this theory has been dismissed.

Lip curling in anger, Ginny rifled through the rest of the chapter. There was nothing that she didn't already *know* ! She shone her wand-light around for any other books, but as the dim glow landed on Unlocking the Chamber of Secrets: Theory and Fact , she heard voices and footsteps.

"What's that light over there, Madam Crofton?"

"I DON'T KNOW. COME ON, WEASLEY, LET'S SEE."

Ginny's breath caught. It was Madam Crofton, and her great-uncle, Epaphras Weasley, the caretaker. "Nox," she hissed to her wand, and, as the light went out, she grabbed the book that she had seen.

At least, she hoped it was the right one.

Flinging the two books into her bag, Ginny ran back to the chain-gate, peering around the corner. Madam Crofton and the familiar face of Uncle Epaphras were drawing closer.

Trapped! Ginny's mind threw out one word as she stepped backwards from the gate. *Trapped! Trapped!*

Not trapped, Ginny suddenly realized, and she whirled around and sprinted away. As her ponytail slapped her cheek from the abrupt movement, she noticed out of the corner of her eye that it was coloured a lot more red than dark brown, and the curls were straightening out. In her fear, her Transfiguration was coming undone.

I'll fix it later!

Weaving through the rows of shelves, Ginny realized that she had no hope of finding the correct bookcase by running around blindly. She pressed her hand up against the third shelf from the bottom on the joined bookcases that lined the wall, and then continued to run.

No – no – no – no – ***yes***

Her slim fingers brushed against an uneven surface, and Ginny came to a halt. Peering through the darkness, she could not distinguish if it was the snake that she was looking for – but she daren't light her wand to find out, because the librarian and caretaker were closer than ever.

Is it – isn't it – is it – isn't it? Ohhh ***Merlin***

Closing her eyes to pray that it would work, Ginny squatted down so that her mouth was level with where the snake was – *if it's the snake – it IS – oh* ***hell*** – took a deep breath, and then, quietly, sharply, spoke, " *Open* " in a language that time forgot.

For one terrifying moment, Ginny thought that it hadn't worked. Then, with a *creak* that seemed far too loud to pass being heard by Madam Crofton, the bookcase swung forwards.

She leapt in, slammed it behind her, and raced several metres forwards before stopping to catch her breath. She was safe now.

Wasn't she?

Well, it depends on your definition of safe. If your definition of safe is trapped in a pitch-black, wet, freezing cold underground chamber that no-one knows about, with only a monumental killer snake to keep you company, then – ***yes*** *, I am as safe as it gets.*

However, for those of you who are ***sane*** *… I'm screwed.*

Realizing that having a conversation with herself inside her head was ridiculous, Ginny focused on the task at hand, and said quietly, "Lumos."

Before her were worn, grimy steps leading downwards. Nervously Ginny descended, keeping her wand-light level so that she could see if there were any patches of slime or broken steps where she could fall and hurt herself.

After what seemed like hours (Ginny was certain that when she walked up there with Riddle the staircase hadn't been so long; she scowled at it), the stairs levelled out, and Ginny found herself in a small chamber. She looked to her left and saw the snake-gate that lead to the actual Chamber of Secrets.

There was something out of place about it.

Ignoring her thoughts on the gate, she turned to the right and started to walk down the long slimy corridor back to the abandoned girls' bathroom.

It's open .

That was what wasn't right about the gate. It was open, and it wasn't supposed to be.

Ginny wheeled about and stared at the ajar snake-gate. Then her eyes flitted from it and stared *through* the gate.

And saw the sprawled-out figure at the end of the Chamber.

So far away, yet Ginny recognized Riddle immediately. And thought triumphantly, *Yes! I don't have to kill him because someone's already* ***done*** *it* ***for me*** Yet, for some bizarre reason, her legs were acting of their own accord and were making her sprint across the Chamber.

Stop! STOP! ***STOP*** *, Damnit! We don't want to* ***help*** *him!*

She lifted her wand and quickly Transfigured herself into 'Petra Akakios'. By the time her hair was curling and darkening to the right shade, she had arrived.

Ginny skidded to a halt and dropped to her knees, her wand clattering on the onyx floor beside her. "Riddle?" she gasped out. "Riddle, are you okay? Wake up – *wake up* , Riddle? RIDDLE?"

Dread filling her heart, she noticed the spreading pool of blood gathering underneath him. With a sense of déjà vu choking her, she leaned over him and inspected his left arm.

The cut.

"Oh God," Ginny whispered.

What the hell am I getting myself into?

"Riddle – *Riddle* !" she screamed, fear pumping through her heart. All thoughts of rejoicing and saving the world and going back home had disappeared, had been replaced by absolute terror. She was alone, kneeling with the Head Boy, dead, and his blood was across her hands.

A thousand other deaths were blurring through her mind, and tears stung the corners of her eyes. *Not another one. Not someone else.*

"Riddle – Tom – Tom Riddle – *Tom Marvolo* – ***Riddle*** !"

"Who are you and how the hell do you know my middle name?"

Ginny's eyes widened and she blinked repeatedly to clear her vision. Riddle's eyes were open, and narrowed.

"Riddle?" she whispered, hardly daring to believe it.

"Yes, that's my name, and how do you know it?" demanded Riddle. His face was always pale, but now it was almost crystal-coloured and there were grey smudges of tiredness under his eyes – the eyes, narrowed and attempting anger, though only achieving fear and despair in the flashing dark. His meticulously-combed hair was in a mess that reminded her of Harry Potter's hair, sticking up all over the place and falling into his face.

But you're not Harry. You killed Harry.

Gulping, Ginny chose not to answer. She hoped that her disguise was sufficient.

Suddenly Riddle frowned. "Do I…" he furrowed his brow, as if trying to understand something immensely difficult. "Do I know you?"

In Transfiguring her features, Ginny had coloured her hair and skin differently. However she was still the same person – she had the same face, the same eyes, the same way of speaking and standing.

She was still Ginny, and she needed to be careful not to be discovered.

"No, you don't," replied Ginny, and quickly swerved the conversation away from dangerous waters. "What happened? Who did this to you?"

"Nothing. No-one." Riddle sent her a dark look, as if to capitalize the fact, and to say *see, that's all there is to it, now get lost* .

"I see," said Ginny mildly, picking up her wand. Recalling that no two wizards shared the same wand, and, knowing Mr. I-Remember-Everything, her identity would be cracked in a second if Riddle saw her wand, she stowed it inside her hoodie.

"What the *devil* are you wearing?" asked Riddle suddenly, his eyebrows creasing in bewilderment. "And who comes down here in the dead of night, anyway?"

That, Riddle, is what I asked you, but seeing as you didn't answer, I don't think I will.

"Nothing. No-one," said Ginny evasively, raising an eyebrow to make her point.

"Look – whoever you are – you wouldn't believe me if I told you," muttered Riddle bitterly as he stumbled to his feet.

"Need help? You probably lost a third of your blood," Ginny told him. As Riddle refused, she merely walked with him and continued conversationally, "So was it the basilisk?"

Riddle stopped completely and stared at her. "Okay, stop this *right now* . Who are you? How do you know about the basilisk? How do you know how to get down here? And *how do you know my middle name* ?" he said sharply.

Smirking, Ginny said, "I am Wellvren Sayoley." She thought it over, before adding, "G."

"What kind of a name is *that* ?" said Riddle incredulously.

Inwardly giggling with insane glee, Ginny replied innocently, "What kind of a name is *Lord Voldemort* ?"

"I don't know. Your cousin?" said Riddle mockingly.

Ginny stared at him.

*No reaction. Absolutely **no** reaction.*

I thought that Dumbledore said that he was already becoming a Death Eater by the time he was seventeen!

*Then again, Dumbledore also forgot to mention the crazy psychopaths running around and slashing people's forearms. **Including** Riddle's.*

The redhead shrugged, and they continued up from the Chamber of Secrets. She was alarmed when Riddle turned right, to the stairs up to the library, but when they moved through the secret bookcase, Madam Crofton and Epaphras Weasley had long-since left.

Outside the library doors, they were a corridor from the Head dormitories. Riddle glanced away at the far image of Robin the Rich that marked his home, and then returned his gaze to Ginny. With the same calculating stare he used on everyone, he observed her – it was, as ever, like being under a floodlight.

"Your hair," he finally said, frowning. "It's… changing."

CRAP!

Ginny was rapidly transforming back into herself. She had to leave – and fast. She waited until Riddle looked away, and then, instantly, tore away down the hallway. Even as she sprinted down the stairs,

three steps at a time, to the floor below, she felt her hair thinning and brightening to red. If Riddle simply looked around the corner, he would see her perfectly and know who 'Wellvren Sayoley G' was.

Damn damn ***damn***

With one last burst of speed, Ginny was through the Entrance Hall, down into the dungeons, and then skidded to a halt before the bust of Salazar Slytherin. " *Ophiuchus* ," she panted, adding, in Parseltongue, " *and if anyone asks, you never saw me* ."

" *Yes, my Lady* ."

Ginny slipped through the door and scurried up to bed. Thankfully, none of her roommates had woken up. Changing quickly out of her twenty-first century attire, she laid her wand to rest on her bedside table, emptying her bag, kicking the contents under her bed, and slinging the bag aside, before hopping into her icy sheets, and curling up beneath them. However, as she lay there, she knew in her heart that she would not sleep tonight, as too many unanswered questions plagued her mind.

A/N: I hope you liked it. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review! Your only other option is death. If your review isn't replied to up here, it's because it probably didn't fit on the review page and I didn't see it. Sorry.

HAHA! YOU THOUGHT IT WAS RIDDLE! HAHAHA!

XxRandomHeartxX: Tomness is now officially a word. Haha. Thank you! Can I have a marshmallow! Yeah. I spent weeks wanting to hug Draco when I read about him crying in HBP. Anywho. THANKS!

sparkling-stone: Oh, good for you! Yeah, TMR-GW rocks. Woop. Thank you!

crazedreader: Wow. Thank you!

o00bubbles00o: Lol. Yeah… *I* wrote this chapter… -shifty eyes- Lol. I won't tell you who did attack them, but it's not Claude. Thank you! Yeah, didn't you know? Everyone in the fifties is evil.

megs06 You reviewed that twice. Thank you though. Lol, yeah I do know who it is. But I'm not telling. HA! Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13 Aw, thanks!

Spats Oh yeah. Right. I knew that. Well, there is another Ball (you can never have enough Balls –wink-) so I guess she kind of has a make-over. But I don't describe it in detail. So. Yeah. Thank you! I just get the P's from the dictionary lmao. Thanks.

AppleC0RE Has this proved your theory? Lol. And, I would like to tell you that on that last point, you're actually a lot closer to reality than you think. I think you're the only person who got that. Well done. –gives you a cookie- Thank you!

KayRose Thanks! Yeah, I love strong characters. I also love brownies! –munch- Thank you! Wow, sorry but your story about your brother just made me laugh. Sorry. I just think it's funny because your brother doesn't even bat for that team LMAO. Anyway. Thanks!

Saene 'Damn it and Snape'? That's a swear-word I haven't heard of. Lol. I have loads of pathetic plot-bunnies on the verge of death because they're being ignored, if you want. Lol, yeah, same! I'm a really good liar. But I don't like lying. And I don't like getting into trouble. Haha. Thank you!

midnightblue17: Damn. You guys are getting smarter with every review. I'm going to have to stop replying to you lot or you're going to ruin the story! Lol. Just kidding. Thank you!

SwirlyL: Wow. You have way too much free time. LOL. JUST KIDDING. Hahahha. I found that funny. I'm not surprised that your

brain hurts after all that thinking! Thank you.

P is for Psychopathic Behaviour

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers. No TMR-GAP in this action. Quite funny though. And Quidditch in this one. Enjoy.

A NOTE: I forgot to say this, and I think that I should, due to recent reviews – this is AU. About as AU as it gets. With no regard WHATSOEVER to the happenings of HBP and DH. Apart from the whole War thing.

ANOTHER NOTE: If you like Evil!Tom, then I'm sorry to say that this fic has basically slapped your opinion upside the head. Sorry.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Two: P is for Pyschopathic Behaviour

With one last burst of speed, Ginny was through the Entrance Hall, down into the dungeons, and then skidded to a halt before the bust of Salazar Slytherin. " ***Ophiuchus*** *," she panted, adding, in Parseltongue, "* ***and if anyone asks, you never saw me***

She slipped through the door and scurried up to bed. Thankfully, none of her roommates had woken up. Changing quickly out of her twenty-first century attire, she laid her wand to rest on her bedside table, emptying her bag, kicking the contents under her bed, and slinging the bag aside, before hopping into her icy sheets, and curling up beneath them. However, as she lay there, she knew in her heart that she would not sleep tonight, as too many unanswered questions plagued her mind.

Ginny did not have nightmares that night. She dreamt of Greek girls with anagramic names and title-less books that gave no meaning.

"Oi, wake up, Sleeping Beauty!"

A pillow hit her hard on the head, and Ginny blearily opened her hazel eyes. "A'ight, m'up," she mumbled ungraciously, and stumbled out of bed.

"You're more tired than usual," observed Grace, though a frown crinkled her faint eyebrows. "Yet you didn't scream in the night."

Feeling embarrassed of her night-time shouting tendencies, Ginny headed into the bathroom to wash. "Er," she called back into the dormitory, through a faceful of soap, "just a rough night, I guess." Grimacing at the awful lie, she towelled her face dry, and returned to her trunk.

As she opened it, Ginny saw her one-entry diary, and her empty bag. She instantly remembered the books under her bed, and felt a twist of longing to sit and pore through them endlessly for clues. However, she had Arithmancy first period, and, as she had passed out previously, she was already behind on her lessons; she couldn't afford missing this next one.

*Gr. I don't have a free period for two **hours***

"Coming to breakfast?" asked Flora, pausing in the doorway up to the Slytherin common room.

"Yeah," replied Grace; she jerked a thumb in the direction of Ginny, struggling into her black school-flats. "I'm waiting for her, though."

" *Her* has a name," said Ginny, pretending to glare. "And *her* is ready right now, thank you."

"Coolsville."

Inwardly raising an eyebrow at Grace's … *interesting* – vocabulary, Ginny cast one last glance at her unmade bed, and, more specifically, what lay beneath it, before continuing out of the door and up the winding stairs to the Slytherin common room.

"Tired?" sneered Claude as Ginny, Grace and Flora entered the room, her feline, almond-shaped, green eyes looking onto round, hazel ones.

Ginny shot the blonde a withering glare.

***Calm down** . She doesn't know what went on.*

Right?

Flipping a rude-hand gesture at Claude just in time for Professor Slughorn to walk past and say, "Ex *cuse* me, Miss Peregrine? Five points from Slytherin for such vulgar attitude, and don't expect an invitation to the Slug Club."

*Ha. In forty-eight years, dear Horace, you will be **begging** this feisty redhead to join your pathetic Slug Club.*

Instead of voicing this thought and being deemed mad, Ginny said humbly, "Sorry, Professor", and left the common room feeling more jaded than previously.

"That was *so mean* of him!" Grace exclaimed. "I mean, honestly. He must, I reckon, see about ten people swear a day, and it's only *you* he tells off and deducts points from. I don't understand – you're one of the best at Potions, as well."

The redhead shrugged, and they continued up to the Great Hall, conversing merrily.

"-and then," said Grace dramatically as they entered the Entrance Hall, "I was like, *WOOOOOO*- " she spun around, very fast, so that

her messy brown curls, black plaid skirt, robes, and arms flailed out, before –

Thud .

"Oops!" said Grace, looking up at who she had bumped into. A blonde boy gave them a haughty look of disgust, and then brushed past them. As he left, the brunette's cheeks flushed bright red. " *Ohmigod* ," she hissed, " *he was really **hot** , as well* !"

Ginny giggled. "Well, maybe not such a good match," she advised.

"I know," said Grace, "I mean, seriously – did you *see* the look he gave us?" She put her hands on hips and did an over-exaggerated old-man frown.

"Gave *us* ?" Ginny echoed. She shook her head, waggling her finger. "Gave *you* , Grace." Then, she flicked her red tresses over her shoulder like an auburn wave, and said coyly, "I'm still game."

Grace's mouth fell open. " *You would **not*** ," she gasped as they pushed through the doors to the Great Hall, and walked across to their table, finding Alden.

Laughing harder, Ginny grinned, "Hey Alden," and helped herself to a croissant. "Did we have any Arithmancy homework?"

"You two *geeks* ," jeered Grace teasingly, immediately munching her way through several blueberry muffins. Then, with a high-pitched, mocking voice, " *Oh, look at me, I take Arithmancy and Astronomy and Divination and* -"

"I don't take Divination," Ginny pointed out, taking a slab of butter for her croissant.

"You do," replied Grace.

"Want to check my timetable?" asked Ginny, drawing it out and waving it in front of her friend's face.

Scowling and grumbling to herself, Grace sank lower in her chair and returned to her muffins, while Alden chuckled appreciatively from the sidelines. "Shut it, you," she growled at him, "or I'll strangle you with a muffin."

What??

Alden stared at her incredulously. "Grace, you can't *strangle* me with a *muffin* ."

My thoughts precisely! ***Thank*** *you, Alden,* thought Ginny triumphantly as she served herself baked beans.

"Wanna bet?" said Grace darkly, holding up the muffin in the palm of her hand, her voice so quiet and calm that it was actually terrifying.

Okay, screw Riddle. It's ***Grace*** *I should have been worried about! She's a freaking PYSCHO* !

Alden rolled his eyes, seemingly unfazed by this pyschopathic behaviour. "Grace, put the muffin down," he said boredly, and collected his copy of the Daily Prophet from one of the many owls swooping in.

How the ***hell*** *is he not frightened by that – that – GRACE*

I guess it's sort of normal for him.

Chasing her baked beans idly around her plate with her fork, Ginny's mind was free to wander away from her friends' bickering, and her mind pursued the books under her bed. The first probably held significant details that had to be read thoroughly to gain realization of their importance, and the second…

Well. She wasn't even sure if she had grabbed the right book.

"- six inches on the Babylonian numerology system by next week, please. Detentions for those of you who fail to hand it on time. I do not care if your limbs have been removed or if you are brain damaged. The only excuse I will accept is *death* ," finished Professor Wiskunde, in his thick Dutch accent.

Cheerful sod.

Ginny sighed, swept her things into her schoolbag, and then slung the bag over her shoulder. She and Alden left the classroom discussing what they had learnt in the lesson, but their conversation was cut off when Ginny suddenly recalled:

"Slytherin Quidditch team try-outs!" she gasped.

Alden frowned. "What about them?"

"They're today!" she groaned. "In my only free period!"

GAH! *I can't read the books if I want to be on the team… Mfhdkfnsdg. FINE. I'll read them* ***later***

The short dark-haired boy peered at her. "What's wrong?" he asked, surveying her features. "That wasn't an 'oh-no-I'm-so-nervous'. That was an 'oh-crud-now-I-can't-do-whatever-it-was-I-was-planning-to-do'. What's going on?"

Honestly, Ginny said, "I got a new book from the library and I'm really keen to start reading it."

Disbelieving, Alden furrowed his brows further into their frown. "Okay," he said, before moving on and asking, "did you do your Defence Against the Dark Arts homework?"

"Of course." It was her favourite class. She had gotten an 'O' in it, for her OWLs, and memories of Dumbledore's Army with all of her friends flooded back to her – the root of discovering her talent. "I wasn't sure about question seven, that could have been the

Disarming Spell *or* a mild Stunning Spell," she said thoughtfully as she descended the stairs to the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom.

Fastening a second-hand flying cloak around her neck, Ginny hurried down the steps, into the Hogwarts grounds, and ran towards the Quidditch stadium. Slughorn had kept her in, so she was late.

Damnit! PLEASE don't let them have already chosen the chasers!

"Sorry!" she howled as she came racing through the doors, grabbing a broomstick from the wall. "Am I too late for Chaser?"

"No," said Jack Swithin, eyeing her suspiciously. "We've selected a second Beater and we're on Keeper try-outs."

"Jack!" hissed a feline voice, as Claude sashayed up to him. "You can not *seriously* be considering letting her on the team!" she glared at Ginny. "She's a *Mudblood* , Jack – think of the Slytherin team's reputation!"

The beefy blonde-haired boy turned to his girlfriend. "I don't give a damn about reputation if she's good enough to help us win. I'm sick of falling second-best to those Ravenclaw poufs," he said angrily.

Claude's emerald eyes glowed with anger. " *Fine* !" she spat. "Forget about the Slytherin team! Forget about *me* ! *And* ," she hissed, "you can forget your Christmas present, too!" With a huff of fury, she swirled away, patted her golden halo of curls self-consciously to check that they were still perfect after her rather vicious swirl, before storming away.

Shooting an apologetic look towards Jack, Ginny pulled on gloves, to protect her from the harsh wind, and waited for her turn to try-out for chaser.

Finally it was time. Ginny was the last of seven to try out. First was Abraxas Malfoy – he scored one, two, three… *thirteen* goals in the two minutes allowed. Ginny had to admit that he was a fabulous shot, and she hoped that this wouldn't lose her a place.

Second and third were under-fourteens. One scored two goals and, the other, six. The redhead's palms grew sweaty and she clenched them underneath her gloves.

Four was a weedy third-year who flew fast, but fumbled every time the quaffle was passed to him; he dropped it three times, but scored eight times. Five was a dark-skinned boy who crashed into the Hufflepuff sidelines within seconds, and a feeling of panic grow as the penultimate try-out chaser flew onto the pitch.

One… two… three… four… ***OUCH.*** *That looked* ***painful***

As would-be chaser number six was levitated down from the middle goal-hoop, Ginny mounted her broom.

It's okay. All I have to do is score more than eight, more than that scrawny kid. Should be a piece of cake.

Flexing her gloves, Ginny kicked off the sand and rose into the air. She hovered for a moment while Jack inspected his pocket-watch, and then, with a toot of a loud whistle, someone hurled the quaffle down the pitch, and the time started.

The redhead powered forwards. She hadn't felt a broomstick under her fingers for so long. It was incredible to be back. The broom she rode was a Heryres 1250, and didn't move as fast as the brooms that she was used to, but it was quite swift for the time period, and she hurtled across the pitch after the quaffle.

Stretching one arm forwards, she snatched the maroon ball from the air, tucked it in the crook of her elbow, and sped towards the goals. Manoeuvring around the many floating obstacles that zoomed around the pitch, she flew determinedly towards the goal hoops. She

pulled her arm back as far as possible, and then lobbed the quaffle as hard as she could.

In the air… through the sky… *score* .

A triumphant smile streaking across Ginny's face, the ball was tossed back to her by Abraxas Malfoy, waiting behind the hoops. It was an unfair throw to her, veering sideways with a spin on it, but she stretched out, and caught it in her fingertips.

"Aha," she muttered to herself, and flew on.

Two goals!

Three goals!

Four!

Five!

DAMNIT.

Seven!

Eight!

Nine! – *I'm on the team for sure now!*

DAMNIT. DAMNIT. *DAMNIT* .

Ten!

"TIME'S UP!" hollered Jack, shaking the pocket-watch at Ginny. Grinning, she flew back down, the quaffle tucked under her arm. She tossed it to the burly Captain, and watched in anticipation for her results as he locked it into the Quidditch box. The blonde boy looked up at her. "You did all right," he grunted.

Unable to keep the beam from her face, Ginny returned the borrowed broom that she had ridden to the broom cupboard. When she returned, the Seekers had played, and Jack was calling the new team players.

"Okay. This year's Slytherin Quidditch team. Keeper – Celem Magnus. Beaters – Jack Swithin and William Nomens. Seeker – Palmer Vegrandis. Chasers – Abraxas Malfoy, Rupert Flax, and…" he grumbled audibly, before reluctantly muttering, "Ginevra Peregrine."

"JACK!" yelled Claude, marching towards her boyfriend.

Sensing danger, Ginny moved away, and was swept into a bear-hug by Alden, Grace, and – Ginny was pleasantly surprised – Flora.

"You got in, you got in, you got in," they chanted.

Ginny grinned.

A/N: I hope you liked the Quidditch try-outs scene. It wasn't very good. And yes, this fic is going to start to get VERY AU. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Review! Your only other option is being eaten.

XxRandomHeartxX: Yay! Marshmallows! Yeah, I hate when fics are like: 'Ginny woke up. She was in the past. She walked downstairs and Tom Riddle was there. He was hot. She started to kiss him'. –shiver- Lol. Sugar highs rock. And aren't we all a softy at some point? I got so pissed with my brother last year because we were on a hike and he deliberately stood on a slug. Lmao. Thanks!

lady darkness: coofromancoofce?? Is that a word? Oh well. I like it! Thank you

BDSanta2001: Yeah. It's like: "EXPECTO PATRONUM!" And this skunk comes out and sprays you. "WRONG WAY, DAMNIT!"

Lol.Yeah, I told you that the plot twists were arriving.

o00bubbles00o: Yeah, it's REALLY AU. And I'm not going to answer your theory or anyone else's, because that'll just basically screw up the story. Thank you!

storm-brain: Lol. That's the point. It's supposed to be confusing for you, because it's confusing for Ginny. But all will be made clear soon.

megs06 Thanks! Interesting theory. I'm not going to say anything about it, though. Sorry.

creative-writing-girl13 -giggle- Of course. But I didn't just tell you that.

Leah: o0 Salazar's dead, remember? Lol. Well, it's a cool theory. But… blah blah blah, can't tell you anything, etc. etc. Lol.

Hermione W. Cullen: Oh, thank you!

AppleC0RE Not saying anything. –zipped lips- Thank you!

La Brujita: Um. –clears throat- This story is kind of going to destroy your opinion entirely. Sorry. Thanks for following it, though.

I had the weirdest dream last night. I was playing Duck Duck Goose with the principal of my school and Tom Riddle. Weird.

P is for Prohibited

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers! Sadly, still no Tom in this chapter. But it's important. And ENTER THE BAT BOGEY HEX! Bwahahaha. Ginny gets REALLY pissed off. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: Not mine. Though I wish it was.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Three: P is for Prohibited

" *Okay. This year's Slytherin Quidditch team. Keeper – Celem Magnus. Beaters – Jack Swithin and William Nomens. Seeker – Palmer Vegrandis. Chasers – Abraxas Malfoy, Rupert Flax, and…" he grumbled audibly, before reluctantly muttering, "Ginevra Peregrine."*

Ginny moved away, and was swept into a bear-hug by Alden, Grace, and – Ginny was pleasantly surprised – Flora. "You got in, you got in, you got in," they chanted.

Ginny grinned.

Happy with her new place on the team, Ginny vowed to stop wasting money on chocolate (a little part of her somewhere died) so that she could buy a really good broomstick the next time that she went to Diagon Alley.

"I'm so happy that I got on the team," burbled Ginny. "I'll be able to play, and *kick Gryffindor's arse* !"

"Too right, you will!" cheered Grace.

"Er. Ginny?"

I know that voice.

The redhead froze, her lip curling in disgust. With a swoosh of hair, she turned her back sharply on the male behind her, and started to walk away with Grace, who fired a filthy look over her shoulder.

"Ginny, please, can we just have a sociable conversation?" asked Scott, grabbing her arm.

" *No* ," Ginny spat, wrenching her arm away. She hoped, deep down inside, that he would chase after her and apologize.

"I just… I just wanted to congratulate you on making the Slytherin team," said Scott feebly, smiling. "I'm Ravenclaw keeper, so I guess I'll see you at the matches?"

Rage flashing in her hazel eyes, Ginny said furiously, "And there I was, thinking that you were about to *apologize* !"

Scott frowned. "For what?"

Good Merlin, good God, good Dumbledore – you ***arsehole***

SMACK.

Scott yelped, and stumbled backwards; an angry red hand-mark standing out brightly upon his browned cheek. " *Oww* ," he hissed through his teeth. " *Bloody* ***hell*** , you're insane! What was that for?"

"You *arse* hole, you stupid bloody idiot – you moron-" spluttered Ginny, livid. Words failing her, she whacked him around the face again, harder this time. " *Consider yourself* ***so*** *freakin'* ***lucky*** *that I was in a good mood before you came,* you ***ARSEHOLE*** !"

"What – I – cat-"

"IF YOU *EVER* SPEAK TO ME AGAIN, THEN THE REEVE FAMILY LINE WILL COME TO AN ABRUPT ***END*** !" she yelled at him. "BECAUSE, SCOTT, *YOU WILL* ***LOSE*** *THE ABILITY TO HAVE CHILDREN* !"

Breathing hard through her mouth, her hair mussed and her hazel eyes wide with fire, she drew her wand back, and before the Italian Ravenclaw could even flinch, she screamed, " *VERMUS NEZ* !" at him.

Emerald green light erupted from the tip of her wand, casting an eerie glow across her face, and then huge green things started climbing from Scott's nose, scrambling all over his face, pulling at his skin and pinching his eyes closed and scratching him raw.

Silence.

"Dude. Remind me *never* to get on your bad side," said Grace in awe, placing a hand on Ginny's shoulder.

"Unless you're an Italian Ravenclaw *blödian* ," she swore in the Dark language, having picked up rather a lot during the War, "I don't think it'll be a problem."

She stalked over to her ex-boyfriend, now on the floor, writhing in pain as his own bogeys attacked him. Ginny bent, grabbed a fistful of his robes, and hauled him to his feet. "Never come near me again," she hissed, her face millimetres from his. Then, with a sweet smile, she said, " *think of the grandchildren* ."

Anger still fizzing through her veins, Ginny dropped him onto the floor, neatly side-stepped his sprawled-out body, and walked into the hall.

It was only halfway through dinner that she remembered the books.

She gasped, and in her sudden recollection of the books, hidden under her bed, she dropped her fork into her lap, spaghetti and all.

"Damnit," she muttered, and, trying not to burn her fingers, swept the hot pasta from her skirt. " *Damn* it."

"You okay?" asked Grace, trying – and failing – to bite back laughter.

"What happened?" inquired Alden, frowning.

"Er, nothing," said Ginny. "I just remembered. Hey, will you if Dippet says anything after dinner, about Prefect meetings or something? And save me some pudding; I have to go."

"Where?" said Grace incredulously, a look of horror in her blue eyes. "What the *hell* could be so important that it's worth skipping pudding for?!"

"Sorry." Ginny puffed out her breath. "See you later, alright?" she shoved a last piece of garlic bread into her mouth, grabbed her schoolbag, and, with brief hugs to both of her closest Slytherin friends, the redhead left the Great Hall.

Anticipation choked her chest as she descended the stairs to the dungeons, and, unable to stand it, she ran faster and faster.

She burst through the doors, dumped her bag, dropped to her knees, and skidded along the stone floor, grazing her knees. Ducking her head down, she fished the books from underneath her bed and rested them on her lap.

Here they are. Finally, my chance to read them.

Wait.

The second book, Unlocking the Chamber of Secrets: Theory and Fact, was blue…

This one is black.

Disappointment sank into Ginny's heart. She had taken the wrong book. Unlocking the Chamber of Secrets: Theory and Fact may have

contained extremely useful information. Now… she would never know.

Giving a small scream of frustration and anger, Ginny picked up the book and hurled it across the room. "Damnit!" she yelled. A glare settling on her stormy features, she opened the first book, which had previously proved useless.

Her eyes skimmed over the text, taking the words in at a rapid-fire pace.

The basilisk was discovered by Lord Aldric of Haldemnate, in the year 1205. It is hatched under a chicken egg, beneath a toad – due the chicken being its natural parent (though it is descended from snakes), the crowing of a rooster is fatal to it. This was discovered when Donald the Daring confronted a basilisk face-to-face in Scotland. A massive fight ensued, in which he was blinded by the snake spitting venom at his face. In a blind panic, he threw anything nearby at it – including a young rooster. The bird squawked in indignation at being thrown, and the basilisk dropped dead.

"Useless."

She skipped several pages.

Common sense says that the Chamber of Secrets is in the dungeons, as it was where Salazar Slytherin resided, and he would have preferred to be close to it. However, every inch of the Hogwarts dungeons have been scoured, and nothing has been found. Theorists and aurors can only assume that it is hidden behind a magical locked door that can only be opened by either a Parselmouth, an heir of Slytherin himself, or by a password, which must have surely died out many years ago.

"The password's not difficult," Ginny muttered, flicking through the book. "Just try *open* ."

She flipped to another part of the book, and continued reading. Half an hour later, she slammed it shut.

" *Useless* ," she spat.

"What's useless?" asked Grace as she entered the room. "Whoa, Ginny, what did you do to your knees?"

The redhead looked down at her grazed knees. "Nothing," she lied. "I must have fell." She stood up, quickly slipping The Chamber of Secrets: the Secrets of the Chamber into her trunk and closing it.

Grace obviously didn't believe her, but didn't push it. Her blue eyes darted down to the corner of the room. "Hey, Ginny, is this yours?" she asked, picking up the black book before the redhead could stop her.

"Er. I don't know. Maybe."

"What is it?" asked Grace interestedly, turning it over. Then her eyes widened. "Ginny – this is from the Restricted Section!" she gasped.

"What?" Ginny frowned. "How d'you know? I don't think it is," she lied, joining her friend.

"Ginny, are you mad? Of course this is from Restricted Section! Hell, this sort of book is," Grace hissed, glancing around to see if anyone was listening, " *illegal* , Ginny!"

What?

"This is a book on *Svengali* , for the sake of Merlin!" Grace exclaimed, shaking it in the air. "These have been prohibited for years. Why is it even in school?" she wondered to herself.

Ginny cleared her throat. "Excuse me, Grace…" she said. "But is the word… ' *svenjelley* ' – supposed to mean anything to me?"

"Er – *yeah* !" said Grace, with a *duh* tone to her voice. "It's a severe act of Dark Wizarding evil!"

Dark Wizarding evil?

This book could be more useful than I first thought…

"It's from somewhere foreign. Ending in –ia. Something. Romania. Slovakia. Bulgaria. Albania. I forget," Grace said absently, waving her hand. She dropped the book onto Ginny's bed, and started to burrow through her trunk for her pyjamas.

Albania!

*Salazar Slytherin was born in **Albania** ! Voldemort lived much of his life in **Albania** ! The first Parselmouth was discovered in **Albania** ! HELL!*

"So what is it?" Ginny pushed further, feeling her pulse speed up with anticipation.

"It's an act of possessing and controlling another human being for evil purposes, usually ending in the victim's death."

It's an act of what?

' *Possessing and controlling another human being for evil purposes, usually ending in the victim's death'.*

Let's think back five years.

When I was eleven.

Shit

A/N: Hahah. Oh dear. By the way, don't give me any credit for the Svengali thing. I don't own it. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW! You know you want to….

XxRandomHeartxX: Yeah, I love Quidditch. I'd love to play it but I'd probably be really bad. Not only can I not hit things, throw things, catch things, save things, or dodge things, but I also have an immense fear of heights. I ROCK! Hah! YOU GOT TURNED INTO THE SQUID! HAHAH! That is going on my top ten funniest dreams list. I once had a dream where I was a lion in the Lion King, and I had to save this stupid meerkat that kept jumping off a cliff… ANYway. I'm rambling. Thank you!

Spats: Thanks!

KayRose: Well, if you were knocked out, dragged down into a chamber that isn't supposed to exist and slashed at, you'd feel woozy enough not to recognize her either. Thanks! I loved that part too.

creative-writing-girl13: Thank you!

BDSanta2001: Her own grandmother? That'd just be creepy. Nah, I have different plans in store for her. –winkwink- Haha. That polecat line made me laugh. Thanks!

o00bubbles00o: Wow. You spelt amoebas right. I can never spell it right. Well, apart from just then. But that's because I copied it from your review. HAHA BOW DOWN TO MEH AMOEBAS! Bwahahaha.

storm-brain: Yeah. I hate it when she's perfect. That's why I made her how I did – obsession with chocolate and eyeliner (like me), not perfect at sports, really untidy, really vicious (sometimes. Like me :P)… and a total geek when it comes to hot guys.

Intricacy: Oh. Is it? Huh. I always thought that blond was like an American spelling, and blonde was a British spelling. –shrug- Oh well. Thanks for saying, though.

Leah: COOKIES! Mahaha. Yeah, and he was really bad at Duck Duck Goose, too.

Shadow Spirit Song: Thank you! My friend won. I suck at Duck Duck Goose. And actually, the strangling with the muffin line idea isn't mine. Someone else wrote a fic on here with a line of strangling with a bagel. Disclaimer: remuslives, Chocolate Covered Love.

Eternal Passion: -squee- Thank you!

chimis: Thanks!

I LOVE YOU ALL!

P is for Pretending To Be Shallow

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers! There's a little Tom at the end. But the next chapter is filled with Tomness! (lol XxRandomHeartxX). Anywho. Ginny learns something interesting. Enjoy.

NOTE: On Saturday, I'm going to France. Sorry. No updates after Saturday until the NEXT Monday. But I'll have lots and LOTS of updates for you when I return. :D

Disclaimer: I own it all. Every plot, every character, every spell, every place. Not.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Four: P is for Pretending To Be Shallow

" *Ginny, it's Svengali! It's illegal!It's a severe act of Dark Wizarding evil! It's from somewhere foreign. Ending in –ia. Something. Romania. Slovakia. Bulgaria. Albania. I forget," Grace said absently, waving her hand. She dropped the book onto Ginny's bed, and started to burrow through her trunk for her pajamas.*

Salazar Slytherin was born in Albania ! Voldemort lived much of his life in Albania ! The first Parselmouth was discovered in Albania ! HELL!

" *So what is it?" Ginny pushed further, feeling her pulse speed up with anticipation.*

" *It's an act of possessing and controlling another human being for evil purposes, usually ending in the victim's death."*

Let's think back five years. When I was eleven… Shit

"It's… it's *what* ?" Ginny choked out.

"I don't know. Something like that," Grace shrugged.

Cogs turned in the redhead's brain. Then, realization of what she had to do dawning on her, she leapt to her feet. "Gotta go!" she blurted. "I'll be back before curfew, don't worry!"

"If you're not, I'll cover for you," said Grace loyally. "Be careful, it's getting dark."

"Thanks!" yelled Ginny before disappearing through the door. She barrelled past Flora and Avani, who were descending down the stairs to the dormitory, and left the Slytherin common room.

As she hurried up the steps from the dungeons, shivering in the cold night air, she dug into her pockets and fished out her pocket-watch.

Eight thirty. She had half an hour until curfew.

Up the stairs, around the corner, through the secret corridor… and out.

Ginny stopped before the door for the abandoned girls' bathroom. She sucked in a deep breath, and then slammed through the doors, letting out loud sobs. Being the baby girl of six brothers, she had to be able to turn on the waterworks like the flick of a switch in order to survive.

" *Gin, I wanna use the toy broom now!" said a six-year-old Ron Weasley, stamping his foot. "Give it!" he tried to wrestle it from her little hands.*

On command, Ginny burst into tears. "Wonnie," she howled. "No!"

A thirteen-year-old Charlie came quickly through the door. "Ron, leave her alone," he scolded, scooping the little girl into his arms. "There, there, Ginny, shush."

Just to be safe, Ginny sobbed a bit louder. She sat on the floor and 'cried' into her arms.

"What are you doing here?" someone demanded, in a cold, and slightly squeaky voice. The two aspects of the person's speech contrasted, creating a very odd effect.

It was Moaning Myrtle Tristanebury. She was quite small, and fat, with thick dark hair in two very neat pigtails; the parting in her hair was perfectly straight, ending abruptly in a very heavy fringe. Underneath the fringe were thick, round spectacles to challenge even Trelawney's, through which teary, yet suspicious, brown eyes were narrowed. She wore her school uniform – her skirt neat, her robes pressed carefully, her tie ironed to perfection.

"Oh!" exclaimed Ginny. "Why – I – I'm terribly sorry," she sniffed. "I thought that this bathroom was abandoned."

"It *is* abandoned," Myrtle said, her lower lip jutting out in the pout to mother all pouts. "It's abandoned because I *died* in here!"

Ginny gasped. "Really?"" she whispered. "I'm sorry, I didn't know. I'm new here. Hogwarts' first transfer student. My name's Ginny, by the way. Ginny Peregrine." She looked around at the bathroom. "My boyfriend just broke up with me," she added with a sniffle. "What's your name?"

"Myrtle," replied the young ghost, her voice sounding tearful again.

"Hi, Myr," said Ginny, grinning. "You don't mind if I call you 'Myr', do you? I mean, *Myrtle* is just kind of *long* , dontcha think?" she twirled a strand of hair around her finger, trying to seem as stupid and shallow as possible. "My name is, like, *so* long! It's *Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine* ! I mean, *seriously* ! Like, what were my parents *thinking* ?"

Myrtle snorted. She didn't look impressed.

"So how long have you been here?" Ginny asked, eyeing the bathroom with what she hoped looked like disdain. "'Cause, you know, this place could *totally* use a splash of colour." She waved her arms about. "A scarf here, a painting canvas there… the works!"

"A year."

Ginny 'gaped'.

"No – *way* !" she exclaimed. "But, like, I thought that all of the ghosts here were like, a gazillion years old!"

"Well, most of them are," said Myrtle, shifting her glasses higher up her snub nose. "They got killed in the Norman invasions, most of them."

"Ohhh." Ginny's hazel eyes widened. " *Coo* -el. What about you then, Myr? Did you, like, get stabbed by an angered lover or what?" she inquired, fiddling with her fingernails.

"No," said Myrtle, almost sadly, Ginny thought. "I was killed a year ago."

There was a moment's pause before the meaning of the fifteen-year-old dead Hufflepuff's words sank in, and realization dawned on Ginny.

One.

Two.

Three.

Killed?!

Wait – that would imply ***murder*** *, or* ***manslaughter*** *. Not… not being frozen by a hungry basilisk!*

"Killed?" Ginny echoed. This time, her awe and shock was real. "You mean… *killed* , killed?"

"No, I meant *chicken-pot-pie, killed* ," said Myrtle sardonically, with what had to be the worst comeback ever. "Yes, *killed, killed* ! I was murdered in this bathroom in the evening after I ran away from Olive Hornby."

Murdered?

Myrtle was murdered?

"But – murdered – murdered by who?" asked Ginny incredulously, anticipation and a slight chill of fear pounding through her veins.

Myrtle opened her mouth-

"Peregrine. I thought I heard you in here."

ARGH!

Fighting back the urge to rip the speaker into a thousand pieces, she took a deep breath. A glare settling onto Ginny's features, she wheeled around and glared at the speaker. "Riddle," she said coldly, her hazel eyes narrowing to slits.

He towered above her, and a look of suspicion, mingled with wry bemusement, glittered in his dark eyes.

"It's two minutes until curfew, Peregrine," continued Riddle glacially. "Don't you think that you're cutting it a bit fine?" he flickered his gaze across the room, landing briefly on Myrtle, behind the redhead. "You're not even allowed in here."

How dare you! Myrtle was about to tell me who murdered her!

And now she won't tell me!

"Sorry, Riddle," said Ginny darkly, firing him another glare. She turned quickly back to Myrtle. "Who?" she asked.

Myrtle shook her head. Her brown eyes were wide and she was staring very strangely at Riddle. "I… I can't," she howled, and then plunged back into the U-bend.

*ARGH! Thanks **so** much, Riddle!*

"Come on, Peregrine," said Riddle frostily, before turning sharply on his heel and marching away, his cloak billowing behind him.

*Merlin, how I **loathe** you.*

A/N: Ooooooooh. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW! You know you want to….

XxRandomHeartxX: Ronald McDonald scares me. –shiver- Lol. Same, I'm not good with flying. I have never flown. In my past life, I was a stick. Sticks do not fly. Lol. Thank you!

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks!

AppleC0re: Well, I kind of gave you Tom. But he's BIG in the next chapter. Is that enough for you? –puppy dog eyes-

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Yeah, I know that her birthday's supposed to be in August… but it didn't work with the plot, like you said. What's a Centric? –frown- Haha. Beg, fool, beg. Well, I updated. And thank you for your wonderful review, it made me all happy on the inside.

BDSanta2001: Yeah, I thought that Ginny was seriously under-appreciated. Plus, no offence to JKR or anything, or to anyone who ships Harry-Ginny, but their relationship is sort of stupid. It just basically sends out a message to girls that if you pine after

something long enough, you'll eventually get it. –cough- *stupid* -cough- Thanks!

ricekrispies: I loved that part, too. Thanks!

storm-brain: Thank you! Er, no, because Ginny pretended that it wasn't hers. Plus, Ginny had no idea what Svengali was, so she 'couldn't' have taken it out. Supposedly.

Leah: HAHA. Playing around with geese… HAHA. Ooh. I can't wait to see your fic. Thank you!

kyraThePoop: Aw, thanks! Er, I'm learning German, but I'm really bad at it. And I spoke Dutch when I was four but I forgot all of it except yes, no, and good morning. Why? 0o

chimis: Aw, sorry! I mentioned Tom in this one. Even if it was only for a bit. Sorreeeeee. Happy birthday! HAHA. Die, Barbie, die.

P is for Punch

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks to reviewers! There's a LOT of Tomness in this chappie. Aw, this is one of my favourite chapters. You'll see. It's also REALLY funny at one point. Well. I thought it was.

NOTE: This chapter can be improved greatly if you listen to *Diary of Jane* by Breaking Benjamin while you read.

Disclaimer: I own it all. Every plot, every character, every spell, every place. Not.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Five: P is for Punch

Myrtle shook her head. Her brown eyes were wide and she was staring very strangely at Riddle. "I… I can't," she howled, and then plunged back into the U-bend.

How dare you! Myrtle was about to tell me who murdered her!

" *Come on, Peregrine," said Riddle frostily, before turning sharply on his heel and marching away, his cloak billowing behind him.*

Merlin, how I loathe you.

They walked in silence. Riddle moved briskly at a pace that would usually generate some sort of noise, but he walked like the dead – silently, smoothly, unerringly. Ginny hurried along beside him, slightly noisier.

Ginny was quite determinedly pretending that Riddle didn't exist. She was looking firmly ahead and thinking only of her Astronomy

homework. She would *not* subject to that arsehole's will.

"I suppose that you're ignoring me because you still think that I attacked you," commented Riddle coolly as they strode down the stairs.

No, you think?

"Peregrine, I *didn't* ," said Riddle coldly, fixing another of his frosty stares on the redhead. "I was in my common room at the time that you were attacked!"

"How the hell am I supposed to believe that?" snapped Ginny. " *How,* Riddle – after, just last week, I was how easily, how completely and totally *naturally* you lied. On the spot. Three seconds, and you had a fool-proof lie with no plot-holes. How am I now supposed to believe and trust *anything* that you say!?"

" *I* believe *you* ."

Ginny stared at him. She knew what he was getting at. She knew that he was saying: *you're a liar as well, but I trust what* ***you*** *say* . Pushing these words to the back of her head, she said icily in reply, "I thought that you were smarter than that."

"I don't believe it – are you simultaneously insulting and complimenting me?" Riddle said, a slightly incredulous tone in his voice.

The seventeen-year-old redhead ignored this, and walked faster.

"Peregrine, I *did not* attack you!" Riddle snapped. "Why the hell would I?"

"I don't *know* , Riddle!" Ginny shouted, whirling around to face him so fast that her red ponytail hit the side of her face. "Why *would* you attack me? There's no answer for it! There just *isn't* ! And, while such a thing would usually reassure me… it doesn't! Because, Riddle,

there are *so **many*** things about you, your life, and what you do that doesn't add up!"

Riddle took a step backwards.

"Why are you secluded from the rest of the world? Why are you so distant from the real world? Why do you, seemingly, detest being *civil* over all other things? Why do act like you hate me, yet go to the trouble to make sure I don't pass out and get hurt at the Hallowe'en ball? Why are you such an *arsehole* ?" Ginny yelled, throwing her hands in the air. " *Why do you act like you hate everyone in this school – every teacher, every student, every room and every brick in the foundations of the building – **why*** ?!"

"Because I do," growled Riddle in reply, his eyes reduced to narrow, dark slits that flashed like fire.

"How can you hate Hogwarts so much?" demanded Ginny. "It's an amazing place – just step back and see what an absolutely incredible place we're in!"

"Yes, Peregrine – but, unfortunately, this isn't the film set of The Littlest Elf," said Riddle darkly. "This is reality, and, here, if you're not pureblood, then reality is absolute *shit* . Life is hell when you have to be a Slytherin living with the fact that you're related to one of those filthy Mudbloods. Life is hell, and you can't even come close to realizing it, what with your perfect life and friends and blood status-"

"Okay, Riddle, shut the hell up for *just one second* ," Ginny snarled. "Would you like to know something about my 'perfect life'? Here's something for starters: when I was eleven years old I had my mind taken over by the epitome of evil. I raised him to power. I tried to kill my best friend. Finally, said epitome of evil rises to power, and murders *everyone* I care about. I had six brothers, Riddle," she held up six fingers. " *Six* ! Not anymore. And of course, to top it all off, my reward for reviving the wickedest man alive is to not be killed. In his sick, twisted eyes, the ultimate reward is to live and to watch as

every family member, every friend, every ex-boyfriend… is wiped from the picture."

Riddle was actually stunned into silence.

Her shoulders were starting to shake, and her vision was blurring with tears.

*No. Okay? No. I **refuse** to cry in front of Riddle.*

Memories flashing back of things she never wanted to see again. She forced her eyes open, and, lips curled in disgust and total hate, she bit out, "don't you *dare* ever make assumptions about my life."

Taking a deep breath, she told him coldly, "I can make the rest of the way to the dungeons unaccompanied." She drew her cloak tighter about her, lifting her chin. Then, gaze icy and voice arctic, Ginny said to Riddle, "and by the way, Riddle – don't give me that crap about how hard life is not being pureblood… I'm Muggleborn. I am, so quote: 'one of those filthy Mudbloods'."

Leaving that for him to contemplate, she gave him one last disdainful look, said stiffly, "Goodbye", before turning sharply on her heel and disappearing down into the dungeons.

"Thanks for covering for me," called Ginny from the bathroom the next morning as she brushed her teeth. "Last night, I mean."

"Oh, it was fine," replied Grace. "Ole' Sluggy came down, but I spun him a yarn about you taking a shower and he left. I swear, he was trying *so* hard not to go and look in the bathroom. I could see it in his eyes." She giggled.

"Ooh," said Ginny, returning to the main dormitory room. "D'you spend a lot of your time looking at Slughorn's eyes, then?" she teased, selecting a green chiffon scarf and twining it around her hair.

"Definitely!"

Laughing, Ginny slipped her feet into her flats and left the Slytherin sixth-years' dormitory room with Grace, meeting up with Alden outside.

"Ginny, I need to talk to you," said Alden urgently as Grace and the redhead emerged from their dormitory.

"Good morning to you too, sunshine," said Grace grumpily, as Alden dragged them away.

Alden looked flushed, but he cleared his throat, and said hurriedly, "Abraxas Malfoy and his cronies have a betting pool. The first to 'make a move on the Mudblood and get a snog from her' wins twenty Galleons."

Ginny frowned. "I didn't know I had my own betting pool," she said in confusion. "Oh well." She winked. "I like a challenge."

Grace's mouth fell open. "What are you going to do?" she whispered.

"Oh, nothing…" Ginny combed her dark auburn hair with her fingers, before flicking it over her shoulder. "Have you got any lipgloss on you?"

She felt as though she was walking to her death, but, putting on a brave air, she flung open the door to the Great Hall.

*Yes, and **excellent** entrance!*

Hazel eyes outlined in dark green, pink lips glowing, and vibrant red hair, brushed for once, flowing over her shoulders, Ginny set her lips into a coy pout and moved towards the Slytherin breakfast table.

Grace and Alden walked a few steps behind her. Their wands, behind their backs, were creating a soft breeze to faintly ruffle

Ginny's hair.

The female Slytherin Prefect slipped into a vacant seat and served herself some strawberries – the best breakfast food to eat while still looking sexy.

She hoped.

This had better work. Or I'll just look like a tramp.

Whether Abraxas Malfoy and his friends had seen or not, Ginny was certainly not going unnoticed. Many male eyes were upon her and it was making her very uncomfortable.

You can do this!

Ginny shifted in her chair. The staring was making her uneasy. Then, suddenly, she realized that it was not a number of people staring.

It was one.

Damnit! Ginny swore inwardly. ***Malfoy*** *was supposed to notice, not* ***you*** *. Oh God, Riddle's* ***never*** *going to let me live this down.*

As Ginny had wanted, within minutes Malfoy stood behind the fourth-year opposite her.

"Move," he snapped at the younger student.

The fourth-year squeaked, grabbed his apple, and departed as quickly as possible. Malfoy then slid into his seat, and threw Ginny what he supposed was a winning smile.

Tosser.

"Hey," he drawled, a smirk gracing his thin lips. "What's your name, pretty lady?"

As if you don't know.

"Luna Granger," said Ginny smoothly, selecting another strawberry, and popping it into her mouth. She had already thought this through, and decided that it wouldn't be safe to say *Lovegood* , as Luna had been a pureblood, and one of her ancestors might be at the school.

Malfoy frowned. "But… your name's Ginevra Peregrine," he pointed out.

"Oh!" gasped Ginny. "But – silly me – *I* thought that you didn't *know* my name!" She widened her eyes expressively.

"Well, I lied." Malfoy grinned lazily. "Say, are you single?"

"No," replied Ginny evenly, sipping her pumpkin juice. "I've been married for three years, but unfortunately the union is only legal in America."

She fought to keep a straight face, which wasn't helped by hearing Grace, a few seats down, bursting into hysterical laughter, and Alden patting her on the back, telling a few frightened first-years that 'a piece of banana went down the wrong way'.

The stare upon her was now almost burning. It was like a hundred-degrees heat from a microscan, or a floodlight.

"What?" said Malfoy incredulously, his eyes boggling. "To *who* ?"

Realizing that Malfoy would not give up, and seeing how he was looking at her, she stood. "It doesn't matter. Well, I'll see you later. Maybe," she said with a shrug, and left the Great Hall as fast as possible. To her horror, she heard hurried footsteps following her.

*Oh no, oh no… this was a bad idea – a bad, **bad** idea…*

Malfoy grabbed her elbow and spun her around to face him. "To who?" he demanded, stepping closer.

Ginny gestured ambiguously, while discreetly trying to wrestle out of his grip. "You don't know him. He's a Czechslovakian wolf named

Paulo."

To herself, she cringed and hoped desperately that Malfoy wouldn't be intelligent enough to remember that Czechslovakia was no longer a country.

She then narrowed her hazel eyes suspiciously. "Why d'you want to know?" she inquired.

"Because," hissed Malfoy, stepping closer until his face was millimetres from hers. She could feel his harsh breath and smell his unpleasant cologne, and she froze. "You, Peregrine, doll, are hot." He stretched out his index finger and trailed it along her strong jawline. Then, his finger lingering by her earlobe, he whispered huskily, " *Really* hot."

Her breath was hard in her throat and her heart was hammering. She couldn't remember being treated like that in a long time – *Harry* certainly had never. Scott had maybe come close.

Oh, if there was ever a time for telepathy to work! Grace, Alden, ***please*** *hurry up out of the Hall!*

"What…" Ginny's voice cracked, and she tried again. "What's your name, remind me?" She struggled to keep her voice steady.

Malfoy's lips twisted into a smirk that made Ginny feel sick. "Abraxas," he said, his voice low, quiet, and still as sultry as possible. "Abraxas Malfoy."

"Well," said Ginny, in a very matter-of-fact tone, " *Abraxas Malfoy* – you can GET LOST!"

She yelled the last two words, and attempted to kick him in the groin. She missed, and hit his knee, hard. Pain shooting through her foot, she swirled away and tried to stagger to the dungeon door, nearby, on the other side of the Entrance Hall.

A hand reached out and grabbed her arm again. Ginny was dragged backwards, spun around again, and this time, crushed painfully against the wall.

"That," Malfoy sneered, "wasn't very nice." He placed his hands on the wall, either side of her head, trapping her.

"I don't give a *damn* ," Ginny growled. "I could be nice until the chipmunks came out to dance – but you're not getting anywhere with me."

Malfoy chuckled. "Is that so?" he hissed, his eyes flashing like silver flames.

A squeak of fear sounded in the back of Ginny's throat, and then the platinum-blonde Slytherin swooped down at her, and smashed his mouth into hers.

No – no – no-

THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!

Ginny squeezed her eyes shut and screamed, thrashing wildly to try and get away. One of Malfoy's hands moved to the side of her face, his strangely long fingernails digging into her skull, and he deepened the kiss, his tongue wandering the depth of her mouth.

OW OW OW!

GET HIM OFF!

HELP!

She curved her hands into fists and started pummelling the other Slytherin chaser's chest as hard as she could, trying to wrestle him off.

"Ginny!"

" *Ginny* !"

Two shouts of horror rang out. Grace and Alden had arrived, and had seen. Ginny tried to scream again, but Malfoy's nails were digging into the side of her head and her mouth was entirely covered by his.

PAIN –

" *Peregrine* !"

The world exploded in purple light.

Ginny didn't even notice the lack of Malfoy there, or who had saved her. Soundlessly she crumpled to the ground, collapsing against the wall, and she closed her eyes to try and block out how worthless and weak she felt.

"Ohmigod, ohmigod – Ginny, can you hear me?"

"Don't worry, Ginny, it didn't count – the kiss didn't count. It has to be voluntary."

Blearily, Ginny opened her eyes. The side of her head hurt, but that was nothing compared to the pain throbbing in her mouth.

"Can you hear me? Ginny, say something. What happened? Say something!" begged Grace. The redhead's vision of her was swaying and doubling every few seconds.

"Who?" she whispered, looking between Grace and Alden. She then looked beyond them, and saw her rescuer. The last person that she ever expected to see in that position.

A few metres away, near the door to the Great Hall, was Tom Marvolo Riddle.

He looked angrier than Ginny had *ever* seen him.

And that's saying something…

His hair had fallen out of its meticulously-combed waves; his face was flushed; he was breathing hard and ragged; he was pointing his wand at where Malfoy had stood a few seconds before, clutching it so tightly that his knuckles stood out, white, in his already-pale skin.

However, by far, the most terrifying was his eyes. Those round, very-dark-but-not-quite-black eyes were narrowed to the slits that Ginny had become so familiar with during the War – except that the eyes she knew were crimson and snake-like – and they were, really and truly, black. They were shadowed, tempestuous and inclement. What was once totally veiled from emotions now radiated absolute fury like heat from the sun.

The swift transition from 'aloof, cold, but still harmless Head Boy' to what could only be described as *Lord Voldemort* was petrifying.

And it had happened… for her.

His unlit eyes flashing sideways and seeing Ginny's gaze on him, Riddle straightened. Tearing his eyes from her face, he moved towards Malfoy faster than Ginny had ever seen him move anywhere.

"Leave him," said Ginny weakly.

Riddle's head snapped to stare at her, his eyes disbelieving.

Ginny knew precisely what she wanted to do, and she would do it.

*You are going to wish **so** badly that you had never messed with me.*

She struggled to her feet, flicked her hair out of her eyes, and then strode smartly until she was standing above Malfoy. Then the seventeen-year-old pointed her wand at his unconscious body, and uttered, " *Ennervate* ."

"What are-"

"Do you *want*- "

" *Ginny-* "

Ignoring the incredulous protests, Ginny glared down at the Slytherin on the ground at her feet.

Slowly, swaying, he stood. His lips twisted into a smirk.

And then Ginny's fist flew forwards.

Crunch .

Malfoy gave a loud howl of pain, and fell again. He was out cold.

" *Merlin* !" exclaimed Alden. "That was one hell of a punch."

"Never underestimate the power of short redheads," said Grace solemnly.

Ginny turned and grinned at her friend, and, as her head swivelled to face the brunette, pain fired through her shoulders and head. She groaned and fell backwards against the wall.

"Oww," she moaned, holding her temples. She sensed someone suddenly nearby her, and looked up – not, as expected, into concerned blue eyes, nor even perhaps brown eyes.

Dark, not-quite-black, bottomless-pit eyes.

Why is he paying so much attention to me all of a sudden?

"Peregrine, are you-"

His words were laced with something that could be defined as concern – only, of course, if the definer was drunk. Because Riddle simply wasn't concerned about *anyone* .

Period.

He was blocked out, however, by Grace and Alden rushing to help her, pushing him away. "Are you okay? What's wrong?" they chorused worriedly.

"Yeah, I'm fine," muttered Ginny. "Just got a bit dizzy standing up."

"And, you know, the whole nearly-getting-raped-in-the-Entrance-Hall thing," Grace said dryly.

"That too." Ginny raked a hand through her loose red hair, and closed her eyes. Her lips stung, and she felt weak; worthless.

"Come on. Let's get you checked up at the Hospital Wing," said Alden, taking no half-hearted protests of 'dunwanna' for an answer, and dragging a reluctant Ginny away from the small crowd that had gathered, the unconscious Malfoy, and the tall, pale, dark-haired boy, who Ginny was terrified might actually have a heart after all.

A/N: Ooooooooh. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW! You know you want to….

XxRandomHeartxX: Ooh, thank you. Yeah, d'you know Piro? Or however you spell it. He's like a French clown, and he's SO damn scary. He always wears this pointy hat, and he doesn't smile. He wears all black and white, even black lipstick, and he has black tears painted on his face. He freaks me out like hell. ANYwho. Don't die without me. You're one of my most frequent reviewers. –sniffle- Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks! Well, I'm slowly making this more and more AU as I go.

AppleC0re: Well, the impression I'm trying to give is that she wasn't killed by the basilisk (that was some sort of cover-up, I dunno) and she was murdered. Thanks!

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: This is a REALLY slowly developing fluff-fic, so he's actually not going to snog her ages. If he snogs her at all. I mean, in my other fic, the two main characters didn't snog until like, the fifth last chapter. But there'll be more snogging in this fic, lmao. Scott? What about MALFOY? Thanks for the review!

BDSanta2001: Thank you! Yeah, that's what I always thought. So that idea is helping the plot to thicken… bwahaha.

Leah: I read your fic, and I reviewed! I love it, it's really good. Yeah, I'm AUing this fic like hell. So if something doesn't make sense, just assume that it's deliberate. Makes it easier.

kyraThePoop: Thank you! OH, that. Yeah. Well. I needed an 'insult' so I just translated a bit. And I also wanted the Arithmancy teacher to be called Professor Maths in a different language. So I chose Dutch, lol. Whoa, you speak a lot of languages. I can top that, however. I speak English, Chinese, French, a little Spanish and a little German. HAH!

chimis: Yeah. Myrtle annoys me a bit. But I love her. She's so gloomy. Well, there's a LOT of Tom in this chapter, consider it a late birthday present.

P is for Playing Matchmaker

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Lala. Hello. This chapter isn't very interesting. It's just a joining chapter, leading from one plot point to the next. Blah. Have fun…

TWO HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN REVIEWS! OMFG!

Disclaimer: I own it all. Every plot, every character, every spell, every place. Not.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Six: P is for Playing Matchmaker

*The swift transition from 'aloof, cold, but still harmless Head Boy' to what could only be described as **Lord Voldemort** was petrifying. And it had happened… for her.*

" *Peregrine, are you-" His words were laced with something that could be defined as concern – only, of course, if the definer was drunk. Because Riddle simply wasn't concerned about **anyone** . Period.*

" *Come on. Let's get you checked up at the Hospital Wing," said Alden, taking no half-hearted protests of 'dunwanna' for an answer, and dragging a reluctant Ginny away from the small crowd that had gathered, the unconscious Malfoy, and the tall, pale, dark-haired boy, who Ginny was terrified might actually have a heart after all.*

Ginny was perfectly healthy and ready to leave, half an hour and a few potions later. She had some bruising on the side of her head, and her lip was bleeding, but the potions would, allegedly, clear that up within a day. However, before it cleared up, it would swell, and the

Prefect did *not* look forwards to spending the afternoon sporting a fat lip.

"If I ever see Malfoy again, I'll rip his face off," Ginny growled as she, Alden and Grace departed the Hospital Wing.

"No!" gasped Grace, and the redhead thought that the other Slytherin girl was going to admonish her for such violent thoughts, but instead advised, "Rip his balls off instead. Not only will it be much more painful, but it will prevent the attempting-to-rape situation from ever happening again – all of that sexual tension will be gone."

Both Alden and Ginny gave their friend an odd, *are-you-nuts* look, before deciding that they didn't want to know, and swerving the conversation to less bizarre topics.

"So what class do we have next?" Alden hastily asked, avoiding Grace's blue eyes.

" *Snogarella* !" chirped Grace.

Without hesitation, Ginny translated, "Charms."

Alden frowned. "How…?"

"Oh, it's easy once you get used to her way of speaking and how her mind works," Ginny said with a shrug. "She fancies Trey Capulet, that blonde Hufflepuff, and he's in our Charm class. When asked what class she has, and she comes up with a strange word that has *snog* in it, it means Charms."

Raising his eyebrows, Alden shook his head. "I don't want to know anything about Grace and snogging," he said. "That just brings on a series of mental images that I never want to see again."

"Why?" smirked Ginny. "Jealous?"

And, to her great amusement, both Alden and Grace rapidly attained a funny colour of purple and looked away.

*Hm. Interesting… **Very** interesting…*

Smirking to herself, Ginny said, "So, how about that ball?"

"What ball?" asked Grace, frowning.

"Oh!" Ginny gave an accurate impression of wide-eyed confusion. "But… don't you know? The Christmas Ball! Dancing, music… mistletoe…" she chimed, hazel eyes sparkling wickedly.

Grace shrugged. "I'll probably go," she said nonchalantly. "But I'll need to buy a new dress. My other one is getting too short; I've grown *so* much in a month."

"Well, you still have the rest of November, and most of December to buy something," said Alden absently, not really paying attention.

" *Merlin* !" Ginny put her hands on her hips. "I'm not talking about what to wear. I'm talking about who to *go with* !"

Grace's cheeks coloured pink, but she said defiantly, "We don't have to go with anyone."

"I s'pose not," said Ginny, inspecting her fingernails. "But it would be so *romantic* , wouldn't it?"

"Hm," said Alden vaguely, acting as though he couldn't care less, though his ears were glowing.

Damnit! Will they just ask each other out?

"Who might you ask, Grace?" inquired Ginny. "I mean, as a third-party person with no personal interest in the matter," she added, glancing up warily.

"Dunno." Grace's face was now red.

"Well. Do you like anyone?"

"Er. You know about Trey," Grace said, waving her hand feebly.

*Gr… **fine** . Time to play my final card. And if this doesn't work, then your relationship is **screwed***

"What about you, Alden?" Ginny asked, turning to face him. She discreetly shook her fringe into her eyes and peered at him through it, cinnamon eyelashes fluttering. "Are you going with anyone?"

He mumbled something incoherent, his ears now like beacons at sea.

"Has anyone asked you?"

"…no."

"Then, technically, you're still fair game," Ginny prompted, triumph lacing her words.

"S'pose."

Ginny knew that she was embarrassing him – *when the well-pronounced geek starts to mumble and abbreviate, you **know** you've got him.*

"Okay," Ginny said, and paused, as though she was thinking something over, before blurting out quickly, "Alden, d'you wanna go to the ball with me?" and ducking her head, as though humiliated.

*Come on, come on, **blush*** Ginny willed her facial features to turn red, holding her breath and straining the blood vessels in her cheeks.

She looked up through her eyelashes. Alden's brown eyes were boggling at her, and he was fighting to control his surprise.

Grace wasn't quite as good as it. All colour had drained from her face, turning her a ghostly white, and her jaw had dropped, splaying

shock openly across her features. She stammered, "b-b-b", no real words coming from her lips.

"Well, Grace is going to go with Trey Capulet, so you might as well, right?" she gave Alden a flirty wink.

"I… I…" Alden swallowed, hard. "I… suppose." He was trying to slip back into the calm, composed manner that he usually held. "Yes… yes, Ginny. Alright. I… yes."

"Hey!" Ginny gasped, turning to the brunette. "Now, you ask out Trey, and we can go on a double-date! It'll be *so* romanceville!"

"Yeah…" said Grace, her voice strained.

"Great," Ginny beamed. "Anyway, maybe Malfoy and his friends will leave me alone now that I have another boyfriend," she joked; she pulled out her Charms books and struck up a conversation about their homework, and whether her companions thought that they had done well.

As they neared the door, Ginny looked over at the notice-board near the door. On it was the broad black letters:

HUFFLEPUFF-SLYTHERIN QUIDDITCH MATCH. FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON – YOU CAN'T MISS IT! SATURDAY, NINE O'CLOCK.

"Ooh," said Ginny as she, a sulky Grace, and a still-stunned Alden lined up outside of Charms. "That sounds like fun. I should go for a fly tonight – it's only in two days, and I haven't had much practice."

"Okay…" said Alden, staring ahead in a state of shock at, apparently, the fact that he now had a girlfriend.

Grace didn't respond. Since accepting that Alden was now dating Ginny, she was fuming. She fired a filthy glare at Ginny, before folding her arms and dropping against the wall with a loud *hmph* .

Mmgh… Ginny worried her lower lip with her teeth. She hoped that she hadn't compromised her friendship with Grace by trying to play the matchmaker – though, admittedly, via the jealousy game.

"Alright, students, hush now!" called Professor Vander, waddling around as fast as he could on his fat little feet. "Quiet, quiet, yes, quiet. In you go, go on now, yes, quiet, go on."

With one last glance at her emotional friends, Ginny entered the classroom and found her seat, her mind racing with a thousand things. Svengali. Myrtle's murder. Matchmaking. Quidditch.

A million questions unanswered.

A/N: Sorry that it's so short. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW! You know you want to….

XxRandomHeartxX: Damn this fic! It's giving me weird dreams! I had one today where I was crossing the road with Tom Riddle, and then I got hit by a bus. And then I taught an elephant to dance! WTF?! AARGH. I saw Piro once at a French circus. Had nightmares. –shiver- Thanks! Yeah, don't we all just want a Ginny in our lives?

creative-writing-girl13: WOO! VICTORY DANCE! –dancedancedance-

o00Bubbles00o: Thank you! Whoa! Really? What film? Then I could go to the cinema and be like: "I KNOW THAT PERSON! WELL. DISTANTLY, ANYWAY!" Hahaha. That'd be so cool.

AppleC0re: Haha, I loved that too. Thanks!

ricekrispies: Well, we are know that Malfoy's kind of freaky. So I just used him. Lol. Thank yewww. And I can't tell you the answer. He could be. He might not be.

Leah: Yeaup. Something is fluttering inside Riddle's little brain. Something that screams: DAAAMN SHE'S HOT. Lol. Hehehe. Thank you for the review! Hey! That rhymed!

storm-brain: Thanks! Yeah, Myrtle's damn cool. And what d'you mean "that kind of person"? What kind of person?

Pixar: Woo! A new reviewer. Hi. Yeah, I fell off my chair laughing when I wrote that part. I suppose it helped that I was on a sugar high. Hm. Same – screw killing him, I'd just piss him off! Lol! Thanks!

chimis: I certainly wouldn't kill him. I'd just go up to him and say: "DAMN you're hot." LOL. Well, him starting to like her is a little obvious, but she doesn't like him. :(poor Tom.

KayRose: Thank you! I haven't actually gone to France yet, lmao. My next post will be on Monday when I get back so… I'll tell you about it then.

P is for Pass

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: I'M BACK! WOOP! France was fun, though I did nearly kill myself on several occasions. I set my coat on fire, I set the bucket that I was holding on fire, I fell down a flight of stairs, and I nearly got hit by a car. Whee! I hope you like the chapter. NOW READ IT.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Seven: P is for Pass

Grace didn't respond. Since accepting that Alden was now dating Ginny, she was fuming. She fired a filthy glare at Ginny, before folding her arms and dropping against the wall with a loud ***hmph*** *.*

With one last glance at her emotional friends, Ginny entered the classroom and found her seat, her mind racing with a thousand things. Svengali. Myrtle's murder. Matchmaking. Quidditch. A million questions unanswered.

Heart pounding, Ginny clutched her broomstick tighter.

"Alright, everyone," grunted Jack. "We've been through this before. Vegrandis – do as many Wronski Feints as you can pull off. That way, when you *do* see the Snitch, the other seeker won't believe you, and will fall behind. Nomens – fly out of the sun. Magnus – if you're not saving a shot, then stay at the centre hoop. Malfoy and Peregrine… settle your differences for *one* match."

The two chasers glared at each other. The bet had died down, and the two Slytherins were basically sworn enemies since the fight in

the Entrance Hall. Malfoy, Ginny was pleased to see, was sporting a black eye, and the left side of his face was swollen beyond recognition.

"Jack, are you *done* yet?" drawled a bored Claude from the benches.

"No. Wait," snapped Jack, who seemed edgy today. Claude huffed and stalked away, leaving Jack to cross over and address Ginny. "Oi. Peregrine. You're kind of like a secret weapon – 'cause no-on expects a girl… so try some… *masculine* stunts. To distract people. With all that Rules of Public Society or whatever."

"Will do." Ginny pulled her ponytail tighter and looked determinedly out, through the doors, at the waiting Quidditch pitch. It was cold, and she wished she'd worn her school jumper underneath her Quidditch robes.

It felt so bizarre to be wearing green Quidditch robes instead of the red and gold that she had grown so used to seeing on her clothing, on her trunk – everywhere. She hoped that she didn't pass to the Gyrffindors when it was their match.

Shaking unimportant thoughts away, she mounted her broom, and kicked off, zooming through the doors after the rest of her team. As she emerged, gasps rang through the crowd – a girl! And… a *Mudblood* girl! On the Slytherin team!

Surely not.

Ginny hovered in between Malfoy and the other chaser, Rupert Flax. There was a pause, and then the Quaffle was tossed up. Everything was drowned out in a screech of whistles and a bellow of supporters from all four Hogwarts houses. The redhead used the momentary stun of inaction to speed forwards, and snatched the Quaffle as it fell.

"Oh, and first off we have… Peregrine? The new transfer student, first ever to come to Hogwarts. And a GIRL! This, ladies and

gentleman, should be interesting!" the commentator shouted.

Ignoring the ongoing speech, Ginny weaved past two Hufflepuffs, and then hurled the ball diagonally to Flax.

"And nice pass from Peregrine, now Flax has got it, swift pass to Malfoy-"

"PASS IT!" Ginny bellowed.

Where the hell is he going? He needs to ***pass*** *, someone will* ***intercept*** *it!*

"PASS, MALFOY!" she yelled.

There was a thud as a Hufflepuff collided with Slytherin. A moment later, the Hufflepuff soared away with the Quaffle.

"Oh, and a nice tackle from Alfonso, he passes to Tanner – wow! That is some nice passing. Look at them go up the field!"

"MALFOY, YOU HAVE TO PASS!" Ginny roared angrily.

The blonde chaser gave her a look of disdain, and flew away.

Fury bubbling in her veins, Ginny soared after the Quaffle, ducking neatly beneath people.

"-there's the Bludger, hit sharply by Cadell, *OOH* that was close-"

Ginny glanced back at the offending Bludger that had just attempted to remove her head. Pushing her irritation to the back of her head, she concentrated on the task at hand – scoring.

She whirled sideways and sped, not after the Quaffle, but after Flax.

"FLAX!" she yelled.

The small, scrawny third-year looked over at her. "What do *you* want, Mudblood?" he sneered, displaying true Slytherin spirit.

"Look, Flax, from now on, pretend that Malfoy isn't a chaser. He's on Hufflepuff's team – he won't pass, and if he carries on like this, we're going to lose!" Ginny implored Flax to understand.

He narrowed his grey eyes at her, but nodded, and they parted ways.

Right. Now ***that's*** *taken care of…*

"And Flax intercepts the Quaffle, drops it – catches it again – not very good, is he? – *ow!* Yes, sorry, Professor – and passes quickly to Peregrine, back to Flax, *Merlin* , that is fast, Flax, Peregrine, Flax, Peregrine, she weaves, ducks, passes – FLAX DROPS IT – Peregrine barrels Reyner out of the way and catches the Quaffle, they're dangerously close to the hoops and-"

His next words were drowned out by the tremendous roar of a thousand Slytherins screaming and jumping to their feet in glory.

Ten-nil.

"Nice work, Mudblood," said Flax grudgingly as he neared her.

Ginny grinned, and hovered impatiently until the Hufflepuff keeper tossed the Quaffle down the pitch, before firing after it.

Twenty-nil.

Thirty-nil.

Thirty- *ten* !

Ginny groaned. Malfoy, now furious at being ignored, had intercepted the Quaffle, and had caused a Hufflepuff goal by, as per usual, refusing to pass.

However, the redhead was not the only one angry at Malfoy. As Jack hurled the Quaffle to her, he bellowed at Malfoy, "Get your act together or you're off the team!"

"Who else will you take?" Malfoy snapped. "I'm the best shot in Slytherin and you know it."

"-and it looks like Malfoy and Swithin are having some sort of argument in air, I don't know if that's going to help them score some more points – but seemingly so! Peregrine and Flax are up the pitch again-"

Ding, ding, ding! POINT to Ginny Aiobheann Peregrine, I believe?

Forty-ten.

Fifty-ten.

Fifty-twenty.

Sixty-twenty.

Sixty-thirty.

Seventy-thirty.

Eighty-thirty.

Ginny rolled sideways to get into position for catching a long pass from Flax, before lobbing it as hard as she could past two Hufflepuffs. "FLAX!" she shouted suddenly, panicking. "BLUDGER!"

He swerved at the last second, leaving the Quaffle to drop down, and a Bludger streaked past where his scrawny head had been moments before. Flax shot Ginny a grateful look, something uncommon on his pointed features, and then swooped after the Quaffle, racing a Hufflepuff for it. He snatched it by the tips of his fingers, and then threw it quickly to Ginny –

She felt the whistling of wind before she heard the yells of warning. Alarm filling her, she looked around and saw a Bludger belting towards her.

*Oh. And I **couldn't** just end the Quidditch game with a triumph and a Quaffle in hand.*

Goodbye, cruel world.

There was a **thud** , and then suddenly Ginny was spinning, faster – faster –

Blue sky –

Brown ground –

Blue –

Brown –

Blue –

Her knees gave out from clutching the broomstick, and silently she fell. She heard a horrified scream that was probably Grace, and then she remembered no more, save for this –

Crunch .

A/N: Sorry, it's another short one. I hope you liked how I wrote the Quidditch game. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Please review, it makes my day.

Joesphine Sawyer: Thanks!

M. E. Potter: Thanks. I hope you liked it.

Crazedreader: Sorry about the wait. Don't cry! Thanks!

Audrhole: I love the sayings as well, they're so quirky and cool. Thank you so much.

BSDSanta2001: Yeah, I've played matchmaker enough times with my friends to know that its hard work. And also, my friends rarely appreciate it, so I gave up. Lol. Thanks!

Chimis: Hey! I'm really offended! Grace is based on me. Lol just kidding. Grace is sort of tall and thin, and then Alden is the same height as Ginny, which is kind of short, and then he's just like average weight. Lmao, they're such a weird couple. Poor Tommy-wommy.

Saene: Hehe. Oopsies. Yeah, this fic is about as un-canon as it gets.

KayRose: Lol, don't worry. I went by plane.

o00Bubbles00o: Is this update uber enough for you? –worry- MAHAHA, and then I'll be like: "I KNOW HER! SORT OF!" And then I'll write a book, and you'll be like: "I KNOW HER! SORT OF!" Teehee.

Spats: Thanks!

Creative-writing-girl13: Yeaup, they certainly do. Thank you!

kyraThePoop: Yeah, I know what you mean, lol. Haha. Ich bin super. Ja. LOL. That's basically what I'm limited to. But I can speak some damn good Chinese. And that's not even exaggerating. Lol. Thank you, and don't worry the chapter with more Svengali in it is coming quick.

Exhexoex: I think that's how you spell your pen-name. Lol. Thank you, I'm glad you like it!!

Ricekrispies: Haha. Prefect's Bath. Umm… no. Sorry. Lol, thanks!

P is for Perkiness

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Hello, this is a nice fluffy chapter. Don't worry, Ginny dearest is fine from the Quidditch knock. Enjoy.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Eight: P is for Perkiness

She felt the whistling of wind before she heard the yells of warning. Alarm filling her, she looked around and saw a Bludger belting towards her.

There was a ***thud*** *, and then suddenly Ginny was spinning, faster – faster – her knees gave out from clutching the broomstick, and silently she fell. She heard a horrified scream that was probably Grace, and then she remembered no more, save for this –* ***Crunch*** *.*

"Is she asleep?"

"Ginny? Hello?"

The redhead pretended to be asleep. She wasn't in the mood for Grace and her peppy, hyper, perkiness. Nor was she in the mood to be delivered homework by Alden. She wanted to eat chocolate and sleep.

But they wouldn't go away!

Leave , Ginny silently willed. *Leave…*

"I think she's asleep."

"Ginny?"

"Grace, leave her."

"Giiiinny?"

"Grace! Let's just go."

She felt bad when they heaved sighs and departed the Hospital Wing, but snuggled down under her quilt and tried to find sleep.

"Miss Peregrine, you have a visitor," said Madam Royce, popping her head through the curtains.

"Iduncare," mumbled Ginny, pulling the covers over her face. "Life hurts."

"Good morning, sunshine," said a familiar - the last person that she expected to hear.

Hardly believing her ears, Ginny pulled her quilt down and turned her face to the voice. Riddle was standing a few feet away, his arms folded over his neatly-pressed green-and-silver tie, smirking.

Well, at least I can count on him not to be perky.

She blinked blearily at him. "Hello, Riddle," she mumbled.

"Pretending to be asleep to your friends?" Riddle raised an eyebrow, and *tsk* ed.

"I can't stand their perkiness," Ginny muttered, unsure why he was telling. "The only reason you're here is because you're an uncheerful sod and I know that I can count on you not to be perky."

Riddle ignored the insult. "Is that so?" A shallow smirk tweaked the corners of Riddle's thin lips. "I could jump up and down and squeal, if

you like – if perky is what would make you feel better."

"Riddle, far from making me feel better, you'd probably give me a heart attack," Ginny pointed out, rolling her hazel eyes.

"What did you break?" asked Riddle coolly, going off on a random new topic.

"How d'you I broke anything?" Ginny retorted defensively.

"I think that the only people who didn't hear that crunch were in Wales, Peregrine," Riddle commented dryly.

"You're in a good mood today," Ginny observed, her gaze flickering over his face.

"Peregrine, I don't have *good moods* ," Riddle corrected. "I have *mildly untroubled days* . And yes, today is one of those, I have noticed."

"Why?"

"I'm not sure. I like to assume that nearly blowing the skull out of Abraxas Malfoy has put me into a less pessimistic perspective," said Riddle. He shifted his weight from his left foot to his right, frowning at the ground, as though he wasn't quite sure of something.

"Why d'you always talk like an encyclopaedia?" Ginny inquired. She was being very rude, and she flushed pink, but held her head high.

As she had known, Riddle's gaze flared to her angrily. "I don't," he said, and his tone was colder than it had been a moment before.

Okay, okay, no need to get over-dramatic about your wounded ego.

"I believe that you're still avoiding my question," Riddle said, looking up at the ceiling, which, for someone as colossally tall as he was, wasn't very far to look up. "What broke?"

Ginny pursed her lips. "I… I just…" she said, with growing irritation towards the Head Boy. Finally, deciding to get it over with, she muttered, "my tailbone."

"Ah."

She fixed a glare on him. His face was masked and smooth as always, but Ginny knew what was going through his head, from the simple 'ah' spoken. "Hey, Riddle," she snapped. "Just because I've broken *my* arse in three places doesn't mean that I won't kick *yours* ."

"I do not doubt it for a second," replied Riddle smoothly. There was a pause of pregnant silence before he said, "it's mid-November now, and if we are to hold another disco-ball in December, then we need to start planning. I've scheduled a date for the next Prefect meeting, but, as you are a crucial member to the team-"

He sounded, Ginny thought, as though he sincerely resented that. The very idea made her smirk.

"- I suggest that you regain health in time to attend, as I don't think that Madam Royce would agree to a crowd of Prefects filling the Hospital Wing with bothersome noise," Riddle finished.

"Okay."

There was a feeling of slight disappointment lodging now in the redhead's chest, and her 'okay' was quieter and more subdued than she would have liked. Bewildered, she shoved the emotion away, and looked back up at Riddle.

Once again, the seventeen-year-old had that look of uncertainty flickering on his supposedly impassive features. He must have felt her eyes upon him, because his dark gaze flashed down to hers. For a few seconds he merely stood there, before clearing his throat.

Ginny suddenly recognized the hesitation. It was the same – identical – to when he had followed her from the Great Hall to apologize. It was his *oh dear I don't want to do this but I think I have to* face. She couldn't for the life of her work out what was wrong now.

"Riddle, what-"

"I realise," he interrupted, staring at the ceiling determinedly, the same as last time, "that you have probably forgotten, and that I should quite honestly leave it, but I think that I should say anyway-"

He was rambling.

Ginny was in a state of near shock.

Tom Marvolo Riddle, unfazed by anything, was firing out a nervous ramble at her.

"-but the thing is that I apologize deeply for calling you…" he paused, as though summoning courage, and then said curtly, " *Mudblood* ," he paused again, "and, as evidence of my solemnity, I brought you a gift – as an apology, and also because you're sick, and that it's only polite to bring things to sick people."

Confused, Ginny slowly dissected the ramble to try and understand.

He was sorry for calling her a Mudblood.

And he got her a *present* .

What in the name of Merlin has this world come to?

"You got me something?" echoed Ginny incredulously.

Riddle's eyes flashed down to her again, before darting away. "Yes," he said shortly, and gesturing ambiguously towards the bedside table.

Biting her lip in preparation for the pain that she knew was coming, she rolled onto her side towards Riddle and the table.

Ow, ow, ***owww*** *… ow.*

She stifled a gasp as she shifted into place, and then looked at the items atop the bedside table.

There was her wand, a vase of orange canna lilies, a box of Cauldron Cakes with *Get Better Soon – Grace and Alden XXX* on it, and a tub of Chocolate Frogs.

There's nothing there…

Then she looked at the canna lilies and saw a note pinned to them. She gasped again, audibly this time. "Riddle, you got me lilies?" she breathed, looking over at him.

Oddly, he didn't look pleased or embarrassed. He had an angry gleam in his eyes, and his lips were thinned. "No," he said darkly. He tore his eyes from the flowers and glared at the floor. "I think those are from Reeve."

"Oh." Ginny picked up her wand, and pointed it at the lilies. "*Incendio* ," she said, and promptly set the lovely orange flowers on fire. "Now, then."

She leaned over to replace her wand upon the table when she saw something hiding behind the box of Cauldron Cakes. She plucked it between finger and thumb and brought it close to her face.

It was a small, perfect flower. A yellow primrose, almost in full bloom, but with a few buds still curling out from their winter beds.

Ginny opened her mouth to say something, but nothing came from her lips.

"They only had Hufflepuff colours," said Riddle wryly. "If I had strived for true Slytherin spirit, you'd be holding a piece of grass. Take your

pick."

"Riddle, it's…" she whispered. She didn't have a word for what she thought. Harry had never given her flowers – instead, his killer did. It was too bizarre to even try and comprehend. And, also too beautiful, though the flower was tiny, inexpensive, and probably just taken from the Greenhouses.

She set it delicately to her nose and inhaled a sharp, sweet smell that could be found nowhere but fresh primroses. So beautiful. So lovely. Her eyes were drifting closed. So lovely. So tired.

" *Peregrine, ae oo…"*

The rest of Riddle's sentence blurred, and she fell quietly asleep with her nose to the little yellow flower. And she found an odd sensation – the pang of odd disappointment was gone, and replaced by a bloated feeling like she ruled the world.

A/N: Sorry, it's another short one. Nice and fluffy. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Please review, it makes my day.

---

storm-brain: Nah, she isn't dead. Lol, you don't ask if she's dead that often. Only twice.

Audrhole: No, Tom doesn't play Quidditch. It's like in the film Mean Girls, where everyone is labeled: the people who play Quidditch are generally really popular, and Tom's basically a geek. Aw. **Pop-pop-banas hugs fictional Tom. Tom: Get off.** Lol, sorry that was really random. Thanks!

BSDSanta2001: Sadly not. I wasn't in Paris, I was in the far south of France, away from civilization, where there are more cows than there are hot French guys. –pout- No fun. Ooh, thank you, that is a big compliment.

XxRandomHeartxX: Thank you! Oh, isn't procrastination just *so* much fun? –sigh- Have fun with your homework. :D

AppleC0re: She's not hurt that badly, don't worry. Yay! Cookie! –grabs cookie- Nyum nyum. –munch- Thank you!

Saene: Uncanon rocks. –rock on hand gesture in the air- Yeah, I can just imagine Ginny stammering to her team-mates, "Well, see, I'm from the future, and I was a Gryffindor, so I *kind of* got confused." Lol! Thanks.

Intricacy: I hope that this fluffy chapter made up for the short previous one.

Leah: Thanks!

KayRose: Ouch. I've been stung by a jelly-fish before. I've been injured by anything possible to injure myself on. Even a spoon. It is possible, trust me. Imps that get squashed? Interesting anamoly. Taste of Chaos? Is that a play? I don't know, sorry. But I'm going to see Les Miserables for my birthday. Yay! Thank you!

Tabasco03: Jack and Claude are funny, I love them. Thanks.

o00Bubbles00o: Thank you! And I just have to say HAHA because 'uber' isn't even English. It's German. But I don't like German (the language. Not the people. The people are cool), no offence to German people. Or you, if you're German. It just annoys me. It's hard to speak.

Creative-writing-girl13: Don't worry, she's fine. She just broke her butt! Lol!

kyraThePoop: Aw. Feel better soon. I'm glad you liked it, writing Quidditch is quite hard. Oh, I lived in China for five years, so I learnt it there. It is actually quite easy to speak – easier than French or German. Writing is hard, though. I don't know what film that quote's from, *sorry* . I don't watch many films, though I am planning to see

The Elephant Man and Forrest Gump soon…they sound good. Sorry, I'm rambling. *No* , Tom didn't save her. I didn't really decide if he was watching the Quidditch or not. Thank you!

P is for Predicted

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Wow, I got **so** many reviews! Twenty-one! **INCREDIBLE** ! Anyway, here's the next chapter, it's quite short but it's important. Sadly, no Tom in this one.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Twenty-Nine: P is for Predicted

" *Riddle, it's…" she whispered. She didn't have a word for what she thought. Harry had never given her flowers – instead, his killer did. It was too bizarre to even try and comprehend. And, also too beautiful, though the flower was tiny, inexpensive, and probably just taken from the Greenhouses.*

The rest of Riddle's sentence blurred, and she fell quietly asleep with her nose to the little yellow flower. And she found an odd sensation – the pang of odd disappointment was gone, and replaced by a bloated feeling like she ruled the world.

The late-November blew in sharply through the Astronomy Tower windows, ruffling scarlet tresses and caressing a shiver up her spine. Sitting with her back against the wall, her schoolbag discarded near the door, her knees tucked up against her chest and her arms loosely encircling them.

It was cold, but she didn't wear a scarf or her winter robe. Her cheeks were ruddy from the chill, as all six of the broad windows on the walls of the octagonal tower were flung wide open. The window

through which she stared depicted a clear, crisp sky, dotted with fluffy clouds, and sprinkled with a powder snow, come early.

Ginny had much to think about; impossible to have time to contemplate such things, however, what with lessons, Quidditch practice, and homework. Also, all of her free time was taken up by Grace's perkiness or joining in on Alden's shy, reluctant studying, to keep up the image that she actually did fancy him.

Now, she had evaded her companions, leaving quickly after Charms with the amiable, stuttering Professor Vander, and disappeared, heading somewhere that she could wallow deeply in her musings.

Svengali.

Myrtle's 'murder', and who had done it.

The Christmas Ball.

And, lastly, Riddle's primrose, sitting in a position of importance upon her desk, in a polka-dotted vase – a topic that had been invading her mind strangely all week since it had been given to her.

As her mind strayed back to the flower, the Astronomy Tower door flew open with a bang and two giggling people burst into, tangled in each other's arms. Ginny looked sideways, and saw Scott and a girl – not even Isabella Mackenzie. A willowy blonde girl with a platinum smile and a swirling gypsy skirt, whom she knew vaguely from Arithmancy class as a Ravenclaw named Ishbel. Neither noticed the redhead.

"Hello," she said.

Startled, the two kissing sixth-years jumped, and whipped around to stare at her. A guilty red flushed across Scott's handsome features; Ishbel huffed.

"Oh." Scott scratched the back of his head. "Hi. Cat. Hey."

"Hey," said Ginny coolly, fixing a beady stare upon him.

"Um. I know that… that you're seeing someone else. And so am I!" he gestured feebly between him and Ishbel, who smirked, "but, um. Technically, cat, we never ended it, so…"

"You're two-timing me?" Ishbel shrieked in her thick, Russian accent.

"No, doll, no," Scott shushed her. He then turned back to Ginny. "Er. Cat – it's over," he declared, puffing out his chest, as if to say, *and that's final* !

Like I'd want him anyway.

"It never begun," Ginny replied softly, before casting her eyes down, from the window, and smoothing out her skirt, for want of something to break the heavy stillness.

Scott frowned.

Ishbel leaned towards him, blonde hair spilling like water over her slender shoulders. "Scottie," she hissed, sparing a narrow-eyed glance at the redhead, "can we go? She's such a freak – I don't feel comfortable here."

"Yeah," Scott agreed.

Ginny was unsure if he was agreeing to leaving, to not feeling comfortable… or to her being a freak. Probably the latter. She fumed silently.

"Well, I guess I'll see you around, cat," Scott proposed. "The next Quidditch match, eh?"

Ishbel sneered. " *If* she can manage to stay on her broom," she said venomously. She turned to Scott, and draped herself elegantly over his thigh. "Come on, let's leave," she simpered.

They made as if to depart from the Astronomy Tower, but Ginny quickly stood.

"No, it's okay," she said. "I was just going." She could muse her thoughts somewhere else – the library, perhaps. She picked up her schoolbag and slung it casually over her shoulder. Her ex-boyfriend and his most recent tart were already snogging by the time she reached the door.

"By the way," she said, turning halfway, one hand on the door-frame. Scott and Ishbel looked at her; Scott slightly irritated, and Ishbel furious, at being interrupted, "if you wanted a cat… you could have gone to the pet shop." She shrugged. "After all, it's where you got your latest catch." She looked pointedly at Ishbel, before smiling sweetly, and slipping through the door.

"And so, and so, and so, *aim* for the bowls, don't miss, *aim* , please, yes? Remember the wand movement, a sharp jab, yes, a jab, *no* , no, no, Miss Hartwin, not a swoosh, yes?" Professor Vander scanned the classroom. "Very well, yes, try it, go on, try it."

Ginny stared at the tip of her wand. Did Professor Vander *really* expect water to come out? She glanced sideways – seemingly so, as Alden was now jabbing his wand sharply, muttering under his breath, and beaming when clear liquid trickled down into the bowl. She looked to the other side, and saw that Grace had no success either.

The brunette was fiercely jabbing the air, snapping, " *Aguamenti* ", and the only thing that was happening was her wand firing an unpleasant green sludge backwards into her face.

Stifling laughter, Ginny turned back to her own bowl. She pointed her wand, stabbed it forwards swiftly and cried, " *AGUAMENTI* !"

A shriek ran out from everyone in the class, following by hilarious laughter, as Ginny scrambled over her desk to retrieve her wand,

spinning at high-speed on the floor, and spurting ice-cold water in all directions.

"Sorry, Professor," Ginny shouted over the roaring of water, gripping her slippery wand and desperately trying to make it stop.

*How the **hell** do you turn this thing off?*

"Finite incantatem!" she yelled at it, and the flow was abruptly cut off. The wand coughed up one last jet of water, before stilling in Ginny's wet hand.

Hair hanging in sodden dark strands around her drenched face, Ginny tried not to burst out laughing. Luckily, the rest of her class did it for her. "Sorry, Professor," she said humbly, her cheeks heating up and a grin threatening to break out on her face.

Professor Vander was also laughing very hard. "Yes, yes, well, you can clean this up, hm, yes," he said briskly through his giggling, gesturing at the water-saturated floor with one fat hand.

"Yes, sir," said Ginny, and quickly set to work, waving her wand over the water and making it disappear. Then she returned to her seat, grinning sheepishly at Grace and Alden.

Right. Let's try that again, shall we?

Ginny attempted the charm again – this time, it sprayed out as widely as possible, as if someone had put their thumb over the end of a Muggle hosepipe. And, in the sparkling liquid, dancing through the air and glittering a thousand colours as it caught the light… she saw something.

She saw herself.

Stamping her foot, shouting, near the verge of tears.

Blood spreading out in a pool, gathering at her feet.

A dress the colour of the darkest wine.

Running out into the rain, standing barefoot at the top of the stairs, staring out into the darkness and screaming.

Riddle, smirking directly at her, eyes sparkling with something that she'd never seen before.

A blinding blue light.

Running, as fast as she could, throwing her arms around someone's neck, and kissing them as hard as she could.

She jerked back into reality so hard that she toppled backwards and fell out of her chair. Several boys in the back of the classroom laughed, but Ginny was too shaken to care.

The redhead lifted her hands and looked at them; trembling. With good reason, too – she had predicted, *seen* her own future. It involved blood and death, something that she never wanted to deal with again.

But was terrified her more was the kiss. It wasn't a *hello how are you* kiss, or even a *goodbye see you later* kiss, or a *just as friends* kiss. It was an all-out kiss.

She was going to start to feel for someone, and *truly* feel for them. And then she'd be torn into pieces again when it couldn't work out, or – worse – when she had to go home, back to the twenty-first century.

And *that* was why she was shaking.

She was going to fall in love.

A/N: Sorry that it's short and that it hasn't got any Tom in it. Three guesses who Ginny'll fall in love with? –COUGH- Please review, I love you really.

BDSanta2001: Ouch. I sprained my wrist and I've fractured my toe three times… but never my tailbone. I just thought it would be funny. Thank you for the review. Pan's Labyrinth? No, I haven't seen it. It's supposed to be good, though. Is it?

Eternal Passion: Yeah, he's so sweet in a weird kind of way. Thanks!

kyraThePoop: Thanks! Er, interesting dream! Lol! I love Sweeney Todd, it's brilliant. The time-travel concept *is* kind of confusing, but it's supposed to be. Ginny doesn't fully understand it, so neither do you, really. Sorry. It'll make sense later. Half-baked? I'll try to find it. Isn't Tom just lovely?

AppleC0re: Yeah, the tailbone thing was a fantastic stroke of inspiration. We all love Tom. Thanks!

Pixar: I'm glad everyone liked that, I loved it too. I wasn't sure if it would work. Yeah, your description of Tom picking the flower is just about spot-on, lmao! The blade of grass thing will be coming back into play soon, with another sweet chapter. Look ooooutttt. Haha! Ginny did indeed break her pretty little bottom. Not that I've got a thing for Ginny's ass. -shifty eyes-

audrhole: I just made an agreement with myself that I was going to post a chapter per day. Anyway, I'm WAYYY ahead of you guys, so I just post what I've already written. She does eventually start to refer to him as Tom, which of course Grace picks up on and teases her about. Thank you!

storm-brain: -gasp- What is with your burning hate of Tom? –hugs him defensively- There, there, ignore the mean reviewer. Lol, just kidding.

chimis: Yup! Proud Chinese-speaker! Really? Aw, I feel so loved. I missed you too.

Intricacy: And thus, the remedy has been delivered. Bwahaha. It depends how long you take to do your homework. If this was on *my* homework-scheme, then it'd be about right. I despise school-work. (Yes! I am still at school! CHILD PRODIGY, I TELL YOU! MAHAHA!)… Random. Thank you!

creative-writing-girl13: Er, he was just saying something like "Are you okay" because she sort of zoned out. But then she fell asleep. Yay!

Josephine Sawyer: Yeah, I wasn't too sure about the Malfoy-Ginny scene either in the Entrance Hall. But I needed to show Tom sort of going all Voldemort-y in order to save her. Cheesy, yes, but it's fun. I can slow down the updates, if you want, but we'd probably *both* get attacked by an angry mob of other reviewers with pitchforks and torches. –shiver- Tom was kind of flirting with her, except that he doesn't really know how… he doesn't even realize he's doing it… he just does it… because he's awkward with her because –whispers- *he's starting to have feelings for her.* But I didn't tell you that.

ricekrispies: Slytherin did indeed win the match, just shortly after she was blasted to Kingdom come. Technically, he didn't call *her* a Mudblood, but he was just being mean about all Mudbloods. And the Mudblood comment was… here: *"Yes, Peregrine – but, unfortunately, this isn't the film set of The Littlest Elf," said Riddle darkly. "This is reality, and, here, if you're not pureblood, then reality is absolute shit. Life is hell when you have to be a Slytherin living with the fact that you're related to* ***one of those filthy Mudbloods*** *. "Then, gaze icy and voice arctic, Ginny said to Riddle, "and by the way, Riddle – don't give me that crap about how hard life is not being pureblood… I'm Muggleborn. I am, so quote: 'one of those filthy Mudbloods'."* Does that make it clearer for you? Thank you so much for the review, it makes my day.

Saene: That line was good, wasn't it? I loved it. I think I'm a sort of mix between Tommy-boy, Hermione, Luna and Ginny. Sarcastic and anti-social, a smart know-it-all and not the prettiest of girls, totally dippy, and quite scarily fierce. I'm very good at lying as well, except

that I feel awful about doing it, and I end up shrieking, " *I LIE, I LIE* !" Well. Metaphorically, of course.

SiRiUsLyInLuV31: Unfortunately, quite a lot of chapters. This is a *long* fic. My longest. I just don't do short fics, sorry. What would you say if I told you they kissed in Chapter 46? –cringe- Sorrreeee.

XxRandomHeartxX: Don't we all just want to be in Ginny's position? It's perfect. I've actually been in love – not the stupid, *omg he's hot I'm in love I want to marry him oh look his friend is even hotter I'm in love* that my cousin indulges in… - properly… and if my life was a fic, then the author chose angst. –pout- Anyway. All's said and done, so I'm just praying that said author decides to give me a fairytale ending. I thought that the flower thing was *so* sweet, too, I was almost crying at the sugariness of it all. Thanks for the review.

Exhexoex: Thank you so much!

That was a lot of review-replying. PHEW.

P is for Privacy Intruded Upon

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Tom's in this chapter! YAY! Sorry that this is late; I spend so much time writing on my laptop that I got it confiscated again… meh. Anyway. Quite a long chapter. Enjoy!!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty: P is for Privacy Intruded Upon

The redhead lifted her hands and looked at them; trembling. With good reason, too – she had seen her own future. She was going to start to feel for someone, and truly feel for them. And then she'd be torn into pieces again when it couldn't work out, or – worse – when she had to go home, back to the twenty-first century.

*And **that** was why she was shaking. She was going to fall in love.*

" *Condelesam* ," Ginny told Robin the Rich, not even giving him time to chastise her for being impolite or un-ladylike. Still, the portly gentleman opened his mouth to be nosy, but she interrupted, "Just let me in, okay?"

With a huff, and a mutter of something obviously insulting and degrading, Robin the Rich swung forwards to admit her.

"Thank you," she simpered at him, and stepped into the Head common room, shifting the sheaf of parchment in her arms that contained the plans for the Christmas Ball. "Hey," she called, smiling brightly. "I'm *back* !"

The other Prefects grunted or mumbled their greetings; Scott avoided her eye totally and said nothing; and Eleanor rushed over to welcome her.

"Are you feeling better, Ginny? That was a nasty fall," she worried, her motherly side coming out as ever.

"It's all been taken care of," Ginny replied. "Don't worry."

"Did you break anything?" Eleanor fussed.

Ginny looked towards the sofas where the Prefects were sat. In his usual seat of superiority was Riddle, who wasn't turned to face her at all, but she could see his gaze focused on her out of the corner of his eyes, and she could see the smirk lifting the corners of his lips.

"No," she replied, with a reassuring smile, and sidestepped the Head Girl neatly. As she made her way to a vacant seat, her hazel eyes flashed a warning look to Riddle, whose dark eyes were glittering with amusement, one eyebrow slightly raised and the smirk still present.

The most common of Slytherin expressions , Ginny thought, shaking her head inwardly.

She dropped her parchment untidily on the coffee table in the centre of the semi-square of sofas, and sank into a seat opposite Antonia Durrell and Jack Swithin, beside Mia Brown.

Eleanor came and sat next to Riddle, and smiled around at everyone. "Now, then," she said, cheerfully, "I've had a great idea!" She looked at each person in turn, as if to say *well, aren't you going to try and guess what it is?* When she found that no-one was going to, she, peppy as ever, chirped, "we're going to hold the Prefect meeting in Hogsmeade!"

Everyone cheered – all but one. Riddle said, " *What* ?"

The blonde Head Girl turned to him. "Well, I thought, because it's coming up to Christmas, and up to the Christmas Ball, we should have a more festive Prefect meeting-"

"Isn't this festive *enough* for you?" said Riddle, a note of incredulity in his voice. The room *did* ,admittedly, look as though it had been hit by a rogue bomb from the Festive Fairy. Baubles, tinsel, and little gold stars were *everywhere* .

"-and also, to celebrate the Slytherin-Hufflepuff match," Eleanor continued, ignoring Riddle's input to the conversation, "and to celebrate Ginny coming out of the Hospital Wing in one piece."

"She doesn't care," Riddle said. He looked pointedly at the redhead, his dark eyes gleaming. "Do you?"

"Actually, I think it would be quite fun."

If looks could kill, Ginny would have been twelve feet under. However, after four months with Riddle, she was quite unbothered by it.

"Yay!" Eleanor clapped her hands. "Okay, I'll meet you guys out by the carriages in…" she looked at the clock- "ten minutes? Get your coats and things!" she scurried up to her bedroom, and the Prefects ran; not only anticipating and excited, but sensing the air in the Head common room, and perfectly aware that if they remained behind, they'd be killed.

Riddle stood, and glared down at Ginny. "Thank you," he snapped. "You could have saved me an afternoon of Eleanor's endless pestering, but I suppose that's beneath you. The entire Christmas Ball will be destroyed within minutes once she gets her cheerful little hands on it." He turned his back on her and stormed up the stairs that lead towards his bedroom.

"What? Why?" asked Ginny, bewildered.

"Because I'm not going!" Riddle snarled, and then there was a snap of a door closing.

Selfish, arrogant…

"Why not?" Ginny bellowed, hurrying to the bottom of the stairs. She was determined to make him go, for reasons she wasn't quite sure of. "Riddle?" She stared at the wooden door at the top of the stairs, heart pounding in her chest, and then ran up them.

Oh Merlin, intrusion of privacy, he's going to ***kill*** *me and* ***eat*** *me, ohh Merlin…*

"Riddle?" she called, knocking timidly on the large wooden door. She supposed that it had to be large, to allow someone as massive as Riddle to pass through it comfortably. "Riddle?" she knocked harder. "Riddle!" she kicked it, and pounded it with her fist. " *Answe* r, goddamnit!"

"I'll thank you not to break my door down," said an absolutely glacial voice from inside.

"Well, then *answer* !" Ginny retorted angrily. "Riddle, please come!" she shouted. "Please, you need to have some fun."

There was a silence, and Ginny levelled her shoulder with the wooden door, preparing to barge it open. Then suddenly it opened, and she stumbled.

She caught a glimpse of dark green furnishings before Riddle blocked her view, glaring at her. "Fun?" he echoed angrily. " *Fun* ? Peregrine, it isn't a matter of me needing… ' *fun* '. I – can – not – *go* . In case it has escaped you, I have no guardian to sign the stupid Hogsmeade form for me!"

"Neither have I!" Ginny shouted, quickly wedging her foot next to the doorframe as Riddle tried to slam the entrance to his bedroom close. The door ricocheted painfully off it, and the Head Boy wrenched it

back open to stare at her. "Neither have I," she repeated, "and you know that, so don't try to play the woe-is-me-I-have-no-parents line."

For several seconds, Riddle stared at her, eyes narrowed, scrutinizing her as if trying to work out if she was serious. Then, finally, he said coldly, " *Fine* ."

"What?" Ginny frowned.

"I'll go." Riddle's tone was icy. "You owe me," he snapped, in addition, and then did he slam the door.

Her heart beating a violent tattoo against her ribcage, breathing hard, Ginny turned away from the door and made her way down the stairs. At the bottom, she leant one hand on the banister and stopped to catch her breath. Then a triumphant grin broke out on her face, and with a squeal, she grabbed her parchment plans from the coffee table and skipped merrily away to fetch her things.

Snow decorated Ginny's hair lightly, contrasting brightly, white against scarlet. She twirled in a circle – green scarf, purple skirt and vibrant hair fanning out spectacularly. Her feet crunched the ice underfoot, and she grinned at Eleanor, caught up in the awe and magic of the Winter Wonderland that the Hogwarts grounds had become.

Spinning again, the redhead caught sight of the person at the back of the group, lingering behind everyone else. The tall young man was holding his robes tight around him against the cold.

Ginny spied something poking up through the thick snow, and, with a burst of inspiration, snatched it up and hurried over to Riddle.

"Hey!" she beamed, bouncing on the balls of her feet in front of him.

The Head Boy narrowed his eyes at her. He was obviously still extremely irritated about coming.

"You know how you said that I owed you?" Ginny asked.

"Yes," Riddle said, frowning, not seeing where she was going.

"Well…" she drew the word out like bubblegum, grinning broadly. She twitched the object she had taken behind her back. "You got me a flower… so I got you one!"

It was taking everything in her not to burst out laughing. She could barely contain her glee and mirth.

Riddle's brow furrowed in the deepest of frowns. "You got me a flower?" he said disbelievingly.

"Yep!" she chirped. She brandished the item from behind her back and put it in his hand, folding his long fingers over it.

The seventeen-year-old, still frowning, uncurled his cold fingers and his dark eyes were met with…

A blade of grass.

" *Slytherin colours* !" Ginny hooted, and skipped away, laughing her head off. A few metres away, where she knew that she was safe from his death-glares, she turned and grinned at him. "Well?"

Riddle looked up from the grass to her face. Strangely, he didn't look disgusted or angry. A bemused expression flickered in his eyes, and one corner of his mouth twisted in a half-smile.

It was the first time that Ginny had ever seen him ever come close to a smile – or even anything that wasn't totally frosty and evil. The hard, masked lines of his face almost softened with it, and the change was astonishing. Just as there had been the transition from glacial Head Boy to Lord Voldemort, there was this new transition – from glacial Head Boy to… well. An actual *human being* .

"Very funny," he said wryly.

Ginny was basking in happy victory. She had not only persuaded Riddle to come to Hogsmeade, but she had made him *smile* .

Almost.

"Come on, then," she said brightly, hopping into the last remaining carriage, occupied by only Robert Harris. "Hey," she said to the Gryffindor.

Robert ignored her, choosing to stare out of the window.

"Someone's in a bad mood," Ginny stage-whispered to Riddle when he got in, nodding towards Robert.

Riddle raised an eyebrow. "Have you forgotten who you're talking to?"

"Yeah – who are you?" Ginny demanded.

"Tom," said Riddle simply. "Tom Riddle."

She didn't know if he was merely responding to the question, or trying to make a point. Either way, she grinned at him.

"Oh, please can we just quickly go into Honeydukes?" begged Ginny, pleading puppy-dog eyes at Eleanor and Riddle.

"Oh, I don't see why not…" said Eleanor, looking over at her companion Head, who was frowning a definite *no* . "Yeah, sure."

"Yeah!" Ginny cheered. She immediately turned to Riddle.

"No," he said, before she could even open her mouth.

"You're coming," she told him.

"Did you not hear me?" Riddle said. "No."

"Am I going to have to drag you there?" asked Ginny, hands on her hips, eyebrows raised.

"Is there any answer I can give that will result in you leaving me alone?" Riddle asked bemusedly.

"I don't think so," laughed Eleanor. "Have fun."

Riddle only had time to send a death-glare at the blonde before Ginny grabbed his wrist and pulled him towards Honeydukes.

The bell dinged noisily as they entered, and a powerful smell of chocolate and sweets wafted towards them. Two young children were scrabbling with each other for a certain type of new sweet, and they looked up at the intruders for only a second before continuing their fight.

"What are these?" Riddle's voice floated into her head, sounding slightly disgusted.

Tearing her gaze from the squabbling children, Ginny turned to Riddle. He was pointing at several brown, wiggling lumps in a tray.

"Oh. Cockroach Clusters," Ginny explained. "You don't want those," Seeing him point to a box of red lollipops and open his mouth to speak, she cut in, " *or* those. They're Blood Pops. For vampires." She scanned the shelves. "You want… these!" she crowed, standing on tiptoe to take a box of Whistling Wizards.

"How do you know what I want?" asked Riddle, taking one of the boxes that she indicated (much to Ginny's chagrin, he barely had to reach up) and observing it. "For all you know, I could be a vampire, and want Blood Pops."

"Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do," she joked, looking around for some Sugar Quills.

The Head Boy stayed silent and didn't move. He was staring at her.

"What?" she asked, feeling self-consious. She ran over her previous words.

Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do.

Riddle, my friend.

My friend.

Panic and worry ebbed through her. Was Riddle really her friend? Did she really count him as one? Worse still, the look on his face read one thing only – he was thinking the same.

He's never had a friend before , Ginny suddenly realised.

*I'm the first **ever** friend of Tom Marvolo Riddle.*

*And, shortly after, I have to **kill** him.*

How does that help?!

"Nothing," Riddle finally replied, looking away sharply. He turned, and started to browse through the chocolate selection. And, Ginny worried to see, a faint pink tinge smudged on his pale cheeks.

Certain that she was blushing too, Ginny continued to gather as many sweets as possible, and then headed to the counter. She paid, flashed a grateful grin at the women now counting her money, and then walked towards the door, calling, "Riddle? Come on."

However, he didn't arrive. He was at the counter as well.

Curious, Ginny waited for him to finish his purchase, and then they left the shop. "What did you buy?" she asked the instant that they left the shop.

"This." Riddle said, and lifted up a small, sugary-looking snake.

Ginny burst out laughing. "Why did you buy *that* ?"

Riddle frowned at her. "It looked interesting. Why – what's wrong with it?"

"Oh, nothing," Ginny lied. "I dare you to eat it."

Dark eyes narrowed at her suspiciously. "Why is it a dare?" he asked warily.

"Well, it isn't. I didn't mean it as a dare," Ginny said quickly, mentally kicking herself. She knew what the snake did, and Riddle didn't – she couldn't wait to see what happened when he ate it. "Go on. Try it."

"I'll eat it later. What have you got?" Riddle inquired.

Delighted to know something that he didn't, Ginny gave him Bertie Botts, first giving him a nice one and then deliberately giving him a really unpleasant one.

"What the devil is *that* flavoured of?" Riddle exclaimed, looking repulsed.

Ginny peered at the chart on the back of the small tub, as though she didn't already know. "Hm," she said, "it says here that you just ate a *soap* flavoured Bean."

Strangely , Riddle didn't allow her to give him any more sweets. He chose them one at a time, asked what they were, and then tried it.

"So what, may I ask, is this delightful little food item?" said Riddle dubiously, squinting at a Whistling Wizard, held between finger and thumb.

"A Whistling Wizard," Ginny prompted. "Eat, eat, eat," she chanted, smiling.

Riddle put the little, round, red tablet in his mouth, and swallowed. Right away, there was a low buzzing noise, and then a ridiculously

loud whistle, and a large amount of curly steam, issued from Riddle's ears, sending meticulously-combed wavy hair flying sideways.

Ginny burst into laughter at the sight of Riddle's alarmed and slightly bewildered expression, almost finding tears in her eyes. "Your face!" she giggled.

"Yes, well," said a rather affronted Riddle, straightening his robes. "I presumed, from the name, that it would make me whistle, but I also presumed that said whistling would come from my *mouth* ."

"What gave you *that* impression?" Ginny chuckled. She peered into the paper Honeydukes sweet bag; empty. "That's my sweets gone," she said cheerily. "Now, don't you have that snake?"

Riddle nodded, and took the tiny serpent from his pocket. Still chary of Ginny's previous reaction, Riddle glanced at her one more time before breaking off the tail of the snake and apprehensively putting it in his mouth.

There was a moment when nothing happened.

Three…

Two…

One…

Riddle, being an impassive, show-no-feelings kind of person, didn't gasp audibly, or shriek, or swear; but Ginny knew that the effect had taken place, as he quietly sucked in his breath and croaked, "Water."

"What was that?" Ginny teased, cupping a hand around her ear, though she had heard perfectly.

"I need… water… *now* , damnit," he rasped, glaring at her.

Chortling gleefully, Ginny lead him through Hogsmeade towards The Three Broomsticks – her skipping, laughing her head off, and Riddle

a few steps behind, one hand clutching his throat, and the other clinging to his stomach.

"It's closed," Ginny tutted, after a few knocks on the door. "It's not a Hogwarts' outing today; they aren't expecting anyone."

"I… don't… *care* ," Riddle snapped, through small gasps.

The redhead took him further, looking for The Hog's Head.

"Ginny!" Eleanor called across the street. "What did you *do* to him?"

" *I* didn't do anything!" Ginny shouted back. "He bought a Sizzling Serpent! Poor, naïve little Riddle!"

Eleanor, and the Prefects gathered around her, all laughed uproariously, calling mocking names and jeering as Ginny ushered Riddle into the abandoned, but unlocked pub.

"I take it you won't be wanting a Firewhiskey?" asked Ginny teasingly as she hurried behind the bar and poured Riddle a glass of water. The dark-haired male did not reply, but he fired her a glare to chill the dead, and sank into the nearest chair. She crossed to him and handed him the glass.

Riddle downed it in one, gasped as the liquid struck his flaming throat, squeezed his eyes closed, and then buried his face in his hands. From that position he didn't move, and after a few minutes of total stillness, Ginny began to worry if he had actually died.

"Er," she said nervously. "Riddle, are you okay?"

"How could you say that?" he snarled, standing so suddenly that Ginny stumbled backwards. "How the *hell* could you just *stand* there and say that?"

Confused, Ginny exclaimed, "I only asked if you were alright!"

"Not *that* ," he spat, turning away and raking one long-fingered hand roughly backwards through his hair. "You said that… you said that I was your – and then you *humiliated* me. I didn't want to come, but I came because you asked me to – and then you… you *humiliated* me."

Then, with a sinking heart, Ginny understood.

Riddle, despite what he showed other people, was socially insecure. He didn't like being in large crowds of people and even more so detested being involved with large crowds of people. He had reluctantly agreed to take part in exactly that – being involved with a group of other people. He'd been given his first ever friend, and then had her do one of the most horrible things he could imagine; publicly embarrassed him.

And it killed her on the inside.

Anger, she could deal with. Snide sarcasm, hell yeah. Happiness, she'd be overjoyed. But mortified sorrow was something that Riddle just didn't *do* . It was wrong on so many levels.

"Riddle, I-"

"Do you have any bloody *idea* what you've done?" Riddle snarled.

"No," she replied honestly in a very small voice. "I – I'm sorry, Riddle."

"After I *reluctantly* , *warily* trusted you, you…" Riddle couldn't even put words to what he wanted to say.

"I-"

" *You have no* ***idea*** *, do you* ?"

He roared. He actually shouted. Not a sneer, not a snarl, not an icy and sarcastic wryness.

"Stop it!" Ginny cried. "For God's sake, Riddle, *stop it* !" she stamped her foot, trying frantically to get him to calm down.

Okay, okay, don't panic, freaky shouting Riddle, don't panic –

And, finally, he did. However, it wasn't so that he could embrace her and apologize. It was to send the most evil, the most terrifying of stares at her. Ginny knew that the scary yelling Riddle was gone – but so was the Riddle she had come close to befriending.

There was no trace now of the lifting smile on his face. It was a storm on human features, and it was directed at the redhead.

With a bang, the others started to come in loudly.

Ginny knew that she had no chance of getting him back if there were other people around. "Please," she whispered, " *Tom* ."

His name was out of her mouth before she could think about it, and the Head Boy wheeled around to face her. His eyes were suddenly no longer bottomless, and swirling with raw emotion; his mask of *I don't give a damn* expression had fallen, just for a second. He stared at her for barely a second, before wrenching his gaze away, and turning his back on her, covering any breach in his guarded feelings as if it had never happened.

You almost had him. And then you lost him.

Eleanor pulled off her coat and started to chat animatedly to Ginny, but the redhead wasn't paying attention. She had just realised what had happened. What she had done.

Stamping her foot, shouting, near the verge of tears.

The first of the many events she had seen coming, in the water. And if it was true, then the next was soon approaching. And the next…

Death .

A/N: DUN-DUN-DUNN! AAH! Oh no. Poor Ginny. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . I love you all, please review…

Saene: Same. Because if you get caught, it's kind of like "omg. 13!+ch." Lol. Aw. And that makes *me* smile.

AppleC0re: Three answers: 1. Yes. 2. No. And 3. Maybe! Hahaha.

BDSanta2001: Scary, isn't it? Knowing that someone's going to die, but you don't know who, and there's no way of saving them? –shiver- I'd hate it. Er. Smoochy time is a *leetle* wait away. Understatement. Hehe.

creative-writing-girl13: I can't answer that. Might be Tommy-boy, might not be. Who knows. Well, I do. But shhhh.

audrhole: Yeah, some chapters are pretty much fillers from one plot point to another. There was plenty of Tom in this chapter, I hope you liked it.

Josephine Sawyer: Thanks! It's nice to hear what I did well, because then I can think of adding some more of that later. You'll find out about the Svengali thing in good time. Er. Well, Scott's a bit of both. I wanted her to get feelings for someone *else* , because then she could be kissing him and Tom would be watching sadly, and she'd be thinking: *What's **his** problem?* Hehe. And also because its fun to make fictional characters get their butts kicked. BWAHAHA.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Don't worry, that's not the end. Sorry that it's kind of long.

ShhImNotMVP: Yay! A new reader. I like your pen-name. Interesting. Thank you so much!

storm-brain: Well, this fic is pretty much going to shatter your opinion. No offence. Thanks!

muggle wishing for magic: Thank you!

XxRandomHeartxX: Thanks! I know! I wish I could be more like her. She's what I wish I was. Someone would be like "oh you're weird" and I'd just be silent… silent… silent… silent… silent… silent… "YEAH WELL YOU SUCK!" And then they just laugh and walk away. For me, it's easier just to slap the person upside the head. All of my friends deliberately poke me just to see how pissed I get. Gr. Tom was here, I hope you liked his niceness and then his angstiness. Ooh, Angst!Tom. Don't we just love him?

KayRose: Yeah. Spoons are dangerous things. Thank you, I hope this long chappie made up for those short ones…

Crazedreader: Okay, it's good that you like long fics. Because this is going to be HELL long. I LOVE HermionexSnape. It's so cool. Anywho. Thanks!

Ow, I'm in pain… I had try-outs for my school athletics team and I twisted my ankle. Meh. –pout-. Ouchie.

P is for Pulling Doors, Patronuses and P

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: More Tom here! This chapter is absolutely *hilarious* (well, I thought so). You'll see why. Enjoy… or die.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-One: P is for Pulling Doors, Patronuses and Pity

His name was out of her mouth before she could think about it, and the Head Boy wheeled around to face her. His eyes were suddenly no longer bottomless, and swirling with raw emotion; his mask of ***I don't give a damn*** *expression had fallen, just for a second. He stared at her for barely a second, before wrenching his gaze away, and turning his back on her, covering any breach in his guarded feelings as if it had never happened.*

The first of the many events she had seen coming, in the water. And if it was true, then the next was soon approaching. And the next… ***Death*** *.*

"How are you, Riddle?" sneered Jack Swithin, pulling off his gloves. "Does your throat feel alright?" he and Scott snickered, walking to the table where Eleanor was setting out.

"Say, anyone up for some sweets?" said Olive Hornby sweetly; she and Antonia Durrell burst into loud laughter.

Scott laughed too, but then his eyes turned to Ginny; where she was standing, silently, tears still glowing at the corners of her eyes.

"Hey, are you okay?" Scott inquired, coming over to her. "You don't look so hot."

"Yeah, I'm fine," said Ginny, tugging the end of her scarf. "What do you care, anyway?"

"Doll, you're my ex. I have to protect you," Scott smiled.

"Protect me from *what* ?" Ginny said heatedly. "Scott, the only thing that I'd *ever* require protection from is *you* !"

"And Malfoy," Scott added, unhelpfully.

"Malfoy isn't here right now, so I think I'll be fine," said Ginny coldly, taking her frustration at Riddle out on him. With a final, defiant glare, she headed over to the table where Eleanor was now spreading out the Christmas Ball plans and sank into the chair opposite the Head Girl.

"Right, have you got your plans, Ginny?" the pretty blonde inquired, shuffling through the parchment she held.

"Yeah, just in here," Ginny replied, fishing them out of her bag and placing them in the center of the round, and slightly grubby table.

"Ooh, hang on," said Antonia Durrell; lifting the parchment and siphoning off many layers of grease and dirt caked onto the table-top. She had an obsession with cleaning that came close to being OCD, but she never mentioned this, as firstly she wasn't certain that it had been discovered in 1958, and secondly, if the delicate dark-skinned Prefect *wasn't* obsessive-compulsive, then it would be very offending to say so. Seemingly happy with the state of the table, Antonia set the papers down in a neat, perfectly rectangular pile atop it.

*I'd laugh **so** hard if she got a paper-cut now.*

Smirking to herself despite her heavy mood, Ginny set out the plots for the Ball (she had decided, as a change of scene, to be involved in the Ball as opposed to the disco) and started to discuss her ideas.

It was to be the best Ball that Hogwarts had ever had. Everyone wearing the bright and fabulous. No-one would be undisguised, and for three hours, on Christmas Eve, everyone would have a chance to be someone they weren't – someone fabulous. Every girl could have their fairytale dress, and every boy could be a Prince Charming, to woo their queen-to-be.

Or whatever.

It would start at nine and end at midnight, like the Hallowe'en ball. There would be soft music playing for slow-dancing, and fast music for a slightly mosh-pit effect, for fun. There would be vast banquets of Christmassy food, and slightly alcoholic fruit punch (with Professors taking it in turns to stand guard – it wouldn't do to have the punch spiked, and then a room full of passed out teenagers, too wasted to respond). Mistletoe, multicoloured baubles, tinsel, and glitter galore.

*This'll be the best Christmas **ever** !*

"Brr, it's getting really cold in here," said Robert Harris. He stood, and crossed to the open door.

"No-"

"Don't-"

" *STOP-* "

Bang.

The door closed, and immediately it locked; a thousand wards swarmed into place.

Mia Brown ran to the door and pulled at the handle, to no avail. "Well done, genius!" she snapped, amber eyes narrowing. She slapped her fellow Gryffindor Prefect upside the head.

"Hey, how was I suppsed to know?" shouted Robert, rattling on the door.

"I DON'T KNOW," Mia yelled, and before Ginny could comprehend what had happened, the two Gryffindors were in an all-out brawl, squabbling and shouting at each, slapping, scratching, punching, poking, and pulling hair.

"HEY!" Eleanor yelled, jumping to her feet. "STOP IT!" she hurried across and hauled them apart from each other; despite her slight figure and average height, she was strong, and she broke the fight easily. "What the *hell* is your problem, guys?"

"He locked us in!" Mia shouted, pointing an accusatory finger and a narrow-eyed glare at the chubby, quiet-yet-fierce Gryffindor male.

"No, he didn't," Eleanor chided. "Calm down." She walked across to the door, gave them a *see, this is how it's done* look, and then pulled at the door.

Nothing happened.

She pulled harder.

Nada.

PULL PULL PULL.

"Give it up!" she snapped at the door, resting one foot on the door-frame and pulling as hard she could. This only resulted in the handle snapping off, and her catapulting backwards, and landing on her bottom, several feet away. From her position on the floor, she jabbed her wand at the door and cried, "Alohamora!"

Nothing.

"Aperio!"

…

"Obviam!"

…

"Ah," she said casually, after a moment of silence. She swept her blonde fringe out of her eyes. "Robert has indeed locked us in."

"WELL DONE, DOOFUS!" Mia yelled, launching herself at Robert.

"STOP IT!" Eleanor wrenched them apart again. "Stop it! You – are – *Gryffindors* ! Save the fighting for the Slytherins!"

"Hey!" said Jack and Ginny indignantly; Riddle remained silent.

"No offence," she added hastily. "Now then." She smoothed out her coat and skirt, and drew herself to full height. "There is no need to panic. I'll send a Patronus up to the school, and while we are waiting for someone to arrive and get us out of this ridiculous mess, we can continue with our meeting."

There were murmurs of agreement and mutinous mutters aimed at Robert. Eleanor smiled brightly at them all, and then waved her wand, eyes squeezed shut, saying clearly, " *Expecto patronus* !"

For a moment nothing issued from the tip of her wand but faintly glowing sparks; then, as though stepping down from a stage, a small polecat emerged, and landed lightly on the floor. It licked its paws before looking up at the Head Girl expectantly.

"Fetch a Hogwarts Professor – any. Give them the following message," she paused, "'hello, Professor, this is Head Girl Eleanor Fionn. Riddle, the Prefects and I are unfortunately trapped in the Hog's Head, in Hogsmeade. If you could please Apparate over and help us out of this situation as soon as possible, that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you'," she paused again, and then,

deciding that her little speech needed nothing else, nodded at her Patronus.

The polecat sat back on its hind-feet, blinked its beady eyes, and then scampered away, disappearing into thin air.

"Right. Prefect meeting." Eleanor headed back to the table. As she sat down, she commented sarcastically, "By the way, Riddle, thanks for helping."

"It was no trouble," said Riddle quietly and icily, flashing her a shadowy look from the corner of his eye.

Sensing that the seventeen-year-old was in a darker mood than usual, Eleanor didn't reply to this, and turned to the next page of the plans for the Christmas Ball.

Oh, what kind of horrible person have I created , Ginny thought in despair, looking at Riddle's hollowed face, and thinking of how much progress had been made before she screwed up.

Wait , she suddenly realised. *Progress towards* ***what*** *? My goal was – **is** - to **kill** him. How is making **friends** with him **progress** ?*

Confusion – panic – worry – and a total bewilderment – all flooded Ginny to the point of her hands started to tremble again. She had lost control of all her emotions… as well as all of her *sense* .

The Prefect meeting continued, and for about half an hour, the problem of being trapped in an abandoned bar was forgotten totally. Then the meeting was adjourned, and they sat back, wondering if anyone had got their message.

"Shall we send up another one?" asked Ginny. "Just in case they didn't get it. Riddle?" She used his surname carefully, threading it into her sentence, as though just half an hour ago she hadn't been pleading *Tom* .

The Head Boy didn't reply; didn't even look at her.

Very quickly, as though trying to hide something, Eleanor said, "He doesn't want to right now." She glanced at him.

*What… surely arrogant, look-at-me Riddle would simply **love** a chance to show off his intelligence and magical power –*

Unless he can't do it.

It was an idea that barrelled into Ginny at high-speed. It made perfect sense. Eleanor, covering for him, because she knew that he didn't want anyone to know that there was something he couldn't do. But why not?

Happy memories.

A rush of Ginny's most dangerous emotion swelled into her heart – pity. Riddle couldn't perform a Patronus because he didn't have any happy memories.

"I'll do it," she said suddenly, having an idea.

Eleanor frowned. "Do you know how?" she asked incredulously.

"Yeah," Ginny shrugged, as if it was nothing. She stood, and turned towards the table; looking quickly over the face of each person at the table, and landing finally on Riddle, who was watching her silently, head bowed, through his thick fringe. Twirling her wand between her fingers, she delivered the speech that she prayed the dark young man would understand:

"I have many happy memories. It just sometimes takes a while to remember that they're there," she said softly, and, daring herself on, looked into the dark, impassive eyes fixed on her. Then, she whispered, " *expecto patronum.* "

" *WE WON!" Ron yelled, holding aloft a silver Quidditch Cup, as Harry entered the common room. Ginny ran towards him, ready to*

*tease him and say that they could win without him, and then suddenly his head ducked and he **kissed** her, properly, just as she'd –*

A blade of grass. "Slytherin colours!" Ginny hooted, and skipped away, laughing her head off. A few metres away, where she knew that she was safe from his death-glares, she turned and grinned at him. "Well?" Riddle looked up from the grass to her face. Strangely, he didn't look disgusted or angry. A bemused expression flickered in his eyes, and one corner of his mouth twisted in a half-smile -

A white light blossomed from the tip of her wand, and from the light stepped a fox. It twitched its ears, swished its tail, and then looked up at its mistress.

"Er – go up to the castle and fetch a Professor. Tell him or her that the Heads and the Prefects are trapped in the Hog's Head," she stammered, trying to get past her shock – a happy memory, and the one that had come was *not* one of Harry, or of her friends while they were still alive…

…but of Riddle.

Shaking these thoughts, she sent her Patronus away and sat down in her seat again. "So," she said, "what now?"

"I have an idea." Eleanor's eyes were sparkling like polished jewels, and her mouth was curving into a grin. "Think about it. No-one is coming to get us… we're trapped… in a pub… an *abandoned* pub… with lots – and I mean *lots* – of *Firewhiskey* ."

Now Riddle lifted his head. "Fionn, are you *insane* ?" he said coldly. "You're supposed to be *Head Girl* . You're supposed to set an *example* ."

"Well." Eleanor said, chewing her lower lip. Then she crowed, " *You* can set an example!"

There was an outburst of cheering and whooping, and suddenly nine teenagers were scrambling frantically to the bar, and grabbing as many bottles of Firewhiskey as they could carry. Ginny followed their lead delightedly, scooping warm bottles into her arms and stumbling back.

"Fionn, have you forgotten that the Professors will be coming soon?" snapped Riddle. "Of course, it'll look fantastic for your Head Girl-ship and the Prefect-ship of the others, finding you lot sprawled out on the floor, utterly *wasted* ."

"You just don't know how to have any fun!" Eleanor fired up.

"Eleanor!" Ginny hissed urgently, knowing that bellowing at an angry Riddle was not a good idea, grabbing the blonde girl's elbow.

"I do not *care* for *fun* !" Riddle snarled. "I'm merely interested in keeping my position as Head Boy! I refuse to take part in such activities not only foolish, but also incredibly childish."

"Fine, then!" Ginny yelled, tearing past Eleanor. " *You* don't have to! You can sit in the corner, *all by yourself* , and have an absolutely *spiffing* time staring at the wall! And if you're so bloody concerned about us not getting in trouble, then you can have the fabulous job of wiping up vomit, picking us up, and picking apart drunken brawls! Fun, fun, fun – no, of course! I forgot! *You don't have fun* !"

"Geez, Ginny, okay, you can stop now-"

"I think he got the point-"

Riddle stood sharply, towering over her. "Don't you *dare* ," he hissed at her vehemently.

"Yeah, play the *look-at-me-I'm-taller-than-you* card!" Ginny spat scornfully. "After all, it *is* all that you have going for you!"

Shockingly, Riddle did not start snarling, or worse, shouting. His voice dropped down to a low, dangerous tone. "Well, then, I suppose that any civility between you and I has just been rather spectacularly destroyed, hasn't it? As well as, of course, anything you said in Honeydukes."

"What I said in Honeydukes still stands," said Ginny fiercely. "Whether or not you decide to pay any heed to it whatsoever its your decision entirely." Aware of everyone watching her, she lowered her voice so that only Riddle and herself could hear her words, before saying softly, "I truly meant it, and I truly am sorry."

For a moment, she thought that she saw something flash in his eyes, but then they merely narrowed at her, and he turned his back on her.

A sigh weaved from Ginny's throat, and she turned back to the Firewhiskey. It was what she needed – something to help her forget that Riddle hated her, and why that made her unhappy.

She downed it in one.

Her senses blurred.

Whaaaa …?

"Okay, Scott's turn," said the slurred voice of Eleanor Fionn, swaying at her position, sitting inelegantly on the floor. "Druth or tare?"

"Truth or dare," Antonia corrected, for the thousandth time, also sounding as though she was talking through a mouthful of beads.

"Hmm." Scott rubbed his chin, thoughtfully. "DARE!" he crowed, punching his hand in the air so enthusiastically that he fell over.

"Yeaaahh!" the group of drunk teenagers cheered.

"M'kay!" Eleanor chirped. "You can… you can… kiss someone!" she declared, and then burst into side-splitting laughter. She suddenly became sombre, and added, "Lips or cheek. Or face. Or foot." She found this equally hilarious.

"Woooop!" Scott crawled awkwardly into the center of the circle, and fell promptly in Jack Swithin's lap, before continuing on his way. "Lydia!" he declared. "I shall kiss you."

"YAYY!" giggled Ginny, who had realised early on in the game that this meant her. She hiccoughed once, and then threw her arms clumsily around the Ravenclaw's neck, planting a long and sloppy kiss on his lips. When he pulled away, she shrieked, "Let's dance!"

She slowly got to her feet, and then began to stagger around the room, laughing hysterically and waving her arms around in an ungainly fashion. "Do the Lydia dance – boom cha, boom cha. Do the Lydia dance – boom cha, boom cha," she sang tunelessly, drifting around the room, kicking her feet out and spinning madly everywhere.

"YEAH!" Eleanor stood as well, and joined Ginny in spinning, whirling, shrieking, and kicking.

Within moments, all of Prefects were dancing drunkenly around the Hog's Head, each singing totally different songs and dancing totally different dances, all, however, consisting of the words 'Lydia dance'.

"Do the Lydia dance – boom cha, boom cha. Do the Lydia dance – boom cha, boom cha."

"Put your left nose in, and your scrambled egg out – do the Lydia dance and *spiiiin* !"

"WEEEEE! LYDIA DANCE!"

"Humpty Dumpty, munch munch, Lydia does the dance and weeee, all the King's horses and all the King's men munch munch!"

And so on.

"Mahahhahahha!" laughed Ginny, and then suddenly the world spun and she found herself lying face-down on the floor. This she found even more funny. "MAHAHAHAA!"

"How'd'you geddown *there* ?" Jack sneered, and then there was a **thud** and everyone was gleefully collapsing, thinking that this was the next part of the Lydia dance.

Ginny lurched into a standing position, stumbled a few feet sideways, and fell into the seating area. Luckily, she landed on a very soft, very solid and very familiar cushion. She blinked up at the cushion. It was glaring at her.

"Hello," she cooed enthusiastically. "Would you like a hug?"

"Peregrine, get off, for God's sake."

"Well, you're just a *party-pooper* , you are!" Ginny said crossly, frowning up at the mean glarey cushion. "And d'you know why?"

"Pray tell, *why* ?"

"'CAUSE YOU'RE PARTY-POO!" Ginny shrieked, and then she rolled off of the cushion, landed on the floor, and started to crawl, army-style, across the room. "Myum myum myum."

"I see the way you eat your newspaper!" Eleanor sang, performing an ungraceful pirouette. "No-one realises how normal you are! Porridge, mm yes! I am the new cancer! I am *so* surreptitious, you don't notice meeeeee! My friend, my enemy, shakakakaka LYDIA DANCE!"

"My turn," said Ginny decidedly and very spontaneously, drawing herself to full height. "Truth."

"Yeah! Errr…"

Robert Harris scratched his head.

"Hm. Whoooo… d'you think is the nicest looking out of all of us here?"

Olive glowered at him from the corner. Definitely an unhappy drunk.

"Ooh!" catcalled Antonia.

Ginny frowned. Then, with a beam plastering across her features, she cheered, " *Riddle* !"

A silence fell.

Well, as silent as drunks could get. There was still the odd hiccough, and raspy breathing, occasionally punctuated by giddy laughter.

" *What* ?"

Ginny turned to the voice that had spoken. "Yesh, Riddle," she slurred at him, hands on her hips. "That's what I said. Because you… you are *seeeeexyyyyyy* !" she sang, terrifyingly high-pitched. "Mm-hmm, yeah, wooo!" she twirled in an ungainly circle. "'Cause your eyes are all glowing and you're like…" she stopped, trying to think of a word to describe him. "BIG!" she shouted, squeezing her eyes closed and then boggling them out, as if to show how truly massive he was. Then she said solemnly, "You are the goddess of insects."

She grinned around at them all, especially at the still-staring ex-cushion that was Riddle, before demanding, "Ask me again."

"Okelie-dokelie-ukelele… Whoooo… would'you get involved with at Hoggie-Hoggie-wartie-wartiesss…?"

"Well, duh!" giggled Ginny. "I'm already taken."

"REALLY?" yelled Eleanor enthusiastically.

"By *who* ?" sneered Olive Hornby.

"Alden Philips," she chirruped. "Didn't you *know* ?" she gave a high-pitched giggle, and then promptly downed the majority of her Firewhiskey bottle. "Yum yum yum!" she yelled, jumped to her feet –

Riddle was staring at her, his eyes dark and *weeeirrrrd* .

A thousand crazy urges… weeeeee –

THUD.

She let out one last manic giggle before the world went dark.

A/N: Haha. Funny. That was nice and long, wasn't it? Now pay me back by reviewing, please. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

COMPETITION:

" *I see the way you eat your newspaper!" Eleanor sang, performing an ungraceful pirouette. "No-one realises how normal you are! Porridge, mm yes! I am the new cancer! I am so surreptitious, you don't notice meeeeee! My friend, my enemy!"*

Those are song lyrics from various songs. If you can correctly tell me the bands who wrote those songs, I will reward you by writing a oneshot of your choice (romance/humour/parody/angst, whichever you want). If you can guess all of the SONGS correctly, you will get a smooch from a fictional young Dark Lord of your choice and *two* oneshots.

---

audrhole: Aw, thanks! I know, isn't Tom just lovely? I was horrified when the HBP destroyed my secret little image of him being lonely and misunderstood. Meh.

BDSanta2001: Your review made me laugh – thanks, I needed it!

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks! It feels better now, though.

Saene: Wth? Flying cat? That gave me a random burst of hysterical laughter, it was so spontaneous. Anyway. Yeah, I like my sweets to behave themselves. I was hoping that Ginny wasn't too OOC by nearly crying when Tom was shouting at her, but seemingly not. Thanks!

chimis: Poor Tom indeed. –hugs-

ShhImNotMVP: Thank you! Whatever will Ginny do now?

SiRiusLyInLuV71: -sigh- What, indeed?

Leah: I updated, are you happy? –hopeful grin- I *know* , he was so cute, and then he went all angsty! Gr. Thank you so much!

storm-brain: Why are you singing? –frown- I don't understand. Lol!

Josephine Sawyer: Hitler? You just compared Tom Riddle… to *Hitler* ? Warped, I tell you. Warped. Lol, just joking.

XxRandomHeartxX: Tom was fairly big in this chapter, but they didn't make up. Sorreee. I love them too, they're so cute. Because she's bright and he's so dark, and he's so tall and she's so short, and she's popular and he's a loner, and they're both sort of fierce but smart. And they just want to be loved. –pout-

---

Ow, I'm in pain… I had try-outs for my school athletics team and I twisted my ankle. Meh. –pout-. Ouchie.

P is for Point Blank Refusal

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: A little bit of Tom here. Fairly important, not really. Enjoy. Just a sort of filler.

COMPETITION:

The winner is anonymous reviewer branni , who guessed correctly with the bands Panic! At The Disco and Kids In Glass Houses! WOOP! She'll be getting a oneshot! Teehee! And also, I'd like to mention ShhImNotMVP and XxRandomHeartxX, who both got the band Panic! At The Disco, so they got it half-right. Sadly, no oneshots for them, but they will be having a smooch from a fictional young Dark Lord of their choice. THANK YOU!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Two: P is for Point-Black Refusal

Ginny turned to the voice that had spoken. "Yesh, Riddle," she slurred at him, hands on her hips. "That's what I said. Because you… you are seeeeexyyyyyy!" she sang, terrifyingly high-pitched.

" *Well, duh!" giggled Ginny. "I'm already taken. Alden Philips," she chirruped. "Didn't you know?" she gave a high-pitched giggle, and then promptly downed the majority of her Firewhiskey bottle. "Yum yum yum!" she yelled, jumped to her feet –*

Riddle was staring at her, his eyes dark and weeeirrrrd. A thousand crazy urges… weeeeee – ***THUD.*** *She let out one last manic giggle before the world went dark.*

Owwww.

Ginny blearily tried to open her eyes, but was overcome by the pounding headache and the stinging muscles. She groaned.

Owww.

She tried again, this time succeeding. Her eyes were sticky and her vision was blurred, but she blinked several times and kneaded her eye-sockets clumsily with her knuckles.

"Mmpgghf," she groaned, and stretched her mouth in a cavernous yawn. Then she looked sleepily at her surroundings. She was not, as she had expected, sprawled out inelegantly on the floor, as she had expected. She was lying quite neatly on the sofa of one of the private cubbies in the corner of the pub.

What… what happened?

The redhead furrowed her brow as she frantically tried to recall what she had done last night. She hoped desperately that she hadn't down anything ridiculous or embarrassing.

Something called the 'Lydia dance'… a lot of Firewhiskey… a lot of giggling… a lot of kissing… and singing in a very high-pitched voice…

*Oh **God** no.*

The chance of her not doing anything humiliating was now approximately one to a thousand. Unless she was in a truly terrible mood when she started drinking, she *always* became extremely hyper, something that *always* ended in general embarrassment – once, at Harry's seventeenth birthday, accompanied by hospitalisation.

She sat up, her muscles protesting angrily at the movement, her head spinning from the slight move of position, and frowned past the

blur that was a very unpleasant hangover.

Blinking once – twice – she looked around. On other seats were equally hung-over Eleanor and the rest of the Prefects.

Where's…

Bewildered, Ginny glanced from her left side to her right, and there saw him. Sitting, straight-backed, in a chair on the other side of the room, staring out of the small, grubby window. He looked as alert and observant as ever, though he didn't seem to have slept.

It was weird to think of Riddle sleeping. Ginny saw him as the arrogant, cold Head Boy – that all he did was argue and be irritated with the world. However, he slept, and ate, and drank; things that, admittedly, Ginny had never seen him do, nor even thought he was capable of. The closest to seeing slumber was him unconscious on the floor of the Chamber of Secrets, in a puddle of blood.

Not quite the same.

"Haven't we been rescued yet?" asked Ginny groggily, rubbing her eyes again and stumbling to her feet. She looked down at said feet and saw that her beloved pink-and-orange stripey socks had a hole in the big toe.

"If we had been rescued, don't you think that we'd be back in the castle?" replied Riddle icily, his tone short.

"You and Eleanor can Apparate," Ginny said, and found a rather unpleasant amount of accusation in her voice. "You could've Apparated up to the castle and got a teacher."

"Have you never bothered to read Hogwarts: A History ?" Riddle snapped. "You can't Apparate onto Hogwarts grounds!"

This was something that Hermione had pressed onto Ginny, as well as onto Ron and Harry, a thousand times, and it set off a pang of

pain through her chest.

"You could've at least Apparated outside of the bloody pub!" Ginny snarled.

"If it was that easy, I would have *done* it by now, wouldn't I?" Riddle retaliated angrily. "We – can – not – get – out! There are wards around the whole building!"

Pride stinging, Ginny found that she had nothing to say to it, and her own ignorance had just been proved. Her cheeks glowed, and with a final glare she sat back down.

There was a thick silence lying between them that, in total, lasted an impressive feat of an hour and a half. During this time, the other Prefects and Eleanor woke up (the Head Girl cast Sobering Charms on everyone with a hangover), and, refusing point-blank to be the first to surrender the war of hush. Ginny was inwardly smirking; she had years of practice at staying quiet.

In a house with seven brothers, you get used to not being able to say anything – drowned out by the rest of the chatter. I can stay like this for ***days*** *.*

It was only when orange light flashed through the cracks around the door, and then it swung open, that she decided that it was enough of being childish; Ginny ran enthusiastically to the door. There stood Professor Vander, Professor Dumbledore, and Professor Dippet. She could have *kissed* them, she was so happy.

She quickly slipped her shoes on, snatched up her coat, and straightened her skirt before darting to the door. "I'm so sorry, Professors," she babbled, "for dragging you out here, and thank you for rescuing us and -"

"Whose brilliant idea was this?" asked Dippet, frowning at them all. "This could have turned out *very* dangerous. You could have all been injured; you could have frozen to death in the snow! You didn't tell

anyone where you going – no-one knew where you were at all! I assure you, he or she who decided on this will lose their position of power for sure."

Oh no. Ginny's heart sank. She cast a surreptitious glance at Eleanor, who had suggested the Hogsmeade trip; the blonde was white as a sheet, and trembling at the prospect of losing her Head Girl-ship.

Without a second's hesitation, she blurted out, "It was me."

The three male Professors turned a unanimous sharp gaze on her.

"I suggested it," Ginny continued. Her heart was pounding, and her mouth was very dry. She had always wanted to be a Prefect. And now she was losing her position. "I wanted to do something fun after I came out of the Hospital Wing. Riddle and Eleanor tried to tell me that it was a bad idea, but I wouldn't listen. I went anyway, against their warnings that it would be dangerous, and they followed, to keep me out of trouble."

"That still doesn't explain why you went without telling anyone," said Dumbledore, his voice strangely stern, though his blue eyes were twinkling.

"I… I was…"

If you're going to lose your Prefect-ship, you might as well go for the full Monty.

"I drank a lot of Butterbeer before the meeting," Ginny lied quickly, attempting to force a blush into her cheeks. "I was on a massive sugar-high. I was a potential danger to myself if they left me alone. I ran away, and, as the loyal and caring Heads, Eleanor and Riddle put my safety first priority against telling a Professor where they were going. The Prefects followed and then… well, I suppose that we forgot."

"I *see* ," said Dumbledore, looking sideways at Dippet.

The Headmaster was frowning at Ginny. "Miss Peregrine, when we arrive back at the castle, you will not be going to your classes with the others. You will accompany me to my office," he said.

"Yes, sir," Ginny said quietly. She felt everyone's eyes upon her; Eleanor, guilty but grateful; the Prefects, a mingled collection of shock and bewilderment; and Riddle, stunned.

*Yeah, well, just because **you** don't give a damn about anyone or anything except you and your stupid Head-ship doesn't mean we're **all** like that* , Ginny thought bitterly.

"Right then, everyone, yes, put on your coats, yes, and your shoes, dear me, what *happened* in here, yes, yes, come on then, let's go," said Professor Vander, ushering them out of the pub.

Ginny pulled her coat on, and followed the teachers humbly. However, she was dragged to the side by Eleanor.

"What the hell?" the Head Girl whispered frantically. "Ginny, you're going to lose your position as Prefect for sure! It was *my* fault, why did you *do* that?"

"You love being Head Girl," Ginny reminded her. "And me? Well. I'm just hoping I don't get expelled for getting nine other students into a possibly dangerous situation," she finished, her voice numb. She didn't think that she would be able to handle expulsion. She smiled bravely at Eleanor, and hurried out of the pub – she didn't want the Professors to get suspicious.

The door closed with a slight bang behind the stocky redhead. Dippet's Augurey, which she knew now to be named Merle, gave a low, mournful hoot upon Ginny's entrance, and fixed beady, dark green eyes upon her.

*Yes, I've been bad. I don't need **you** judging me too, you stupid bird.*

As if it had heard her thoughts and was highly offended, Merle let out a rush of air from her beak and turned on her perch, away from the seventeen-year-old.

Dippet shuffled about behind his desk, and then sat neatly in his leather-backed chair. "Sit," he instructed, indicating a wooden chair that had just appeared from nowhere.

Doing as she was told, Ginny dropped into the chair, her eyes lowered.

"Now, Miss Peregrine," said Dippet, settling his spectacles onto his nose and peering at her through them. "May I inquire as to why you took the blame?"

Alarmed, Ginny looked up at him. "W-what?"

"You and I both know that it was not your idea to go down to Hogsmeade. Whether or not you showed any enthusiasm towards the spontaneous journey from the Hogwarts grounds, you did not strike the spark that caused the flame," said Dippet knowledgably.

There was a hush. Ginny didn't know what to say.

"It was Miss Fionn, I believe?" continued Dippet, pulling a sheet of parchment towards him and straightening it on the hard surface of his desk.

"No sir. It was me," Ginny said bluntly. She refused to get one of her friends in trouble for a reason as silly as this.

"Miss Peregrine, no-one is going to get in any trouble," Dippet said wearily, as though he had read her thoughts. "I assure you."

Relief flooded through the redhead. "Really?" she said anxiously, hardly daring to believe that she could keep her position as Prefect.

"Yes, really, Miss Peregrine," responded Dippet smoothly. "Now, I'm going to trust that it *is* indeed Miss Fionn?"

Ginny bit her lip. "Yes sir," she replied after a moment of uncertainty. "But, please, sir, don't-"

"I *won't* ," Professor Dippet reassured her, sounding irritated, yet him dipping a large eagle-feather in a pot of black ink and scratching across the parchment in a firm manner of authority did nothing to console her. "I am curious however, as to why you decided, seemingly without much thought on the matter, to defend her and therefore get yourself in trouble when you had nothing to do with it.

Ginny merely shrugged.

"It was very noble of you," replied Dippet. "Now, I will not make a bigger mess of this situation than it already is, so you will receive a month's detention, and that will be the end of it."

He dotted a full-stop on the parchment, rolled it up, and set in aside. "Let's hope that this never repeats itself, Miss Peregrine," he said sternly. Then he shooed her away to her lessons.

"Thank you, sir," said Ginny, struggling to contain her grin.

With a muttered phrase that she didn't quite catch, Dippet shooed her from his office, and the redhead gleefully obliged. She skipped down the stone steps, beaming at her luck of getting off so easily.

She ran down to the Slytherin common room to fetch her books, and then hurried to catch up to Grace and Alden, who would be heading towards Transfiguration. She couldn't wait to tell them about the meeting, and how she had escaped Dippet's punishment.

"Grace! Alden!" she yelled happily, waving her arms as she thundered down the final few steps.

Her friends wheeled around to look at her.

"Where have you been?" Grace exclaimed, wrapping her in a bear-hug.

"Hello," said Alden; he, reluctantly, awkwardly, kissed her cheek – not without first, Ginny noticed, a wary glance at Grace.

Ginny told them the whole story, delicately skirting the parts involving Riddle, hoping that she wasn't being too obvious, and was smothered in questions and gaping-mouthed exclamations of "but you could've been trapped for *ages* in there".

"Alright, hush now, students," said Professor Dumbledore, blue eyes twinkling down at them all. "Into the classroom."

Grace jostled Ginny in an attempt to get into the classroom, forming a childish race between the two. The redhead would have happily joined in the immature squabble, but a flailing hand struck her hard on the forearm, and she yelped in pain. " *Ow* !"

"What's wrong?" Grace frowned.

Ginny spluttered for a moment like an angry kettle. Then she lied, "Nothing", not wanting to worry her companions. She looked down at her hand, now wrapped around the source of the pain – her forearm.

The pose was oddly familiar…

The Death Eaters.

It was identical to when their Mark burned as Lord Voldemort called them to him. That position on her arm was where the Dark Mark lay – and also, she remembered, where she had been sliced open by an anonymous attacker in the Chamber of Secrets, and then found by Riddle.

She gasped.

Svenagli!

Myrtle's murder!

*I **totally** forgot!*

"Hello, earth calling Planet Ginny?" called Grace, waving her hand in front of Ginny's face.

"Wha-? Oh. Yeah. Hi," said Ginny, shaking her head to clear her thoughts.

"Are you okay? You seem kind of blanked out today," said Grace, frowning worriedly.

"Yeah. Fine."

"Well, come into Transfiguration, then. You're blocking the doorway."

Nodding, and apologizing to the crowd of people waiting behind her, Ginny entered the room and found her seat. Dumbledore began a speech about Animagi, but the seventeen-year-old's thoughts were elsewhere. She would have an interesting evening tonight.

A/N: Dum dee dum. Review, please and thank you. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

MAJOR PLOT-TWISTS COMING BACK INTO PLAY.

---

o00Bubbles00o: Poor Tom. Thank you!

Josephine Sawyer: True, actually. There can never be an online conversation that lasts more than a month where the topic of Nazis doesn't come up. Depressing. –sigh- Thanks! Yeah, I thought that it would be really awkward for Ginny to remembering calling Tom –ahem- *handsome* , shall we say.

Saene: Ah. I see. I have two dogs that sometimes do that. At the same time. –wince- They're more of Hufflepuff pets; they lounge

around and lick your feet. Haha. No offence to Hufflepuffs. BACK OFF! TOM'S MINE! –grabs him defensively-

branni: Thank you! What do you what your oneshot to be about? You can have romance (you have to tell me the pairing) or angst or supernatural or humour or whatever you want. But you have to give me characters and settings. Have fuun.

creative-writing-girl13: Oh, I thought she was really funny. –pout-

X-XsiobhanX-X: Thank you! Yeah, it made me hyper too… :D

SiRiUsLyInLuV: Er, no, because Tom – despite what everyone else thinks – is really, *really* shy, which we'll see later, and he's never actually had a friend before, and he's never liked a girl before… Sad. But that'll change soon. –wink- Sorry, so no.

The-Quoi: Okay, three things . One: I love your pen-name. It is awesome. Two: Your evil guinea pig comment made me laugh SO HARD! Three: Sadly, Tim can't eat my soul, because I never had one to start with. –sob- And thank you! Wait, that's four.

ShhImNotMVP: Thank you so much! I was a bit worried if I wrote the drunk part well enough, because actually I've never been drunk, and I've only ever seen one of my friends drunk, and he was basically normal except for the fact that he tried to kiss me. –shiver- Oh, the horror.

Faye8222: I had a kindergarden buddy called Faye. Except that she was really, *really* evil and she got all of her friends to attack me when her teacher wasn't looking. I'm sure that you're not evil, though. Thank you!

storm-brain: *Oh* ! Right! That! Yeah, I know. Um, Tom thought it was a totally stupid idea. Lol. Oopsies. I updated the rating, didn't I?

BDSanta2001: -does Lydia dance- Lol!

XxRandomHeartxX: Brendon Urie is awesome. I love P!ATD, except now it sucks because they dropped the exclamation mark. – SOB- Anywho. Thank you loads!

P is for Professor Vander

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: MASSIVELY IMPORTANT CHAPTER! Pay attention it… well, it's hardly very subtle, so you don't need to pay that close attention. Anyway. Read it. Now.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Three: P is for Professor Vander

A flailing hand struck her hard on the forearm, and she yelped in pain. "Ow!" She looked down at her hand, now wrapped around the source of the pain – her forearm. The pose was oddly familiar… It was identical to when their Mark burned as Lord Voldemort called them to him. That position on her arm was where the Dark Mark lay – and also, she remembered, where she had been sliced open by an anonymous attacker in the Chamber of Secrets, and then found by Riddle.

She gasped. Svenagli! Myrtle's murder! I totally forgot!

Nodding, and apologizing to the crowd of people waiting behind her, Ginny entered the room and found her seat. Dumbledore began a speech about Animagi, but the seventeen-year-old's thoughts were elsewhere. She would have an interesting evening tonight.

"Hey, aren't you coming to dinner?" asked Grace.

"Yeah!" Ginny lied. "I mean – well. No. But I will later. I have a detention. Sorry. I'll catch up with you later, okay?"

Grace made a sympathetic face. "Ouch. Who with?"

"Er. Vander."

"Okay. I'll see you in a while then," Grace said. "D'you want me to save you some chips? Just incase there aren't any left when you get there."

*Just **go** , damnit. LEAVE!*

"You don't have to, but thanks," said Ginny. "I really have to go, though," she lied. "Bye."

The brunette skipped down the stairs; Ginny waited until she was sure that she was gone before turning and hurrying in the opposite direction of Vander's office.

Praying that no-one saw her and inquired as to where she was going at dinner-time, she ran down the corridors towards Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.

She smoothed her skirt; twisted the ends of her hair; entered.

"Hey!" she chirped, putting on a big false grin again, ready to be shallow again. "How are ya, girlfriend?"

"You can stop pretending to be a bimbo anytime you like, you know," said Myrtle dryly, sitting on a crumbling wall, her legs swinging down.

"Well, that's good," said Ginny, exhaling noisily with relief. "Sorry."

"What do you want?" asked Myrtle, scratching her nose and peering in the mirror.

Ginny took a deep breath. She needed an ally. And Myrtle might just be the damn best ally she could get.

"Someone's attacking the students," she said seriously. "I was attacked. I know that Tom Riddle was attacked. And I have a feeling

that their will be more attacks – again and again."

"Oh," said Myrtle, as though what Ginny had told her was something as normal as the weather. She picked a spot on her chin. "Anything else?"

"Well, I did notice… neither Riddle or me are pure-blood. D'you think that could be anything to do with it?" Ginny asked nervously. She was, technically, a pure-blood, but hey – it hadn't stopped Voldie when she was eleven, so why not this attacker?

"Have you considered that the Chamber of Secrets might be opening?" asked Myrtle, not bothering to check if Ginny knew what that was.

"Yes, I have – but I know that it's not. Because I'm a Parselmouth, and I would have heard the Basilisk going about the school. Also, the gamekeeper's roosters are unharmed, and the spiders I've all seen are behaving normally," Ginny stated, calling back from memory what had happened in her first-year.

"Hm." Myrtle didn't respond at all to any of this very bizarre knowledge that, in theory, a transfer student shouldn't have known. "Good point."

"And," Ginny added frantically, "you can't tell anyone what I've told you!"

"I won't." Myrtle floated up from her seat and drifted across the room, humming tunelessly. It seemed to Ginny as though she had a rather short attention-span, though whenever the redhead spoke she did know what was going on.

Ginny waited for a moment to see if Myrtle had anything to say. Then, remembering something, she asked, "Myrtle… have you ever seen… *this* ?" she raised her sleeve and showed the fifteen-year-old ghost the long scar on her arm from the Chamber of Secrets – she

hadn't been to the Hospital Wing to have it fixed (Madam Royce would have asked questions) and so it had left scarring.

This captured Myrtle's attention entirely. "Yeah," she said. "I have. I've got one." She raised her own sleeve and brandished an identical scar.

Ginny's heart hammered in her chest.

Whoever is attacking me and Riddle… killed Myrtle. He or she is capable of murder. ***We could be next*** *.*

"Myrtle, do you know what this means?" Ginny asked slowly.

"Probably not," said the ghoul darkly. "I'm not very bright."

Wow, you're positive.

"Aw, you're bright…" Ginny tried. "You're quite clever-"

" *Not clever enough to stop me from being killed* !" Myrtle howled, and dived into the nearest toilet with a loud, gurgling splash.

Ginny despaired. She *needed* Myrtle! "No," she called pleadingly. "Myrtle – Myrtle, I didn't mean it that way – please come back – Myrtle – hello – come back, please-"

There was only a silence that greeted her.

"Myrtle?" she called hopefully.

Nothing.

With a groan, the seventeen-year-old crossed to the wall, leant heavily against it, and slid down to the ground. She sighed.

Great. It was going so well, too!

For a while, she sat there in silence. As she was considering going to dinner and telling Grace and Alden that her detention had been cancelled, there came a slight bubbling noise, and two morose-looking bespectacled eyes peered out over the toilet rim.

Heart soaring with hope, Ginny leapt to her feet. "Myrtle," she said hurriedly, "I didn't mean to offend you. I just meant that you *were* clever – just rather unlucky. Not that being a bad thing, I mean. Look at me! Screw walking across the path of a black cat – I *kicked* one!"

Myrtle (or, at least, what little of her face was visible) didn't look impressed. From within the toilet, she pointed out, "Crossing the path of a black cat is good luck."

Growing increasingly annoyed with the ghost's uncooperative attitude, she rolled hazel eyes and said, "Whatever. Just come out please?"

"Don't you *whatever* me," said Myrtle, sounding very much like a teacher, though she did (begrudgingly) come out of the toilet. "What did you want to tell me?"

"What I wanted to say was that you and I have the same scars – from being attacked!" Ginny said excitedly. She was *so* close to uncovering the truth. "That means that my attacker is probably the same person as your killer. So if you could remember who killed you… then, then – then I could catch the culprit!"

She paused.

"Can you remember who it was?"

"Remember?" Myrtle snorted. "I see his face everyday, whenever I try to relax…"

Heartbeat growing faster and faster…

"Who?"

Myrtle opened her mouth, but the sound was cut off by a high, terrible, blood-curdling scream.

Ginny panicked. "I have to go!" she shouted. "Tell me later."

"No!" Myrtle cried. "That's – that's the scream!"

"I don't understand, Myrtle – I have to go – someone's in trouble!" Ginny said. "Tell me another time!"

"The scream!" Myrtle said frantically. "When you were attacked, did you scream? Was it a … was it a 'ah'? Or was it an all-out," she shrieked loudly, "like that one just then!"

"I don't see where you're getting with this," said Ginny, shaking her head. "Later!"

"Ginny-"

" *Not now* !"

Myrtle said something desperately, but, again, silenced by a scream.

This time, a scream: "HELP!"

"Later!!" Ginny shouted one final time, before barrelling through the door of Moaning Myrtle's bathroom and sprinting down the corridor.

"HELP! OH GOD, *HELP ME* !"

Ginny ran faster, her legs pounding so that she thought the muscles might break, already panicking with the prospect of what she might find. " *Hold on* !" she yelled as loudly as she could, in the hope that the person might hear her and be comforted by the fact that someone knew that she was in trouble; that someone was coming to help her.

*If he or she is still **alive** , that is.*

Don't think about that!

She pushed herself that little bit faster, though it felt that her knees would give, and whirled around a tight corner, almost hitting the other wall. Her heart was hammering, buffeting, battering a scar onto the inside of her ribcage.

Fear drenching though her, she slammed through a wooden door, and sprinted around another corner. She came to an abrupt halt, skidding, as the scene unfolded at her feet.

A girl – a second-year, maybe younger – screaming – so loud that it scratched even Ginny's eardrums – tears etched onto her pale face – hands curled into claws – unharmed.

And then, what caused the young female's grief.

A bloody, disfigured mess in a pool of spreading crimson that Ginny recognized vaguely as a *person* – someone who had, until recently, been alive and well. There was no chance that the mess retained life now. She couldn't see who it was – who it had been – but the girl was pulling at her dark curls and sobbing breathlessly, "P-P-Pro-Prof-Profess-V-V-Vand-er-"

Ginny's stomach lurched. Now that the thought had entered her mind, the bloody mess did, indeed, hold the shape of what *used* to be the Charms teacher.

Too many deaths.

Another one.

Bile rose in her throat and tears stung her eyes.

Blood –

Pain –

Panic –

The vision! She suddenly remembered what she had predicted in her water charm – ironically, in Vander's class.

Blood spreading out in a pool, gathering at her feet.

Ginny couldn't breathe. She ran to the young girl, still screaming, and grabbed her shoulders. "Calm down!" she shouted. "It's okay – well – it's not – but – don't panic – don't panic!"

With wide, tear-filled brown eyes, the girl stared at her for a second, her pale pink lower lip trembling like a 7.4 on the Richter scale. Then she burst into loud sobs of "P-P-Professor-Prof-Pr-Van-Vander!"

"Stop panicking!" Ginny fought to keep her voice from shaking. "I said, don't panic!"

The girl drew a long, rattling gasp, and nodded, her tears flowing silently now.

Ginny turned back to where Professor Vander lay – or what was left of him.

" *Hermione? Mione, did you hear the news? Harry got a-" the words were never finished because Ginny ran into her best friend's room –*

She was numb with shock. Her Charms Professor. Dead.

-- and came to see the bushy-haired Muggleborn on her bedroom floor, red and sticky and somehow a lot smaller than Ginny ever remembered, because her arms were in the corner --

What was she supposed to do? How could she fix this?

-- and her legs were mutilated, and her head was GONE and her best friend was in pieces, and she was screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** *–*

"HELP! *HELP US* ! SOMEONE!" Ginny screamed, as loud as she could, tears threatening the corners of her hazel eyes.

"What?" sobbed the first-year beside her. "I thought you said not to panic!"

"OPEN YOUR EYES!" Ginny yelled, hysterical. "A Professor has been *murdered* ! All over the *floor* ! IS THAT *NORMAL* FOR YOU?! *OF COURSE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BLOODY PANIC* !"

"Is that you, Ginny?"

"I thought I heard you!"

Grace and Alden were coming running down the corridor, followed by a small crowd of people.

"What's going on-"

"What happened-"

Grace froze. "Ohmigod," she whispered. "Is that… is that… a person?"

The young student who had found the Professor answered this question by wailing, " *P-Professor Vander* !"

"Professor Vander?" echoed Alden in horror.

Grace gave a small cry and buried her head into Alden's shoulder, her shoulders quivering.

"What's going on here?" boomed the voice of Professor Slughorn, and he marched forwards, followed by the majority of the other teachers.

"Horace – Horace, is that – *Cadwygawn* ?" shrieked Professor Ornella, the Italian Herbology Professor.

"Oh, Merlin," whispered Gladwyn, clutching at Slughorn's fat arm.

"What's happened?" asked the soft voice of Eleanor Fionn, pushing through the crowd.

"Who's that other one?"

"Which other one?"

"That one!"

*Someone else? Someone **else** was attacked?*

Fearing the worst, Ginny turned. Indeed, she had missed to see that there was, a few metres away, another body lying in the blood. This body wasn't mutilated, as Vander was. However, it was as equally lifeless and terrifying to see. This sight chilled Ginny more than the sight of Professor Vander did, and, with no regard towards the people around her, screamed.

" *RIDDLE* !"

A/N: -GASP- REVIEW AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

KyraThePoop: -gasp- Not the three-headed monkey! Ooh, thank you! There might be some other contests coming up. I think there is. But it's in a while, so you have to wait. Haha.

creative-writing-girl13: Thank you!

Josephine Sawyer: Thanks! Yeah, I just thought it would be the sort of thing that he'd have read cover to cover. Thank you, I love your constructive reviews. D'you think I covered the reason why she got detentions enough?

Saene: Aw. Your cat sounds cute. One of my dogs has these massive tremble-spasms when she meets new people, she just goes

shiver shiver shiver shiver . It's sad but kind of cute. In a weird way. Thank you!

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Nah, it's fun to think up new words starting with P.

BDSanta2001: I'm going to admit that I didn't understand a word of that. I don't work with the sciencey bits. I just do the horror, the adventure, the romance and the drama. I don't like science much.

The-Quoi: Thanks. I do try. AH! BACK, VILE BEAST! I warn you, I have a protractor! –stab stabby stab stab-

chimis: Lol, don't we all?

Faye8222: Evil, moi? Lmao. Thanks!

XxRandomHeartxX: I love donuts. And Brendon Urie. And the exclamation mark in PATD. Yeah, I'm skiving my maths homework to post this chapter. Who likes maths anyway?

Pyrexiophobia: Thank you, and by the way I LOVE your pen-name. What does it mean? I'm thanatophobic. Lol.

KayRose: Thank you, I'm glad you liked it. They're not very friendly, but don't worry. They'll be friends again.

Hi! I have a random urge to tell the word that I'm thanatophobic and also ichthyophobic! You get a hug from a Dark Lord if you know what that means!!

And no using a search-engine. That's cheating.

P is for Pieces Missing

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: A bit sad. A bit fluffy. A bit gory. I LOVE YOU, I had about THIRTY reviews, you're bloody amazing. All of you. And sorry that it took me so long to update – actually, this time my laptop *wasn't* confiscated. It's just that it took me all day to write review replies. Lmao. READ THE FIC!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Four: P is for Pieces Missing

A bloody, disfigured mess in a pool of spreading crimson that Ginny recognized vaguely as a person – someone who had, until recently, been alive and well. "OPEN YOUR EYES!" Ginny yelled, hysterical. "A Professor has been ***murdered*** *! All over the* ***floor*** *! IS THAT* ***NORMAL*** *FOR YOU?! OF COURSE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BLOODY PANIC!"*

" *Who's that other one?"* ***Someone else? Someone else was attacked?*** *Fearing the worst, Ginny turned. Indeed, she had missed to see that there was, a few metres away, another body lying in the blood. This body wasn't mutilated, as Vander was. However, it was as equally lifeless and terrifying to see. This sight chilled Ginny more than the sight of Professor Vander did, and, with no regard towards the people around her, screamed. "RIDDLE!"*

People were gasping; muttering; shouting; it was a blur. She couldn't hear, she couldn't see – just the sprawled out, scarlet body across the corridor.

"Miss Peregrine!" Dippet shouted from within the haze of panic that was flooding through the redhead's senses. "Get back here! It isn't safe; the area could be cursed!"

It probably *was* cursed – as she stepped over where an invisible line lay, there was a sensation as though she was walking through solid ice. She let out a cry as her head pounded and her limbs numbed, but she continued. "Riddle," she choked out, skidding in the growing lake of blood and falling to her knees beside him. The liquid was hot and sticky beneath her knees, but her disgust was by far overwhelmed by her terror.

"Students are to return to their dormitories immediately!" bellowed Dippet. "Students are to return to their dormitories immediately!"

Professor Selene, the Divination teacher, cast a Loudening Charm on her voice and shouted the message to the school, before escorting the students away from that part of the corridor.

Riddle was paler than ever – almost transparent. Any proof that he meticulously combed his hair every morning was gone. He was smeared with blood. And he didn't seem to be breathing.

"Miss Fionn, if you could Miss Boyka to the Hospital Wing and wait there with her until Madam Royce is available?" Dippet ordered to a white-faced Eleanor. The Head Girl nodded dumbly in reply, and stumbled closer to the body, looking terrified; took hold of the first-or-second-year's hand, and led her away.

"Riddle," Ginny whispered. She grabbed his arm – his left forearm.

Slashed.

As she had expected.

The attacker was getting serious.

Two dead now. One living. And one… Ginny didn't know if Riddle was okay or not; alive or dead.

Please don't be dead…

"Riddle, please-" She moved a hand to the side of his neck and tried to pull him into a more comfortable position that being sprawled out as if… as if he was…

He's not!

Then his eyelashes fluttered briefly again his pale cheeks, and he cracked his eyes open. "P…Peregrine," he croaked – even in a state of near-death on the marble floor, he was able to furrow his brow into a frown. "How… how did you…"

"Riddle, Riddle, shh," Ginny whispered.

"Mr. Riddle, you will need to come immediately to my office to sort out this mess," demanded Dippet.

"What?" Ginny leapt to her feet. "Sir, you can't actually *believe* that it was him – him who killed-" she averted her eyes from what had used to be Professor Vander, and stared the Headmaster defiantly in the face.

"Really, Miss Peregrine?" snapped Dippet, strangely out-of-character as to his usual attitude. "If you'll direct your gaze towards what is in Mr. Riddle's hand, then I *believe* that you'll change your own opinion!"

Ginny did as instructed.

The knife.

The long knife that had taken both Riddle's blood and her own was in the Head Boy's loosely-curled, long-fingered hand.

"It could have been planted there!" cried Ginny, taking the defence instantly, though not sure why.

"Miss Peregrine, I have already had two murders in my school!" bellowed Dippet angrily, drawing himself to full height. "I will not be subject to any more! This – business – ends – *now* !"

"Peregrine," Riddle rasped again from behind her.

She wheeled around to look at him.

He was staring up at her with a look in his eyes that Ginny had never seen before – yet its meaning was perfectly clear. It was the look of a hanged man just before he gets to the noose: *please believe me. I didn't do it.*

"Sir, he didn't do it," Ginny protested, a note of pleading in her tone.

"This case is closed!" snarled Dippet. "Miss Peregrine, I shall also see you in my office tonight! You have just earned yourself a week's detentions for your back-chat and sheer *disrespect* !"

"Oh *no* ," said Ginny sarcastically. "Because of course, it's not like I'm being punished enough already for something that I didn't even *do* !" she glared pointedly at Dippet, to pass across the meaning of how she was being punished for sticking up for Eleanor.

Dippet merely stared at her through narrowed emerald eyes. Then he said sharply, "We will discuss this later, Miss Peregrine. Now, Mr. Riddle, if you'd care to follow me."

Feeling weary with defeat, Ginny turned back to Riddle. She didn't say anything to him – what *could* she say? She silently offered a hand to help him up, but, ever proud, Riddle refused it and got up by himself, stifling a gasp of pain.

She stood and watched him walk stiffly through the blood. He staggered around Professor Vander's maimed body, and then he

took a step forwards; let out a barely audible groan of what could only be agony, and collapsed against the wall.

She shrieked, "Riddle," and ran after him. She knew instantly what had caused his pain, as she stepped over the same area that he had, and immediately felt again the sensation of numbing – ice – pounding – pain – as she crossed what must be the barrier of the cursed area. Pushing through what felt like sub-zero temperatures, Ginny left the curse behind and hurried to the Head Boy, who was leaning his entire weight onto the wall and was slowly slipping down it due to his clothes being slippery with blood.

Warily, and afraid of being snapped at, Ginny peered into his ghostly-pale face. Riddle didn't reply.

"Professor Dippet, sir, we have to take him to the Hospital Wing," Ginny said seriously. "He's not well."

"He can be patched up after he's been through a series of questioning!" Dippet snapped. The change in his character was uncanny and frightening. When had he transformed into this beast of a Headmaster?

"But sir-!"

"Silence!" the elderly man barked, holding up a hand of authority. "Miss Peregrine, that will now be two weeks of detention in addition to the month's detentions you are already booked for. If I were you, I'd keep a wise tongue in your – if, that is, you wish you retain your position as Prefect."

Fury bubbled up inside Ginny until she was almost ready to scream. Preparing herself for a severe blow – verbal or, perhaps, even physical – she shifted her arm around Riddle's back, tilted her chin up at the Headmaster and said defiantly, "I'm taking him to the Hospital Wing right now, and I'm sorry to say, sir, that you can do absolutely *nothing* about it."

Dippet swelled angrily like a balloon. His veined cheeks turned purple. "Miss Peregrine, you are coming dangerously close to losing your Prefect-ship!" he shouted, waving a fist at her.

Ginny gave a humourless laugh. "Of course, silly me," she said. She knew that she was sassing the Headmaster, and she'd doubtlessly get in trouble for it, but she blundered ahead regardless, "I *forgot* that these days doing what's *right* is punishable." With one last rebellious glare, the redhead heaved Riddle onto his feet, and staggered away with him down the hallway.

She was barely a few steps around the corner when Madam Royce came bustling into view.

"Oh, dear," she clucked like a worried mother hen. "Oh, no, oh no. Poor Mr. Riddle – here, Miss Peregrine, here," she waved her wand and conjured a stretcher, and then lifted Riddle onto it with ease. "I'll take it from here, Miss Peregrine, don't you worry."

The words "I'm coming" had left her mouth before she realised that she was speaking, and by the time that she thought about what she was doing, she was jogging along beside a speeding stretcher.

"Dear, has Headmaster Dippet gone into another one of his crazed anger bouts?" Madam Royce inquired, steering Riddle and his moving bed through a series of doors that Ginny swore were usually walls. "I thought I heard his austere tone. Oh dear. What happened?"

"Professor… Professor Vander… was found dead," Ginny said, feeling tears blur her eyes. "Riddle was a few feet away, unconscious – and he was holding a knife. The area around them was cursed, and upon leaving the area, I think… well, I have no idea," she admitted.

"Cadwygawn? *Dead* ?" Madam Royce echoed. She shook her head. "Oh dear, what has this school *become* ?" she then frowned. "You don't look too well, yourself. Did you pass through this cursed zone?"

"Yeah, but-"

"What was it like?"

"Um. Very cold, and very harsh. Like walking through freezing temperatures. It made me numb and it made my head spin," Ginny said, shivering just to think of it.

"Oh dear, oh no…" fussed Madam Royce, blanching.

"What? Ma'am, what is it?" Ginny panicked, her blood running cold. "Is – is Riddle going to be… okay? Will he be alright?"

The matron did not reply.

The two females powered through the Hospital Wing doors, and Ginny fell behind as Madam Royce pushed the stretcher to the very end of the room; drew curtains around it; disappeared into a cupboard, complete with crashing and banging noises; and appeared again with a tray laden with dangerous-looking items that did not console the redhead.

Without so much as a comforting glance towards Ginny, Madam Royce vanished behind the curtains, and the seventeen-year-old Prefect was left alone. She stood solitary for a moment, but then looked around and saw, a few beds away, Eleanor Fionn holding the dark-haired girl who had found Professor Vander and Riddle.

"Hey," Ginny said softly, approaching them.

Eleanor looked up. She was still pale, but her shaking had subsided. The first-year, however, was in Eleanor's arms, and trembling quietly into the Head Girl's jumper.

"Oh – Ginny. Hello," said Eleanor, forcing a smile.

The first-year turned her head slightly to see Ginny. Her eyebrows crinkled into the look of one about to burst into tears. "You – you –

you h-have blood on your h-hands," she choked out, her brown eyes wide with horror.

Ginny looked down. She did indeed have crimson still smeared across her fingers. "Sorry," she said hastily, and siphoned it off with her wand. She looked back up at the first-year. "And I'm sorry that I shouted at you back there… are you okay?" she asked gently. "What's your name? I'm Ginny Peregrine."

The first-year trembled, but gave a shaky nod. "M-m-my name's A-Amalia Boyka," she said quietly.

"Really? You've got a very pretty name," Ginny said with a smile. "It suits you."

Amalia didn't reply, but the objective was achieved: a faint tinge of pink emerged on her pale cheeks, and her lips curved into a tiny smile. Then she yawned, and said, "Thanks, Misses. I'm going to go to sleep now." She clambered down from Eleanor's lap and padded around to the bed, before getting in and pulling the covers up to her chin.

"We'll be right here if you need us," Ginny promised; Eleanor gave the little girl another hug, and then they left. Before the Head Girl drew the curtains, she picked up a pile of blood-stained clothes and stockings that Amalia had obviously shed.

For a few seconds Eleanor was silent. Then she said quietly, "I want to thank you, Ginny."

"For what?" asked Ginny, bewildered. "If this is about sticking up for you in The Three Broomsticks, then just forget about that, because I already-"

"No." Eleanor held up her hand, just like Dippet had done. "It's not that. It's…" she took a deep breath "Riddle."

Ginny blinked.

Huh?

"Wait… what do you mean?" Ginny asked, still confused.

Eleanor bit her lower lip. "Well, it's just… he's been here seven years – just like me. But… *un* like me – I just," she looked distinctly uncomfortable, "I don't think he's ever had a friend before. Or even just someone who cares for him."

"I-I-" Ginny stammered, feeling her face heat up.

"Ginny," said Eleanor, her voice all *don't try to lie to me* and slightly patronizing, "I doubt there's a single person in all of Hogwarts – except perhaps him – who didn't see you scream, run through blood, mangled bodies, and – *no less* – a cursed barrier to get to him."

The Prefect lowered her head. Her cheeks were hot enough to fry eggs.

"If that's not caring for him, then what the hell is?" Eleanor asked quietly with a slight laugh.

Ginny didn't reply. She considered saying 'I don't' in defence, as usual, but it had just dawned on her that saying that wouldn't be true.

"As you may or not have noticed… well. Despite the whole get-the-hell-away-from-me attitude, you can't deny that he's good-looking," Eleanor added. "I mean, honestly? I don't think that there is a single student over fourth-year who hasn't, at some point, fancied him."

*And **why** are we discussing this, remind me?*

"Hell, I did." Eleanor blushed. "It's just… so many people have tried to get through to him, you know, thinking that someone so handsome was probably just misunderstood and in need of a hug. I think that you're the only person *ever* who's gotten anywhere close to succeeding."

"Mm," said Ginny, aware that she had been quiet for too long and needed to reply. She gave a non-committal shrug of her shoulders and for quite a while there was an awkward hush.

"Well, I'm going to go and see Dippet. Things need sorting out, you know, so… bye," Eleanor gave Ginny a quick hug, and then departed.

Yawning, Ginny realised that she was extremely tired, and she walked over a vacant bed near the one that was occupied by Amalia Boyka. Sitting heavily on it, she peeled off her blood-stained outer robes and kicked off her shoes. She lay down, but, despite her weariness, didn't feel like going to sleep. She looked at the ceiling, thinking about Professor Vander's fate, and also about the fate of –

She averted her eyes from the ceiling and looked across the room at the thin gauze curtains surrounding the bed in the corner.

Madam Royce had left along time ago – she'd gone to private room in the back to work on Professor Vander for a post-mortem.

Ginny sat up, still eyeing the curtains. Unsure, she hovered between indecision, before tucking her wand into her waistband – just incase – and getting up. She tiptoed across the room and then paused before the wispy drapes.

Just go back to bed, Ginny. Just go back to bed.

She pushed the curtains aside and stepped quietly through.

Riddle hadn't coloured any more from his chalky complexion. He was still smudged with blood and his clothes were filthy. He seemed to be either sleeping or unconscious; Ginny thought immediately of her thinking about him sleeping, and how she'd never seen him slumber.

Be careful what you wish for.

He was curled up into a ball – the most un-Riddle position she could imagine – with one hand clenching the blankets unconsciously and the other hidden beneath them. His dark tresses looked like the hair equivalent of a Muggle atomic bomb, and little of his face was visible.

Ginny stepped closer, and then crouched down beside the bed. She rested her elbows on the mattress and peered up at where his face was, hidden behind the messy hair. For reasons unknown, she had an inexplicable urge to see his face, and slowly, hesitantly, she stretched out a hand. Her hand floated in uncertainty near his head, and then as she gently brushed the dark waves out of his face she got a shock.

His eyes were open.

She shrieked.

" *Hell* , Riddle, you *scared* me!" she gasped, clutching at her heart. "I didn't expect you to be awake," she said, and a blush rose on her cheeks as she silently finished the sentence with: *when I was trying to sweep your hair out of your eyes so that I could see your face.*

"I… I didn't… expect you to… visit… but I didn't… scream…" Riddle said quietly, his voice unusually subdued, with a pause between each word, as though speaking was difficult. He gave a tiny sigh, like a very small child, and allowed his dark eyes to flutter closed.

A small smile cracked Ginny's features. She merely watched him for a few seconds, and then she tore her gaze away; looking towards the floor, biting her lip. She looked back up at him, and asked softly, "Are you okay?"

A pause. "…no."

She worried her lower lip again with her teeth, before probing further, "Will you be?"

The answer was barely audible: "…yes."

A relieved sigh tugged from Ginny's lips. She didn't really know what to do. She wasn't much of a nurse. Hermione would have hugging him and comforting him, and somehow knowing *exactly* what to say to make him feel better.

I always wondered how she did that.

What could make the future Dark Lord, evil-in-training, Tom Riddle… feel better?

" *Hey, dude! Wanna kill me?"*

That'll brighten his day.

Utterly at a loss, Ginny settled for asking, "Is there anything I can help you with… anything I can get you?"

Riddle twitched his head; it barely moved, but Ginny knew that it was an attempt at a 'no' gesture.

She cleared her throat. "Um. I'll just – um – go, then, I suppose," she said, trying to sound cheery, as though he wasn't bedridden, cursed and probably dying, and as though a Professor hadn't just been murdered at, allegedly, his hand. She stood-

"No…" Riddle's eyes opened the smallest amount; just enough to see dark, weary eyes through long eyelashes. "Just… stay…"

Ginny's heart swelled with pity. "Okay," she whispered, and drew up a chair to his bedside; crouching had hurt her feet like *hell* . She sat on it and quietly looked at Riddle. She had no idea what to do, or even say. A thousand questions plagued her mind like a swarm of bees, and she let these occupy her mind and fill the silence, trying to work out a dozen puzzles with so many missing pieces that the end picture resembled nothing but space.

A/N: Aw. How sad. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Please review, it makes my day.

Remngo: Thanks! I'll make sure that doesn't happen, don't worry.

Josephine Sawyer: Yes, you're right, and thanks!

ricekrispies: Aw, sorry. I actually didn't get it confiscated. Haha. Lol. Thank you!

Asta-Amkis: Dude, fish are FREAKY! They have weird eyes and weird scales and ew. I just don't like them. Live ones are okay, but I HATE dead ones, and their eyes seriously scare me. Don't worry… he's not dead; just mortally wounded. :D I'm trying to find a place to fit Asta or Amkis in here somewhere. If I can't, I'll put it in the next fic I'm planning, which is another T/G time-travel fic (Evil!Tom instead of Lonely!Tom, though). Thank you!

Hydra27: DAMN that was a brilliant review! I love you! And I love caffeine! WOW! –high five- A fear of clowns and dolls? Yeah, some dolls are creepy (like Chuckie… -shiver-), and *everyone* hates clowns. They scare me so much. And yes, I have a morbid fear of death, as well as an unexplained dislike for fish. I was worried that I was making Ginny too Gryffindor-y. Thank you so much for all the lovely things you reviewed with!

XevenOf9: Interesting theory. I'm not going to make any comment on right or wrong, though.

Storm-brain: Vander? Yes. He was cut to pieces and horribly mangled. Tom? No. He was cursed and had his arm slashed.

chimis: Hehe. I love you too.

peacegirl: Ooh, thanks!

Saene: I've always wanted a cat. They're sort of cute. Whereas my entire family are more of dog-people, so instead we've had five dogs

(not all at the same time, lol). Ooh, I LOVE shiny things. I found an empty Tic Tac box today, and I was obsessed with clicking it open and closed like a mouth and making it talk to people for *ages* but then my Music teacher was like: "what are you doing?" so I stopped. Hehe.

DeadlyCreative: But… the thing is… does he?

00jade: Thank you! Yeah, my brain did that once. I hate it when it does that.

SiRiUsLyInLuV: ARGH! –hides- Don't hurt me. I updated… -cry-

crazedreader: Thanks!

blonde-gym-chick: Aw, thank you!

Amberdream7: I like your pen-name. And as for what happened, we'll find out later. But the basic summary is that Professor Vander (the Charms teacher who I introduced a few chapters ago) was sort of mutilated and murdered, and Tom was cursed.

Leah: Yeaup, you're right! You won't find out what happened for a while, sorry. Thanks!

ShhImNotMVP: Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: Haha. Someone's getting stressy.

audrhole: Lol. I mentioned him a lot. He's the Charms Professor. Thank you!

Faye8222: Thanks, lol!

SwirlyL: Haha, I laughed when I read about your friend stabbing her fish with a pencil. And actually the dead people are called Inferi, lol, not Furies.

Pixar: Don't worry… I won't… I hate fish. YAY! Hating Fish Buddies! –high five-

kyraThePoop: Ah! Cheater! –scowl- Nah, I still love you. Thanks for the review!

The-Quoi: Haha, I LOVE Monty Python. The evil rabbit is so cute. And then IT DEVOURS THEM ALIVE!! Bwahahaha. "But she is a witch! She turned me into a *newt* ! (insert blank stares from everyone else) … I got better." Haha.

BDSanta2001: See, the great thing about this kind of mystery is that it could be ANYONE! And trust me when I say its going to be the person who you least expect… Yay! Two reviews.

X-XsiobhanX-X: Fish freak me out. –glare- Thanks!

P is for Procession

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thank you for so many amazing reviews. Quite an important chapter. Reeeaddd. Nowww.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Five: P is for Procession

" *No…" Riddle's eyes opened the smallest amount; just enough to see dark, weary through long eyelashes. "Just… stay…"*

Ginny's heart swelled with pity. "Okay," she whispered, and drew up a chair to his bedside; crouching had hurt her feet like hell. She sat on it and quietly looked at Riddle. She had no idea what to do, or even say. A thousand questions plagued her mind like a swarm of bees, and she let these occupy her mind and fill the silence, trying to work out a dozen puzzles with so many missing pieces that the end picture resembled nothing but space.

The eighth of December.

The procession began.

"We are gathered here today to remember and commiserate the passing of Cadwygawn Vander, sixty-eight year old Hogwarts Professor. He taught Charms for twelve years, and was Head of Hufflepuff House for eight of those years. He was a fabulous man and we will miss him sincerely. He was not only teacher – he was also brother and husband. We pray that he is happy in whatever life he attains next, and pray him safe passage to it."

The elderly man at the front of the seated crowd snapped his book closed and stepped down from the podium. He blessed the small wooden coffin, and then called, "We now have a few words from various friends, family, and students who wish to remember him."

First stepped up his wife, a kind-looking, portly woman with brown hair and a face blotched with tears. She gave a shaky speech about her husband before subsiding into sobs and returning to her seat, being held tightly by several other women.

Then the brother. Then the aunt. Then the nieces and nephews.

Professor Vander had a large family.

It reminded Ginny of her own family. For the first funeral – Fred's – there had been a massive ceremony. Slowly, with each death, the processions became smaller and smaller, until there was just Ginny, pale and tearful, crying alone over a tombstone that read: *Ronald Bilius Weasley. A hero. Missing in action.* A lie, in stone.

She clutched at her own speech, unconsciously crinkling the cards she held in her hand.

Grace sobbed beside her, into Alden's chest. Alden was weeping silently, his tears flowing down into Grace's curly hair.

"And now… Miss Ginevra Peregrine."

Ginny stood and quietly made her way to the podium, her black skirt flowing around her ankles. She hadn't wanted to make a speech, but, as one of the last people to see Vander, she had been forced into it. The last thing she wanted was to chat to everyone about murder.

Nervously, she cleared her throat. She shifted her speech-cards in her hands and flipped through them quickly. "Um," she said, aware that her 'um' was being echoed across the courtyard by various charms.

Please don't boo. Do people boo at funerals?

The procession couldn't continue until everyone had finished their speeches, and Ginny was holding it up. She tried again.

"Um." She glanced at her cards again. "Oh, screw this," she muttered, and tore the parchment in half. Again, her words were amplified. "I mean, forget this," she corrected hastily, with a wary glance at the vicar nearby.

Awkward…

"Professor Vander was a great teacher," she improvised, her cheeks glowing red. She dug her fingernails into her skirt, trying to quench her anxiety. *Merlin* , she hated funerals. She had to always say speeches, and they had to be solemn and sweet and heart-warming.

She just didn't *do* heart-warming.

She did funny, amusing, make-you-smile stuff. She did crude jokes and imitations of annoying people. None of which was suitable at a funeral.

"He… um. He was really smart – well. Duh, he was a *teacher* – anyway – um. He was smart, yeah, I said that, and he was really nice, too. I mean, I'm hardly the Girl Next Door. But he always over-looked my embarrassing accidents, or my charms gone wrong. I wasn't the top of my class, but I was alright – yet, when I got a tiny thing right, he'd act like I was nominated President. Or Queen. Or something."

She bit her lip.

*Oh Merlin. This is **not** going well…*

"I remember," she quickly said, being hit with inspiration, "this one time. It wasn't even that long ago. Maybe two weeks. Three, tops.

Anyway. Um. We were learning the Aguamenti Charm, and, naturally I was… um. Well. I was crap."

She gasped inwardly.

No! Bad!

"Really bad!" she corrected hurriedly. "I meant, really bad." Another glance to the vicar. He was frowning at her. "I was really bad at the spell and… I cast it too hard. My wand shot out of my hand, hit the desk, and started spinning at high-speed, on the floor, firing water *everywhere* . And… Professor Vander just laughed. He told me I'd have to clear it up," she added, "but he laughed about it."

Some people in the audience were smiling watery smiles.

"He did that a lot," Ginny said, sensing a jack-pot. *This might be heart-warming after all* , she thought gleefully. "You know when something really awkward happens, and everyone's like 'oh, don't worry, we'll laugh about it later'? Well, that was Professor Vander down to a tee. He laughed instantly. Screw – I mean, forget – forget later. He laughed."

More people were smiling.

"I think," said Ginny, "that if there was anything I *really* learned from Vander – *Professor* Vander, that is – and I don't mean things like learning charms and spells and to hold onto your wand during potentially dangerous situations involving *aguamenti…* then what I learnt is to make the most out of life. Don't let anything get you down. Laugh in the face of disaster and possible humiliation. Because our life, contrary to popular belief of teenagers, is great. I loved Vander," she panicked, "not in the creepy way, no offence Mrs. Vander! – but I loved him, in a teacher-student kind of way, and I'll really miss him."

She finished, and grinned.

Wow. That really worked.

Triumphant, Ginny returned to her seat and sat down, heaving a massive sigh at not having to make any more speeches for a *long* time. Provided, of course, that no-one else died in the short-term.

"That was really good," said Grace, her voice hoarse from crying, but smiling at her.

"Meeerrmpgh," Ginny moaned and hid her face in her hands, going bright red.

The first day of the Christmas holidays had gotten off to an excellent start – a storm. It tore at the walls, and anyone who dared to step outside, or even just open a window, would be swept away in a torrent of rain. Ginny stood at a window at the end of the sixth-floor corridor. She could hear the Gryffindors thumping about in their common room upstairs, but the noise didn't bother her. She idly watched the rivulets of water crawl down the windowpane and gather in a puddle on the sill.

After the funeral, Grace and Alden had both returned home to their families – they were going to return in time for the Yule Ball, but they hadn't wanted to stay in Hogwarts. Not when a dangerous murderer was loose in the castle. Ginny couldn't blame them.

The redhead had returned to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, but, as if to spite her, the Hufflepuff ghost had disappeared. Also, the book from the Restricted Section, on Svengali, had disappeared too. Ginny suspected that her dormitory had devoured it. It was messy enough to.

Ginny wore her hair loose in fly-away waves, and she pushed it over her shoulders. Staring at her reflection, she noted with some satisfaction that she had put on weight since the last time she looked at herself.

" *Kill…* "

She whirled around and stared down the corridor.

No-one was there.

" *Kill…* "

"Who is that?" she yelled. She waited for a response; anything. But nothing came. After a few seconds of standing stock-still, listening intently to the silence, she decided that it was her imagination, and she walked down the corridor. She wanted a shower. Maybe it would help her relax – stop hearing things.

Nodding to herself in agreement to this thought, she headed off down the corridor towards the stairs.

" *You've got to find your balance* ," Ginny sang, rinsing shampoo out of her hair. " *You've got to open your eyes* ." Her nose was itchy, and she raised one soap-covered hand to scratch it – and at that precise moment, she sneezed.

Soap fired up her nose. She grabbed at the wall, coughing and spluttering, sneezing hysterically; her eyes burning and streaming tears.

"Ow," she whimpered, "ow, ow, ow!" *Achoo.* "Ow!" *Achoo.* She bent over and gave one last, massive sneeze. The pain slowly subsided, though her nose was throbbing, and her eyes still were watering.

" *Kill…* "

Ginny stood bolt-upright.

" *Kill… must… kill…"*

In that instant, she knew that she hadn't imagined it.

" *KILL…* " It was getting quieter. It was moving away.

Ginny shut off the shower and jumped out. She ran into her dormitory and pulled on a sunshine-yellow summer dress – the easiest garment to slip on quickly – followed by a lime-green cardigan, and pink flats that clashed with both. Then, sodden hair flying out with a spray of hot water, she sprinted up the stairs to the common room.

"Miss Peregrine," called Professor Slughorn's voice. "Just the girl I wanted to see."

"Not now, sorry, sir!" yelled Ginny, racing past him.

" *What* ? Miss Peregrine, return here *this instant* !" Slughorn was running after her.

"I can't!" Ginny panicked. The voice was moving faster than she was, and she was going to lose it.

" *KILL…* "

"It's going to kill someone!" Ginny shouted. It was as though she'd said the magic words: Slughorn paled and stopped dead. She took this advantage and sprinted through a tapestry, up a series of steps that lead her to the third floor…

…now where?

" *Kill… tear… rip… BLOOD…"*

It was going up.

The stairs, where are the stairs when you need them?

Ginny located them and thundered up to the fourth-floor corridor.

" *Blood… kill… KILL…"*

The Hospital Wing doors! That's where it was going!

She pushed her legs harder, running as fast as she could, flat-out, painfully aware of who was inside the Hospital Wing.

Please don't! Please don't!

She slammed through the doors of the Hospital Wing; raced down the aisle. Her heart pounded. The voice was going the length of the Wing – towards where Riddle was.

" *KILL!"*

"Riddle!" Ginny cried, wrenching the curtains open.

There was no-one there.

"…what?" she gasped.

"Miss Peregrine, are you okay?" asked a kindly voice from behind the redhead. It was Madam Royce, looking concerned.

"Where's Riddle?" Ginny demanded, not caring if she was being rude.

Madam Royce's face twisted into a look of sympathy. "I'm sorry, dear. He was transferred to St. Mungoes' this morning."

Ginny stared at the empty, perfectly made-up bed. What on earth? If Riddle was gone, then why had the voice brought her here?

" *Hearing voices is the first sign of madness* …" It was the voice. It sounded malicious and gleeful. Then, it was gone.

"What's going on?" Slughorn shouted, booming through the doors. "Miss Peregrine, I command an explanation!"

"For what?" asked Madam Royce, looked shocked at this out-burst.

"That girl," Slughorn pointed a chubby finger at Ginny angrily, "sprinted past me, ignored me when I spoke to her, and then shouted at me that someone was going to be killed!"

" *What* ?" Madam Royce gawped at Ginny.

Slughorn stared beadily at the redhead for a moment. Then he snarled, "I suppose you think it's funny, do you? Joking about death?"

Joking…?

"What – sir – sir, it wasn't a joke!" Ginny cried. "I heard a voice! It was – sir, it was saying that it was going to-"

"I apologize for interrupting what I'm sure would have been an excellent punch-line, but I don't want to hear it, Miss Peregrine," Slughorn snapped. "I will be speaking with Headmaster Dippet. This matter *will* be addressed, I assure you." He straightened his robes, and then, with a haughty sniff, stormed away.

Ginny wasn't sure what to do. She stood still. Then she sank onto the now-empty bed beside her, where Riddle had been barely forty-eight hours previously.

St. Mungoes…

"Why's he gone to St. Mungoes'?" asked Ginny abruptly. "I mean – he said that he was going to be fine when I spoke to him. He's… he's not *that* sick, is he?"

Madam Royce raised a grey eyebrow. "Miss Peregrine, he was bleeding copiously and cursed," she pointed out.

Ginny looked worriedly at her feet. She hoped he'd be okay…

A/N: -gasp- Maybe I'll kill him, just to spite you. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . Please review, it makes my day.

The-Quoi: Thank you! Yes, Monty Python is awesome possum.

00jade: I can't tell you *that* ! It'd ruin the plot! – sticks tongue out-

X-XsiobhanX-X: Hell, I'll screw ruining the next chapters and say yes. And you're MEAN! You shouldn't use phobias against people.

Josephine Sawyer: Yeah, I thought that it might have been over the top, but I wasn't thinking about like this – that she'd been surrounded by War, pain and panic for so long, and now she thought she'd finally left it all behind when someone was murdered. Erm, the answer to what he was trying to say "how did you-" will be explained much later. Thank you, I liked that as well.

Kriz: Indeed, I do feel immensely honoured. Thank you! And, -whispers- yes, he is.

Faye8222: Thanks, I love your patience.

BDSanta2001: We'll find out latteerrr. Lol.

Audrhole: Er. I can put her in. I haven't actually put her in yet. Thanks so much!

kyraThePoop: Thank you! Damn good prediction! Yes, a funeral. An

SwirlyL: Ouch. I came three-hundreth-and-something in a n 800m run with a thousand people. Haha, that made me laugh!

creative-writing-girl13: YUP!

Saene: Yeah, I was talking to my friend, and I said something to tell her, and I was like: "OOH OOH OOH, GUESS WHAT – er. Um. Wait. Damn." Thanks!

Intricacy: Thanks!

DeadlyCreative: Well, this is REALLY AU. Because, if you remember, there weren't originally any murderous pyschopaths in 1950s Hogwarts, either.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Yes, I know… it's coming soonnnnn….

peacegirl: Thanks!

Hyrda27: I don't know what Dead Silence is about. But I know what you mean about jumping – me and my friends watched White Noise at a sleepover, and everyone was budging up to me because I kept screaming predictions, like: "OHMIGOD SOMETHING'S GONNA JUMP AT HIM" or "OHMIGOD SHE'S GONNA DIE" or "SHIT, DON'T DO THAT!" Lol! And then something would happen, and we'd all scream and cling to each other. Lmao. Good times. Thank you SO much, I adore your reviews.

KayRose: Aw, indeed.

Amberdream7: That clears what up?

storm-brain: Of course. It's all a very devious plot by the house-elves. WHO GUESSED *THAT* ?

Trumpetina: I like your pen-name! Thanks!

XxRandomHeartxX: Thank you! Eh, procrastination is my life. In a summarized sort of way.

TurnSmileShiftRepeat: Can I just say that your pen-name is AMAZING? I love it! Thanks! And I'm afraid that nothing's ever that easy, and I like my fictional buddies to earn their happy-ever-afters. Lots of crying and shouting. –grin-

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I just finished writing Chapter Sixty, and I *ACTUALLY* burst into tears. I'm so pathetic. Meh.

P is for Preparing Speeches

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for the reviews! There's more Tom in this chappie. Nice and fluffy. Fairly amusing at some points. Well, I thought so. Anyway. Enjoy it. Or not. Whichever

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Six: P is for Preparing Speeches

Ginny stared at the empty, perfectly made-up bed. What on earth? If Riddle was gone, then why had the voice brought her here? "Why's he gone to St. Mungoes'?" asked Ginny abruptly. "I mean – he said that he was going to be fine when I spoke to him. He's… he's not ***that*** *sick, is he?"*

Madam Royce raised a grey eyebrow. "Miss Peregrine, he was bleeding copiously and cursed," she pointed out. Ginny looked worriedly at her feet. She hoped he'd be okay…

She scanned the chart of the wards. She couldn't see which one he could possibly be in. She hoped she'd be let in. Regardless of her worries about this, Ginny continued forwards as the queue moved on.

"Hello, St. Mungoes reception, my name is Kiana Port. How may I help you?" drawled a bored, middle-aged woman who, Ginny thought, looked as though there was nothing she would like *less* than to help her.

"Um. Hi. My name's Ginevra Peregrine, I'm looking for a Mr. T. M. Riddle," said Ginny, fiddling with her wand nervously in her coat pocket.

Kiana Port looked through a huge list of papers. "We do indeed have a Mr. T. M. Riddle staying here," she said boredly after a moment of scanning the miniscule text.

Ginny smiled with relief. "Okay, thank you. What ward is he in?" she asked.

"And, Miss Peregrine, what relation are you to Mr. Riddle?" inquired Port unenthusiastically.

"Oh. Er. I'm a friend." Ginny frowned – what did this have to do with anything?

"Well, Miss Peregrine, his ward is confidential information, I'm afraid."

" *What* ?"

"I'm sorry," said Port, who didn't sound sorry at all. "He is in a very secure area, and only immediate family are allowed in."

Furious, Ginny considering shouting, 'he doesn't have any family! I'm probably the only person he's got!', but, for a plan she was rapidly hatching, that would be a bad idea.

"I apologize for wasting your time," Ginny said angrily, and stalked out of the hospital.

"'ello, I am 'ere to see Monsieur T. Riddle," said the pretty blonde woman, tossing sheets of silvery blonde hair out of her face. "I believe 'e is 'ere, non?"

"Yes, he is. May I ask what relation you are to him?" drawled Kiana Port, scratching something down on parchment. Probably doodles.

The blonde woman – obviously French – giggled. "'e is my fiancé," she declared happily, thrusting a hand forwards and, wiggling her fingers, displaying what looked to be an extremely expensive engagement ring. Then a look of concern crossed her beautiful features. "But, pleez," she added severely, "eef my muzzer or fazzer come – do not tell zem. It eez to be a surprise."

"Yeah, yeah," said Port dismissively. "I need to take your name."

"Ah, *oui.* Félicie Tatienne. What ward eez Tom een?" the woman inquired, leaning anxiously over the counter. "I 'ope 'e eez feeling well now. I don't want 'im to be, eh, *le grumpy* !" she giggled again.

Port didn't look impressed with this giddy behaviour. "Sixth floor. Babatunde Ward." She banged a small hammer. " *Next* !"

" *Merci! Á bien tôt* !" the woman chirped. She gave a cute wave and then flounced away, her blue poodle-skirt swirling a good inch above her knees, high-heels clacking noisily, blonde hair billowing behind her like a cape. She attracted the eyes of many males before she entered a nearby lift.

On the ground floor, in stepped Félicie Tatienne, French beauty.

And on the sixth floor, out stepped Ginevra Peregrine – a brilliant actress.

"Hello," she said to the sixth-floor receptionist who was eyeing her suspiciously. "Félicie Tatienne. Miss Kiana Port should have informed you that I was coming up. I'm here to see Tom Riddle."

The receptionist didn't look satisfied by this. She rifled through papers, held one up… "Hm. Yes, I suppose. I'll have a nurse take you through," she said, still looking warily at the redhead, as though she might run at any moment.

How many people do I have to go through? Will there be a security check as well?

A friendly-looking, rather overweight man came down the corridor. "Hello," he said cheerily. "Welcome to the Babatunde Ward of Extreme Cursing. This way, please."

As they made their way through the ward, Ginny looked through a few windows, and was horrified to see the state of some of people in there. There was a woman who was basically just a puddle of blood with a gaunt, grey face. There was a man having convulsions that shook the whole bed. There was a very small girl whose eyes had turned scarlet, who Ginny saw try to attack a nurse.

Ginny paled. Was Riddle *that* sick?

The male nurse saw her face and hastily comforted her. "Don't worry about that," he said. "Those are the more severe patients; the permanent patients. The further down the corridor, the less severe the patient's problem is. You'll be glad to hear that Riddle is in the second room from the end. And… here we are."

Suddenly feeling very worried, Ginny tried to peer through the glass. She couldn't see him.

"Mr. Riddle, are you awake?" asked the man cheerfully, entering the room. "Your fiancée is here!"

Ginny smacked her forehead. *Stupid! Stupid! No!* Feeling warmth flood her face, she looked up through the window. Someone had stirred, and she could now identify which one was Riddle – the one frowning in bewilderment.

"I don't have a-" she heard him start to say. Then he turned to the window and saw her.

She smiled nervously and waved. She glanced to the nurse to check that she could come in ("Go ahead", said the friendly man, and left)

and then entered the room shyly. "Hey, Riddle," she said brightly.

"Funny," said Riddle, raising an eyebrow slightly. "I don't recall asking you to marry me."

"Don't worry, it was a long time ago," teased Ginny. She rolled her eyes. "It was the only way they'd let me in." She grinned. "Look, I've even got the ring!"

"Lovely," Riddle said quietly, before closing his eyes with an almost inaudible sigh.

Again, the uncomfortable feeling of not knowing what to do or say. "Um. How are you?" she tried, sitting on a stool nearby.

"How do I *look* ?" Riddle muttered.

"Um. You look…" Ginny flickered her gaze over him. His hair was even more of a messy cloud than it had been the last time she saw him, his eyes were rimmed with tired black, and soft dark stubble on his rectangular jaw created an ill-looking contrast with his near-translucently pale skin. "…good!"

Riddle cracked open his eyes and raised an eyebrow in an *are you insane* look.

"Honestly?" Ginny said, cringing. "You look like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards."

Now the corners of Riddle's lips twisted into a half-smirk, his face practically speaking the words 'I thought as much, thank you for your opinion' in his quiet, well-pronounced voice.

Ginny observed him. He looked like a shadow of the Head Boy, of the Riddle, that she knew. It was inconvenient – *you know, what with having to murder him and all* – she pushed this to the back of her mind – but she felt an almost agonizing pang of worry for the dark seventeen-year-old. "Riddle…" she said slowly.

"Mm?" Riddle mumbled.

She mentally prepared the speech she was going to say, and then came out with it. "Riddle, a while ago – two days, maybe three – a friend of mine was really sick," she began, hoping he'd see where she was getting. "And… and I asked him, ' *are you okay'* and he said ' *no* '. Then, I said ' *will you be okay* '. And he said ' *yes* '."

She paused. Riddle's eyes were open now; fixed on her, trying to understand what point she was trying to make.

Biting her lip, she leaned forwards, resting her elbows, together, on the mattress, and rested her chin in between them. "Did you mean that?" she asked softly.

Something flickered in his dark eyes. "Yes."

Ginny gave a little laugh. "Did you mean *that* ?" she asked, her tone teasing, but still serious all the same.

He looked away. Riddle took a deep breath, and then lifted his eyes back to hers, and said quietly, "Yes." The smallest of smiles curved his lips, and there it was. It was like the sun coming out after a year of non-stop rain. It was the first time that Ginny had ever seen him smile – really and truly smile. It lit up his face like a small boy at Easter, getting chocolates and hugs and little toys inside wicker baskets.

And, then – just like the sun, after a year of rain – it was gone.

Her heart lifted, and feeling strangely cheery – wanting to have another glimpse of the sun, Ginny asked, "When do you think you'll be coming back?" she pouted. "I have no-one to shout at."

Dry amusement glittered in Riddle's dark eyes. "Won't Reeve do?" he asked.

"Alas, no," said Ginny. "If I shout at him, I'll end getting *really* pissed off, and I'd probably rip off his-" She stopped mid-sentence, remembering who she was talking to. "Eh." She racked her brain. "His… well. It'll be painful. And the Reeve family line will come to an abrupt and ungainly end," she finished.

Riddle's left eye twitched slightly in what was undoubtedly a wince. This, more than her unwieldy sentence, made Ginny laugh. She told him about the funeral, and about her less-than-politically-correct speech. She told him about her plans for the Yule Ball. And he listened – smirking in the right places, injecting a sarcastic comment here or there. Yet, unlike with other people, this didn't seem to ruin the story. It was just… unexplainable.

Then, suddenly, Ginny realised that her two hours were up, and that she had to leave. The male nurse was hovering outside, so that he could take her away.

"I have to go," she said awkwardly. "Sorry." Her quick, uncomfortable ' *sorry* ' reminded her of the long apology she had planned about what had happened at Hogsmeade. She had totally forgotten to say it, and she didn't think that she had time now.

"Oh."

"Yeah."

Ginny swallowed hard. "Um. I'll see you later, I s'pose," she said, biting her lip for what seemed the thousandth time since she arrived at St. Mungoes.

Riddle nodded. "Goodbye," he said quietly, formal as ever.

"Get better soon," Ginny said, standing up. She looked down at Riddle, lying on the hospital bed, and stifled a laugh. "Oh, and Riddle? Shave."

The ill Head Boy looked up at her, a bewildered frown creasing his brows.

"Sorry!" she giggled. "It's just… you look like a beaver."

Riddle raised his eyebrows in an I- *see* gesture, and then said tiredly, "Peregrine, I think that you're probably the only person I've ever met who would compare me to a beaver."

"Aw. You know you love me," Ginny teased. "Alright, Sleeping Beauty, I *really* do have to go before the nurse calls security to take me out by force."

"That would make my day," mumbled Riddle. His eyes were closed and he looked like he was ready to fall asleep at any moment.

Ginny watched him for a moment, and then turned away. She was about to walk towards the door when she heard him speak again:

"…I heard what Fionn said."

Much to the dismay of the male nurse outside, Ginny swivelled back to face him. "What?"

"…in the Hospital Wing. Before she left…"

Frowning, Ginny ran over Eleanor's words a few days previously.

" *Ginny, I doubt there's a single person in all of Hogwarts – except perhaps him – who didn't see you scream, run through blood, mangled bodies, and – **no less** – a cursed barrier to get to him. If that's not caring for him, then what the hell is?"*

In the space of approximately half a second, faster than the eye could follow, every blood cell in Ginny's body surged into her cheeks. She could see herself in the polished floor, and was even afraid that she might explode.

"Oh. Um. Well." She tried to keep her voice from a stammer. 'Tried' being the operative word.

She felt extremely embarrassed at having been caught discussing how Riddle had no friends. There was never a moment where she had more wanted to turn into a slug and eat herself.

"…Thank you," Riddle murmured, his words so soft that Ginny had to strain to hear them, and then his breathing slowed, and the redhead knew that he was truly asleep.

Face still glowing like the setting sun, Ginny turned and left the room. She spared a backwards glance through the window, and then departed the hospital, feeling as though she might implode from blushing so much… but also oddly pleased.

A/N: Aw. How cute. –huggles Ginny and Tom- Meh! Please review. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

audrhole: Um. A few things that you may have forgotten from earlier chapters. A: Ginny *is* a Parselmouth in this fic, and B: the Basilisk dies in Harry's second-year… which is currently forty-two years into the future. So the Basilisk is still alive. Thanks, though!

The-Quoi: Eek! –hides- Haha, lol, your ideas of what Slughorn should do made me laugh… hehe.

Faye8222: Since you sign off your reviews as Kallie, can I call you that next time? Because typing your pen-name is exhausting mentally. Well, not really. But yeah. Lol. Thank you!

Annabel-lurvs-purple: I love purple too. Hehe. Thanks! Um, because then you wouldn't have as much time to think about the chapters, and you might skip bits or not understand properly.

crazedreader: Oops. DAMN YOUR CLEVERNESS!

creative-writing-girl13: Aw, we all have that little part of us that cheers for psychopaths.

chimis: YEAH! Woo, sixty!

kyraThePoop: Haha, lol. Sleep tight!

storm-brain: Hahaha. Revolt Of The House-Elves. I like it. It has a catchy ring to it. I'll try it.

ShhImNotMVP: Thank you!

X-XsiobhanX-X: -gasp- That's HORRIBLE! I don't like you anymore. –pout- Don't worry, he'll be fine.

Saene: Lmao, that made me laugh. I like your ranting, I look forwards to more in your next review.

DeadlyCreative: Ah, the senile dementia is setting in, I suppose. Thank you!

BDSanta2001: Haha, yeah. I didn't actually think about that. Hm.

XxRandomHeartxX: Ooh, I HATE when that happens. Thank you! Well… um… how long? I'd say… about eighty chapters. –cringe- It's very long.

00jade: Everyone can answer you, silly. They just don't want to. Yeah, I named the Basilisk as well. But I named him Mascie. Teehee.

Eternal Passion: Thank you!

Exhexohex: Ooh, thank you so much!

P is for Plowing Into People

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: More reviews! Three-hundred! WOW! More Tomness. And some Quidditchness. Have fun.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Seven: P is for Plowing Into People

"… *I heard what Fionn said… in the Hospital Wing. Before she left… …thank you," Riddle murmured, his words so soft that Ginny had to strain to hear them, and then his breathing slowed, and the redhead knew that he was truly asleep.*

Face still glowing like the setting sun, Ginny turned and left the room. She spared a backwards glance through the window, and then departed the hospital, feeling as though she might implode from blushing so much… but also oddly pleased.

The fifteenth of December. Five days until the Yule Ball (they had decided that it wouldn't actually be at Christmas, because many people wanted to spend the day with their families).

Ginny was so excited; she couldn't wait. However, there was only one problem – five days to go, and she didn't have anything to wear. On the way out of lunch, the redhead mentioned this to Grace, who had returned a few days ago. The reaction that her friend had, you'd have thought she said 'I'm getting married to Slughorn' or something like that.

Grace gasped. "You're *joking* , right?" she gaped. Then, without further ado, she snatched Ginny's arm and dragged her away.

"Help!" Ginny shrieked to an amused-looking Alden. " *Help* !"

Alden merely laughed.

I'll pay you back for this, thought Ginny crossly, scowling at him.

Ten minutes later, Ginny was staring in horror at her reflection. " *No* ," she said flatly. "I'm not wearing this."

It – known better to herself as The Poofy-Sleeved Horror – was white and shaped a bit like a cloud at the bottom, separated into distinguishable body parts only by wide pink ribbons.

"What?" asked Grace. "It suits you."

"Get it off. Now."

The brunette Slytherin huffed. " *Fine* ."

Next was a floaty green number that Ginny did, admittedly, like the colour of… she just hated the dress.

"No."

"No."

"No."

"What answer were you *expecting* ?!"

"Ew no."

Grace sighed. "This?" she held the last dress up.

"No-" Ginny automatically said, and then she looked at it. It wasn't half bad. In fact, it looked really pretty. "Maybe."

"Try it on!" Grace said enthusiastically.

"You're like a five-year-old," Ginny laughed, and she disappeared into the bathroom. A moment later, she emerged wearing it.

"THAT'S SO NICE ON YOU!" Grace shouted.

"Okay, okay! It's nice – I get it – keep it down," Ginny shushed her friend. She glanced in the mirror. "It's okay, I suppose," she lied, ignoring her brain screaming, *MINE* !

"Cool. That means that you're wearing it," said Grace, and she started to put in pins and extra stitching so that it would fit (Ginny flushed red with humiliation when the hem had to be raised ten inches).

When they left to find Alden, Ginny couldn't help but grin. She was going to look spectacular – just as she needed to, as she fully intended to make that retard Scott see what he could have had.

Slytherin-Ravenclaw. Ginny pulled her green robes tight around her and listened impatiently to Jack Swithin's pep-talk speech. Pep-talks were supposed to be short, but, in the style of Oliver Wood, it was so long-winded that she was certain that the Quidditch pitch would decompose before they got onto it.

"-Malfoy, you're going to behave today, or you're off the team. You know what I mean. Flax and Peregrine – just do what you did last time. Okay," Jack clapped his hands. "I think that's it."

"Hm?" said Magnus sleepily, lifting his head up from his folded arms.

Jack scowled at him. "Okay, everyone up. We're going on," he said, firing one last glare at Magnus.

Ginny snatched up her borrowed broomstick (she hadn't saved up enough yet for her own. Buying loads of sweets for Riddle hadn't

helped) and marched onto the field, behind Flax and Malfoy. The winter air hit her like a sledgehammer, and she shivered. She was glad that she'd wore her twenty-first century jeans under her Quidditch robes.

The cheering and applause exploded as they rose into in the air, in a semi-circle formation, opposite the Ravenclaws (Magnus flew to his hoops).

Jack flew forwards and clasped the hand of the Ravenclaw Captain. Then he returned to his place and waited.

A pause…

TOOT!

The whistle blew harshly, and Ginny dived forwards for the Quaffle, which had just been hurled into the air. She swooped upwards, swerving past the Ravenclaws and took their clumsy attempt at diving for the Quaffle as an advantage moment to power towards the Ravenclaw hoops.

"And Perergine is firing away to try and score, followed swiftly by Flax, she passes to Flax, Flax to Malfoy, Peregrine again, Flax – *oooh* , he's dropped it – caught by Malfoy, tossed to Peregrine – *score* !"

Raucous shouts of cheering and triumph echoed through the stadium from the green-clad section of the stands.

Grinning at the goal she had made, she fired a smug look at the Ravenclaw keeper – namely, Scott - and then shot after the Quaffle again.

"Reeve passes to Lynn, Lynn to Odgello to Yates – *fabulous* interception from Malfoy, passes to Flax, back to Malfoy, Flax, Peregrine – *long* pass to Malfoy – *score* !"

Reeve glared at Malfoy, Ginny, and Rupert Flax. Ginny tossed him a winning smile. He hurled the Quaffle down the pitch.

Up the pitch, down the pitch. Slytherin's score rose steadily. Ravenclaw started to catch up.

Seventy-fifty.

Come on , Ginny thought desperately, glancing sideways at Vegrandis, the Slytherin seeker. He was floating around the left side of the pitch. *Hurry up and find the snitch* !

Seventy-sixty.

Eighty-sixty.

Ninety-sixty.

Then, as Ginny hurtled down the field, Quaffle tucked in the crook of her elbow, she saw a familiar blur of gold, near the Ravenclaw goal-hoops.

But where was Vegrandis?

She looked around, still flying forwards at high-speed, and saw him, several metres below her. On a flash of inspiration, she dropped the Quaffle.

"Damn," she said loudly.

"And Peregrine's dropped the Quaffle, she's diving after it-"

Ginny swooped down, faster, faster, and just as she caught the Quaffle and swooped up, she hissed to Vegrandis, " *Ravenclaw goalposts* ." Then she was away, passing back and forth with the other Slytherin chasers. As Flax scored another goal, she glanced backwards, and saw Vegrandis surreptitiously trying to sneak closer to the hoops.

"The snitch!" she cried, pointing in the opposite direction. The gaze of the Ravenclaw seeker snapped to where her finger was directed.

Then, in the blink of an eye, the willowy, ginger-blonde haired fifth-year seeker was tearing towards Scott, an aggressive, determined look in his eye.

"HAS VEGRANDIS SEEN THE SNITCH?" roared the commentator. "Ooh, clever diversion from Peregrine, Vegrandis is racing to the Ravenclaw goalposts, Cavalier is at his heels – good *Merlin* , that's fast flying – they're going faster – they're going to hit the posts – THEY'RE GOING TO CRASH INTO THE HOOPS!-"

And a split-second later, in what even Ginny had to admit was a truly spectacular save, Vegrandis dragged the nose of his broom upwards, shot towards the sky like a missile, and snatched the Snitch out of the air, a few feet above an oblivious, and bewildered, Scott.

Cavalier, the Ravenclaw seeker, however, smashed into the left goal-hoop at full speed.

"OH, and that looked *painful* ! But Slytherin has got the Snitch, Slytherin win! Two hundred and fifty to sixty! Slytherin… WIN!"

Ginny let out a very un-lady-like roar of happiness, and did an odd sort of twirl on her broomstick. "WOOOOO!" she yelled, speeding towards the group hug (well. Slytherins aren't very cuddly people. It was more of a group slamming-sweaty-bodies-together-and-grunting kind of thing) and wedging herself in between Vegrandis and JACK Swithin.

"We did it!" she cheered.

"Yeah," agreed Jack. "I saw you telling Vegrandis where the Snitch was. And I saw your diversionary tactic - good work."

"Aw, thanks!" said Ginny cheerfully as they untangled their arms and robes and broomstick handles from each other and lowered themselves down onto the ground of the pitch.

"Thanks," said Vegrandis, with a smile. The fifth-year had always seemed quite shy, but nice. "I didn't notice the Snitch," he admitted as they walked straight through the changing rooms and out the other sides – it was the holidays, and there weren't any classes, so why bother changing?

Ginny grinned. "Anytime. That was a good game. And by *Merlin* that was a good pull-up. If I tried that, you would all be scraped me off the sides of the posts," she said flatly.

Vegrandis laughed. "What, you mean like Cavalier?" he joked.

"Yeah!" she turned back to look at the other seeker, draped inelegantly through the hoop, looking broken and battered, while his team tried to get him down. She laughed, too.

The Slytherin seeker's blue eyes flickered over her face. "Say," he started to say, "are you going with anyone to the-"

However, Ginny had tuned out completely. She'd just seen someone leaning against the door to the Entrance Hall. Someone sporting a white cast on their left forearm. Someone tall, pale and dark.

"Riddle!" she squealed, sprinting up the stone path towards him, grubby second-hand Quidditch robes billowing out behind her.

He stood up straight, the smallest of smirks twisting the corner of his thin mouth. He opened his mouth to say something, evidently expecting her to stop.

She didn't.

He only had time to frown and say, "Peregrine, slow-" before she plowed into him at about a hundred miles an hour, flung her arms

around his stomach and hugged him tightly.

Riddle actually stepped backwards; something that would, in normal people, have translated into stumbling and falling over. "O *kay* , Peregrine," he said bemusedly. "It's nice to see you, too, but I don't quite feel the urge to spontaneously attempt to rugby-tackle *you* to the floor."

Realising what she was doing, Ginny flushed bright red and let go of him as though he was on fire. As though her face *wasn't* ready to combust, she said cheekily, "I didn't knock you to the floor, did I? Anyway," she pouted. "It wasn't a *rugby-tackle* . It was a glomp."

"A *what* ?" echoed Riddle incredulously.

Damn. Time period . Mentally slapping herself, she said, "Never mind."

"I'm not even going to inquire as to what a… *glomp* is," said Riddle, shaking his head slightly.

" *Never mind* ," Ginny pressed onto him. "It doesn't matter. It's just like a hug."

"Do you call that a hug?" Riddle raised an eyebrow. "I call that a potentially lethal assault on my person."

"Pah." Ginny flapped a hand dismissively at him. "It *would* have been lethal had you been shorter. However, you're colossally tall instead, so you didn't have to worry."

Riddle opened his mouth to say something, and then Ginny realised that his mouth wasn't flashing or at all shiny. "Your retainer!" she interrupted him. "It's – where'd it go?"

"After I left St. Mungoes', I went… home. While I was there, I was ordered to the dentist. I don't have to wear it any more," said Riddle

with a slight shrug, though in his eyes he looked embarrassed and rather pleased.

Ginny was going to give him a congratulations in reply, but then Vegrandis stormed crossly through the doors, shoving past them.

"Hey!" Ginny called after the seeker, remembering that he had said something to her. "What was that you were saying to me a second ago? Sorry, I just kind of ditched you. What did you say?"

"Doesn't matter," said Vegrandis angrily.

"Palmer!" Ginny called after him despairingly.

"Who the *hell* said you could call me by my first name?" Vegrandis snarled, whirling about to face her.

Okay, maybe not so shy and nice as I thought!

"Sorry for caring," snapped Ginny.

"If you must know, I was asking you to the Ball!" Vegrandis growled. "But I take it back – you're obviously going with lover-boy here."

"Hey!" Ginny said furiously. "I'm sorry that I cut you off, and no, I am *not* , for a matter of fact, going with *lover-boy* here!"

"I wouldn't go with you anyway, you stupid Mudblood filth!" Vegrandis spat.

Eyes narrowing, Ginny prepared to lunge forwards at him. She wasn't sure what she planned to do. Claw at his eyes, probably. However, instead she crashed into Riddle's back, as had quickly stepped between them. Irritated at him spoiling her fun, she peered around his side.

"That, I believe, will be a week's detention with Slughorn for offensive and discriminating language, Vegrandis," said Riddle coldly.

Vegrandis glared, and muttered darkly, " *Biased arsehole.* "

"Two weeks," said Riddle, his jaw set and his tone icy. "Did you think I didn't hear that?"

"I don't care," Vegrandis sneered, displaying true Slytherin spirit. "You can have her. As the saying goes, blood should stick together. Or in this case-"

"Okay, let me deal with this," said Ginny, storming out from behind Riddle. Before a single syllable could be said in protest, she had whirled her wand out and pointed it between the Slytherin seeker's eyes.

Vegrandis made a small whimpering noise before gathering his courage and hissing one last, " *Mudblood* !"

Ginny mock-gasped. "Oh *no* !" she 'cried'. "I'm a *Mudblood* ! My blood… is mud!" she let out a bark of derisive, humourless laughter. " *Does it **look** like I give a damn ?*" she considered stabbing him in the eye with her wand, just as a warning. She decided not to. "See, the thing is, Vegrandis, that I don't care. That's the wonderful thing about me. You can call me Mudblood and filthy and worthless until the cows come home – and I'm not going to care. I'm not going to run away and cry. Admittedly, I'll probably jinx your head off, stemming from the position of mercy I have you in now, but *I don't care* !"

"I'll… I'll get you for this," growled Vegrandis.

"Will you?" said Ginny fiercely. " *Vermus nez* !"

Green light exploded from the tip of her wand, and massive slimy winged creatures crawled from Vegrandis and started to attack his face.

"Making friends, all the way – just making friends," said a cynical voice from behind her.

"Shut it, you," said Ginny, rolling her hazel eyes. "I just defended you. Though I have to confess I was impressed by your heroic attempt at protecting me."

The smallest smudge of pink was discernible on Riddle's cheeks. He was looking down at her with something strange and unreadable in his eyes. Like a kind of respect, mixed with sadness and something else that made Ginny's stomach hurt.

A/N: Sad. But nice and fluffy. Please review. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

kyraThePoop: We all love Ginny and Tom. And Tom. Especially Tom. –giggle- Svengali – soon. Tom better – you just saw it. Thanks!

Intricacy: Thank you! Aw, I'll pay attention to you on your birthday. –huggle- HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Hey, you don't need *friends* or a *life* . All you need is a chapter of fluffy fanfiction and lots of chocolate.

Hydra27: Ewww. Just hearing about it makes me shiver. White Noise is brilliant. I hadn't planned to make him tease her about the marriage thing, but I think I'll put that in. Thanks for the idea and the review. DAMN CAT! Leave the reviewers alone!

Storm-brain: hem hem. Say… eighty chapters? –cringe- Sorry. It's very long. You can give up on it now if you want. I'll just publish a oneshot about the house-elves. But nothing too long. Happy?

Annabel-lurvs-purple: Thanks!

Pixar: Hahaha! Can I use that phrase in here at some point? 'I think I might vomit rainbows and perhaps a few bunnies'. HAHAHHAH! So funny. Anywho. Thanks!

AppleC0re: Thanks! And I can't tell you the answer to that. Haha.

SerenityKaitlyn: Really? Cool. I'm the same age as you. –highfive- WOO! Yes, thanatophobia is a fear death, and I'll get the Dark Lord in contact with you very soon. –winkwink-

LovesYouVewyMuch!: Haha. I like your pen-name. Thanks!

BDSanta2001: LMAO, your review made me laugh. Lol, I wish. –sigh-

Darkangel24700: Thanks!

Chimis: Ah, so cute.

Kriz: Yeah, basically, Ginny transformed herself into Fleur. Except shorter and with a different name. Thanks so much!

Exhexohex: Yay! I spelt your pen-name right! I was wondering if I should do something like that, but I decided it was too much too soon. And, um, svengali is "an act of possessing and manipulating someone to perform evil deeds, usually finished by death of the victim", so quote.

XxRandomHeartxX: I'll personally slap your computer upside the head if it keeps trying to get you away from my fic! HWACHA! –kungfu move- Thanks! Yeah, lol, it's like every review: "they're so adorable. They're SO adorable. They're really cute. They're so adorable." ARGH!

P is for Princess?

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Lots of reviews! Hehe. LOTS OF FLUFFINESS APPROACHING! Not in this chapter, though. This is very short, because it's leading up to… THE YULE BALL!

Note: I would like to kindly inform you now that Ginny and Riddle aren't going to the Ball together. Duh. Ginny's with Alden. That's too cliché, and I'm avoiding as many clichés as possible. Thank you for your time.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Eight: P is for Princess?

" *Shut it, you," said Ginny, rolling her hazel eyes. "I just defended you. Though I have to confess I was impressed by your heroic attempt at protecting me."*

The smallest smudge of pink was discernible on Riddle's cheeks. He was looking down at her with something strange and unreadable in his eyes. Like a kind of respect, mixed with sadness and something else that made Ginny's stomach hurt.

The words around the school were the whispered, *I'm so excited* ! Everyone was. Why?

It was the twentieth of December.

With the Yule Ball only four hours away, Ginny and the others on the team for the Ball, as opposed to the under-fourteens' disco, were

frantically busy. The redhead was certain that her entire day would be spent creating paper-chains and turning mud into glitter.

She crossly eyed the enormous mound of paper-chains beside her. Grace had pitched in to help, babbling for England as she did so, and even Alden had created a few before sloping off to do some reading or some homework or something else geeky.

"I can't wait!" Grace shrieked, throwing her most recent paper-chain into the air.

"Yes, I know," said Ginny dryly. "You've only told me, what, seven times in the past…" (she looked at the clock) "thirty seconds?"

"Yeah well… I can't wait!"

"Eight times."

A few seconds later, Ginny completed the last paper-chain. "Right," she said, standing. "Let's get these down to the Room of Requirements." Together they Levitated the huge mass of paper-chains and walked with it down to the Room of Requirements. They dumped them in a large tub, which Antonia Durrell, the resident expert at Charms, waved her wand over; the flimsy parchment links transformed into strings of glittering silver beads.

"Thanks, Grace," said Antonia, smiling at the brunette. "It's really nice of you to help, considering that you don't have to."

Grace shrugged. "It's not like I have anything better to do," she replied honestly.

Antonia looked at her check-list. "Okay, well, you can help to bring some of the tables down from the Great Hall."

Nodding, Ginny and Grace set off for the Great Hall. On the way, the Prefect commented, "Can't the Room of Requirement just make all of the decorations and things *for* us?"

"Then that would be unfair," said Grace as they arrived, selected the nearest table, and Levitated it away, "because your group wouldn't have to do anything, and the group working in the Great Hall would have to slave away trying to get this room perfect."

Ginny grumbled.

Scott and Mia Brown went to go and get the second table, so Ginny and Grace were assigned the task of setting up the music.

The list of jobs was endless. They had to set up the stage.

Set up the lights.

Set up the amplifying of the stage area just right.

Dim the sounds of the rest of the room so that the chatter wouldn't drown out the band.

Clean the tables, to get rid of the daily stains of bacon fat and pumpkin juice.

Enchant the ceiling.

Decorate the Christmas trees.

Levitate the mistletoe.

Avoid the mistletoe after you'd set it up.

And then, of course, there's the tinsel fight. I mean, honestly. What Yule Ball preparation would it be if there wasn't a tinsel fight?

"TINSEL FIGHT!" yelled Mia Brown, and she immediately ran at Robert Harris with a long strand of furry gold tinsel.

The room exploded in laughter, shouting, and tinsel. Had the Quieting Charms not been in place, everyone might have deafened.

Ginny sprinted towards Grace and hurled herself onto her friend's back, wrapping her arms, legs, and her string of tinsel, around Grace's torso. "GO, HORSEY, GO!" she yelled.

Shocked, Grace staggered, but then she straightened up, grabbed Ginny's legs to keep the redhead aboard, and sprinted across the Room, throwing tinsel left, right, and center happily.

" *Look out* !" someone screeched.

Too late.

Grace skidded on a patch of spilt Firewhiskey, and, arms whirling, she flew forwards like a mad, overgrown bird of prey. Then she fell over her own feet, and, painfully, she and Ginny rolled across the ground.

Bang . Ginny crashed into a table leg. She blinked past the haze of confusion, and turned to see where Grace had got to.

The other Slytherin girl had collided heavily with none other than Scott Reeve. Grace was on the ground, and Scott was grinning at her, extending a tanned hand to help her up. Ginny's eyes narrowed. Grace, suspiciously, stretched out her hand, and Scott pulled her to her feet. Then, suddenly their faces were a lot closer than they should have been… furious, Ginny leapt to her feet.

It turned out that she didn't need to.

Grace gave a gasp of fury, and then her hand whirled out to slap Scott, hard, around the face.

Scott stumbled. He scowled, and marched away.

"Whoa, Grace!" said Ginny, rushing over to the brunette. "Whatever happened to the marriage and the house with the picket fence?"

"Marriage?" Grace snorted, and went on to call him a word so vulgar that Slughorn would have had a fit, had he been in the area.

Deciding that letting Grace rant on about how much of an arsehole Scott was would not be good for her physical, and especially mental, health, Ginny gave her some more jobs to do. When these ran short, the Room of Requirement was finished.

The two Slytherin females stepped back to admire the room.

" *Nice* ."

Her hair sodden down her back from the shower, Ginny slipped into the dress that Grace had lent it. She had admit that it was fabulous, though she wasn't totally sure about some aspects of it.

One of these aspects being the tight upper half.

I'm so short – as if it wasn't ***already*** *enough of a problem that to look down at me, male eyes are automatically attracted to… ahem.*

Ginny uncomfortably shifted it, and then turned her attention to the rest of her. She wasn't much of a girly-girl (she had barely brushed her hair twice in the past month. How much less girly can you *get* ?), but, like all girls, she had a crazy urge to look like a princess.

She combed out her hair and twisted it into the look she desired, after at *least* ten minutes of trying to decide what would look best, and then called in Grace to do her make-up. Ginny was the eyeliner queen, and she could do the basics, but she couldn't do the whole… *princess* look.

And that was where Grace came in.

Grace herself looked incredible. She was clad in a floor-length lilac dress that put a lot of emphasis on her height. Ginny felt like a hippo next to a giraffe.

Five minutes to go.

I hope we're not late.

"Aren't you going to look in the mirror?" inquired Grace, puzzled.

"No," said Ginny. "I will, without a doubt, find something wrong with my appearance, and then I'll probably run away from the entire ball in favour of spending the night in bed with a tub of chocolate ice-cream."

Grace stared. "Are you *nervous* ?" she said incredulously.

"Well. Kind of."

"Who is it?" Grace demanded, putting her hands on her hips. "I haven't seen you this nervous since you wanted to look your best for that Hogsmeade trip because you had overheard that Scott had accidentally reserved the table next to the one that we had. And *then* ," she continued, as the story wasn't already long enough, "he didn't even show up!" she flickered her blue eyes over Ginny's face. "Who is it?"

"I don't *like* anyone," said Ginny truthfully, not able to understand why Grace was so adamant that if she was nervous, she must fancy someone. "If I did, I'd have told you."

"What, like how you told me that you fancied Scott?" Grace snorted. "If memory serves me well, I believe that you were in strict denial to having any feelings for him until he asked you out!"

"I. Do. Not. Fancy. Anyone."

"Suit yourself," Grace shrugged. "Don't expect me to drop this, though."

I had no doubt that you would.

A/N: Sorry it's so short. But trust me, the next two chapters will MORE THAN make up for it. Please review! Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

SwirlyL: Haha, your review made me laugh so much, thinking about Tom's 'widdle cotton socks'. Haha. Thanks!

kyraThePoop: Sorry, they're not going together. Too cliché. And, I think you'll be happy to know that I've worked out – they'll kiss two days before your birthday. If I post once a day, that is.

XxRandomHeartxX: ARGH! –slaps computer- DIE! Haha. I can just imagine this person sitting at a desk, completely silent and then going "SQUEEEEE" randomly. Haha. Teehee. Thanks.

Maddiegirl: Er, a glomp is a combination of a hug and a rugby/American Football tackle. Lol.

BDSanta2001: Er, I'll explain the expressions for you. The respect: he'd always felt under-appreciated and less than worthy because of blood status, and Ginny's just like: "I'm a Mudblood and I honestly don't give a damn!" Next. The thing that made Ginny's stomach hurt: a certain emotion that Tom is so far unfamiliar with, that starts with L. Finally: the sadness. Because he is just starting to understand the L-word emotion, and knows that he can probably never have her.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: It's coming, it's coming! Trust me, the next two chapters will make you a very happy person.

00jade: Thank you! He was going to ask her, but Ginny sort of wasn't paying attention because she saw Tommy-boy.

Hydra27: Yeah, that's a good idea. Thanks. A letter of atonement would be excellent, thank you.

AppleC0re: Well, you have to remember that despite Grace, Alden, Ginny, Flora, and Tom as exceptions, they're still Slytherins.

Mugglebornismness is like the plague. And Vegrandis was probably kicking himself for even thinking about asking her out.

Saene: Ooh. You had a prom. I have a prom in eighteen days. I bought a yellow dress. GO ME! You only gave three rant topics. Tut tut. Can't you count? That's why I love my Tom. He's so anti-Gary Sue. He's a geek, he's snarky and sarcastic, he's antisocial, and he's socially insecure. Wow! Nice dream! I had a dream last night that I was on a school trip and we were on a plane with five storeys, and, due to encouragement from my friends, I sat on the top floor, and I was scared shitless (excuse my language) because I *hate* flying – paranoid fear of death, and to a thanatophobe, flying three thousand feet in the air in a metal can doesn't seem very safe. Lol. So I was terrified, because I couldn't see the wings properly through the windows (totally irriational phobia, yes, move on), and then suddenly the engines cut and the plane nose-dived. Then I screamed and woke up. –shiver-

storm-brain: Lol. I'd prefer sir, even though I'm a girl. HOUSE-ELF REVOLT!

o00Bubbles00o: Yeah, I checked through the chapter and found a lot of mistakes. I just couldn't be bothered to fix them. Sorry. I'm glad you like the glompage! I love glomping people! Hehe. Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: Thanks! Did you have a nice holiday?

X-XsiobhanX-X: Haha! Triumphant! Thank you!

Darkangels24700: Thanks! I can't answer any of your questions, sorry. But you'll find out soon enough.

The-Quoi: HAHAHA! YOUR REVIEW MADE ME LAUGH SO HARD! Hahahaha. That was hilarious. "All night long. With various kinky objects". LMAO! Thanks for making my day!

Pixar: Aw, thanks! Yay! I get to use your phrase! Thank you!

M.E.Potter: Er, thanks!

Peacegirl: You'll have an overload of fluff soon.

DeadlyCreative: Er. Who? Who called out in pain? I don't recall that. Thanks!

XevenOf9: The dates for the Ball are as such: Grace, single. Tom, single. Alden and Ginny together. However, the *pairings* are: Ginny and Tom, Grace and Alden. Teehee.

Kallie: Sorry, I didn't mean to ignore you. Thanks for the review!

Exohexohex: Did I get it right this time? Water vision? I'm confused. What water vision? Yeah, Tom's getting emotional. And such is his downfall.

P is for Poignant

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Sorry it's late. LOTS OF FLUFFINESS! SO MUCH FLUFFIENESS THAT YOUR EYES WILL BURN! AH!

Note: This chapter is much improved if your listening to slow but happy music, or just any slow music. E.g. Hey Now, Hey Now by *Crowded House* , or You And Me by *Lifehouse* is especially good.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Thirty-Nine: P is for Poignant

" *Who is it?" Grace demanded, putting her hands on her hips. "I haven't seen you this nervous since you wanted to look your best for that Hogsmeade trip because you had overheard that Scott had accidentally reserved the table next to the one that we had. And then," she continued, as the story wasn't already long enough, "he didn't even show up!" she flickered her blue eyes over Ginny's face. "Who is it?"*

" *I. Do. Not. Fancy. Anyone."*

" *Suit yourself," Grace shrugged. "Don't expect me to drop this, though."*

Ginny and Grace ascended the steps to the Slytherin common room. Only a few people were still there. There, in one corner was Ramira and Avani, Claude's friends. Claude wasn't with them, so Ginny

presumed that the curly-haired blonde was still primping herself to perfection.

Ramira came over to the two of them. "Don't tell Claude I said this," she whispered, "'cos she'll be, like, *madsville* . But... well, considering that I don't think you've brushed your hair, like, *once* since you arrived… you clean up really well."

The redhead blinked. A compliment? From Claude's friend?

"Um. Thanks," she said, smiling despite her bewilderment.

I can't look that bad if ***they*** *think I look nice* .

Still unsure if it was a prank or not, Ginny smiled again at Ramira, and then departed with Grace.

Despite telling herself firmly that she wasn't going to care about her appearance tonight, Ginny couldn't help but glance at her reflection in a passing window. She gasped audibly. She had wanted to look like a princess… and she looked more like one that she could imagine. Her hair was positively glowing, and the merlot-coloured dress she had chosen looked incredible.

Grinning happily, she skipped to the Room of Requirements.

"Wait out here," said Grace. "I have a special job to do."

"What-?" Ginny started, but Grace had already disappeared through the doors. The redhead looked around. The other Prefects were outside as well. "Why are we out here?" she asked Antonia, who looked dazzling in sunshine-yellow robes.

"Oh. A bright idea of Eleanor's," Antonia rolled her eyes.

Ginny frowned. She opened her mouth to ask what the 'bright idea' was, but at that moment the question was answered for her.

From inside came a deafening whistle. "HEY!"

Ginny groaned. It was Grace.

"Everyone, please welcome and applaud… the people who made this Ball happen! Amelia Brown, Gareth Coville, Antonia-May Durrell, Ginevra Peregrine, and Scott Reeve!"

Just before the doors swung open, Ginny turned to Antonia, eyes wide, and mouthed, " *Antonia-May* ?"

Then the doors opened, and the applause began, and Ginny flushed bright red to see that some wonderfully clever person (who she would see to was strangled later) had installed flowing marble stairs to make that fabulous entrance.

Feeling her face heat up violently, Ginny descended, holding her skirt out in one hand. The room looked incredible. Thick, powdery snow had been laid out evenly across the floor, and the very air seemed to glitter with magic. However, Ginny wasn't interested in the room; she'd created it. She scanned the crowd, and, then, in the corner, rested on someone who she hadn't expected to see.

Riddle was dressed in, not black and grey, as she had expected, but, surprisingly, black and a very attractive shade of green (*okay, I* ***so*** *didn't just think that*). Admittedly, no, it was hardly bright and festive, but it worked. And there was a look on his face that Ginny had never seen. It was the kind of look that most people got when they weren't really paying attention – mouth slightly open, head slightly tilted forwards – but Ginny knew that for Riddle, Mr. Emotionless, it was an appearance of being totally and utterly shocked.

Is that a good thing or a bad thing ?

At the bottom of the stairs, Ginny curtsied with the applause, and then made her way to find Riddle. However, someone grabbed her elbow. She turned to see who it was and found herself face-to-face with Abraxas Malfoy.

"Hi," she said dully.

"May I have this dance?" he inquired, offering a hand.

"The music hasn't even started yet," Ginny pointed out.

As if on cue, the band, The Explosive Cauldrons, began to play.

"Er. Okay." Ginny shrugged, and placed her hand in his. The platinum-blonde grasped her fingers and pulled her close to him. "Try a move like last time," she warned him fiercely, "and you'll be jinxed into next week."

Smirking, Abraxas placed a hand at the small of her back and started to twirl her around very rapidly. Within the first three seconds she stumbled and nearly fell flat onto him.

"Not so fast!" she gasped, twisting her ankle painfully as she tripped on her wine-coloured skirt.

"But it's a fast song," protested Abraxas, a smug smirk on his face that Ginny didn't like at all. He spun her in a broad circle, so broad that she was almost hitting some dancing seventh-ears, and then twirled her back into him so swiftly that she collided with his chest. "Oh, hello," he leered.

"Malfoy," Ginny growled. "I will continue to dance with you on one condition…"

"What's that…?"

" *My face is up here* !" she snapped.

"Sorry, doll," smirked Malfoy. "Couldn't resist. They're just too-"

He didn't complete his sentence as Ginny's knee promptly became acquaintanced with his manhood.

With one last look of disdain, Ginny turned her back on him and marched away into the crowd. She grinned at Eleanor dancing like an idiot with a crowd of her equally giddy friends, and then continued

on her way, weaving easily through the bustling bodies on her way to the left corner where she had last seen:

"Riddle!" she said happily, smiling enthusiastically at him.

"Oh. Hello, Peregrine," he said. He cleared his throat and stared rather intently into the glass of wine he held.

"You look really good," Ginny blurted out. She coloured madly, but grinned to make up for it, as though she wasn't bothered about what she'd just said. "How 'bout me?" she spun in a circle, so that the skirt of her dress, the colour of darkest wine, could flurry out to its full extent. She then narrowed her hazel eyes at Riddle. "And if you say, ' *like a beaver'* then I'm going to kill you."

Riddle's lips twisted into a smirk and he looked up to meet her eyes. "Thank you, and for your information, I wasn't going to say that you look like a beaver," he said wryly. "I was going to say-"

He suddenly cut himself off. Again the tinge of pink was visible, high on his hollowed cheeks; he swallowed hard and returned his dark eyes to the wine in his glass.

"Well?" Ginny asked, rather worriedly.

Do I look that bad?

"You… you look lovely," muttered Riddle, not looking up from his wine.

However, Ginny knew that this wasn't what he had been about to say, and felt a sinking sensation in her heart. "Thanks," she said brightly, but her smile was fake.

There was an awkward hush between them as a slow song started.

"Um," said Ginny, glancing up at Riddle. "D'you… d'you know how to dance?"

"No," replied Riddle smoothly, sipping his wine as opposed to merely staring at it.

Ginny sighed. "Well, that makes two of us," she admitted.

Silence.

It wasn't truly silence, for the soft, melodic ballad that rang through the room.

"Are you going to ask me to dance or not?" Ginny asked crossly, folding her arms and scowling at Riddle.

"Probably not," Riddle said coolly. "You can't dance, and I know for a fact that I can't, so what, I ask you, is the point?"

Ginny's brow furrowed into a glare. She didn't *know* what the point was. Everything about her life was too confusing and strange. "Fine," she bit out. Then, just as she had with Malfoy (minus, of course, kneeing him in the groin), she turned her back on him sharply and walked away.

Halfway towards totally disappearing into the crowd, she heard, "Would you like to dance with me?"

"No," Ginny replied snappishly over her shoulder. "What's the point?"

"Peregrine, get back here."

" *No* ! I don't have to do anything you say."

There was a pause. Then, just before she vanished from his view:

"Ginevra-"

What?

Ginny stopped dead. She turned around, her red curls whipping sideways over her shoulder, a curious expression on her face.

"Aha. Triumphant," said Riddle smoothly, setting his wine-glass down and making his way towards her.

"Where did *that* come from?" Ginny asked.

"Where did what come from?" Riddle inquired, avoiding the question easily.

" *Ginevra* ."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but I was under the impression that it was your name," Riddle said dryly, raising one eyebrow.

Ginny reddened. "It is," she said. "It's just… I never thought I'd hear *you* say it. And normally people call me Ginny. I haven't heard that name in… a long time."

" *Pull your dress lower, Ginevra. It's ridiculously short," snapped Ginny's great-aunt Muriel at Fleur's wedding.*

"I'll have you know that, at any given point in the foreseeable future, I refuse to refer to you as… *Ginny* ," Riddle's lip curled. "I mean this in no offence to you when I say that it is probably the most irritating nickname I have had the misfortune to hear."

"Having an argument of who knows the most irritating nickname?" Ginny snorted. "I can top that. Wait for it – *Tom* ."

"Why don't we put this delightfully interesting conversation starter on *hold* , and instead assume that, to my offer of a dance, you have said *yes* ," Riddle said formally, amusement dancing in his dark eyes.

He extended a hand.

Ginny took it.

Side-by-side, Riddle walked her out a few feet onto the dance-floor – enough so that they were on it, but not at the center of attention.

Then they turned to each other.

A half-smile quirked the corners of Riddle's lips as he shifted his hand awkwardly into the proper position for holding hers, and then after a moment of hesitation, placed his other hand on Ginny's hip.

A warmth rapidly spread through Ginny, only visible on her glowing cheeks, though she was certain that she was nearly on fire; a burning sensation that might have come from the feel of Riddle's hand on her waist.

But it was probably just the faulty heating.

She slid her spare hand around his neck, and then, avoiding his eyes, started the clumsy attempt at a slow waltz whilst not breaking all of Riddle's toes.

*Preferably breaking **none** of his toes,* Ginny thought to herself. *But that's very unlikely. I'll just keep my hopes up for not breaking them all* .

Taking a deep breath, she looked up into his face. Time seemed to freeze with the snow that they stood in, and in her strange dancing tranquillity, everything else was tuned out – like how she didn't step on Riddle's feet once. Like how people were staring, whispering, and giggling, " *Look at how short she is compared to him* !"

All that existed was the poignant, smooth, tuneful ballad that rang like fairy bells; their soft, shallow breathing; that one dark wave of hair that had come separate from the rest and was curling into his eyes; the slightly dark, but comforting smell of sandalwood and ink; the rustling of Ginny's wide merlot skirt against the snow-

"I'm sorry," she said softly, interrupting the serenity and the total peace that she'd just blindly accepted. It was at that moment that she trod on his foot.

Riddle frowned – seemingly oblivious to having his foot stood on. "For what?"

The red-haired Prefect bit her lip. "For… Hogsmeade."

For a few seconds there was a silence. Then Riddle said tensely, "Oh."

"I really am, and I'm also sorry for bringing it up because it's basically spoiled our dance." Ginny said all of this very quickly.

Drawing in a deep sigh, Riddle shook his head; barely moving his head from side to side. "It's fine," he said quietly.

Suddenly wolf-whistles erupted.

Ginny looked over and saw Grace and Alden, also dancing to the slow waltz – however, unlike them, she and Riddle were not locked lips as though there was no tomorrow. "GET A ROOM!" she shouted, though grinning proudly. Her match-making had worked.

She looked back to Riddle. He was staring at her incredulously.

"What?" she asked self-consciously.

"I thought that was your boyfriend," he said.

"Oh. Yeah. Good point." She withdrew her left hand from Riddle's neck, and, still holding his right, turned to face the crowd and bellowed, "ALDEN!"

The two Slytherins kissing broke apart. A guilty red flooded Grace's face and neck; Alden looked extremely ashamed of himself. "Yeah?" he called in reply.

"YOU'RE DUMPED!" Ginny yelled back.

Alden looked at her in bemusement as he worked everything out in his head. Then he grinned and returned to snogging a delighted

Grace.

Ginny swivelled back to face Riddle. "Now," she said, "where were we?"

For the second time in probably his whole life, Riddle's hard, smooth, emotionless features broke into a smile. And this time, he kept smiling. "I believe," he said softly, "it was something along the lines of this." Then, with those words, he replaced his hand upon Ginny's waist, and Ginny's hand at his neck, and together, both smiling still, they danced into the night.

A/N: Awww. –swoon- Review or I'll never post again! Bwahaha. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

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exohexohex: Yay! Oh, right, I get it now. And no, that smirking part comes later. Teehee. Because she got the visions in the correct order, so she's got to do other things first. But I'll point out that one of the visions was: *a dress the colour of wine* . Which is what she's wearing to the Yule Ball.

Kriz: Yeah, sorry, it was a little boring. Oh well, I'm glad you liked it, and I hope the Ball chapter lived up to your expectations.

Courtney P.: Wow. Thank you so much!

XxRandomHeartxX: Haha! Sorry. I wasn't supposed to laugh, was I? My bad. Oh well, feel better soon. Thanks!

Kallie: Ooh, thank you!

KayRose: Indeed she is… :D

Saene: Oh, yeah, same. I'm not scared of heights – I'm scaring of falling and splatting and dying. I'm not scared of water – I'm scared of drowning. I'm not scared of vicious animals – I'm scared of being

mauled. I'm not scared of freaky dolls and dead people – I'm scared of being possessed and then killed once my body has fulfilled whatever purpose they wanted. Hence the thatanophobia. –shrug- Rebelliousness and craziness? How about Ginny and Luna for characters?

Ricekrispies: Nope. Sorry. Too cliché. I'm avoiding as many clichés as possible. Wasn't that fluffy enough for you?

The-Quoi: It was already said in her vision that she was going to be wearing a dress the colour of wine. Haha. Your review made me laugh. Thanks, your reviews always give me something to chuckle about.

Bewitching: Thanks! By the way, I love your pen-name.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: No, sorry. It's hard enough for me to post regularly anyway, because I have exams coming up, and my CCF Training (that's like army), as well as athletics practice. *And* whenever I post a new chapter I have to spend ages typing review replies. Not that I'm complaining. It's fun. But it takes a while. I hope you liked the chapter!

creative-writing-girl13: Did you like Tom's reaction, then?

BDSanta2001: Oh, I used to love The Jetsons. I haven't seen that Hair-In-A-Box thing. It'd be really cool, though. No more bad hair days!

Asta-Amkis: Sorry. No mistletoe. I said they'd kiss in chapter forty-six, and not a moment before. So *ha* ! Thanks! YAY! Snarky sarcastic children!

kyraThePoop: Well. That made no sense. But thank you! LOL.

00jade: Not the teddy bear! I love teddy bears. I have hundreds of them. No kiss though. Sorry.

Apparently, toothpaste gets rid of spots. I now have Oral B smeared all across my face. All it seems to be doing is making my cheeks stiff and giving off fumes.

Optional

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: READING THIS CHAPTER IS ENTIRELY OPTIONAL.

It's pretty useless. I just HAD to do it from Tom's POV, though. It's so much cuter from his eyes. It's just… lovely. Again: listen to slow music. The plot, what is said, and what happens, is identical. It's just from another POV. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty: Optional

I look ridiculous.

Tom frowned at the reflection in his mirror, which frowned back at him through dark, narrowed eyes. It was times such as these that he was immensely glad that he did not own one of those magical talking mirrors – he dreaded to think what any would say of him.

Deciding, wisely, that glaring at his appearance would not improve it, he straightened his dark green bow-tie to a neat dead-center position before departing from his Head Boy chambers and making his way towards the Yule Ball.

He was mildly interested to see what it would be like. Headmaster Dippet had, quite inconveniently, scheduled Tom's interrogation at the time when it was being prepared. He hoped that for once, not blowing something up in his absence would be enough to ask of the Prefects. Then again, they had Ginevra this time.

Frowning again, he pushed the thought of her away.

He moved briskly through the corridors, his muted footsteps strangely loud in the echoing silence. Tom arrived at the doors to the Room of Requirement. Reeve and Coville were standing outside. He considered asking them icily if they were aware that the Ball was *through* the doors, but decided against it. He slipped through silently.

Tonight Tom wasn't early, as was normal of him, but he certainly wasn't late. The Head Boy made his way inconspicuously towards the refreshments table and selected a glass of dark wine.

As more people began to pile into the chamber, Tom moved out of the way. He detested crowds and generally avoided them at all costs. The Ball was no exception.

Briefly, as he walked to the other side of the room, passing through the people like a ghost, like a shadow, no-one noticing he was there, he wondered why he had come at all. An answer came to mind, but he left it as a rhetorical question.

He didn't like that answer.

Tom settled near the corner, beside a small, round table, and leaned back to quietly watch the goings-on of the Ball.

There was Fionn, giggling about something to her friends. Evidently planning to attempt something stupid. Probably embarrassing. Possibly life-endangering. He should intervene. He really couldn't be bothered.

Finally he was pulled from his musings by a piercing whistle from a very tall sixth-year girl, standing at the bottom of stairs that he was positive had not existed when *he* had entered the room.

The girl was vaguely familiar. When she began bellowing, Tom paired her voice with her round, blue-eyed face and identified her as Hartwin, someone that Ginevra occupied her time in the company of.

"Everyone," Hartwin yelled, "please welcome and applaud… the people who made this Ball happen! Amelia Brown, Gareth Coville, Antonia-May Durrell, Ginevra Peregrine, and Scott Reeve!"

Then the doors swung open, and five pleased-looking Prefects began to descend the marble stairs.

Now, Tom Riddle wasn't easily surprised. There weren't many things that could shock him.

Then he saw Ginevra.

She was… she was… ' *beautiful'* didn't do her justice. She was spectacular. She was everything. She was the sun and stars. She was the earth and sky. She was his inspiration. And she was smiling at him.

Her hair was loose and wild as usual, but in a more defined way than it was normally kept, and in wide, loose curls spilling over her slim shoulders. He could see hazel eyes, delineated in thin, delicate purple. Her dress was merlot, the colour of the darkest wine, swirling out, hiding her feet. Her arms were bare, revealing the long, thin scar from when they had met in the Chamber of Secrets, as well as a smaller scar on her elbow that was-

Oh God.

Wine. He needed wine.

He picked up his glass from the table and drank a large quantity of the clear, dark purple-red liquid inside.

It was exactly the same colour as Ginevra's dress-

More wine.

There wasn't much left in his glass now. The Head Boy continued to hold it. He had no doubt that over the due course of the evening he'd need the rest.

Tom looked up, across the room. Through the ever-shifting bodies of people dancing, he saw Ginevra being reluctantly twirled about at high speed by none other than Malfoy.

She crashed into the blonde. They were speaking to each other. In actuality, Malfoy was speaking. Ginevra was snarling at him like a wounded cat.

Tom didn't see what happened next, but suddenly Malfoy was bent over, groaning, and Ginevra had disappeared. Then the redhead appeared a few metres away, and her heart-shaped face broke into a grin.

"Riddle!" she beamed at him, coming to stop before him.

"Oh. Hello, Peregrine," Tom said, lifting his eyes towards her. Her forest-coloured eyes were sparkling and – *not good* . He tore his gaze away from her and stared at his wine. He pretended that she wasn't there. This was made very difficult by having to stare at a drink the same colour as her gown.

"You look really good!" Ginevra suddenly exclaimed. Her face abruptly turned red enough to lose her in her hair, but she grinned anyway. "How about me?" she asked.

No. Do not ask that question.

She twirled quickly; her merlot skirt swirling out and brushed against his feet. When she returned to face him, she scowled. "And if you say, ' *like a beaver'* then I'm going to kill you.

Tom smirked. Feeling confident, he met her half-smiling, half-frowning gaze. "Thank you," he said, feeling heat threaten his impassive face. His efforts at looking his best hadn't gone unnoticed, then. "And for your information, I wasn't *going* to say that you look like a beaver. I was going to say-"

-that you're probably the most beautiful person I've ever seen.

DON'T SAY THAT!

Panicking, Tom stopped his sentence dead. Oh God. Heat flooded his face now. He swallowed past a lump in his throat, and decided that it was safest just to stare at his wine again.

There was a pause. He still hadn't answered.

"Well?" asked Ginevra. She looked quite anxious. She was probably presuming that his silence meant that she looked terrible.

"You…" His voice was raspy. He swallowed again. "You look lovely," he mumbled.

Heat. In. Face.

Kill me now.

He told himself very firmly that under no circumstances was he to look at her.

"Thanks!" Ginny said cheerily. Seventeen years of showing the equivalent emotions of a rock told Tom merely from her voice that she was faking her happiness.

Guilt.

He squashed it.

After a few seconds of silence, Ginevra moved around Tom's side and leant on the round table in the corner. A slow, triple-beat melody began to issue from The Explosive Cauldrons' instruments. A waltz. A slow-dance.

"Um." Ginevra turned to Tom. "D'you… d'you know how to dance?" she asked nervously.

I know the theory; I just can't do it.

"No," he replied, still not meeting her fiery gaze. Images of him twirling her across the dance-floor, twisting her elegantly beneath his arm – flowed into his mind faster than he could stop them. He drank some more wine.

Ginevra gave a small sigh, and, with a smile, confessed, "Well, that makes two of us."

She paused for a few moments, as though waiting for something. What could she possibly want?

She folded her arms. "Are you going to ask me to dance or not?" she finally said irritably.

Tom's stomach clenched to the size of a walnut. She wanted to dance with him. She seemed to, anyway. "Probably not," he responded offhandedly. "You can't, and I know for a fact that *I* can't, so what, I ask you, is the point?"

Screwing up her face into an angry glare, Ginevra snapped, " *Fine* !" With a swirl of purple skirts, she turned and began to march away furiously.

What the-?

Tom frowned. What had he said? He had once overheard someone say that females liked honesty. And he had been honest. Perhaps brutally honest, but…

Call after her.

No.

Do it.

For once, it was his choice. Forget everything else. For once – just once – he was going to do what he wanted, regardless of the consequences.

"Would you like to dance with me?" Tom called, forcing aside everything that he protected himself with, everything that made him who he was (meaning the cold, arrogant arsehole image that he defended his pride with), and everything he knew.

"No," Ginevra retorted crossly. "What's the point?"

People were staring. Tom Riddle had asked someone to *dance* . *Publicly* . He had *shouted* it. And he had been *rejected* .

This was a first.

Exasperated, and with his pride stinging, he called, "Peregrine, get back here."

" *No* ! I don't have to do anything that you say!"

Now people were starting to snigger. Furiously sending mental *silencio* s at them, he took a step forwards. What the hell now?

Say it .

Say what?

Say it.

"Ginevra-" he said impulsively.

The use of her first name, which, despite speaking of her as 'Peregrine', was how he thought of her, had the desired effect. She stopped walking. And then she turned. He swallowed as what was often described as the *ocean effect* took place; blinking doe eyes slowly, wild red curls flying out and sweeping over her shoulder like the crashing waves of the sea, hence the name, red bouncing around her face-

"Aha," he said, smirking. He set his almost-empty drink down upon the table that, moments earlier, he and Ginevra had been boredly leaning on. "Triumphant." He headed towards her.

"Where did *that* come from?" she asked curiously.

"Where did what come from?" Tom asked innocently, his smirk increasing in size.

" *Ginevra* ." She set her hands on her hips.

Tom lifted one eyebrow. "Correct me if I'm wrong," he said smoothly, "but I was under the impression that it was your name."

To his amusement, Ginevra flushed a deep red to challenge that of her hair and dress. "It *is* ," she replied, rolling her eyes. "It's just… I never thought I'd hear *you* say it."

A frown creased between Tom's eyebrows. What did she mean by the emphasis on *you ?*

"And normally people call me Ginny," she added. "I haven't heard that name in… a long time." She looked thoughtful, as though remembering something.

Tom decided to let his confusion go. "I'll have you know," he told her, "that, at any given point in the foreseeable future, I refuse to refer to you as…" (he grimaced just to say it) " *Ginny* . *"* It was like the name of a cat, or of a very small child. Not this wild, fierce fire-queen in front of him. "I mean this is in no offence to you when I say that it is probably *the* most infuriating nickname I have had the misfortune to hear."

Ginevra smirked, a curving mischievous smile that gave off the air of someone who knows that she's just won the dispute. "Having an argument of who knows the most irritating nickname?" she narrowed her round hazel eyes teasingly. "I can top that. Wait for it – *Tom* ."

Touché.

A smirk twisting his own lips, Tom said amusedly, "Why don't we put this delightfully interesting conversation starter on *hold* , and instead

assume that, to my offer of a dance, you have said *yes* ."

Ducking his head into a slight bow, he loosely offered a hand. Casually, as though it was perfectly normal. Nonchalantly, as though his stomach wasn't somewhere in the vicinity of his throat. Blasé, as though his spleen wasn't trying to congo with his kidneys.

Ginevra took his hand.

His internal organs moved on to a salsa.

Tom walked out with her to the very edge of the dance-floor before turning to face her. Feeling the smallest of smiles twitching on his mouth, he tried to hold her hand properly for the waltz.

Damn. How the hell do you…-

Deciding to simply grip her fingers loosely, he lifted his other, long-fingered hand… a moment of heart-pounding vacillation surged through him, and then nervously let it rest on her waist. His heart attempting to thrash its way out of his ribcage, he stared anxiously at his hand.

A short pause, and then Ginevra settled her free hand on his neck; a shiver ran down his spine that had nothing to do with the snow. Swallowing, he looked back up from his hand, on the top of her hip, to her face, and they began to slowly rotate in sets of three-steps.

She was avoiding looking at him; choosing instead to gaze at the snow-encrusted floor. Then, abruptly, she sucked in a steady breath and looked directly up into his eyes.

His heart stopped.

There was nothing but her.

Nothing but the soft, melodic ballad; her glowing hazel eyes, looking up at him through cinnamon; that section of fiery tresses that had escaped and was curling delicately over her shoulder; the tingling

scent of lavender water and apples; the long, wide purple-red skirt pressed against his legs; the top of her curly-haired head level with his nose.

She was the brightest star; she was heaven in human form; she was fire and ice – and for two minutes, for one song, she was his.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. She stood on his feet. He ignored it.

"For what?" Tom frowned.

Ginevra bit her lip, and looked away. "For… Hogsmeade."

Tom tensed. Reluctantly, he stared down at her. "Oh."

"I really am, and I'm also sorry for bringing it up because it's basically spoiled our dance," she said rapidly, colour spreading across her cheeks.

Humiliation. Pain. Betrayal.

Outweighed by the sensation of having her in his arms. By far.

The tall Head Boy sighed; shook his head gently. "It's fine," he said.

At that moment, there were loud, piercing, and highly interruptive whistles.

Ginevra and Tom looked over to where they had come from. In the center of the dance-floor, dancing, was Hartwin, and that dark midget, Philips, who disliked Tom very strongly. He and Hartwin were kissing thoroughly, seemingly oblivious to everything around them.

Something hurt inside of Tom. He frowned. What was it?

That's Ginevra's boyfriend.

"GET A ROOM!" Ginevra suddenly yelled across the room; however, her face was grinning.

Tom stared at her.

She turned back to him. "What?" she asked, frowning anxiously.

"I thought that was your boyfriend," he said slowly.

"Oh. Yeah." Ginevra scratched her head. "Good point." She pulled her hand away from Tom's neck (impetuously, he held her other hand tighter, before realising what he was doing and loosening his grip, and dropping his hand from her waist), turned to the two kissing Slytherins and shouted, "ALDEN!"

Philips and Hartwin pulled away from each other; both went bright red. "Yeah?" replied Philips shamefacedly.

"YOU'RE DUMPED!" Ginny bellowed, grinning.

Tom blinked. *What?*

Ginevra returned her gaze to Tom shyly. "Now," she smiled. "Where were we?"

For what was the first time in a long time, Tom completely dropped his shield and smiled. Only for her. "I believe," he murmured, "it was something along the lines of this." He held onto Ginevra's hand; rested his other hand on her waist. She slid her hand around the back of his neck.

And they returned to the music, dancing in a place that time forgot and that only they could see.

A/N: Meh, I nearly started crying writing this. I'm so pathetic. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW! DO IT NOW!

I'd like to point out that had anyone noticed how Ginny sees Tom as 'Riddle', but Tom already sees *her* as 'Ginevra'? Hm.

Saene: Haha. I'll try those books. Hm. Your Luna-Ginny-ness sounds nice. If you wrote a fic, I'd R&R. Just as encouragement. I love snakes. They're so amazing-mongoose.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Did you quiver in this chapter? Thank you!

The-Quoi: Aw, thanks! Yeah, I got your PM about the rest of your review. Lol, made me laugh. As usual.

CourtneyP: Oh, you'll find out later. Don't worry. Thank you so much! Why heart-wrenching?

storm-brain: Argh! Can't you just be nice to poor Tom? –protective hold-

Annabel-lurvs-purple: Soon, my friend. Soon.

Eternal Passion: Thanks!

creative-writing-girl13: Aw. I feel so loved, thanks!

Sparkling-stone: Thank you! It actually works! It does! Try it!

Quiet: Thank you so much! Ooh. Nice pen-name. Simplicity at its finest.

Artemisia Gentleschi: Thanks! Exotic pen-name, by the way.

BDSanta2001: Thanks. And he'd probably notice. Lol. Ginny isn't very subtle.

dstnd2travel: I love your pen-name! I travel a lot, too. Thanks!

ShhImNotMVP: Lol, I loved that too, I'm glad you liked it. Thanks! T/G history? Wow. It could be like the Grammy awards… only for T/G fics. "I'd like to thank…" etc. etc.

chimis: Ah. Don't we all?

kyraThePoop: Haha. Good timing! Same. I don't really go for dating, because I don't just want to be on-off like everyone else. I want a fairy-tale romance like in a fanfiction.

Kriz: What I'd give to waltz with Tom Riddle. –sigh- Ooh, thanks, I'll take that as a huge compliment!

X-XsiobhanX-X: It does work! Well, you'll see about Grace and Alden. Coziness? Ooh la-la, indeed!

00jade: Phew. That was close. Poor teddy. I know, I was kind of building it up for a kiss, but a kiss was too cliché, so I snatched it away at the end. HAH!

XxRandomHeartxX: So was I! My brother came in to ask me something, and he was like "Er… are you okay?" because I was all grin-ness with the fluff and the romance of it all. I could probably get high on fluff. Like a sugar-high. But a fluff-high. Yeah, neither Ginny nor Alden cared about where their date was, because Alden only had eyes for Grace, and Ginny only had eyes for… (blank). Lol. Seven chapters, translated – two and a half years. –cue distant shout of WHY OH WHY- Haha. Thanks!

OMG! THE TOOTHPASTE THING ACTUALLY WORKS! That is so amazing!

P is for Plushie

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Five hundred reviews! OMG! Wow! –happy dance- Thank you so much, I'm glad you liked it, because that was my second favourite chapter that I've written so far. I hope you enjoy this one, too. It's not such a fluff-overload, because it's back to reality, what with school and everything. But it's quite funny.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-One: P is for Plushie

Ginevra returned her gaze to Tom shyly. "Now," she smiled. "Where were we?"

For what was the first time in a long time, Tom completely dropped his shield and smiled. Only for her. "I believe," he murmured, "it was something along the lines of this." He held onto Ginevra's hand; rested his other hand on her waist. She slid her hand around the back of his neck. And they returned to the music, dancing in a place that time forgot and that only they could see.

"Jingle bell, jingle bell, jingle bell rock!" sang a very high-pitched voice far too early in the morning.

"Graaace… shu'up…" Ginny moaned, turning over and burying her face in her pillow.

"But it's *Christmas* !"

The magic word had been spoken.

Ginny sat bolt upright, grinning. She scrambled to the end of her bed and shrieked gleefully when she saw the pile of presents. There was a present from Grace; Alden; Flora; Scott (she set it on fire); Malfoy (she threw it out of the window); Eleanor; Antonia Durrell… there were far more than she had received on her birthday. There was also a package from Dippet.

"Aren't you going to open them?" said Grace excitedly.

The word ' *yes* ' nearly burst out her mouth, but it wasn't the right answer. "No, sorry," she apologized. "I'll open them after breakfast."

" *What* ?" Grace gasped as the redhead began to grab her clothes. " *Where* could you possibly want to go in favour of *presents* ?!"

The Prefect grimaced. "I'll open them with you after breakfast, okay?" she babbled, pulling on a grey jumper. Then she snatched up two large bundles, and ran out of the door.

Please don't let him have already gone down to breakfast…

Having sprinted up three floors, Ginny was exhausted by the time she skidded to a halt in front of Robin the Rich. "Top o' the mornin' to ye," she giggled, sweeping into a ridiculously low bow. " *Condolesam.* "

The portly man in the painting huffed, but let her in. Hoping desperately that Eleanor wasn't in the main room (she wasn't) she darted through the sofas, vaulted over a small plant, and up the stairs to Riddle's room.

Now praying with all of her life that Riddle didn't abruptly open the door before he was supposed to, Ginny unwrapped the first bundle – the scarlet and slightly furry one.

Once finished, she picked up the second bundle, and knocked heavily on the door.

"Go away, Fionn, I'm busy," sounded from inside.

You're cheerful on Christmas morning, aren't you?

She knocked harder.

"Fionn, *go away* ."

Grinning at the irritation he would come out with before seeing that it wasn't Eleanor, Ginny knocked one final time.

There was the sound of someone pushing back a chair and storming across the room. Then the door was flung open. " *I – am –* ***busy*** *-* " Riddle snapped, and then stopped dead as he came to a sight that he had not expected.

The sight of a very small, and very stupid-looking Father Christmas, beaming like a maniac. "Merry Christmas!" Ginny chirped happily, pushing the rim of her furry hat up to stop it from falling over her eyes (it was three sizes to big. She'd stolen it from a statue in Madam Puddifoots').

Riddle was stunned into silence. Then, he said incredulously, " *Peregrine* ?"

"I'm not Ginny Peregrine – or even Ginevra Peregrine!" Ginny said in a stupidly deep voice. "I am Father Christmas!" She held out the second package; something quite large, oddly-shaped, and wrapped in sunshine-yellow paper decorated with smiley faces.

Riddle raised one eyebrow. "I *see* ," he said. "And may I inquire as to *why* you are outside my bedroom at-" he glanced behind him, probably at a clock "-six-thirty in the morning, dressed as such?"

"Because I have your present!" Ginny exclaimed, a slightly *duh* tone to her voice.

Slowly, Riddle's eyebrows furrowed. "My… my present?" he echoed softly.

"Mm-hm!" Ginny thrust the yellow package at him, perhaps a little more forcefully than was necessary; it crashed into his chest, and he raised his hand to take it from its position against the front of his dark robes.

"Peregrine, I-"

" *Father Christmas* !" she corrected fiercely.

With a weary, bemused expression in his dark eyes, Riddle amended, " *Father Christmas* , then. I… I don't understand why you got me something." The last few words were very quiet.

Ginny's heart sunk. Of course. Riddle had never had a Christmas present before. He'd never been given anything. He didn't really understand the whole *concept* of Christmas.

"It's Christmas," Ginny said simply. "At Christmas, you give presents to your friends. And, as a friend, I believe that you qualify."

Riddle stared at the yellow packaging, as though he still couldn't believe that he had a gift.

Pity surged through Ginny. *Seventeen years before he gets his first Christmas present.*

"I – Peregrine-"

" *Father Christmas* !"

Riddle huffed out a short breath, fixing his eyes on the ceiling briefly in a *God help me – make her shut up* expression. Then, after a pause, he said, "Thank you."

"Just open it!" said Ginny, grinning.

"Yes, yes." Riddle fiddled awkwardly with the wrapping for a few seconds before shelling it, and into his hands fell…

A beaver.

It was rather big for a stuffed toy, and fluffy. It was also hideously adorable for a gift received by the Heir of Slytherin – complete with massive brown eyes and plush buck-teeth. It wore a red furry Christmas hat.

Riddle stared at it for quite a while. Then he said dubiously, poking it with one finger as if to check that his eyes hadn't deceived him, "You got me a *beaver* ?"

"Yup – check under the hat!"

Suspicious, the Head Boy lifted the furry hat and found a piece of folded paper. After unfolding it several times, he saw the words scribed there:

Merry Christmas, Tom!

Remember to shave. Tsk tsk.

Love,

Gin(evra)ny xxx

A smirk made itself present upon Riddle's unusually tired face. "Who, may I inquire, is Ginevrany?" he said dryly.

Ginny scowled. " *Me* , you idiot." She hesitated, before bravely plunging forward with, "Did you get me anything?" Then she regretted it. If he hadn't, then he'd feel really guilty.

No – bad – oh, so bad…!

"Oh." Riddle scratched his head, mussing his tidily combed hair. "No, I haven't. *However* ," he said slowly, frowning deeply as though trying to remember something. " *However* , I think there's something – yes, hang on."

He turned and disappeared through the door.

Uncertainly hovering by the door, Ginny wondered if she was supposed to wait outside. "Er," she said, loudly, so he could hear her, "can I come in?"

There was a silence from within.

Back-track, back-track!

"I'll just wait out here," Ginny hastily said, feeling her cheeks began to flame from the obvious rejection.

Damn me for being a redhead , Ginny cursed, fanning at her face, trying to cool herself down.

"No – you can come in," said Riddle hesitantly from inside. "Just… just bear in mind that no-one's been in here before."

Ginny grinned. "Are you trying to warn me that it'll be messy-" she teased, but stopped when she slipped through the door.

It was tidy; scrupulously tidy. Everything was neatly in place. It was an unbelievable contrast with Ginny's own room (schoolbooks thrown haphazardly across the floor, bed unmade, socks scattered here and there, and the land of the dead and forgotten underneath her bed). The furnishings – everything from the stiff-backed armchair to the curtains at the slightly open window – were not black, as expected, but the same striking dark green that Riddle had worn to the Yule Ball. The walls were lined with bookcases, nowhere near filled; only a few shelves were occupied with fat, dusty volumes, and then, in addition, very grubby schoolbooks. And there, partly concealed in an alcove behind another dark curtain, was that...?

"Is that a guitar?" Ginny asked, staring at the curve of something pale and wooden.

Riddle glanced across to follow her gaze. "It was the last time I checked," he said distractedly as he rifled through drawers, seeming indifferent to her seeing it – though again the faint colouring high on his cheeks appeared, and he did twitch his wand from on his desk, sending the curtain swooshing sideways and hiding the guitar completely.

"Hm." Ginny tilted her head. "Didn't see you as the musical type."

This was an understatement.

Her mind was shrieking, *he has a guitar? The future Dark Lord isn't supposed to be* ***musical*** *and* ***artistic*** *! Get it right!*

"Well," said Riddle offhandedly, as he closed the first drawer and opened the next, "I didn't see *you* as the type to give people-" (he glanced up at the plushie, now seated on his desk) "- vastly over-sized beavers. And," he added cynically, searching the next drawer of his immaculate desk, "if I may ask, what type *did* you see me as?"

Ginny shrugged. She crossed the room and perched on the edge of his rigid-backed armchair, removing her too-big hat and crumpling it in her hands. "I dunno," she said, "the voodoo-doll type. The collector-of-shiny-knives-and-torture-implements type."

Riddle paused in his searching to send her a withering look over his shoulder. "Very funny," he said dryly.

It wasn't a joke .

Grimacing once his back was turned, Ginny continued to survey the room. "You know," Ginny said worriedly, as she heard a quiet ' *damn'* from Riddle, "you honestly don't have to get me anything."

"A *ha* ." Riddle straightened. His back still turned to the Prefect in his armchair, he rubbed something against the front of his robes; then he moved towards her.

Ginny sat upright.

"Merry… Merry Christmas," said Riddle tentatively, holding out his hand, and revealing, glittering at the end of his thin fingers, an irregularly-shaped pale green rock.

The Prefect flickered her gaze up to Riddle's face. He was watching her, that microscan look of trying to stare into her soul. Then Ginny took it, and immediately Riddle turned, walked away, as though he couldn't be bothered to see what she thought of it. She held it up; light poured through it, casting a soft green glow on her face.

"It's beautiful. Is it peridot?" inquired Ginny, twisting it this way and that.

Riddle ceased his pacing – his back still turned to Ginny, he said indifferently, "Probably not."

Ginny thought that this was all he was going to say about it.

However, he continued, "I live – lived…" A pause. "-near a series of coastal cliffs. I found it at the bottom of one of the cliffs when I was ten."

"Oh, it's lovely – thank you," said Ginny happily. She pocketed it, and grinned up at him. Then, recalling something, she said, "Well, I remember distinctly you saying you were busy, so…" she waved. "I'll see you later." She stood, and headed towards the mahogany door.

"Peregrine?"

Ginny turned her face towards him.

"Prefect meeting tomorrow, after breakfast," said Riddle. "And thank you." He lifted up the beaver, a bemused, weary smirk curving his lips.

A smile twisting her own, Ginny dug in her pocket and held up the pale green stone. "Same to you."

As she descended the steps from his bedroom, pulling off the ridiculous Father Christmas outfit, she realised that she now had three close friends in 1958. Riddle was, admittedly, a slightly unpredictable wild card of a friend… but a friend all the same.

And this made her the most worried that she'd felt in a very long time.

A/N: Oh, diddums. Did you like their presents? Please review! Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

AppleC0re: Yeah, he was going to say, " *For your information, I wasn't going to say that you look like a beaver. I was going to say that you're probably the most beautiful person I've ever seen* ," but he cut himself short because he panicked.

Kallie: Thanks! Well, it could have started with a P, but I wanted to say that it was optional. It was a pretty pointless chapter, actually. It didn't show us anything new. Except maybe that Tom's starting to fall in- *oops* ! Didn't say anything. Hehe.

00jade: I love slides. My friend got stuck in one once, and she had massive bruises all on her leg. Thank you!

Creative-writing-girl13: Thanks!

The-Quoi: I liked the Safety Dance PM you sent me! Squeeing is fun. Actually, I was considering making that happen! But I decided that it would be way too embarrassing for both of them, and too funny, and I wanted the chapter to be really sweet and serious.

NamineFlower: Um. Wow. Thank you! Yeah, it seriously does work! Try it!

Artemisia Gentileschi: Can I call you something else? Your pen-name is sort of hard to write. I'm just going to call you Art from now

on. Sorry. Thanks for the review!

kyraThePoop: I did that! I changed the names of me, my school, and everyone I knew, and I wrote a story about myself, like a diary. And my band with my friends became famous and we toured the world and I had a fairytale romance and ahhh… So lovely. But not true.

SerenityKaitlyn: It is a bit weird, but it works.

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Fine, don't give me any praise! –huff- And I have to warn you that the kiss won't be what you expect. Not in the slightest.

chimis: Tom *is* sweet? Why haven't you *realised* ?

Saene: Ah. I see. Good old gang-mentality. Well, I hope you like the rest of the fic. Which should help you feel better. –grin-

Eliseyweesey: Inhale a fanfic? I didn't know that you could do that. Hm. Should try it sometime. Well, thank you, and I hope you enjoy what's coming up? Gin 'n' Tonic? I like it. Did you come up with that phrase?

Loving It!: Thanks!

BDSanta2001: ARGH! NOT MILEY CYRPUS! No offence. I just don't go for her music. I like rock. And indie. And classics, like David Bowie and Britney Spears. Haha. I hate when step-family do that. Well. I don't have a step-sister. But I have a step-cousin-to-be (my aunt's boyfriend's daughter), and she's pretty annoying. Snootchy-bootchies indeed.

audrhole: Er, no. My friend told me. Lol! Thanks!

KayRose: One day very soon… -manic giggle-

Eternal Passion: Oh, thanks. I wasn't sure if I made Tom… well, if I made him Tom-ish enough. Lmao.

XevenOf9: I made you *cry* ? Wow. I feel really honoured. I know, it's so sweet, isn't it? Aw.

o00bubbles00o: *Seriously* ? You *read* that? For Those Of Us was *crap* ! I can not believe you actually read it. Thank you so much!

Fic-princess: Thank you!

MadeNew: WOW. That is a big compliment. Because I had read some damn good fanfics (The Lost Moments , Have You Ever , The Sweetest Revenge etc.). Anywho, thanks!

XxRandomHeartxX: I *know* , Tom's just *so* lovely! Mehhh. –huggles him to death- Tom: -gag- Ahh… help… me… LOL. Anyway. Thanks so much for the reviews… I like your sleep deprivation. You send nice reviews when you're deprived of sleep… STOP SLEEPING! Bwahaha.

Had a cool idea. Watch this…

NEXT TIME:

"No!" she cried as the beefy, and totally irrational blonde Slytherin wrenched himself out of his chair and stormed across to the stairs.

Salty water blurring her vision, Ginny ran down the corridor, stumbling blindly over her own feet more than once, before darting into the nearest empty classroom and slamming the door behind her.

"I'm sorry!" she shouted at him. "I'm *sorry* for your stupid embarrassment! I'm *sorry* for *destroying* your stupid reputation! And *I'm SORRY for caring enough to get you a sodding Christmas present* !"

DUN DUN DUNNNN….

P is for Prefect Mortification

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for your reviews! Now, this chapter might seem a little angsty, but you have to remember that a) Riddle isn't feeling very well, so he's crankier than usual, and b) Ginny is all emotional because she's confused by little things that she's starting to feel for Riddle… Ooh…

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Two: P is for Prefect Mortification

" *Prefect meeting tomorrow, after lunch," said Riddle. "And thank you." He lifted up the beaver, a bemused smirk curving his lips.*

A smile twisting her own, Ginny dug in her pocket and held up the pale green stone. "Same to you."

As she descended the steps from his bedroom, pulling off the ridiculous Father Christmas outfit, she realised that she now had three close friends in 1958. Riddle was, admittedly, a slightly unpredictable wild card of a friend… but a friend all the same. And this made her the most worried that she'd felt in a very long time.

"Are you ready yet?" Grace asked boredly, examining her short, bitten fingernails. "We're going to be late for breakfast."

"Nearly…" Ginny mumbled, trying very hard not to poke herself in the eye with her stick of new orange eyeliner. "Whoa, Grace, this 'liner's really good. Thanks! I'm going to wear the gold one on New Year's Eve," she promised.

Grace beamed.

From Grace, she had obtained three sticks of eyeliner in lime green, bright orange and gold. From Alden, she had received two books – Destroy, Duplicate and Dominate The Dark Arts: Edition One and a Wizarding fiction book about a girl who found an evil necklace and fell in love with the boy trying to destroy her, called The Rock Talks . From Eleanor, a warm fleecy purple jumper. From Flora, a box of Honeydukes chocolate. From Antonia, a black chiffon scarf. And lastly, from Professor Dippet, a book titled So You've Decided To Travel Through Time .

Upon seeing this last gift, Grace spluttered with laughter. "Why did he get you *that* ?" she asked incredulously.

"I have no idea," Ginny lied, tossing it into her trunk.

Stifling a yawn, Grace flopped back onto her bed and stretched; spanning the entire mattress. "I can't believe that we only have a week left of freedom," she said sleepily, rolling onto her stomach, reaching under her bed, and locating a slab of chocolate.

"Come on," Ginny urged. "I thought you didn't want to be late for breakfast."

The two girls headed up to the Great Hall, chatting happily. They found Alden, near the end of the table, and sat nearby. Ginny let Grace sit beside Alden, and she sat next to Grace.

"Hello," grinned Grace, turning pink as Alden kissed her cheek.

"Not in public!" Ginny exclaimed, pretending to shield her eyes. "I'm trying to eat, you two."

Alden raised his eyebrows. "I don't think that you, of all people, should have a problem," he commented.

"Considering that you're the one who set us up," Grace chipped in, sticking her tongue out at the redhead.

"Yeah, yeah," Ginny said absently, taking some waffles. "Whatever." She ate leisurely, enjoying the amiable conversation that had, for a while after the attack on Vander and Riddle, become scarce. Then, slinging her schoolbag onto her shoulder (she didn't have lessons, but she had to attend the Prefect meeting now; it contained parchment, quills, ink, and her patrol schedule), she said goodbye to them, and left the Hall.

Unsure if she was early, on time, or spectacularly late, Ginny glanced at a clock in a passing classroom.

Damn .

If she didn't hurry, she'd be late.

" *Condolesam* ," she gasped out to the painting of Robin the Rich as she skidded to halt in front of him, having sprinted the majority of the journey from the Great Hall. "Sorry I'm late-" she stopped. "Has the meeting not started yet?"

Eleanor looked up at Ginny's loud entrance. She shook her head.

The redhead scanned the people on the sofas; dumping her bag on the floor and dropping heavily beside Antonia, she asked, "Where's Riddle?"

With a flicker of her gaze upwards, Eleanor said, "In his room."

Ginny frowned. "Is he okay?"

"He's fine. He said he'd be down in time for the meeting, but he's not feeling very well. I think we should just start without him," said Eleanor guardedly, shuffling the parchments that she held in her hands and laying them flat on the table.

He seemed fine yesterday!

… *I think.*

Flashing her mind back, Ginny recalled that he *had* seemed more tired than usual; less cynical and sarcastic, too. A pang of anxiety flitted through her, but she ignored it in favour of paying attention to what was going on at the Prefect meeting.

Apparently, while she had been zoned out and worrying about Riddle, an argument had started.

" *I* don't feel well, either but I came!" Jack Swithin was shouting angrily. Ginny had heard that, after the Yule Ball, he and Claude had broken up, and he was, allegedly, a total mess without his bossy girlfriend.

"Jack, sit down now!" Eleanor snapped, trying to maintain control.

" *None* of want to be here, but we can be bothered to bloody show up! I have more important things to do, *but* I came! And so can that stupid lazy bugger upstairs!" Jack bellowed, his face turning red.

Ginny knew what was going to happen before it did.

"No!" she cried as the beefy, and totally irrational blonde Slytherin wrenched himself out of his chair and stormed across to the stairs.

"JACK!" Eleanor yelled, but even she was smart enough to know that setting foot on the stairs was a bad idea.

A thunderous knocking on wood, and a sound like a door being kicked down ripped through the Head common room.

"Oh, sweet Merlin." Eleanor blanched. "Okay, everybody, defend yourselves, because-"

SMASH.

" ***Get the bloody hell out of my bedroom!"***

Ginny panicked. Riddle was swearing.

Not good.

"You get your lazy arse down! None of us want to be here but-"

" ***Get – OUT!"***

Swithin's got guts.

"No! I'm not going to-" Jack's bold, angry voice stopped. It was replaced by an evil cackle. "What the hell is that?"

Ginny's face drained of all colour. She could only imagine one item ridiculous enough to guarantee that malicious laughter.

" *Get out now* ."

Riddle had stopped shouting, but now that Ginny thought about it… she preferred the shouting. The quiet, even, *lethal* venom in his low, slightly accent-tinged voice was psychologically terrifying enough for Ginny to dig her fingernails tightly into the material of her skirt.

"Okay, I'll get out…"

Ginny didn't like that tone. No. No, she didn't like it all. *Jack!* She pleaded silently. *Whatever you're planning –*

"I'm going… REEVE, CATCH!"

Silently, her mouth slightly open in horror, Ginny could only watch with wide eyes as a large plush beaver soared down the steps, bounced once with a high-pitched *squik* , and then landed in Scott Reeve's open arms.

"Swithin, where the *hell* did you get this?" Scott laughed incredulously.

White as a sheet, Ginny stared, dismayed, as the two arrogant arseholes blasted it back and forth with their wands.

The hat fell off.

Ginny closed her eyes.

Then footsteps sounded, storming down wooden steps.

Don't see it, don't see it, she silently prayed. *Don't see it. Don't see it, please don't see-*

"Hey, what's that?"

Shit .

Eyes still tightly shut, Ginny could only listen, as, over the furious thumping of Riddle's feet as he descended the stairs, Scott read out the paper.

In a high-pitched voice, he started, " *Merry Christmas, Tom!* "

The footsteps stopped. Ginny knew that he'd heard.

" *Remember to shave! Tsk tsk* !"

Scott and Jack burst into loud, raucous laughter at this.

"Who the hell is it from?"

Scott looked down at the parchment. His eyes bulged.

"ENOUGH!" snarled Riddle, finally storming out of the stairway. He snatched the parchment and the giant beaver from the two laughing idiots – the paper, he ripped in half before dropping carelessly onto the floor; the beaver, he threw into a corner of the room, where it squeaked morosely once before falling silent.

But Scott had already seen it.

" *Ginny* ?" he said incredulously.

She opened her eyes to see nine shocked gazes sweep onto her face, and one pale, unwell-looking Riddle staring defiantly at the floor. The Prefect didn't even turn red; she just went grey, and ducked her head, hiding her face behind her left hand, which rested on her brow.

For a very long time, no-one spoke, moved, or even breathed.

Then Eleanor stood abruptly, gathering her papers, and said sharply, "This meeting has just been adjourned."

Not waiting for any other words spoken, mortified to the verge of tears, Ginny grabbed her bag and fled from the Prefect meeting.

Salty water blurring her vision, Ginny ran down the corridor, stumbling blindly over her own feet more than once, before darting into the nearest empty classroom and slamming the door behind her.

She hurled her bag at the wall, and then sat heavily on the floor, curling up and sitting miserably in front of the wooden-panelled desk.

Damn them all. Stupid Scott Reeve. Stupid Jack Swithin. Stupid Prefect stupid meeting. Stupid Tom stupid Riddle. Stupid. Damn them all.

She had no idea how long she sat there, wallowing in self-pity and distress, until a soft knock came on the door.

A glare furling her features, she firmly ignored the person asking to come in.

The smallest of sighs sounded from outside the door. "Open the door, Peregrine."

No! I'm not talking to you!

There was a pause. Then faint blue light streamed through the keyhole, and, with a soft click, the door swung open. Ginny didn't look up. The muted footsteps and the glimpse of very long, school robes-clad legs confirmed that it was indeed Riddle. He strode towards her and then stopped just beside her fragile, curled-up form.

"What do *you* want?" Ginny said into her crossed-over arms, atop her tucked-up knees, her voice subdued and snuffly.

Riddle didn't answer. He sat heavily upon a nearby table and looked at his long-fingered hands. "Peregrine, I-"

"Don't you *dare* tell me how embarrassed you are," Ginny growled.

"Peregrine, don't act like this doesn't affect me, too," Riddle snapped. "I'm not supposed to *be* that person!"

"What person?" Ginny asked coldly.

Riddle stood sharply. "The one with guitars and stupid poems – and a giant beaver, for God's sake!"

Ginny's thoughts were torn in two.

The first half of her brain was thinking dumbly, *Poetry?*

And the second half was screeching at how unbelievably selfish Riddle was being.

The second half won, and she leapt to her feet, fury clouding her features.

"I'm sorry!" she shouted at him. "I'm *sorry* for your stupid embarrassment! I'm *sorry* for *destroying* your stupid reputation! And *I'm SORRY for caring enough to get you a sodding Christmas present* !"

Again, the sense of despair and angry mortification was overwhelming enough to drown her; Ginny wrenched her bag from

the floor nearby and stormed towards the door.

Suddenly, swiftly, Riddle reached out and grabbed her wrist; pulling her back so that she spun, stumbled and then somehow ended up approximately three inches from crashing into his Head Boy badge-adorned chest.

"I did not mean it like that," Riddle said, his voice soft and oddly strained.

Ginny stared down at her schoolbag, balanced beside her hip.

Another of the tiny sighs, like this ordeal wasn't just tiring for Riddle, but painful, too. "Pere-… Ginevra."

Reluctantly, Ginny lifted her eyes from her bag to Riddle's pale face. As always, his jaw was set and his face a smooth mask, lacking any distinguishing emotive language – his eyes, in stark contrast, dark pools of… of so many things.

Pain.

Actual concern.

The same humiliation that Ginny was sure reflected in her own eyes.

And one other thing that seemed to be present often in his icy gaze. Something unreadable and strange. Like a kind of great sadness. It hurt to see.

Ginny felt tears threatening again. Everything was so confusing about her life. Caring for her family's murderer in itself was enough to make her head spin. This, in addition to the endless mission of trying to play detective in the role of a killing. This, in addition to the pressure of studying for the NEWTs. This, in addition to having an entire school either trying to use her, mock her, or terrified out of their skins.

Her head was swirling and pounding.

She drew a deep, shuddery breath; tried to hold it; failed. The bewildered red-haired girl was in such a disarray of her own emotions that, without planning, or even thinking, she let out a short sob and threw her arms around Riddle's thin torso, hugging him so tightly that she probably cut off circulation, and burying her head into the worn material of his jumper.

Riddle tensed immediately. Then, when it apparently became clear to him that Ginny wasn't going to get off any time soon, he cleared his throat and falteringly placed his hands on her back. "Peregrine," he said quietly. " *Peregrine* ."

Now her face went scarlet. "Sorry," she mumbled, letting go of him as though she'd been burned. She took a few steps back; into a safety zone, where she was in no danger of embarrassing herself. She looked up at Riddle.

His eyes were closed, and it was then that Ginny remembered that he was ill. Being perfectly honest, she would have been able to tell that he was sick regardless of having being told prior to seeing him. He looked the same as he had in St. Mungoes', though, of course, far less severe. Ashen face; dark stubble; mussed hair; grey around the eyes… and that tiredness with which he seemed to living lately.

"Riddle – Tom – are you… are you alright?" Ginny asked uncertainly.

The tall Heir of Slytherin tipped his head back, eyes still closed; after a pause, he lowered his head, cracked his eyes open, and murmured, "Fine…"

Cautiously, Ginny stepped closer. She peered up through her fringe at him. As a joke, she teased softly, "D'you want a hug?"

However, to her immense surprise, the tall young man half-leaning against a desk didn't snap at her a sarcastic *no* . He didn't say anything, but four months with Riddle had brought her a lot closer than anyone else could claim for their entire lives.

And so, she moved closer still and put her arms gently around him. Resting the side of her face on his arm, they stood together for Merlin knows how long, and there, for the second time in a week, Ginny found an inner peace that for so long had been missing from her young, eventful life.

A/N: Ahh. What I'd give to hug Tom Riddle… -sigh- Please review! Thanks to my beta SilvanXan .

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storm-brain: Ah, well. I said that it was optional. You didn't have to read it.

Dstnd2travel: That it is.

MadeNew: Haha. Punish you, I must! Aw, thank you, especially since Grace is based on me! :D

KyraThePoop: Favourite ice-cream flavour? Er. Probably Rocky Road or Chocolate. Why? Thank you!

NamineFlower: Thanks! Don't die!

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Er, not quite. But it'll be unexpected. I'll probably give it all away in the chapter prior to the kiss. Hm. I suppose that praise'll do.

Ricekrispies: Um. Is she supposed to show him? I hadn't planned that. Lmao. KILLER BEAVERS!

Courtney P: Aw, thank you!

Bewittching: Thanks!

X-XsiobhanX-X: Well, the rock is just… a rock. Like he said, Tom found it when he was ten on the cliffs near his orphanage. I hope it wasn't too angsty. Tell me what you think… -hinthint-

ShhImNotMVP: Yeah, I thought it'd increase the suspense a little… Bwahaha. I wondered if him having a guitar was a bit much. But don't worry… the guitar will disappear soon… Hehe.

Kallie: He sort of destroyed his reputation in this chapter. Not exactly a declaration of love, though.

chimis: I didn't make them suffer! Did I?

BDSanta2001: THAT MULLET WAS FREAKIN' AWESOME! And also…. HAHAHA! BEAVER AND… AHAHAH TROUSER… that was so funny. I liked the image you attached to the review.

Saene: WOW! You went to a HP thing as Ginny Peregrine! That's amazing! I feel so loved. What was the plot of the D/G fic, I could help you find it.

Gmmstoleurlife: Thanks!

DeadlyCreative: YIKES! Sorry, I felt like saying that.

The-Quoi: BEAVERS! Yazzah! (I stole that from Heroes, lol. D'you watch it?)

XevenOf9: Haha. That made me laugh. Thanks!

Exhexohex: Sorrryyy. It's coming sooooon, I promise. My exams are in two weeks… Meh. I'd love to date Nagini. An evil Horcrux snake is better than the guys at my school. –grumble-

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NEXT TIME:

Hysterically happy, Ginny couldn't help but laugh with the sweet, untroubled ease that filled her with this one silly sing-song on New Year's Eve. It was too good to be true. " *Kill* …" Her blood ran cold.

"Tom?" she called. "Tom – TOM!" Her hair plastering to the sides of her face, and her fringe sticking to her eyes, she began to scream

desperately into the wind. "TOM!"

P is for Panic

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: I have so many reviews now! –squee- Hm. A bit angsty. A little fluffy. A bit funny at some points. Mostly suspense-y, though. If that's a word. Anywhoooo. Enjoy the chapter… and remember to review! –wink-

Only ONE person got it! Ginny's book? The Rock Talks ? OmG!! Oo. It was a stupid reference to my other fic, Montol, which was previously named The Stone Speaks . Get it right.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Three: P is for Panic

" *Riddle – Tom – are you… are you alright?" Ginny asked uncertainly. Cautiously, Ginny stepped closer. She peered up through her fringe at him. As a joke, she teased softly, "D'you want a hug?"*

However, to her immense surprise, the tall young man half-leaning against a desk didn't snap at her a sarcastic no. He didn't say anything, but four months with Riddle had brought her a lot closer than anyone else could claim for their entire lives. And so, she moved closer still and put her arms gently around him. Resting the side of her face on his arm, they stood together for Merlin knows how long, and there, for the second time in a week, Ginny found an inner peace that for so long had been missing from her young, eventful life.

"Aaaaand auuuld laaaang syyyne!" shrieked a very tipsy Grace.

"Grace, shut up," said Alden bemusedly. "The count-down hasn't even started yet."

"Oh."

The brunette downed the rest of her Firewhiskey, gasped, and proceeded to bunny-hop about the common room, many other drunken Slytherins following suit and jumping in an ungainly line through the chamber. It was the Slytherin New Year's Eve party. A sign of the weather warning was the rain battering the cold windows near the ceiling (as high as possible, to catch a glimpse of the ground outside) – the snow had melted to give way to liquid precipitation. Champagne had been smuggled up from the kitchens, and everyone with no sense at all was totally wasted.

Basically, everyone but a few older students, a few younger students, Alden, and Ginny.

Alden drank, but not to an extent; Ginny, however, had stayed safe by drinking Butterbeer – she *still* had no recollection whatsoever of what had happened in the Hog's Head, and she didn't want a repeat.

"Well, someone's having fun," Ginny commented dryly to the short, dark boy beside her.

"Yeah," replied Alden, sipping his champagne. "I dread to think of what she'll be like in the morning."

"Perfectly cheerful, actually." Ginny grimaced. "Grace doesn't get hangovers. It's really annoying."

"What?" Alden frowned. "That's not fair. *I* get hangovers, and I don't even drink!"

Ginny gave a non-committal twitch of her shoulders, and took another gulp of her warm, frothy Butterbeer.

"Do the conga, *hey* , do the conga, *hey* !" the Slytherins cheered raucously, attempting a clumsy hokey-pokey.

Wrong dance, genius.

The hokey-conga only ceased when a third-year tripped over the turned-up edge of the carpet, landing with a disastrous and sickening *crunch* .

"Ooooh."

Everyone 'ooh'ed and 'ah'ed like immature six-years-olds at the sight of an injury.

"I can see the bone!"

" *Ewww* !"

Two girls who had screeched these comments ran away, giggling hysterically; they both squished into an armchair, downed a glass each of Butterbeer, and continued to chuckle hyperactively.

"HERE IT COMES!" someone shouted.

Ginny tore her gaze away from the bleeding third-year and looked over at the grandfather clock in the corner of the green common room.

It was indeed *one minute* to twelve o'clock. *One minute* to midnight. *One minute* … to 1959.

" *Fifty-nine! Fifty-eight! Fifty-seven! Fifty-six! Fifty-five* !" the Slytherins began to yell. Thunder crashed outside, as though the weather was getting angry, because it wanted to stay in 1958 forever.

Grace sauntered over. "Get ready, darlin'," she slurred, slopping champagne over the edges of her glass. "At midnight, you kiss the

nearest member of the opposite gender and I'm making *sure* I'm positioned next to *you* , buddy old pal!"

Alden shot a panicked look at Ginny, and mouthed *help me* .

Ginny laughed. "Hah, have fun."

The short sixteen-year-old scowled. "Hey, you have to do it, too," he pointed out.

"So?" Ginny shrugged. "The difference is that *I'm* not bothered about it."

Alden grumbled.

" *Forty-one! Forty! Thirty-nine! Thirty-eight! Thirty-seven* !"

The chanting was getting louder as the anticipation mounted. Even Claude and her friends had joined in (Claude had spent most of the evening flirting with the seventh-years, much to misery of an emotional-looking Jack Swithin, moping by himself in the corner with a large bottle of Odgen's Finest Firewhiskey).

"Can't wait!" Ginny shivered with excitement.

" *Thirty-three! Thirty-two! Thirty-one! Thirty!"*

"Half a minute until 1959," said Alden. "I'm getting more champagne."

"I thought you didn't drink!" Ginny called teasingly after him.

Alden fired a *haha-very-funny* look over his shoulder at her.

" *Twenty-five! Twenty-four! Twenty-three! Twenty-two! Twenty-one!* "

"Get ready!" Ginny shouted to her two closest friends in her year as Alden reappeared with the bottle of champagne.

"READY!" shrieked Grace.

Their champagne-flutes were refilled (Ginny was given a new glass, as she had previously been drinking Butterbeer). Grace immediately emptied the contents of her glass all down her front and giggled like a toddler on ecstasy.

Ginny wound one arm around Alden's broad shoulders, hugging him one-handedly, her free hand holding tightly to her champagne. Grace followed suit on the other side, stumbling against her boyfriend so that she accidentally pushed her nose into his ear.

"Ugh, Grace. Not romantic," Alden complained jokingly.

" *Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!"*

"HERE WE GO!"

" *-our! Three! Two! ONE!"*

Small fireworks from Zonko's Joke Shop (in the current time, a fairly new addition to the Hogsmeade village) exploded noisily in the air. More champagne bottles were opened, with loud *pop* s. And *everyone* , drunk or not, cheered. Simultaneously, Ginny and Grace pressed their lips to each of Alden's cheeks. Then the dark, dank chamber filled with tuneless, inebriated music as everyone began to sing.

" *Shouuuld auuuuld acquaintance beeee forgot,*

And never brought to miiiiind?"

Hysterically happy, Ginny couldn't help but laugh with the sweet, untroubled ease that filled her with this one silly sing-song on New Year's Eve.

It was too good to be true.

" *Kill* …"

Her blood ran cold.

For a moment, she didn't react. She'd had quite a lot of Butterbeer, and, now, a glass of champagne. She was probably just imagi-

" *Kill… rip… KILL…"*

The voice was clear as day to her, in its low, gravelly tones. She knew that she wasn't hallucinating it, and her hands started to tremble, dangerously shaking the champagne left in her glass, so that it sloshes over the sides.

"Are you okay?" Alden said, nudging her arm worriedly, speaking louder than normal so as to be heard over the boisterous chorus of Auld Lang Syne. "You don't look so hot."

Ginny bent close to him and said into his ear, "I'll be right back. Don't tell Grace – she'll blurt it out while she's in this state. Cover for me?"

Alden nodded.

" *Shouuuuld auuuuld acquaintance beeee forgot,*

And auuuuld laaaang syyyyne ?"

Without further ado, Ginny slipped silently out of the common room. The redhead had to be careful – New Year's Eve or not, it was more than two hours over curfew, and if she claimed to be hearing voices again, then she'd be reported to Slughorn, and he would *not* be happy.

" *Kill … KILL… tear…* "

It was moving away, faster than it had progressed through the school last time.

Ginny broke into a run, lighting her wand and using it to shed light on the agonizingly dark corridors. Her bare feet created resounding *slap* s with each step that she took, and a fear of being caught (surely,

she was being too noisy to go unnoticed), in addition to the pure, unadulterated terror that spawned from the chilling voice, surged through her veins, giving her an extreme rush that enabled her to sprint through the dungeons bravely.

She knew without any doubt whatsoever of where the voice – the *thing* – was going, and the seventeen-year-old was furiously determined to outrun it.

" *I… will… KILL…"*

Pounding up the stairs to the ground floor, the first floor, the second floor, the *third* floor, and then she was running flat-out to a very sleepy Robin the Rich.

"Condolesam!" she barked at him; he swung open instantly, looked highly affronted by the rude greeting, and also rather frightened by the wild-faced young woman sprinting at him.

The redhead burst in on a rather tipsy, and very surprised, cluster of Eleanor Fionn's friends, having a New Year's Eve party. "Oh, hello," said Eleanor brightly. "What are you doing her-"

"Where's Tom?" Ginny demanded, her heart hammering in her ribcage, interrupting the Head Girl's cheery welcome.

"Dunno." Eleanor shrugged. "I don't think he was feeling well enough to do his patrol. I haven't seen him – I hardly ever do… hehe," she giggled, and then hiccoughed loudly. "He's probably just in his-"

Ginny didn't grace the drunken seventh-years with a thank you. That could come later. She bolted up the worn, age-old stairs, her breath shallow and her heart wild; she didn't bother with knocking, just slammed the door open with her left shoulder, so hard that it nearly shattered for the second time in a week.

His bedroom was a horrific state. Well, to be honest, it looked like Ginny's did on a bad day – but Riddle – Tom – *whoever he was* –

didn't work like that.

Riddle simply *didn't* break his pillow so that feathers scattered everywhere. Riddle *didn't* scatter torn parchment everywhere. Riddle *didn't* tear clothes out of the cupboard and rip them to shreds. Riddle *didn't… break* his *guitar* .

And Riddle certainly didn't leave splashes of blood on what little of the floor was visible.

The room was empty of the tall, dark Head Boy.

" *Kill* …" the voice cackled insanely.

Riddle was gone. The voice was moving away. It had won.

Hadn't it?

Seized by the same determination that had fixed her previously, Ginny rushed down the stairs and tore out of the Head common room, followed by drunken giggles as she bashed her way out of the portrait hole.

Thundering back down the stairs from the third floor, she was certain that she was sharply on the heels of the seemingly disembodied speaker. It was leading her past the Transfiguration classroom… down the stairs…

She cut sideways and slid down a long tube, hidden in the wall, that she had discovered in her second year. Emerging with a soft *thump* on the first floor, she raced after the voice again. It was taking her down the sweeping Entrance Hall stairs…

To the dungeons?

No.

Outside.

Ginny ran faster; smashed through the Entrance Hall doors. She sprinted out, and skidded to halt at the top of the stone steps that lead down onto the grounds.

Tears of terror for again losing someone she cared about blurred her vision and mixed with the icy rainwater that was falling heavily, creating a thick night-time haze, through which nothing was visible. She practically blind in this aspect; deaf, too, due to the incessant crash of thunder and the roaring of water rumbling down from the dark clouds.

And then the voice chose to disappear.

She was cold, she was wet, and she absolutely no idea where Riddle was.

"Tom?" she called. "Tom – TOM!" Her hair plastering to the sides of her face, and her fringe sticking to her eyes, she began to scream desperately into the wind. "TOM!"

" *KILL…"*

"DON'T YOU DARE!" she screamed frantically to the crashing outdoors. "DON'T YOU – *TOM* !"

A hand grabbed her shoulder. "Miss Pere-"

She screamed and whipped around.

But behind her was not the disembodied voice, nor was it the person who'd attacked her, nor was it Tom Riddle. It was a very alarmed-looking Albus Dumbledore.

"Miss Peregrine, it's very late for you to be out… what's wrong?" he inquired, peering at her concernedly.

"I – I-" Ginny stammered, trying to get her breath back. She could trust Dumbledore. She could tell him. He'd believe her. "I – I heard a voice."

Dumbledore frowned. "Let's step inside, shall we, out of the rain…" once through the doors, he said severely, "What voice was this you claim to have heard?"

"It was … it was loud – and it moves really fast, and – and -" she couldn't help but start to panic again. "-and – *Tom* – it has Tom – Riddle – sir – Tom Riddle – *it has Tom Riddle* !"

The Transfiguration Professor grabbed her shoulders and held her tightly. "Miss Peregrine. Please. Breathe."

Ginny sucked in a long breath, and tried to calm herself down.

"Now. Please, explain."

"It – it was low, and gravely, and I heard it before, just after Professor Vander was attacked – and I followed it, and it lead to Riddle's bed, where he was staying in the Hospital Wing – but he was *gone* . I thought I'd imagined it. Then, during Auld Lang Syne, just now, I heard it! And I followed it again, and it lead to Riddle! To his bedroom – but his bedroom was vandalised, it was really messy – and there was blood – *there was blood!* – and – and – the voice was moving again, and it lead me outside, but then it was gone – it's got Tom – *it's got Tom* !"

Nothing like this is supposed to happen! I wasn't told about this! I wasn't told that there would a psycho slashing people's arms and stealing away the Head Boy! I wasn't told about ***murder*** *and – and –* ***kidnappings*** *! THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!*

"Calm down, Miss Peregrine. I guarantee you that the chance of Mr. Riddle being snatched away is very small," Dumbledore said comfortingly. "Now. Is there any place that he might be, where you could check?"

"I don't think so-"

The Chamber of Secrets!

"Yeah!" she gasped. "Yeah, there is!"

"There we go. Would you like me to accompany you?" the auburn-haired Professor inquired kindly.

"No – I mean, sorry. But… but if I tell you where it is, then it'll stop existing," she lied quickly. She filled her eyes with faux tears. "Then he'll be gone forever!" she whispered in horror.

"I see." Dumbledore sighed. "Very well. If you are seen, assure the person that you were sent by me, and that they could ask me for proof."

"Thank you, sir," Ginny gabbled, and then she ran away, up the stairs. Smirking at the young Dumbledore's naivety, she hurried up to the library.

She slipped through the grand doors, and then made her way silently across to the Restricted Section gate. The rain was still snapping at the windows, and she prayed that this noise would cover – at least partially – the loud *creeeak* with which the gate swung open. The Prefect hurried through the many bookcases, shining her wand-light and anxiously feeling the wood of the third-shelf…

The glowing yellow of her 'lumos' landed on an intricately carved serpent. Ginny ducked down closer to it, and hissed softly, " *Open* ."

And absolutely nothing happened.

" *Open* ," Ginny ordered, glaring at the snake. " *Open, damnit.* "

Still nothing.

" *What is your freakin' problem?* " Ginny snapped. Riddle could be *dying* in there, and this stupid snake *wouldn't let her in* ! " *Listen to me, you little bugger –* ***open*** *."*

No response. No doorway appeared behind the bookcase.

" *Okay, snake, I'm giving you a choice* ," she hissed angrily. " *You open up **right now** or I'm gonna set the freakin' Heir of Slytherin on you!* "

As if she had said the magic words, the wooden serpent twisted viciously. It spat furiously at her before allowing the bookcase to slide sideways, revealing the hidden door that, Ginny reckoned, hadn't seen this much use in hundreds of years.

The rubbed smooth, slightly green stairs came into vision under the glow of Ginny's wand-tip, and she hurried down the steps. To her bare feet, it was like walking on ice; the chill crept through her jumper and skirt as well as she slowly descended beneath the castle, silent as the grave save for the patter of her toes on stone. The frostiness grew stronger and the air grew danker as Ginny went further down. Her clothing stuck to her skin as she hastened down the steps, two at a time.

Finally, after what seemed to be at least half an hour of jogging down endless stairs, Ginny emerged into the main corridor of none other than the Chamber of Secrets. A glance to her left informed her that the basilisk was sleeping; to her right, the snake-carved door into the actual Chamber… open.

Panic – fear – worry – *agonizing* anxiety.

Ginny looked through the door, but she didn't even need to focus on the right area, because she could tell, without looking, that he was in there.

"Oh God," she whispered. "Oh God – *Tom* !"

Without any further hesitation, the redhead was sprinting across the wet onyx floor to the sprawled-out body at the end of the long, dimly-lit underground room.

"TOM!" she yelled again, splashing through puddles and skidding through patches of what looked like silvery-green blood. Stumbling

the last few feet, Ginny stopped before him and dropped inelegantly to her knees. "Tom – Riddle – Tom, can you hear me?" she called worriedly.

He wasn't the best he'd ever looked, what with the messy hair, the dirt smeared across one of his cheeks, and the vast amount of blood pooling under his lean figure.

Oh hell.…

"Er. Wake up. Wake up… now!" she told him firmly. "Listen to me, Tom Riddle. You are going to wake up and you are going to *like it!* "

"What in the name of Merlin are you going on about now…" Riddle – Tom – *whoever he was to her now* – mumbled blearily.

Ginny heaved a sigh of relief. "Well, you're being sarcastic, that's good," she said.

"That was hardly sarcasm…" he rasped. He let out a harsh cough, screwing up his ashen face, and then pulled his upper torso into a sitting position. His dark eyes flashed left and right, and then honed in on the grubby, barefoot, and rain-saturated Prefect in front of him. "How did you get in?" he demanded. "And," he frowned, "why are you wet?"

Damnit!

"You left the door open," Ginny lied easily, raising her eyebrows.

For the barest of seconds, alarm fired up in his eyes. Then it disappeared, and he said nonchalantly, "Did anyone notice?"

Ginny smirked. "It's midnight. Did you expect anyone to?" Then she furrowed her brow at him. "You know, for someone who was just knocked out and had their arm slashed open, you seem rather casual."

"The surprises this life holds," Tom Riddle muttered darkly.

"Come on, then," the redhead said cheerily, bobbing up onto her toes and standing. "Up you get." She offered a hand to the seventeen-year-old on the floor.

After a moment of suspiciously eyeing her extended hand, Riddle – Tom – he – *it?* – oh, screw it - *Tom* took it. Ginny tugged her hand rigid, and pulled him to his feet (she felt embarrassed when she had to take a few steps back to get him to his full height).

"D'you need help walking?" inquired Ginny.

"No," Tom said obstinately, and, clutching his crimson-stained forearm, began to walk stiffly forwards. Within a few seconds, he stumbled.

"Let me try again – d'you need help walking?" Ginny said bemusedly, walking beside him.

Tom set his jaw. "No."

At that precise moment was when he fell over.

Panicking, Ginny swept forwards and wedged her shoulder in the path of his fall; quite painfully, he grabbed hold of her, stopping his fall, before leaning lightly on her, and, eventually, straightening up.

" *Merlin* , you're stubborn!" Ginny exclaimed. "Look, you're going to hurt yourself. Just let me help you." She wrapped an arm around his waist – she would have supported him under his arms, but for the fact that she couldn't really reach his arms – and he immediately tensed as though he'd had an electric shock. "What's wrong?"

Tom didn't answer.

"Is your side hurt? What? Tom – what's *wrong* ?" Ginny said concernedly.

Then she saw – high on his cheeks, pink. He paused for a moment before reluctantly muttering, "I'm not dressed."

Ginny stared. And then she laughed. And then she laughed some more. "You're not *serious* ?" she said incredulously. She glanced over his attire – school shirt, school trousers, and faintly greying socks. "Tom, all that you're missing is your outer robes and your shoes!" she pointed out. "You're hardly naked. Now, come on. We should go."

Unwillingly, Tom allowed the younger Hogwarts student to support him as they slowly walked back up from the Chamber of Secrets. As they neared the top of the steps to the library, the seventeen-year-old Head Boy began to straighten up and lean less on Ginny.

"The door is closed," he noted as they approached it.

"Well done," said Ginny sardonically as she shoved it open using an intricately-carved door-handle embedded on the inside. "I closed it behind me when I came down. You know, people finding a blood-soaked Head Boy and a Prefect known to argue with you a lot, in a place that isn't supposed to exist… because, of course, *that* wouldn't cause a scandal."

Ginny couldn't see Tom's face, but she knew of the smirk present.

"We have to hurry now," she told him. "Are you okay for hurrying?" she raised her eyebrows.

"I don't need to hurry," Tom informed her coolly. "I, after all, am the Head Boy – I'm allowed to be out at these hours."

"Again, let me remind you – half-dressed, muddy, and covered in blood." Ginny smirked. "You were saying?"

She was right, and he knew it; he didn't reply.

Ginny didn't let out the waiting breath of relief until she and the wounded Heir of Slytherin arrived outside the portrait of Robin the Rich. There, finally, she sighed, and then looked up at Tom. "Well, our interesting little journey ends here," she said dryly. "I'll see you

tomorrow. Or, more accurately, today…" she pointed at the clock down the hallway, revealing the serif-adorned numerals of half an hour past one in the morning.

Tom smirked again. "True." He lifted his eyes briefly to the ceiling, before flickering them back to Ginny. "Thank you, Peregrine."

It was out of the blue, but Ginny knew what he was referring to.

"Any time," Ginny teased. "That's my job – hauling bloody Head Boys up from underground rooms that aren't supposed to exist? Oh yeah."

An expression clearly saying *I-expected-no-less-from-you* appeared in Tom's eyes. "Very well, then," he said smoothly. "Goodnight." He turned, and address Robin the Rich, " *Condolesam* ."

"Took you long enough," the portly man in the painting grumbled.

"Oh, and Tom?" Ginny called after him as he stepped through the portrait hole.

He tilted his head slightly towards her, to show that he was listening.

"Happy 1959," she grinned, and skipped away, back to her Slytherin common room.

A/N: WOOO! IT'S THE NEW YEAR! –dancedance- Well. Not for me. But for them. Lol. Thanks to my beta SilvanXan . REVIEW OR DIE!

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somerdaye: Wow, thank you! By the way, I love your pen-name. BOOM CHA BOOM CHA! Le happeh indeed! At least, until you stole my quote, you quote-stealer! Stealer of quotes!! MEHHHRHGH. (Sorry. Blame it on the sugar high.)

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Sorry. But being friends with a Dark Lord isn't easy, ya know. Yeah, that was the sort of response you were supposed to get for the poetry thing, lol. And as for your question, I'm not going to answer that. Ginny doesn't understand, so neither do you. HAH!

X-XsiobhanX-X: Don't worry… soon, my friend, soon… And, sadly, it will at some point end. I wish it wouldn't, because I actually do adore Tom *so* much. Screw Ginny. I love this Tom… but it'll be really long, so there's a while to go yet. Lmao. Especially considering that they haven't even kissed yet.

Annabel-lurvs-purple: Thanks!

Pixar: Well, Jack's okay. But you have to remember that he *is* a Slytherin, and also, he just got dumped by his girlfriend. Er, no, I haven't heard it… I'll look for it though. But if it's about clowns, maybe I don't want to hear it. Lol. There's a really good song about a stalker though, called Sick by *Son of Dork* . It's good.

Peacegirl: Thanks! Er, I can't answer either of those questions. Sorry. That'd ruin the plot. I have to keep you guessing… mwahha.

Kriz: Sorry, but that hug is MINE! Thank you! Kissy time? Er, soon enough. I promise.

Art: Thanks!

BDSanta2001: Wow. I feel honoured. Um… *actually* , there is something a *little* like that. But don't worry. It doesn't have the same crappy ending: "Omg I'm in the present day! There's Voldie! HIIII Voldie! I love you!" Voldie: "Hey, sexy, I love you too!" – smooooooch-…. Because that's just stupid.

MadeNew: HAHAHAHA! Eviiill. Mwaha. Thank you!

XxRandomHeartxX: YAY! Sleep-deprived-ness! YAY! Mysterious-and-broody-and-just-so-Tom-ness! Haha. Sorry. Sugar high. Or..

maybe it's a FLUFF HIGH! Mahahhaha.

Saene: You're the ONLY ONE who got that Montol reference! I mean, GEEZ! Oh, I know a game like that. Except it's called Mafia. Anyway, thank you! Aw. You should rebel against the system and dress up as Ginny Peregrine again!

KyraThePoop: Aw. –hug- -gets Tom to give you a hug- That'd cheer up anyone! Rocky Road is lovely. It's vanilla, and then it has lumps of marshmallows, chocolate, and cookie dough in it. Ahhhh…

Creative-writing-girl13: It's okay. Did you have a good time? Thanks!

DeadlyCreative: Haha.

Courtney P: Thanks! I'm trying to make it as realistic as possible, so they don't fall in love in a day, but that means that it's going to be a really long fic. At least seventy chapters. –cringe- I can't answer your questions, again, but it's nice to know that you're confused! Hehe. Thanks again!

chimis: Come on! We can drool over hot fictional characters together! LOL.

XevenOf9: -in sing song voice- Can't tell yooooouu.

Jip91: Thanks!

Exohexohex: Lmao! Yes, The Rock Talks is a real book. It's one of my other fics! But my fic is a DracoxGinny called Montol . Lol, it was a joke. Nagini's hot. Er, Year Nine. You? I can't get my author bio to work! Whenever I type something, it doesn't save. Meh. Thanks!

NEXT TIME:

"Oh, come on! You *have* to have worked it out. At New Year's Eve, everyone gets drunk, dances around, and bitches about everyone behind their backs," said Grace simply. "All that I had to do was pretend to be wasted and hang around with people who were too drunk to remember that I hate them. I found out quite a lot. Oh, and by the way, popular opinion is that you and Riddle are having an affair."

Ginny abruptly inhaled at least sixty percent of her toothpaste and choked on it.

"I'm just curious as to how it suddenly changed from 'arrogant idiot', 'arsehole', 'Riddle', or 'Spawn of Satan'… to *Tom* ," said Grace innocently.

"I was wondering, sir, if you could tell me… about a certain topic of what I'm pretty certain are the Dark Arts," said Ginny falteringly. "I heard it... just after Professor – P-Professor…" she ducked her head, and willed her eyes to stream. Then, looking back up, with hazel eyes glistening, but a look of determined *I WILL NOT CRY* blazing in her gaze, she continued bravely, "Professor… V-Vander… was attacked. I was in the Hospital Wing, and everyone thought I was asleep – I wasn't supposed to eavesdrop, I know, and I feel really bad about it… but someone, I'm not sure, said… said it looked like the work of Svengali."

I had another weird dream! I'm way too obsessed with Tom Riddle now. Lol, I was an OC character with dark hair, and I went back to TMR's time, and he fell in love with me instantly, and he had really crooked teeth. And as a token of his never-ending love, he pulled out one of his twisted yellow-y teeth and gave it to me. It was sort of gross. And then I went back to the present-day where I was a ninja and I had to restore a blue-haired princess to her Chinese throne…

WTF?

P is for Pigtails For Effect

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Hi! Wow, sorry it took me so long. Guess what… laptop, confiscated. I won't be updating much this week because I have my SATs, sorreee. And also, I won't be putting up review replies today because I just want to get this chapter out.

However, I'd like to respond to one person by saying: actually, I haven't totally forgotten the plot. This *is* the plot. Like it or lump it.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Four: P is for Ponytails For Effect

" *The voice - it – it was low, and gravely, and I heard it before, just after Professor Vander was attacked – and I followed it, and it lead to Riddle's bed, where he was staying in the Hospital Wing – but he was gone. I thought I'd imagined it. Then, during Auld Lang Syne, just now, I heard it! And I followed it again, and it lead to Riddle! To his bedroom – but his bedroom was vandalised, it was really messy – and there was blood – there was* ***blood*** *! – and – and – the voice was moving again, and it lead me outside, but then it was gone – it's got Tom –* ***it's got Tom*** *!"*

" *Oh, and Tom?" Ginny called after him as he stepped through the portrait hole. He tilted his head slightly towards her, to show that he was listening. "Happy 1959," she grinned, and skipped away, back to her Slytherin common room.*

"Where'd you go last night?" a very hangover-lacking Grace inquired the next morning as she brushed her curly hair in front of the mirror.

"How would you know if I left at all?" Ginny pointed out. "You collapsed on the sofa halfway through the second verse of Auld Lang Syne."

"You only know that because Alden told you," Grace said. "And, I may add, I didn't pass out."

"Oh, what – you *fell asleep* gracefully onto the floor, did you?" Ginny retorted sarcastically.

"Very funny." Grace scowled. "I'll have you know, Miss Smarty-Pants, that I wasn't actually drunk."

Ginny burst out laughing as she was pulling her socks on; she actually fell over and hit her head on the bedpost. "Ow."

"Seriously!" Grace insisted. "It was part of a devious plot. I never actually drank *any* champagne – it tastes gross – because, the inelegant moi, I slopped it on my top. I slopped *all* of it on my top. I never drank *any* ."

"That was stupid," commented Ginny, rubbing her head, and secretly thinking of her own stupidity at hitting her head.

"No, actually, it wasn't," said Grace. "In theory, yes, I have ruined one of my best tops, but it was worth it. I found out some interesting information."

"Really?" Ginny doubted it.

"Oh, come on! You *have* to have worked it out. At New Year's Eve, everyone gets drunk, dances around, and bitches about everyone behind their backs," said Grace simply. "All that I had to do was pretend to be wasted and hang around with people who were too drunk to remember that I hate them."

"What'd did you find out?" Ginny asked, going across to the bathroom to clean her teeth.

"Quite a lot. According to rumours, it was a Gryffindor by the name of Timothy Defoe who killed Professor Vander, because he had always hated Vander, and he was overheard talking about how if he could, he'd kill him without a doubt… and how my relationship with Alden is just a huge scandal..." Grace tilted her head, as though considering the rumour.

"Mmm?" Ginny said, through a mouthful of minty water and toothpaste.

"Er… Claude and Jack broke up because apparently Jack had been seeing a Hufflepuff called Rosalind Keefe…"

"Not true!" Ginny's voice was garbled.

"Oh, and by the way, popular opinion is that you and Riddle are having an affair."

Ginny abruptly inhaled at least sixty percent of her toothpaste and choked on it.

"Are you okay?" Grace asked absent-mindedly from within the dormitory, seemingly oblivious.

After a moment of hacking, Ginny coughed up the majority of the toothpaste; she then swallowed the remainder of it, trying to get it down the right tube, and then demanded incredulously, "They think *what* ?"

"That you and Riddle are having an affair," Grace repeated, very clearly and very slowly. She picked up a magazine and started to flick through it.

"Why the *hell* would anyone think that?" Ginny ranted disbelievingly, throwing down her toothbrush and returning to the room in which

they slept.

"Dunno," Grace said, not really paying attention. She lay on her bed and held up the glossy magazine she held. "Hey, is this yours?"

"And, I mean, honestly – no, it's not, I don't buy that trash – *who* would-"

"Oh." Grace flipped it back up in front of her face. "Probably Flora's…"

Ginny was still furiously sceptical. " *Why* the *hell* would *ANYONE* think that me and Tom are more than just-"

"Ooh. This is interesting," said Grace, dropping the magazine back onto her lap.

"I don't care about the stupid magazine, Grace, I'm having an angry crisis right now-"

"Not the *magazine* , stupid." Grace rolled her eyes. "I wasn't talking about *that* ."

Ginny turned a beady eye upon her. "Then what's interesting?" she asked suspiciously.

"Since when has he been *Tom* to you?" Grace inquired casually, raising an eyebrow, that deft skill that Ginny didn't possess.

The redhead stared at her friend. "What?"

"I'm just curious as to how it suddenly changed from 'arrogant idiot', 'arsehole', 'Riddle', or 'Spawn of Satan'… to *Tom* ," said Grace innocently.

"Hilarious, Grace, hilarious," said Ginny, slipping her feet into her shoes. Then, with a last look of withering disdain directed at the brunette, she left the dormitory to go upstairs.

"YOU DIDN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION!" Grace shouted after her.

"Sixteen inches on the Unforgivable Curses, which, in your opinion, is the most dangerous, and why," Professor Devin informed the class. "And, students, that will be due in next Tuesday. Not a day later."

Ginny scratched down these homework details, and punched in a full-stop in her planner, before beginning to pack her things away.

"Some brief prior knowledge for you is that next lesson we will be attempting the Unforgivable Curses-"

Undiluted horror passed over the faces of the students.

"- *except* for the Killing Curse and the Cruciatus Curse," Devin said. "Basically, just the Imperius Curse."

Everyone sighed with relief.

"I doubt that anyone here would have the motives, intelligence, or even stomach to perform either of the other two Curses," the Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor said with a wry smirk.

Are you sure of that?

Keeping her thoughts to herself, Ginny slid her books into her bag.

"Now, I shall see you next lesson, and you are dismissed for your next class," said Devin. He stood to shoo them away, and waited until they started to pile through the door before sitting again behind his desk.

"You go on," Ginny told Grace. "I'll catch up with you in time for Astronomy."

The brunette Slytherin gave an *okay if you say so* shrug and headed off, slinging her bag onto her shoulder.

Ginny waited quietly behind her desk. She had lost the Svengali book, and she couldn't find Moaning Myrtle. This was probably her last chance.

"Yes, Miss Peregrine, was there something you wanted?" Professor Devin inquired, frowning at her from hooded blue eyes.

"No – well. Yes, sir, there is." Ginny stepped closer to the desk.

Turning charms on… now.

Eyes wide. Her hair (in ponytails today, just for effect) over the front of her shoulders. A small, innocent smile on her lips. Blinking cinnamon lashes often. Fiddling with her hands as a sign of uncertainty.

We're good to go.

"I was wondering, sir, if you could tell me… about a certain topic of what I'm pretty certain are the Dark Arts," said Ginny falteringly.

"What is it?" asked Professor Devin. At the mention of the words 'Dark Arts', his attention had shifted fully to her.

"I'm not really sure," Ginny said with a slight, tentative smile. "That's why I'm asking you. I heard it... just after Professor – P-Professor…" she ducked her head, and willed her eyes to stream. Then, looking back up, with hazel eyes glistening, but a look of determined *I WILL NOT CRY* blazing in her gaze, she continued bravely, "Professor… V-Vander… was attacked."

"I see." Devin's expression was grave. "Continue."

"Well, I was in the Hospital Wing, and everyone thought I was asleep – I wasn't supposed to eavesdrop, I know, and I feel really bad about it… but someone, I'm not sure, said… said it looked like the work of Svengali."

Devin's heavy-lidded eyes seemed to widen slightly. "Svengali?" he echoed.

"Yes, sir. I looked it up in the library, but all that I found out was that it was an act of supreme Dark magic. I was wondering if maybe you knew," she said hesitantly, "seeing as you're the cleverest on that subject in the school."

Carefully weaving in sycophancy… yes!

However, her efforts were for naught.

"I apologize, Miss Peregrine, but I cannot discuss these matters with you. I think it would be best for you to forget you ever heard those words," said Professor Devin firmly.

"Oh." Ginny looked confused. "But, sir, I *have* heard them. And I'm terribly curious. I wouldn't tell anyone, not even under torture," she exaggerated sincerely.

Devin frowned at her. "I don't doubt your loyalty, Miss Peregrine, but I am not at liberty to discuss this. Perhaps try bringing it up with Headmaster Dippet."

Ginny, however, knew that Dippet wouldn't tell her *anything* . He would immediately see through her. Devin, smart and effortlessly handsome as he was, lacked the sixth-sense of being able to see through lying students trying to wheedle information out of people.

"Okay, sir," Ginny said humbly, ducking her head again. "Thank you for your time."

As she neared the door, Devin said, "Are you alright, Miss Peregrine?"

Bing ***o*** *.*

Tears gathering on her reddish-brown eyelashes, she turned back to him. "Nothing, sir," she said softly. Then, unable to contain her

'sadness', she burst out, "I just *so* wanted to be able to tell him, once, just once, out of all the times I've promised his grave that I'd find out what killed him… just once, I wanted to be able to tell him that I'd found out, tell him that I knew, and that his memory could live on."

The Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher was cracking. Ginny could see it in his blue eyes.

"I found him." Ginny was playing her trump card. Her hands began to tremble visibly, and her tears spilled over. "Amalia Boyka, and me, we found him. Lying, on the f-floor – *on the floor* ! … b-bleeding, and… d-d-dead…" she heaved a great sniff, and she looked up at Devin, playing her doe-eyes look for all she was worth. "What kind of person would *do* that? *Why* ?"

Devin stared at her. He was fighting a losing battle on the inside.

Ginny gave a start. She 'realised' where she was. "Oh, sir, I'm so sorry for wasting your time," she said worriedly, wiping her eyes. "I'm so sorry…" she turned and fled from the room.

Before she could even get to the door, a masculine voice behind her said, "Wait."

A smirk dancing across her lips, Ginny stopped. She wiped any sign of triumphant joy from her features and turned, her lower lip wobbling precariously. "Yes, sir?" she asked, her face ingenuous and sad.

"Come here." Devin glanced at the door. "I will tell you, on the promise that you will tell no-one of what you learn here."

*Hook, line, and **sinker** , baby.*

Ginny nodded, her ponytails bobbing up and down eagerly. She tried not to look too enthusiastic; like a small child trying not to seem too hysterically pleased with his Christmas present.

"Miss Peregrine, I know that your memories are haunted by what you saw of Vander, and I'd much rather not tell you… but I think you should know," said Devin severely. "There are some wicked people in this world. Truly *evil* people. People who would stop at nothing to gain power and control."

So close…

"Svengali is an Albanian act of Dark Wizardry. It is performed by a series of complicated enchantments – nothing like what you learn in school. It is Black magic, evil magic. You don't simply wave your wand. It's occult; casting pentancles in blood, sacrificing animals – even people – mixing salts, offerings from your own body…" Devin gave an involuntary shudder. "It's disgusting, quite frankly."

Ginny 'shivered'. "What does it do?" she inquired in a hushed tone.

"It takes control of another body. Human or beast. Living… or dead. Forcing the dead to follow your will brings on another entire type of Dark magic of resurrecting the Inferi, which you will have probably learned about previously in your study of Dark creatures. However, taking over the living is perfectly within the capabilities of Svengali. The victim, who is taken over... it is a terrible position to be in. Their mind and soul is manipulated and twisted into terrifying new forms. And, once the victim is released, they have absolutely no recollection of what happened, who they are, or where they are."

Ginny frowned inwardly, though keeping a candid, naive expression on her heart-shaped face.

That's not what happened to me. I could remember who I was and where I was. I just couldn't remember what I'd done and how I'd got there.

"The victim grows weaker and weaker – once a superior presence has been felt in their mind, they begin to depend on it – until eventually, they die," Devin finished sombrely.

That bit is kind of right. I did feel weak when I was writing in the diary… but nothing else adds up.

"Is there another type of Svengali, sir?" she asked.

Devin looked at her with narrowed eyes. "What makes you say that?" he said sharply, and Ginny knew that she'd hit the jackpot.

"I don't know. It's just that… if that was true, then Professor Vander would have just died, right? Just sort of keeled over on the ground. And instead he was kind of… you know. Mutilated…" Ginny said quietly.

Professor Devin stood, knocking his chair back. "That's quite enough, Miss Peregrine. The time, I believe, is two minutes until your next class. I recommend you hurry," he said brusquely.

"Yes, sir," Ginny said with a nod, and hurried away.

She'd certainly hit the jackpot. But if the other type of Svengali was the one that was being used by the attacker, then she'd gotten no closer to understanding what it was and how to stop it.

A/N: Dun dun dun. Anyway. Please review.

NEXT TIME:

Yes. There. She *hadn't* been imagining it. There was something pearly-silver floating in the Black Lake, perhaps a few metres down. Opening her other eye, the redhead pushed herself up off the trunk of the willow, crouched forwards on her knees, and peered down into the dark water. For a while, the object was not identifiable. Then it floated closer to the surface, turned over, and Ginny sucked in a gasp of horror.

And then the world went blissfully blank.

P is for Petrify

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: YAY! GUESS WHAT THIS CHAPTER LEADS UP TO! Woop woop. –dance-

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Five: P is for Petrify

She'd certainly hit the jackpot. But if the other type of Svengali was the one that was being used by the attacker, then she'd gotten no closer to understanding what it was and how to stop it.

"Myrtle?"

Ginny pushed open the door to the abandoned girls' bathroom and entered quietly. Tiles crunched under her school shoes and her bag flumped softly against a nearby sink Glancing around, she found, to her dismay, that as usual, Myrtle was not there.

"Myrtle?" she tried again dejectedly. Only the pregnant silence answered her. With muttered nothings of frustration, she backed out and stomped away.

Never there , Ginny thought angrily. *What, does she have that busy a social life ?*

She snorted loudly, startling a few first years into dropping their books.

"What are you looking at?" she snapped at them, especially grumpy today due to her endless failure.

They squeaked in fright and scuttled away.

Pathetic.

She brought up her thin-fingered hands and wearily massaged her temples. She needed to calm down.

Deciding on impulse that a walk - a breath of fresh air – would do her good, she veered away from the direction that she was heading, and continued towards the Entrance Hall. She headed around a corner when she saw Scott and Alden, having what looked like a heated argument. Not wanting to get caught up in it, she ducked away and took a longer route.

On this route she saw Eleanor, Claude, and Flora's shoe coming through a door before she hurried down another bearing. Eventually she wound up in the Entrance Hall, and, smugly triumphant at having evaded everyone she saw, she passed through the broad wooden doors and out onto the Hogwarts grounds.

The black chiffon scarf tied around her hair flapping behind her, Ginny set off for the willow beside the Black Lake. It was one of her favourite spots to sit; it was where, in forty-eight years time, she would hang out with her best friends every day.

" *I dare you to jump in the Lake!" Ginny said gleefully. "Go on, then!"*

" *No," Hermione refused bluntly, "it'll be cold, and anyway, I'm a Prefect, I should be setting an exa – PUT ME DOWN, HARRY!"*

Then, with a great splash, she was-

Ginny shoved such thoughts firmly to the back of her mind as she neared the tree. She flopped down heavily onto the grass and leant back against the trunk. She had really and truly drawn a blank. Devin

wouldn't tell her any more, she'd lost the Svengali, and had found out by borrowing – yes, borrowing! She'd give it back in time… - from Madam Crofton the list of all the books in the library, including those in the Restricted Section, that there were no other Svengali volumes. It had taken her a long time to locate and finally extract from the pincer-like grip that Crofton maintained on all of her possessions, but it had all been all for naught.

Gr .

The Slytherin released a short sigh of frustration, and tilted her head back.

Then, out of the corner of her eye, just before she closed them to relax, flickering, in the water. Something grey and cloudy and very still. Boredly curious, Ginny opened an eye and glanced back at the water.

Yes. There. She *hadn't* been imagining it. There was something pearly-silver floating in the Black Lake, perhaps a few metres down. Opening her other eye, the redhead pushed herself up off the trunk of the willow, crouched forwards on her knees, and peered down into the dark water.

For a while, the object was not identifiable. Then it floated closer to the surface, turned over, and Ginny sucked in a gasp of horror.

Lying in the Black Lake, seemingly frozen solid, was none other than Moaning Myrtle Tristanebury. Her mouth was fixed into a round, pouty 'o' of fear and surprise. Her eyes were wide; her pigtails were stiff.

Myrtle was petrified.

Ohmigod.

"How on earth do you petrify a ghost?" Ginny whispered, frowning. She recalled Nearly Headless Nick, from her own time, being

petrified in her first year, by the basilisk.

Rapidly, almost like the pace of a life-support machine, pieces began to slot together in her mind. In her first year, the basilisk had travelled through the pipes. Myrtle lived in a toilet (well. She wasn't alive, but whatever). She *lived* in the pipes, where the basilisk roamed. She must have met it somewhere, been frozen, and then washed out into the Black Lake – she did say, in Ginny's third year, that her pipe connected to the Lake.

Then, Myrtle's previous words floated back to her:

" *Have you considered that the Chamber of Secrets might be opening?" asked Myrtle, not bothering to check if Ginny knew what that was.*

For all that Ginny knew, it could very well be. If she and Tom Riddle could enter and exit the underground chamber of Slytherin, then it was definitely a possibility. Then, she suddenly remembered her response to Myrtle's question:

" *Yes, I have – but I know that it's not. Because I'm a Parselmouth, and I would have heard the Basilisk going about the school. Also, the gamekeeper's roosters are unharmed, and the spiders I've all seen are behaving normally," Ginny stated, calling back from memory what had happened in her first-year.*

The voice… the voice, travelling through walls and ceilings… could it be the basilisk? Admittedly, she hadn't seen any oddly behaving spiders, or any dead roosters… but then again, how often did she pay attention to roosters and spiders anyway?

It was a very strong possibility.

But who could have opened it? It needs to be a Parseltongue…

Her brain answered immediately, *TOM.* However, as accurate as this had been twice before, she knew that it could not possibly be Tom

setting basilisks on people – the voice, of, supposedly, the basilisk, always lead to him, generally ending in blood, dismay, unconsciousness, and a slashed forearm.

Again, the confusion of 1958 (*now 1959* , Ginny reminded herself) all revolved around one major topic.

Svengali.

But she knew nothing about it, and, with no books, no help from Devin, and Myrtle petrified, it was becoming more and more unlikely that she could ever unravel the mystery.

"Hey!" Ginny said, falling into step beside Grace.

"Where were you during our free-period?" the brunette inquired. "I was looking for you."

"Library," Ginny lied easily. "Every heard of it? Big place with books. Scary midget lady looks after it."

Strangely, Grace didn't protest or look offended. She was staring, open-mouthed, behind Grace, embarrassed surprise and guilt playing across her round face.

"What?" Ginny frowned.

" *Scary midget lady is behind you* ," Grace finally hissed, going bright red.

Crap.

Slowly, Ginny turned about to face the tiny and terrifying librarian. "Hello, ma'm," she said brightly. "And how are you on this fine January day?"

"TEN POINTS FROM SLYTHERIN," Madam Crofton barked, glaring.

"Lovely," Ginny muttered quietly as the very small woman marched briskly away.

The two female Slytherin got into the line for Defence Against the Dark Arts, comparing their homework and chatting animatedly about what they thought having the Imperius Curse cast on them would be like (Devin had briefed them that today it would be tested).

"I hope he doesn't make us do anything humiliating," Grace prayed fervently.

"Relax," Ginny said bemusedly. "Anyone, you can throw it off if you try."

"Really?"

Ginny's memory flashed back to a skinny, black-haired, bespectacled boy crashing into a set of Defence Against the Dark Arts desks as he half-tried to jump onto them and half-tried not to. "Yeah," she said simply, shutting down painful memories and telling them mentally never to come back.

"Quiet, students," Devin commanded. He avoided Ginny's gaze. "In you come now. Everyone sit down. Your homework will be collected at the end of the class, and there will be no need to take out your wands."

Grace and Ginny filed into the classroom with the others and located their seats. There they sat straight, paying attention carefully to when they'd get to experience the Imperius Curse.

"We'll be doing it in alphabetical order," Devin began.

"Aw! So unfairsville, sir!" complained Ramira – her last name being Xau, she'd be second-last to be selected.

Ignoring this outburst, Professor read out from the register, we will begin with… Faisal Alfonso."

A dark-skinned Gryffindor got proudly to his feet and swaggered to the front of the classroom. "Wicked, sir," he declared, tossing a wink into the audience of his classmates (the Gryffindor boys grinned; the girls sighed; the Slytherins *all* curled their lips in disgust) "Let's go!"

"Very well," said Devin coolly, twirling his wand between his index and middle finger. Catching it mid-twirl, he flourished it at Alfonso and bit out, " *Imperio* !"

Ginny watched silently. She'd seen it done a thousand times… though never something as harmless and pure as this was demonstrated. Alfonso clucked like a chicken and paraded around the room, still making chicken noises.

The spell was released, and, amid hoots of laughter, there was left a totally bewildered Alfonso. "What happened?" he asked dumbly, scratching his curly-haired head.

"Next! Harriet Augustine, please – Mr. Alfonso, sit down."

A small, rather rotund Gryffindor girl came up, her hands trembling. "Yes, sir?" she asked.

" *Imperio* !"

Two verses of 'God Save the Queen' later, Augustine was left in the same puzzled position as Alfonso had been in.

"Claude Felina Bastet!"

With a smirk playing on her lips, Claude stood and sashayed to the front. Then the familiar look of total bliss and ignorance crossed her pretty, usually snide face as the spell was cast, and she began to enthusiastically dance the cha-cha.

Orion Black – stared blankly into space and said solemnly, "To be, or not to be… I have absolutely no idea."

Cecile Dubois – shrieked, "YEAH, BABY!" in a pitch several octaves higher than his usual baritone, and wiggled his hips.

Percival Golding – shuffled his feet, pumping his hands, and shouted, "Oom-pah! Oom-pah!"

Grace Hartwin – skipped around the room (she did fall over twice of her own accord) and then did a ballet pirouette that Ginny was certain she never could have accomplished alone.

Tamara Joseph – picked her nose with her wand ("ewwww!" the class chorused, looking in horror at both Tamara and Professor Devin).

Daal Lim – sang the latest Wizarding pop-song, complete with bizarre hand actions.

It was getting closer to Ginny's turn.

Abraxas Malfoy – hugged himself and squealed, "Nyum nyum nyum!"

Avani Mohana – drew on herself with her own eyeliner a moustache and a monocle.

Pamela Muggins – usually shy, she sashayed forwards like a model, struck a dramatic pose, and then fell asleep.

"Well done, Miss Muggins," Professor Devin said warmly. He consulted his clipboard. "Next… Ginevra Peregringe!"

She glanced anxiously at Grace. Then she stood and crossed to the front of the room, hovering unsurely in front of Devin's desk.

"Ready?" Devin asked, pointing his wand at her face in a fashion slightly more than ominous when paired with his hooded, unfriendly eyes.

"Yes, sir," said Ginny boldly.

Devin nodded at her; lifted his wand…

The last word that Ginny remembered was a sharp " *Imperio* !"

And then the world went blissfully blank.

A/N: -GASP- Next chapter from Tom's POV, for obvious reasons. Teehee. Is this what you expected? Please review. Sorry, still no review replies. Not enough time. Will do soon, though.

P is for Personal Space Invasion

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thank you so much for all the reviews! This chapter is from Tom's POV. Sorry it's late. I had SATs, and then I had my prom, which was honestly more like a rave than a sophisticated prom. We were all crammed together and bouncing like a moshpit. WOOO. Anyway. Enjoy the chapter. It's quite short…

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Six: P is for Personal Space Invasion

Devin nodded at her; lifted his wand… The last word that Ginny remembered was a sharp "Imperio!" And then the world went blissfully blank.

Looking through weary eyes at the Prefect patrol list, Tom found that there was nothing at all wrong with it. Scanning over it one more time… no, it was perfectly acceptable. His task completed, and satisfied with the outcome, he set his battered quill back into its pot, and sealed his ink. Long, thin fingers neatly folded the list and dropped it into his robes pocket.

The tall Head Boy rested his head onto the top of the posterior of the high-backed chair he sat in, and stretched slightly.

He stood, straight as a pin, and decided that he saw no reason why not go and deliver the date-list to Professor Dippet right away. His homework was finished, having completed it the instant it was set; his new book from the library was proving rather uninteresting; and it was his free period. He might as well go for a walk.

Is there anything else needs doing…?

Tom's dark gaze skimmed over his bedroom, searching every surface for something that might need delivering. Any loose papers… no.

Plucking the book that might as well be returned to the library from the top of his cabinet, Tom slipped through the door and quietly descended the stairs.

"Oh, hello!" said Fionn cheerfully from in the living room, surrounded by a gaggle of her disruptive, peculiar, and immensely stupid companions. She beamed at him, knowing without a doubt that being friendly and cheery would irritate him endlessly.

The seventeen-year-old male eyed them apprehensively. Then, with a curt nod, he said frostily, "'Afternoon." He missed out the 'good'. What was *good* about having to acknowledge and greet the existence of Fionn and her idiotic comrades? Without waiting for anything else to happen – at worst, the conversation being continued – he swept from the Head common room, black robes snapping at his ankles.

He made his way briskly but smoothly through the long, winding corridors of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He knew every tapestry, every statue… and, more importantly, what secret tunnels lay behind them.

Stepping surreptitiously into one of said tunnels, he navigated a reliable short-cut to the office of Headmaster Dippet. The passageways were dimly lit by torches of flickering fire, suspended on the walls in metal brackets.

One minute later – perhaps two – Tom emerged down the corridor from Dippet's office, from behind a painting of two snakes, biting each other's heads off.

Ironic , he mused to himself, his eyes flashing upon the image, before he moved on, forwards with his journey.

" *Ancillary* ," Tom told the two stone gargoyles. Of course, a dictator such as Armando Dippet would have his office password being a word meaning *in a position of lesser importance* , so quote said dictator. "Head business."

The gargoyles grumbled and muttered in response, before allowing a twisting staircase to appear in the wall. Tom headed up it, his footsteps echoing lightly and reverberating against the stone walls. The steps came to an end and there, at the end, was the expensive, carved oak door, emblazoned with the intricately-chiselled name of *Headmaster Armando Dippet, 1934-1959.* As if somehow anyone had forgotten.

Tom lifted a knuckle and rapped smartly on the wood. "Professor Dippet, sir," he said, not raising his voice a single decibel, but his clear, accent-laced voice carrying.

"Ah." A pause. A shuffling of papers. "Yes… yes, come in, Tom."

The Head Boy's eyes narrowed. *Don't call me Tom.* Relaxing his face into a smooth, impassive mask, he pushed the door open and stepped into the office.

Merle, Dippet's Augurey, hooted at him morosely.

Be quiet, you blasted bird.

"Yes, Tom?" Dippet surveyed him from over the tops of his spectacles. "Is there something you want?"

Hiding every ounce of *I hate you* throbbing within his head, Tom said smoothly, "No, sir. I have the Prefect patrol list for you to check over."

"Ah. Well done."

*Do I **look** as though I'm five years old?*

Tom withdrew the folded parchment from the pocket of his robes and held it out loosely to the Headmaster. Dippet took it from his fingers, glanced at the lines of miniscule, neat italics, and then set it down on his desk.

"Is that all?" Dippet asked conversationally, though his tone was distinctly uninterested.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Off you go, then, Tom," Dippet shooed him away.

Wanting to leave as quickly as possible, Tom turned and moved smartly towards the door-

"Hang on – are you going in the direction of Professor Devin?"

Tom glared at the back of the door, his lips thinning. Flattening the features of his strong-jawed face, he swivelled back to face Dippet. "No, sir," he said flatly. "I'm going to the library, and then returning to the Head dormitories. I have work to do."

"Oh." Dippet looked rather put-out. "Say do you think that you could possibly go on a detour to the library… maybe deliver some papers to Professor Devin, I promised I'd get these in to him as soon as possible." He held up a large sheaf of papers.

"I'm afraid that I do have quite a lot of work to do," Tom said untruthfully.

"Not too much, I don't think?" said Dippet hopefully, pushing the parchment towards his student.

Dark eyes narrowed. What part of *I do not want to be your paper boy* could Dippet not understand?

"Go on, then, Tom," said Dippet cheerily. He gave a wry smile, and then flapped open a large, dusty-looking book.

The Head Boy grasped the bundle of documents from the front of Dippet's desk, slid them on top of the book he was returning to the library, and then, not waiting for anything else to be asked of him, left.

As he moved down the curving steps, he boredly drew his wand and inspected it. He hadn't polished it in years… he didn't think it ever *had* been polished. It was smeared with fingerprints and traces of ink; the tiniest stump of bright, bold red was poking out of the bottom.

Imbecilic feather.

Tom pushed the phoenix feather back into place, made sure that it was secure, and then dropped the wand into his pocket. Walking quickly through the castle, he made his way down to the fifth floor, fiddling absent-mindedly with the shabby hem of his sleeve as he did so.

Soon, the corridor came into view around a corner, and, near the end, the wooden door that Tom recalled to be marked with a sign reading *Defence Against the Dark Arts – Professor Michelangelo R. Devin* . There was noise from within that the Head Boy couldn't identify. He slowed as he approached the room.

"Professor Devin, sir," he said to the door, knocking lightly on the wood beside the bronze plaque.

No-one answered. Noises were still coming from within. He briefly pondered the chance that they were doing something dangerous that shouldn't be interrupted.

Nonsense. It isn't the seventh-years in there… how dangerous could it be?

More dangerous, it turned out, than Tom could ever have imagined.

For him, at least.

After another knock – and another – the seventeen-year-old male pushed the door open and entered the room.

"Sir," he said politely, "sorry to disturb your lesson."

He didn't see what was going on, though he glanced around the room. The tiny glimpse he got was enough to show a class of sixth-years all sitting, silent, doing nothing, watching in great interest.

Wondering to himself what they were looking at, he turned back to where, he presumed, Professor Devin was. "I have some papers for you, from Pro-"

All that he remembered was a blur of dark red. Then he was cut off very abruptly by something – someone? – he couldn't tell – something, he decided – not a person – *because that would be classified as an invasion of my personal space* – grabbed the sides of his face rather painfully-

*It **is** a person,* Tom realised, with a considerable amount of alarm as he saw round hazel eyes glowing in his line of vision, *in fact, I think it's Ginevra.*

-and then crushed his lips underneath her own.

All thoughts disappeared as Tom's logical, always-working, in-pristine-condition mind shut down completely.

A few seconds… no.

A few minutes?... no.

Maybe a day or two… who knew.

Then the someone – something – red hair, hazel eyes, heart-shaped face… Yes, that was indeed Ginevra – pulled away, and was dragged backwards by an unseen force… probably Devin… he had no idea…

Staring blankly ahead, not having moved since being… well, 'attacked' was the best word for it – Tom struggled to find his voice. Or even his brain. Everything, however, he found, was numb and not working properly.

"Mr. Riddle, I'm terribly sorry, she was under the Imperius Curse, just a test, you see, though that was *not* supposed to happen, I *am* sorry – what was it you wanted?" Professor Devin's voice was ringing as though from very far away.

Stiff. But somehow not frozen enough to stick his hand out. The hand holding the papers.

Devin took them. "Oh, yes, thank you! Tell Professor Dippet I send my thanks and regards; or maybe I'll do it myself. I *am* sorry, Mr. Riddle…" a pause. "Mr. Riddle, are you alright?"

Something woke up in Tom's brain.

He's talking to you.

"Er. Yes… yes, I'm – I'm fine," Tom heard himself say, and, as though he was outside of his body and watching his actions from a long distance away, he felt himself turn and move blindly out of the door.

Then, where no-one was watching, where nowhere could see the Great and Mighty Tom Riddle lose control, where no-one could see the unbreakable break, he stumbled, nearly fell over, and had to lean against a wall to regain his suddenly short and very shallow breath.

Breathe in… breathe out… breathe in… breathe out…

The feel of her lips on his lingered. He couldn't shake the feeling pounding through his head. Maybe she… no, it was improbable. She couldn't possibly… could she?

Don't be ridiculous.

He still entertained a secret thought, however, of a beautiful red-haired girl coming up to him and telling him that it wasn't all the Imperius, that there was something there for her too-

Laughter echoed from inside the Defence Against the Dark Arts. In the back of his mind, Tom vaguely realised that the shock must have passed – she must have become conscious of what she'd done.

For the first time in what was probably… approximately nine years – Tom felt himself go completely red. Then, his brain still dead, his muscles numb, and his lips stinging, he walked away as though absolutely nothing had happened.

A/N: Awww. How sweet. He went red. Sorry if it isn't exactly what you wanted. The next few chapters are very sad… wah. Please review!

Next Time:

" *Not that big a deal* ?!" Ginny screeched (quietly). "Grace! I just publicly snogged the Head Boy! And – and – *in public* !" she cried. "In front of the entire class! Which, I may add, includes *Gryffindors* ! And Gryffindors will tell the Ravenclaws and the Hufflepuffs! And then Gryffindors will tell *Eleanor Fionn* ! And she'll – *she'll* tell the whole world…" The seventeen-year-old gave a low moan and smacked her head down onto the desk. "Ow," she complained quietly.

… *No. He's lying. Defending his own pride. Because that answer is just… just ridiculous. Impossible. Scandalous. NOT TRUE.* Ginny refused to believe her Professor. Because if she did, that would leave to the eventual conclusion of…

YAY! Review replies!

Kyra: Sorry, I calculated that before I realised that I'd be off for a week with exams. Thanks!

00jade: Well, we *sort of* now know what Svengali is… I do. You don't. Hahah. YAY! TOM'S POV!

The-Quoi: Hah! Your reviews made me laugh, thank you! AND YES, THAT WAS THE KISS. Sorry, not exactly a proper kiss. But that comes in… -checks calendar- six days time. If I update daily, that is. Bwahaha. Work it out yourself.

MadeNew: Yes, I'd have to say that there was a bit of Tom in this chapter. LOL. Yeah well, darn you review writer! Bwahaha.

creative-writing-girl13: Don't we all wonder? She didn't black out, she was Imperiused. You can't remember anything when you're Imperiused.

Somerdaye: Thank you! I hope the cuteness and Riddleness of this chappie makes up for it. Yay, I review-replied. Is that a verb? It should be.

Saene: You didn't sleep for a week? WHY? I need my sleep. I am not a happy morning person, and I go to bed early. Try to wake me up and I'll groan, slap you, and then roll over and go back to sleep. Yeah, I hate that as well. I mean, even *Riddle* breaks under pressure. But it has to be a lot of pressure. Haha.

DeadlyCreative: Indeed they do. As we just found out, no, she didn't fight it off.

Sb: Er… no.

Taylor Rae: AWESOME POSSUM! I love that phrase! I say it all the time. –squee- Anyway. Yes, I think that about Abraxas too. Well, doesn't *everyone* ? And I assure you that snogging is fast approaching.

Faye8222: It happens a lot. It's not really that unusual. Thanks!

XxRandomHeartxX: No fear, I am alive! Yeah, it said in OotP that she was a good actress, because she lied really easily to her mum, so… yeah, basically. What, even put a stick up your nose? Ew. And won't people stare and be like, "Er… crazy lady says what?"

TurnSmileShiftRepeat: Yeah, that's where I got the idea from!

BDSanta2001: Here. A nice big review-reply for you. Oh no! Just imagine loads of hippies with peace signs on their shirts sleeping around the Black Lake in peaceful protest. LOL.

SmexiMexi: Nah, she didn't throw it off.

AppLette: I can't answer that. But thanks for the review!

Peacegirl: Bwahaha. Attack of the cliffie.

Courtney P: Thanks!

KayRose: Thank you!

Amberdream7: Don't die, or I'll lose a reviewer. Lol.

P is for Partly Horrified

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for the reviews. This is a sort of explanatory chapter. Some funny bits. Some sad bits. Sorry it's late. The next few chapters might be late too – I'm having my bedroom reconstructed and I'm busy moving into the guestroom. Anyway. ENJOY! (Your only other option is death.)

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Seven: P is for Partly Horrified

Devin nodded at her; lifted his wand… The last word that Ginny remembered was a sharp "Imperio!" And then the world went blissfully blank.

All that he remembered was a blur of dark red. Then he was cut off very abruptly by something grabbing the sides of his face rather painfully and then crushing his lips underneath her own. For the first time in what was probably… approximately nine years – Tom felt himself go completely red. Then, his brain still dead, his muscles numb, and his lips stinging, he walked away as though absolutely nothing had happened.

" *Finite incantatem* ."

Ginny couldn't remember a thing. She racked her brains… nothing. She looked expectantly at Professor Devin, only to find that he was staring at her in a mixture of mingled shame, astonishment, and embarrassment. Turning to her classmates, she found their expressions identical.

"That's amazing! I don't remember what I did," Ginny said, for want of something to break the uncomfortable and very ill-foreboding silence. She gave a hesitant grin, unsure if it was right move.

And then the class exploded into laughter.

What'd I do? Ginny scratched her head. It couldn't be that bad. Could it?

"Alright, students, that's enough!" Devin said sharply. "Miss Peregrine, please return to your seat. Next…" he referred to the list that he was still holding in his left hand. "Alden Philips."

Still confused, Ginny headed back to her chair, beside a partly-horrified Grace. She flashed Alden an encouraging smile as she past him, but he gave her a wary glance in return.

Okay, what did I seriously do?

Hurt by Alden's behaviour, Ginny sank into her seat, a frown furrowing her brow.

" *Imperio* !" commanded Devin.

After a few seconds, Alden began to sing an Elvis Presley song, accompanied by the mandatory wiggling of hips. Amusing as it was to watch, Ginny was still deeply concerned by the stares she had received at the end of her turn – that hadn't happened to anyone else.

She took a piece of parchment from her bag, dipped her quill in ink, and then scrawled a note, reading: *Grace, what happened to me? Why did everyone stare and then laugh?* She then turned to Grace, on her other side. "Hey," she whispered, flickering her gaze sideways to check that Devin wasn't looking. "Grace." She tossed the parchment onto her friend's desk, and waited.

A moment later:

Erm. Your Imperius was kind of… unusual, let's say.

Frowning deeper, Ginny wrote back.

What do you mean? What happened?

I don't know what Devin cast for you to do, but you ended up… you ended up kissing Riddle. Heh.

Ginny raised an eyebrow sceptically.

Grace. He isn't in our class.

He came in. He sort of ran away after you finished.

Ginny stared at the response she'd got. She stared at it for a long time. Then her eyes widened and she started to choke.

Professor Devin looked up from setting the Imperius Curse on Oliver Quiney at the sound of a gagging Ginny, who was clutching at her throat and seeming to have a fit.

"Sshh!" Grace hissed frantically. "Ginny – Ginny, be quiet!"

The redhead gave one last splutter, drew a long breath, and then fell silent. People were staring; whispering; giggling.

They knew what I'd done. They…

Oh God *.*

"Calm down," Grace whispered once Devin had called Jack Swithin to the front. "It's okay – it's not really that big a deal-"

" *Not that big a deal* ?!" Ginny screeched (quietly). "Grace! I just publicly snogged the Head Boy!"

"Yeah, but not deliberately," Grace pointed out calmly. "It wasn't as though you *chose* to do it."

Fuming, Ginny had to realise that Grace was right. "But – but – *in public* !" she cried. "In front of the entire class! Which, I may add, includes *Gryffindors* ! And Gryffindors will tell the Ravenclaws and the Hufflepuffs! And then Gryffindors will tell *Eleanor Fionn* ! And she'll – *she'll* tell the whole world…" The seventeen-year-old gave a low moan and smacked her head down onto the desk. "Ow," she complained quietly.

"I do wonder, though," Grace mused aloud, "what command Devin must have given you."

Ginny turned her head slightly, and, from her position on the desk, made a *do I give a damn* face at her friend.

"I mean… it's not like he said to you: *kiss Tom Riddle when he comes through the door* ," Grace mentioned honestly.

"…Grace?"

"Yes?"

"Shut up."

"So, Peregrine, did you think you could get away with snogging him? Think that because you were supposedly under the Imperius, people would think it wasn't planned?" Claude sneered at the end of class.

"I *was* under the Imperius," Ginny growled from between gritted teeth.

Claude smirked. "Sure."

Resisting the urge to rip the snide blonde to pieces, Ginny stuffed her things into her schoolbag (with a little more violence than had been intended, admittedly. She heard something snap, but ignored it). Then she straightened, and, for the second time, waited behind after Defence Against the Dark Arts.

Sensing the storm coming, Alden, who had seemingly overcome his shock, ushered a reluctant Grace from the classroom. Ginny, the storm-cloud in question, sent him a grateful glance. Then the door closed behind the two leaving Slytherins, and Ginny fixed her darkest stare on a weary, confused Professor Devin at the front.

"What did you tell me to do?" Ginny demanded. Screw politeness and respect to teachers at all time. She wanted answers and she wanted them *now* .

Devin sighed. "Miss Peregrine, what happened was completely unintentional, and I assure you that I didn't know it was going to happen."

Ginny folded her arms defiantly. "That's not what I asked."

"Miss Peregrine, I admire your determination, and I understand your embarrassment, but due to your language and disrespect, I feel I must remind you that *I* am the teacher here," Devin said sternly.

" *What did the hell you ask me to do ?*" Ginny snapped, close to shouting.

" *Language* , Miss Peregrine!" Devin said angrily in response. "I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"No!" Ginny said furiously. "You just want me to go so that you don't have to humiliate yourself by telling me how you screwed up!"

" *Miss Peregrine* !" Devin was turning red with rage now. "I am going to tell you two things. Firstly, I am asking you to leave not as an act of cowardice, but in punishment, as I will *not* tolerate such insolence! Secondly, I did not… *so quote* , 'screw up'. I will have you know that what happened was your fault!"

Ginny's mouth fell open.

*I was under the bloody **Imperius** ! How **dare** you try to push the blame on me!*

"I'll tell you what I commanded of you, Miss Peregrine. I was running out of ideas. I know you teenagers – I was one once, contrary to popular belief!" the Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor scorned. "You and your classmates would have been bored of repetition. I made a foolish decision in saying – and this, I promise to you, is accurate – *do whatever you want* ."

Confusion. Then understanding. Then more confusion.

"What?" Ginny echoed dumbly.

"I told you to do whatever you wanted, Miss Peregrine. I could not control the outcome, and I realise now that it would have been exceptionally dangerous – what if you had wanted to blow up the school? Or kill your classmates?" Devin shook his head. "It was a bad idea, but it was *not* my fault." He twisted his lips into a grimace. "It was merely misfortune that Mr. Riddle entered at such an opportune moment."

… *No.*

He's lying. Defending his own pride.

Because that answer is just… just ridiculous. Impossible. Scandalous. NOT TRUE.

Ginny refused to believe her Professor. Because if she did, that would leave to the eventual conclusion of her *wanting* to kiss Tom Riddle.

And that was just wrong on so many levels.

"Well." Ginny wouldn't anger Professor Devin any further. "I'll leave you now." Her voice was cold. "Thank you, sir, for your time." She turned sharply on her heel and departed the classroom, the door

swinging energetically behind her; a bewildered and guilt-ridden Devin sitting in her wake, his hooded blue eyes ashamed.

"Hey!" Grace fell into step beside the partly horrified, partly wrathfully anger redhead. "What's up?"

"What did sir say?" inquired Alden; he always used the appropriate term of respect when speaking of others, regardless of whether or not they were around.

For a moment, Ginny considered telling them. Then she decided against it. It was unfair, as they'd always been kind and truthful to her, and it seemed as though she'd done nothing but lie since she got her. Alden, she thought, would be a good person to tell. He was quiet, wouldn't spread it around, and also had a useful insight into how the hopelessly confusing male mind worked. Grace, however – nice as she was, and as good a companion, and probably closer she was to Ginny – was a gossip, and wouldn't let go of the false notion that Ginny, allegedly, untruthfully, fancied Riddle.

She repeated the words *false notion* once more in her head. She wasn't sure why. She just needed to hear the words – even just echoing in her brain.

"He… he didn't say anything," Ginny said.

"Oh." Grace looked put-out.

Alden flashed his gaze to Ginny's quizzically; she nodded in response. She'd tell Alden, she decided. But he'd be sworn to secrecy on his life.

"What have we got next?" Ginny asked loudly, not only veering away from dangerous waters while Grace was present, but also realising how to get Alden alone.

"I have History of Magic," Grace said.

Catching on, Alden tutted. "Arithmancy. I'll see you later, Grace." He stood on tiptoe to kiss his girlfriend, and then waved her away, into the direction of her next class.

As the brunette reluctantly left, Alden turned to Ginny, one eyebrow slightly raised. "So what did sir *really* say?" he said calmly.

Ginny glanced around, checking for anyone spying on them… and then told him the synopsis of the entire meeting. When she was finished, Alden was frowning. The sight of his troubled facial expression didn't make Ginny feel any better. "What d'you think?" she asked as they headed up the stairs towards Arithmancy.

Alden roughly licked his lips. "Well." His frown eased slightly. "So *you* say that you definitely don't like Riddle that way." His frown returned. "However, Devin says that you do."

"Yeah, basically. And," she added irritably, "you can take the emphasis off the words ' *you say* ', because I'm not *saying* that I don't fancy Tom. I *don't* ."

"Okay," Alden amended. "You don't like Riddle beyond the whole friendship thing, but Devin says you do."

Ginny was glad that she'd told Alden. Not only was he working things out in a logical manner as opposed to the embarrassing screeches of *you fancy Riddle you fancy Riddle* that would doubtlessly sprout from Grace's knowledge of the situation, but also he didn't stop to question when Ginny had become friends with him, and when she had started to refer to him as *Tom* .

"Yeah," Ginny agreed. "And I think that Devin's lying to cover his own back."

Alden looked amused at this. "Ginny, people don't do that here. The students do, but the teachers? No."

Her only reasonable solution now officially squashed, Ginny grumbled and kicked the wall.

"Don't worry about it," Alden reassured her. "It's probably just a big misunderstanding."

"Hell yeah!" Ginny snorted. "One big old misunderstanding – *understatement* ! This is the worst misunderstanding *ever* ! Because the fact is that people have to *understand* that I *don't* feel *anything* for Tom."

Alden shrugged, and the topic moved on to the safer topic of the Arithmancy homework.

And, unbeknownst to the world outside, a tall, dark silhouette stood frozen behind a tapestry of a little beribboned girl patting a sheep, having heard the entire conversation. Then, with only a flair of cloak that ruffled the left corner of the tapestry to give him away, the shadow stalked back down the corridor, his sharp footsteps hiding the sharp pain that no-one could ever learn of.

A/N: He's in *waaaaay* too deep. –tut tut- Please review…

Next Time:

Ginny, on the other hand, knew full well than Tom existed, and also was fully aware that he was avoiding her. For the sake of her own embarrassment at having publicly kissed him in front of a teacher, she was glad that she hadn't seen him. However, more than two weeks had passed, bringing late January in with the melting snow, and she was getting rather worried about if he was even still alive.

Not many people would have noticed it, save for Ginny, and that was because she was carefully watching every inch of Tom's anatomy for the slightest give-away of what was going on inside that big skull of

his – but at these words, he quickly clenched his fingers into fists before releasing them.

YAY! Review replies!

creative-writing-girl13: All together now – *awwwww!* Hehe.

Fandy: Between me and you, he almost is…

Peacegirl: Haha, I've done that plenty of times. Thank you!

flashes-of-silver: Thank you for realising that no matter how much you pester me, I can't tell you any answers. THANK YOU! – worships- Trust me, there are lots of fascinating twists.

00jade: Ooh! –squee- I love after-effects, don't you?

SugarDumplings: Thanks!

somerdaye: Squeeing time! Die, verb-people, die! Lmao. Please don't die!

DeadlyCreative: Funny, sweet, but kind of sad as well. Because he knows that if it weren't for the Imperius, it never would have happened.

BDSanta2001: I'd love to be his courier! –drool- Dippet's hot. Haha, the Rave-Prom was one big, brilliant ole moshpit.

The-Quoi: I HAVE THAT STUCK IN MY HEAD NOW! THANKS A LOT! –huff- *When the moon hits your eye, like a big ole pizza-pie, it's amour.*

Saene: Ouch. I hope your hand feels better soon. Lol, you're the *only* person who remembered that she had to have had a command, and what could the command have been? Tell me your dream! I DEMAND IT.

Chimis: Haha, indeed it did. Well, whose subconscious DOESN'T?

Eriika33: Wow, thanks!

Taylor Rae: Thanks! Haha, it's like you get drunk, and start rambling, "So what you think is gonna happen, huh? Ginny and Tom kiss again or will they- **THUD.** (passes out)". Hehe. Sleep is a wonderful thing, ja.

xHeavilyxBrokenx: Three things. Uno: I love your pen-name. Dos: AWWW. Tres: I've been wishing I was Ginny for the whole freakin' fic!

Amberdream7: Thank you!

Kallie: Thanks, sorry it's late.

Courtney P: I've been fine, how are you? Thanks!

SiRiUsLyInLuV71: Well, yeah, it was kind of spontaneous, but I did say about three chapters ago that they were going to start studying the Unforgivables. And this is quite a long fic (a VERY long fic) so there's quite a bit left. Sorry.

Storm-brain: We should start a STH campaign! (Save The House-elves.) –marches with banner-

P is for Pathetic And Pride

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for the reviews again! Sorry that the previous chapter was a bit boring. This is interesting though. Trust me. But it's sort of sad. Anyway. I'm going camping tomorrow, so this is posting quickly without review replies. I'll reply soon.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Eight: P is for Pathetic And Pride

" *Hell yeah!" Ginny snorted. "One big old misunderstanding – understatement! This is the worst misunderstanding ever! Because the fact is that people have to understand that I don't feel anything for Tom."*

And, unbeknownst to the world outside, a tall, dark silhouette stood frozen behind a tapestry of a little beribboned girl patting a sheep, having heard the entire conversation. Then, with only a flair of cloak that ruffled the left corner of the tapestry to give him away, the shadow stalked back down the corridor, his sharp footsteps hiding the sharp pain that no-one could ever learn of.

"Hey, Peregrine! Declared love for anyone yet?"

Ginny glared at the passing Gryffindor, her cheeks heating up. He found this only more amusing, and he began to laugh harder. Walking off with his stupid friends, Ginny found herself fixed by the urge to direct her legendary Bat-Bogey Hex at the boy's head.

Resist. Resist. It's bad to maim people, remember?

Her leaf-coloured eyes narrowed dangerously, but she forced herself to keep walking.

As she had suspected, within two hours, the entire school was aware of what had happened under the effect of the Imperius Curse. Professor Devin had been formally addressed by the rest of the staff, telling him off about how dangerous it could have turned out, and luckily the only thing that was wounded was 'poor Miss Peregrine's and Mr. Riddle's pride'.

Mr. Riddle was another story entirely. He'd disappeared, seemingly, from the face of the planet. Ginny knew from her own personal experience that Hogwarts was more than big enough for someone to hide in and never be found. It was quite easy to never see someone in seven years of schooling with them, and if the person happened to be evading society, then it was probably possible to forget they even existed.

Ginny, on the other hand, knew full well than Tom existed, and also was fully aware that he was avoiding her. For the sake of her own embarrassment at having publicly kissed him in front of a teacher, she was glad that she hadn't seen him. However, more than two weeks had passed, bringing late January in with the melting snow, and she was getting rather worried about if he was even still alive.

Contemplating back on these thoughts, Ginny told herself it was pointless, and, with a sigh, pushed her stupid anxieties to the back of her mind.

Rain spattered the windows – *good old Scotland* , Ginny thought crossly – cleaning the glass, and revealing a gray sky outdoors. Grimacing at the less-than-pleasant weather conditions, Ginny decided against visiting her favourite willow tree, and seeing the state of the unfortunate, petrified Moaning Myrtle in the water.

What else can I do?

Homework, she reminded herself. She had a twelve-inch essay on Golpagott's Third Law due in tomorrow for Potions, and she had to practice Transfiguring tables into quilts for Professor Dumbledore, at which she had failed dismally during yesterday's lesson.

However, as *enticing* as doing her homework sounded, Ginny simply couldn't bring herself to do something educational.

Maybe look for Tom…

As soon as this thought left her brain half-formed, as though Merlin had heard her, she looked up and caught a glimpse of a snatch of dark, hand-me-down robes disappearing around the corner, and an abnormally long leg.

What were the odds?

Sensing that Tom knew she had seen him and would probably run before she could catch up, Ginny broke into a sprint, shoving through a group of third-years and dashing forwards. The flapping sole of her broken flats threatened to trip her every step of the way, but she overcame it and wheeled about the corner.

Hell, he moved fast.

Still, seemingly, walking at the same brisk but casual pace, Tom had astonishingly made it the entire length of the hallway and was nearing the stairs, where Ginny was certain she'd lose him.

"Tom!" she called after him.

He continued a few more steps before slowing, almost reluctantly, and then came to a halt.

Ginny breathed a sigh of relief, and hurried after him. "Tom," she said again, less loudly now that she wasn't forcing her voice to span fifteen metres.

As she neared him, she clearly saw the dark look cutting a scar on his pale, strong features.

Okay… someone's not happy to see me…

The redhead ceased her running; Tom immediately began to walk again. Cross with his antisocial-ness, Ginny hastened to fall into step with him. "Hey," she said brightly, peering up into his shadowed face.

"'Evening," said Tom curtly. The cutting of the word ' *good* ' was obvious, and, Ginny thought privately, very childish.

Ginny mock-frowned. "'Evening'?" she echoed. "Silly boy, it's only-"

"Five o'clock," he threw out impassively, casting a meaningful look sideways at a clock they passed. Ginny looked at the clock. It was indeed five o'clock.

Well, damn.

As they began to descend the grand staircase, Ginny attempted again to spark up conversation. "So," she tried, "how about that Quidditch match tomorrow? Gryffindor-Ravenclaw? Should be interesting."

"Not really," said Tom icily. "A hoard of arrogant idiots versus a hoard of know-it-all idiots, each trying to kill each other."

"Exactly!" Ginny said proudly. "Now you're starting to understand the whole *point* of Quidditch. It's just basically two Houses trying to kill each other, and then two other Houses watching, cheering, and hoping that somebody gets into a fight."

Ginny had expected for Tom to find the mention of dying Gryffindors amusing. However, his jaw was set steadfastly, and he didn't even satisfy the joke with an answer.

Cheer up, moron , Ginny mentally screeched at him. She imagined a series of images in which she hit him over the head with a Beaters'

bat. Then she put the images to the back of her mind before she seriously considered Summoning one. Maybe even a Beater, to help.

The two Slytherins walked down the next flight of stairs in total silence. Ginny could easily have remained quiet, but Tom's unexplained stubborn disposition was grinding on her nerves greatly.

"Okay, stop it," she snapped frustratedly, stopping stock-still halfway down the stairs. She folded her arms across her chest and stared at him. "What did I do?"

Tom, who had previously not stopped when she did, now came to a halt, a few steps below her. He didn't turn and look at her, but Ginny saw his shoulders tense. She waited for a reply. She didn't get one.

"What have I done wrong now?" Ginny said angrily. "As far as I'm concerned, all that I did was accidentally kiss you. And if you're avoiding me because of that, then I mean you every offence when I say that that's just really *pathetic* ."

Not many people would have noticed it, save for Ginny, and that was because she was carefully watching every inch of Tom's anatomy for the slightest give-away of what was going on inside that big skull of his – but at these words, he quickly clenched his fingers into fists before releasing them.

Then, after a pause during which tension built up like a gathering storm, he ground out: "It's not."

"Not what?" Ginny said.

"It's not that." For the first time since their little meeting had begun, his dark eyes flashed left to meet hers.

Ginny realised with some abashment that she was now the same height as Tom – standing two steps higher than him. She tilted her chin defiantly up at him and held his gaze. After another long silence,

the Head Boy exhaled heavily, turned away, and carried on down the stairs.

As he slowly faded into the distance, she asked, "What is it, then?"

She didn't raise her voice, nor did she lower it. Yet it carried clearly, softly, down the steps, to the ears of the Heir of Slytherin.

Tom stopped again, on the steps. For one heart-hammering moment, Ginny thought he was actually going to tell her. Then, with the tiniest twitch of his head, indicating what, for a normal human being, would have been a shake of *no* , he resumed his walk, and vanished.

The bewildered redhead stared at the space where he had just been. Then, thinking furiously, she tried to think of what she could have said – or done – or even *thought* about doing – to upset Tom so.

She drew a complete blank.

Now feeling awful for calling him pathetic when something must be really troubling him, Ginny sank down and sat dejectedly on the stairs, staring sadly ahead. What a mystery that boy was. And what she'd give to find out why.

A/N: Aw. Poor Tommykins. Ginny's kind of stupid. But then again, she'd never guess in a million years that he was upset because the *Dark Lord fancied* her. Anywho. Please review.

Next Time:

"Please answer the door!" Ginny said to the wood of the door marked *Head Boy – Tom Riddle* in swirling letters. "I even have a big speech prepared, but it's not going to work if I have to say it to a door."

P is for Predictable Pages

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: THANK YOU! Sorry, *still* no review-replies. I'll get around to it, I promise. I've been really busy, and replying takes so much time. I'm sorry. This chapter has interesting references to other fics… hehe. It's quite sweet, but quite short.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Forty-Nine: P is for Predictable Pages

" *What have I done wrong now?" Ginny said angrily. "As far as I'm concerned, all that I did was accidentally kiss you. And if you're avoiding me because of that, then I mean you every offence when I say that that's just really* ***pathetic*** *."*

The bewildered redhead stared at the space where he had just been. Then, thinking furiously, she tried to think of what she could have said – or done – or even ***thought*** *about doing – to upset Tom so. She drew a complete blank. Now feeling awful for calling him pathetic when something must be really troubling him, Ginny sank down and sat dejectedly on the stairs, staring sadly ahead. What a mystery that boy was. And what she'd give to find out why.*

She wasn't ready to lose him yet.

Nervous twitches hit her like thunder as she pulled on her dungarees. She shouldn't do this. Hell, she *couldn't* . Taking a deep breath, she sat on her trunk and tried to calm herself down.

"Hey, are you okay?" Grace asked, looking concerned.

Ginny nodded. She took another breath before standing. With as much confidence as she could muster, she grinned at her friend, and then set about twining her hair into two thick scarlet plaits. "I'm fine," she said.

The brunette didn't look convinced, but she shrugged, let it slide, and returned to her favourite Saturday past-time of curling up with a good book. Today, Ginny observed, was a Muggle novel named…

"Isn't that mine?" Ginny asked, pointing at the book. "I think Alden got me that book."

Grace went pink. "Well. Yes."

"You can read it," Ginny said dismissively. "Just don't tell me what happens. I haven't finished it yet."

"Okay," Grace agreed. "I won't tell you anything," then hiding behind her book, she muttered, "except that Dago Manfy dies on page 184."

"WHAT?" Ginny yelled, leaping onto the bed and attacking Grace. "Give me that! He does *not* die!"

"He does," Grace insisted, trying to wrestle the book away from an insane Ginny. "Page 184, I tell you. He gets killed by-"

"DON'T TELL ME!"

"-a rabid monkey."

"What?" Ginny gave her friend an *are you crazy* look. Then she snatched the book and danced away with it. She flipped angrily through it.

Page 184… page 184… aha.

She scanned the text in horror.

And then, with a roar, the gorilla advanced on Dago. "NO!" Guinevere screamed. "DAGO, MY LOVE!" Then, claws flashed, blood flew, and the handsome young man fell to the floor. Guinevere screamed again. But Dago would be okay, she told herself, he'd get up any minute now. However, little did she know that he'd never move again .

Ginny gasped. "Dago!" she cried, dropping the book in shock.

"Sheesh, don't mistreat the book," Grace said irritably, picking it up off the floor and returning to her bed to read it.

"Why?" Ginny howled. " *Why* ? Why do they always kill the pretty one? It couldn't just be Harold or Rhun, *oh no* , it had to be the pretty one. MEEH!" she hid her face in her hands.

"Don't worry, he'll probably come back to life," Grace predicted from behind the book's pages. "This story is kind of predictable." She paused. "And very false. Everyone knows that gorillas don't roar."

Ginny rolled her eyes. Deciding to grieve the death of the best-looking fictional character in the book The Rock Talks later, she bid Grace farewell and then left the dormitory.

" *Condolesam* ."

"Oh, have you taken to coming up and asking politely?" Robin the Rich sneered from atop his fat grey horse. "Decided that sprinting up and bellowing at me was getting a bit boring for your taste?"

Ginny scowled. "Just open the stupid common room," she said, annoyed.

Robin the Rich huffed indignantly, but swung his painting forwards.

" *Thank* you." Ginny made a face at him, and then stepped through the portrait-hole. Eleanor wasn't in the common room, she knew –

she'd seen the blonde Head Girl heading outside with a gaggle of her friends. It was better that way. She couldn't really do what she was planning with Eleanor listening.

Weaving through the intricate maze of plush sofas and stacks of books, Ginny made her way across to the Head Boy's stairs. Being gripped again by that age-old phobia of being ripped to pieces by Tom in a very bad mood, she drew in a very deep breath before venturing up the wooden steps.

Okay, here we go.

The redhead bravely knocked on the door.

No-one answered.

She knocked again.

Still no reply.

"Tom?" she called in. "Well, I've probably just cemented all reason for you not coming to answer the door – *oh great, it's Peregrine* ." She gave a short laugh. "Tom, can you come out? I know you're in there."

Silence.

"Please answer the door!" Ginny said to the wood of the door marked *Head Boy – Tom Riddle* in swirling letters. "I even have a big speech prepared, but it's not going to work if I have to say it to a door."

She knocked again.

"Hello?" she tried. No reply came, and she sighed. "Fine." A pause… an inhalation… "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Tom, for all these problems I've caused for you. I imagine that your life was probably a hell of a lot easier before I arrived, sticking my nose in everything and getting in the way. It seems," she said, honestly, quietly, "that all I've done

since I got here is embarrass you. Me passing out and having to get you to carry me… the Hogsmeade incident… me and my stupid beaver… and now this."

You can do this.

Ginny boldly plunged onwards.

"And I really am sorry… if I could take back all the stupid things I've done… or said… or wanted to say – then I would. Seriously." Ginny stressed the last word. It was the only way that she could think of proving to him that her apologies were genuine. Subtle, she was not. But hey, she could try. "Er. So… I was *actually* coming to try and ask… um. Considering that tomorrow is a Hogsmeade day-trip, I was wondering if maybe you wanted to join me. You know, the same sort of thing as last time. Except minus the whole me-poisoning-you thing. And then also minus the big fight that we had, and then getting locked in the Hog's Head and getting wasted to the point of passing out," Ginny added, grimacing. "That wasn't good."

Still no response.

*How stubborn **are** you?*

"If you don't want to, then I – um – I get the message. And… I am sorry, and… well. That's it really, so please open the door," Ginny pleaded one last time.

Silence.

"There's a fire!" Ginny yelped. "Help me, Tom, I'm burning alive!"

Absolutely *nothing* .

Screw you! I could be dying out here!

She pushed at the door and peered through a crack. She couldn't see anything. In fact, it was completely dark. Tom was probably

sulking in the shadows. "I'm going to cry," she sing-songed into the room, setting her lower lip into a pout-

"Well, we couldn't have that, could we?" a voice said from her.

Ginny yelled out, frightened; whirled around so fast that she forgot she was on stairs, stumbled, fell. With the world blurring around her, she crashed down several steps and then finished in a heap on the stair just above where the speaker was. She stared, dizzy, at a pair of extremely long shins.

"You're supposed to be in your room," she said crossly to the shins.

"Yes, and you're *not* supposed to be on my stairs. I think you'll find it's a fair contradiction," Tom's shins said – no. Shins couldn't talk – said Tom. Then a pale, long-fingered hand came into Ginny's line of view, and she pulled her own hand out from beneath her, took the hand, and was pulled to her feet.

Tom's lips were curved into a bemused smirk; his arms folded.

"Er. Sorry. I'll just…" she faltered, words failing her. "I'll just go." She bit her lower lip anxiously. "Sorry. Bye." Without any further indecisiveness, she hurried away, down the steps. Near the bottom, she was stopped.

"Wait."

Ginny paused, on the second stair from the last. She turned and looked up at the tall, dark-haired young man on the stairs above.

Tom seemed to be hesitating. Then, he said quietly, "I heard your speech."

"Oh." Red flooded Ginny's face faster than she ever thought was humanly possible. She didn't have anything to say to this latest comment. She fidgeted awkwardly with her hands, behind her back.

"Okay, then." Running out of small-talk to make, she turned away again.

"Peregrine?"

Please let me go! Ginny swivelled back to face him, head tilted slightly in question.

After a short pause, as though summoning courage – *don't be silly* , Ginny reprimanded herself – Tom said slowly, "Hogsmeade... that's tomorrow, at half past twelve, isn't it?"

Confused, Ginny replied, "Yeah."

Tom nodded. "I suppose that I'll see you there, then."

Ginny blinked. *Huh?* Then she understood, and reddened further, though a grin cracked her freckled features. "Okay." She turned and bounced down the final step.

"Peregrine-"

"Will you just let me *leave* ?" said Ginny exasperatedly, smiling broadly despite this.

"Never," Tom said coolly.

"You wanted something?" Ginny asked, rolling her eyes.

Tom took a breath. "Apology accepted."

Ginny's beam reached her ears. "Can I go now?" she teased.

The Head Boy shrugged indifferently, and the redhead at the bottom of his stairs skipped away, grinning as though her birthday had come early. She hadn't lost him yet.

A/N: YAY! Sorry, I'm really hyper because I know what's going to happen in a few chapters' time and YOU DON'T! Please review!

Next Time:

"I see." Grace raised her eyebrows. "Can I inquire as to whether the companion in question for this non-date happens to possess a title rhyming with Bomb Fiddle?"

"But-" Ginny moved her eyes from Tom's face to the cloak, unsure if this was really happening – the future Dark Lord being chivalrous and selfless.

P is for Platonic

A/N: I am SO sorry. I'll post some review-replies soon, I promise you. I love you all; thank you so much for reviewing. I hope you like this Hogsmeade chapter. It's quite funny and quite sweet. YAY! This time you got the references to "The Rock Talks". Hehe.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty: P is for Platonic

Tom took a breath. "Apology accepted."

Ginny's beam reached her ears. "Can I go now?" she teased.

The Head Boy shrugged indifferently, and the redhead at the bottom of his stairs skipped away, grinning as though her birthday had come early. She hadn't lost him yet.

"You're cheerful today," Grace noted as Ginny came out of the shower, her pyjamas slightly damp, towel in hand, drying her hair. "What have you done wrong?"

Ginny shot her friend a look. "What's *that* supposed to mean?" she asked, acting highly affronted.

"Well, I just haven't seen you this happy since that time that you held the bust of Godric Gryffindor at ransom for ten ounces of Honeydukes chocolate," Grace pointed out.

"I still can't believe they followed through with that." Ginny tutted, shaking her head. She grabbed a brush and began to attack her

head.

" *And* you're brushing your hair," Grace commented, blue eyes widened. "Wow. How many ounces did you ask for this time?"

Ginny set down the brush, deciding it was pointless. Instead, she grabbed a small elastic band and pulled her hair up into it, high atop her head.

"You know that's never going to come out, don't you?" said Grace conversationally, flipping up her latest book, having finished The Rock Talks the previous day. This one was called For Those Of Us , whose cover depicted a small curly-haired girl in a boat.

"Whatever." Ginny pulled on her pink poodle-skirt, perfectly aware that it clashed horribly with her hair. Did she *honestly* give a damn? She smoothed a wrinkle out of the ribbon at her waist, and burrowed about for her shoes.

"So what's got you all cheery, Miss Peregrine?" Grace drawled in a stunning impression of Professor Rowney, the Astronomy teacher. "Ooh. Here's a thought. Today's Hogsmeade."

"I am aware."

"And…?"

"And so I have secured a person to accompany me into the village in a platonic and purely friendly manner," Ginny said casually. "And have you seen my shoes?"

"You got a date." Grace looked around. "Which shoes?"

Ginny paused. "No. It is not a date."

"I see." Grace raised her eyebrows. "Can I inquire as to whether the companion in question for this non-date happens to possess a title rhyming with Bomb Fiddle?"

"Subtlety is not your strong point," said Ginny, rolling her eyes. "And where are my damn shoes?"

"Which ones?"

"The only ones I *ever* wear."

"Oh. Those." Grace cast an eye about the messy dormitory – the messiest part being Ginny's section. "I think that your bed ate it."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Very funny. I need those."

"Wear something else," Grace suggested, disappearing behind her book.

" *Aha* !" The redhead dived under her bed, having spotted one her ultra-elusive shoes. She emerged triumphant, clutching both of her shoes, hidden under the swamp that was the underside of her bed. "Found them."

"Mm," said Grace, not really paying attention.

"I'm going to go now," Ginny said, grabbing her bag and her stripey scarf. "See you."

"Say hi to Riddle for me," Grace mumbled, waving the redhead goodbye.

Ginny hurried out of the door. She met Alden in the common room, who cast one brown eye over her appearance and raised a quizzical eyebrow. She grinned at him ("Hogsmeade," she told him) and then continued on her way, slipping out into the East corridor of the dank dungeons.

Her footsteps echoed; her hair slapped her shoulders as it dried into untidy waves; her skirt brushed her legs a few inches below her knee; she climbed the last few stairs out into the Entrance Hall, and then scanned Hogwarts' broad lobby for a sign of her 'platonic and purely friendly companion'.

Dark hair – no, that was Scott… tall – no, that was Ilivan Yaxley… Slytherin – no, that was *still* Yaxley…

"Hello."

Ginny shrieked, her hands flying to her heart. " *Jesus,* Tom!" she gasped, turning to scowl at him. "What is it with you and creeping out of dark places to scare me?"

Tom smirked. "Are you planning on leaving, or is standing in a corner all I am to expect?"

"Ha-ha-ha," Ginny said sarcastically, though for some reasons she was finding it difficult to stand. Almost as though her knees had dissolved. Funny. "I see you've brightened up."

One eyebrow lifted. " *Bright* is not an adjective most commonly used to describe my attitude," Tom said dryly.

"Well, neither is *beaver* ," Ginny pointed out.

"That's not an adjective."

"Silence, fool."

They departed the Entrance Hall and made their way towards the Threstral-drawn carriages at the edge of the Hogwarts grounds. The one that Ginny selected only occupied a pair of giggly third-years, whispering and patting their hair as soon as Tom stepped in. Ginny recalled what Eleanor had said about Tom being handsome and highly fanciable; she rolled her eyes, knowing that she was going to get highly irritated by these thirteen-year-old bimbos.

The carriage rocked into life, jostling down the road. The bolder of the two third-years used one large pothole in the road to 'accidentally' send her flying onto Tom.

Ginny burst into laughter at the look of alarm, bewilderment, and annoyance on the Head Boy's face; he sent a scowl at her. This only

made her laugh harder.

"Say, Tom, when are you going to propose to Nancy?" Ginny inquired loudly, on a spur of the moment to rescue her companion from the hyena-like third-years.

Tom frowned at her. Then, understanding, he said coolly, "I'm not really sure. I might ask her over the summer, if I can get her father's permission first."

The third-years gaped.

Ginny stared. "You'd ask her dad first? How old-fashioned *are* you?"

"Middle Ages," Tom replied smoothly. "I believe we've arrived," he added, glancing sideways out the window.

Following his gaze, Ginny saw the village of Hogsmeade approaching, still caked with frost and ice, not yet melting by the approaching spring. Before the carriage even came to a halt, the thirteen-year-olds sharing it with them got up haughtily and jumped out.

"Hah!" Ginny yelled after them, before slamming the door closed.

Tom raised one eyebrow. "Was that really necessary?"

"Of course."

The Threstrals ahead of the phaeton ceased their trotting, and stopped neatly in the landing area for the horse-drawn carriages. The one pulling Tom's and Ginny's whinnied, stamping its hoof and flashing scarlet slits of eyes around to survey the land.

Standing (he had to bow his head, Ginny smirked to see), Tom moved towards the door, got out, and held the door open for the redhead following suit.

"Thanks," Ginny smiled, stepping out into the winter chill. Ginny knotted her scarf about her neck and curled her hands into the material hanging down from the knot. It was colder than she had expected. Tom, however, seemed totally unaffected, so she didn't complain.

"Where to?" he asked, dark eyes glancing down at her.

"I'd say… Honeydukes!" Ginny declared. Then, seeing Tom's frown, and remembering what happened last time, she hopped in front of him. "Halt, Sir Riddle," she said in a deep, ridiculously macho voice. "We form a treaty here today – I, Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine, sweareth that under no circumstances doest I re-attempt poisoning thee. Shouldst this accord beeth brokest, then I shalt cutteth mine own head from mine own shoulders."

Tom stared incredulously at her.

She extended a hand. "Now shake my hand," she commanded.

"Has anyone ever cared to inform you that you sometimes act bizarre beyond belief?" Tom said wryly.

"Many times. Now shake my hand."

With a short exhalation that spoke leagues (translating into: *I'm mad for going along with this. She's crazy. I really can't be bothered*), Tom took her hand and loosely shook it.

"Excellent." Ginny beamed. "Now we can go to Honeydukes."

The bell dinged noisily for the door of the Three Broomsticks, and two rather amusing-looking figures stepped through. One, an image of the walking dead – pale, dark-haired, dressed in black, and extremely tall; the other, the image of cheerful – scarlet ponytail, freckled, and wearing bright colours. Holding bags filled with

Honeydukes' and Zonkoes' products, they sat down at a table for two, near the fireplace.

"Two Butterbeers, please," Ginny said brightly, dumping her bags on the table. She then turned to her comrade, who was surveying the crowded bar with mild interest. "What d'you think, then?"

"What, may I inquire, is a Butterbeer?" asked Tom, returning his gaze to Ginny's face, a slight frown creasing the space between his eyebrows.

"Oh, don't worry," Ginny consoled him. "Everyone drinks them. It's sort of frothy and gold-brown coloured… it's hard to describe the taste. But it gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling."

At this last comment, Tom's eyebrows rose almost to his hairline.

"It does!" Ginny said defensively. "It honestly does."

"I'm sure it does," said Tom, as reassuring an adamant child that the Easter Bunny exists.

Ginny gave a *hmph* of annoyance. "Just you wait," she told him, narrowing her eyes.

At that very moment, a sulky-looking teenage boy with looks resembling that of present-time's Madam Rosmerta (Ginny suspected that this was the barmaid's father) arrived at their table holding two glasses of Butterbeer. He dumped them on the table, and held out his hands; Ginny pushed two Sickles and four Knuts into his calloused fingers.

When she turned back to Tom, he was staring at her again. "Why did you pay?" he asked.

Ginny frowned. "It's not free, you know."

"Not that – I'm not stupid," said Tom, folding his arms. "I mean, why did *you* pay for *me* ?"

What?

"Er. I thought I was being nice," Ginny said, confused.

Tom lowered his head, and mumbled, "I'm not a charity."

"I never said you were," Ginny pointed out. "It's not charity – it's buying your friend a drink out of kindness. If you don't want it, *I'll* have it."

Instinctively, Tom put a protective hand around his glass.

"Just drink it," Ginny said wearily, picking up her own glass and taking a sip. It was warm, but not so hot as to burn her lips, and a bubbly sensation, liking drinking shampoo, filled her stomach, lifting her spirits immediately.

The young Heir of Slytherin followed suit; Ginny, opposite him, watched him closely as he experimentally drank a small quantity of the foamy beverage. He blinked as it hit his throat. Then he looked up at Ginny in surprise.

"Well?" Ginny demanded. "Warm fuzzy feeling?"

Seeming to consider the question for a moment, Tom eventually said, "It's nice."

"I told you so!" Ginny declared happily. "Warm fuzzy feeling! Warm fuzzy feeling!"

After a long series of interrogations, Tom reluctantly agreed, before obstinately saying that it would never happen again. They finished their drinks (Ginny, in the meantime, consuming her own body-weight in salted peanuts provided on the polished wooden table) and returned to the cold outside world.

"Eh, it's freezing," said Ginny, chattering her teeth. She wished she'd brought a coat other than the fluffy purple jumper that Eleanor had given her for her birthday.

Without the slightest pause in hesitation or uncertainty, Tom shrugged off his shabby black cloak and handed it to her, laying it gracefully over the back of his hand.

"But-" Ginny moved her eyes from Tom's face to the cloak, unsure if this was really happening – the future Dark Lord being chivalrous and selfless.

Then said future Dark Lord, seeing that she wasn't going to do anything with it, draped it over her thin shoulders, before stepping back and motioning with his head down the road, in a *let's go* signal.

Ginny, still not sure that this was real, trotted obediently after him. The cloak was so big that it completely enveloped her, trailing behind her on the ground like a wedding train. She pushed her cold arms into the sleeves (the hem was flapping a good few inches past her fingers), and then picked up the end of the cloak to stop it from getting muddy and wet on the dirt, hurrying after the Head Boy, who was walking a lot faster than she was.

"Um," she said, "thank you, Tom." The robe was at least three sizes too big for her, but it was so warm that you'd think that Tom Riddle was a human furnace.

Until, of course, he started speaking to you, giving instead the impression of being a human freezer.

Tom turned his head to her and nodded. Then a half-smile flickered on his lips, lifting Ginny's heart and thawing her better than any cloak could. And suddenly the redhead felt like words had completely and utterly failed her, felt like her stomach had disappeared… felt like she was invincible.

A/N: THE HYPERNESS IS ALMOST EATING ME! ONLY TWO CHAPTERS! AAAAH! ..I got stung by a bee. It was in my *pajamas!* What the hell? Anyway. Review! OR DIE!

Next Time:

" *Flourish* !" the Hufflepuff chastised.

"If you don't shut up, I'm *seriously* going to *EAT* you!" Grace roared at the Hufflepuff, glaring.

Haha.

P is for Pummelling Hufflepuffs

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: GAH! Still no review-replies. I'm sorry. And by the way, for people who were confused, "platonic" means… like, not in a relationship. Like, a platonic friendship is two people who are friends but don't feel anything for each other. Which of course is a total lie when used in Ginny's context. And no, not two chapters until the end. HELL NO! Whoa. *One* chapter now until…. HEHEHE!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-One: P is for Pummelling Hufflepuffs

" *Eh, it's freezing," said Ginny, chattering her teeth. She wished she'd brought a coat other than the fluffy purple jumper that Eleanor had given her for her birthday. Without the slightest pause in hesitation or uncertainty, Tom shrugged off his shabby black cloak and handed it to her, laying it gracefully over the back of his hand.*

Tom turned his head to her and nodded. Then a half-smile flickered on his lips, lifting Ginny's heart and thawing her better than any cloak could. And suddenly the redhead felt like words had completely and utterly failed her, felt like her stomach had disappeared… felt like she was invincible.

She replayed it happily in her mind.

" *Okay," said Ginny, looking up through her fringe. "I'll see you later."*

A glimmer of smile wavered on his lips again. "Goodbye, then… Ginevra."

She beamed as she skipped the last few steps down to her dormitory. Then she pushed open the door for the sixth-years and twirled through the entrance.

As she entered, five faces turned up to glance at her. Ramira gave a quick smile before looking away; Avani and Claude sneered and continued what they were doing. Grace and Flora were sitting on the latter's bed, flipping through glossy magazines and doing each other's hair.

"Hey," said Grace, looking up from plaiting Flora's thick blonde hair. Her blue eyes immediately narrowed. "Oh great. You're grinning. What now?"

"Nothing," Ginny chirped, flopping onto her bed.

Grace raised an eyebrow slightly. She secured Flora's plait with a hairband and then released it. "Be right back," she said to the blonde girl, and scrambled towards Ginny. "So." She propped her head on the edge of the redhead's mattress.

"So what?" Ginny looked over at her friend.

"Why the grin? Why the slightly dizzy look? Why the skipping and twirling?" Grace inquired, a knowing glint in her sapphire eyes. "Am I right in thinking that Bomb Fiddle did something to make your day all sunshiney and glowy?"

Ginny gave the other girl an apprehensive look. "Are you nuts?"

"He did, didn't he?"

" *Ooh* ! Who? Who did what? Who does Ginny like?" Flora squealed, leaping over to kneel beside Grace.

Grace opened her mouth-

-and Ginny kicked her in the stomach. "No-one," she said firmly. "Grace has a totally insane theory that I fancy someone who I *don't* ."

"Who does she think that you fancy?" Flora frowned.

"Ri-"

" *Richard* !" Ginny cut in sharply.

"Richard?" Grace and Flora echoed, staring at her.

"Yeah. Grace thinks that I like Richard," Ginny lied blatantly. She racked her brain, hoping that there was a Richard in their age-group.

Richard… Richard…

"You do," said Grace, catching on quickly though she wasn't supposed to tell Flora. "You totally fancy Richard Poole", answering Ginny's line of thought.

Richard Poole?

Seeing Ginny's confused face, Grace elaborated, "d'you know him, Flora? He's that cute fourth-year."

Ginny stared.

"Isn't he a *Gryffindor* ?" Flora gasped.

Ginny gagged.

"Yeah, he *is* ," Ginny said. "And he's also three years younger than me. So I don't like him."

"Whatever." Grace flapped a hand dismissively and observed her nails.

Nothing happened for a very long time. Then, getting bored, Flora stood with a huff of indignation, as though silence should be banned,

and went back to her own bed.

" *Is she gone* ?" Grace whispered, still looking carefully at her fingernails.

" *Yeah* ."

Grace looked up from her fingers. "So what did… ahem, *Richard* … do?" she said.

" *Richard* did nothing," Ginny said firmly. "And by the way, thanks for helping me think of a Richard. I didn't think there were any in the school."

"Hey, could have been worse. You could have chosen the name Ripman. *He's* a first-year," Grace said severely. "And, not to mention, a Hufflepuff."

"What's wrong with Hufflepuffs?"

"They annoy me."

"Why?"

"Because all they ever do is talk about happiness. It makes me want to pummel them. Then they won't feel so happy."

(input frightened silence here)

" *Any* way," said Grace, drawing the word out like chewing gum. "Back to Richard. Tell me what he did."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Grace, will you give up on the idea that I fancy him?"

"Not until you tell me what he did."

"He called me Ginevra."

The brunette stared at the redhead for a long, long time. "And?"

"And that's it."

"…And?"

"That's it!"

"…you are sad. So, so sad." Grace shook her head, and jumped onto her own bed, grabbing a bar of chocolate and her book.

Ginny glared. However, her stern expression was to hide what was going on inside her head – and, more importantly, her heart. Tom had called her Ginevra. And she had been filled with a feeling better than Butterbeer. Tom had smiled at her. And she had felt like she ruled the world.

What in the name of Merlin was happening to her?

In reality, the fact was that she knew perfectly what was happening to her. Exactly what had happened seven years ago. Except that this time, it wasn't for the quiet dark-haired hero. It was for the quiet dark-haired anti-hero.

It was for the hero's murderer. It was for the killer of souls.

And so, fancying him simply wasn't an option. She was even going to entertain such thoughts. She pushed them away, to her mental rubbish-bin, where they'd be destroyed and never mentioned again.

"Now, focus… and speak the words *orior ortus* . Clearly, now, no mumbling," Dippet reprimanded.

The Headmaster, having been a former Charms Professor, had taken over the role as Charms teacher and would probably remain in that position until someone else was signed.

"Orior ortus!" Ginny said resolutely, swiping her wand forwards with a fierceness that probably wasn't required for the Conjuring Charm. The sixth-year class of Slytherins and Hufflepuffs were starting to learn how to Conjure items out of thin air, beginning small, with matches.

Looking sideways, Ginny saw that Alden had the red flint of a match lying on his desk, and he was trying to make the rest of it appear. To her other side, Grace was having no success either.

"Orior ortus!" Grace snapped at her wand, slicing at the air and concentrating so hard on the tip of her wand that her eyelid was twitching.

"Not so much of a slash, more of a flourish," corrected a nearby Hufflepuff in a motherly way. "Careful, now."

Grace's other eyelid began to twitch. "Get lost," she bit out. "I can do it myself." She hacked at the air in front of her. "Orior ortus!"

" *Flourish* !" the Hufflepuff chastised.

"If you don't shut up, I'm *seriously* going to *EAT* you!" Grace roared at the Hufflepuff, glaring.

Ginny bit back giggles and focused on her own spell-work. She pictured a match in her minds' eye, looking at every inch of it, every splinter of wood glued together to form it. "Orior ortus!" she commanded her wand. With a shimmer of grey light, a splinter wavered into sight on the desk.

"Aha!" she crowed. "Aha! I have a splinter!"

"Well done," said Alden, glancing over at her. "I have three matches."

Ginny fell silent, and looked sadly at her splinter.

By the end of the lesson, the seventeen-year-old Prefect had produced half a match, and Alden, who was close to perfecting his

Conjuring of matches skill, had moved on to trying to Conjure a whole box. Grace, unfortunately, spent most of her time trying to beat up the Hufflepuff next to her – she lost the Slytherin House five points for attacking another student, and was set extra homework, because she was so behind the rest of the class on her Conjuring.

"That was so unfair," said Grace, incensed. "How was I supposed to pay attention when there's this retard next to shrieking, *flourish, flourish* !" she squealed out a crude but accurate imitation of the Hufflepuff she sat beside.

"How indeed," said Alden solemnly, but he caught Ginny's eye and grinned at her. Then, as if remembering something, frowned. He looked up again afterwards and mouthed, " *have you told Grace about what Devin said* ?"

" *No* ," Ginny mouthed in reply. " *She follows the same theories as him, so I don't see the point* ."

" *You should* ," Alden chided. " *Despite the obvious factor of her using it as blackmail against you whenever possible* -" (Ginny gaped) "- *she'll actually be a really good person to help you* ."

Ginny grumbled. " *Fine.* "

The barefaced truth was that Ginny couldn't face telling Grace about Tom, because for months the brunette had been predicting this jump in the Head Boy-Prefect relationship, and she couldn't stand the never-ending reel of ' *I told you so* 's that would fly. And also because if she admitted to having someone tell her that she fancied Tom, then the eventual truth would come out that she thought she might be starting to actually fancy him-

NO! She didn't. She simply *didn't* . Because that was stupid.

Tom was *Tom* . The Head Boy. The idiot. The arsehole. The future murderer of thousands.

And she was *not* going to fancy him. Not on her watch.

"You're quiet," said Grace to her two companions, lingering a few steps behind her, and, seemingly, being silent. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Alden said brightly.

Ginny didn't reply. To her, at least, there was a hell of a lot wrong.

Things that could, perhaps, in time be solved – Svengali. Her public embarrassment about the beaver and the Imperius-prompted kiss.

Then, things that could probably never be solved – the murderer of Hogwarts. Why *Vander* of all people was targeted.

And then, things too complicated to even consider how they would turn out. And that, in all certainty, burned down to one word, one syllable, three letters: *Tom* .

A/N: OMG! THE NEXT CHAPTER! ARGHHH! Please review… or I won't post the next chapter… hehe.

Next Time:

"No, wait, there's more." Had Tom been a normal person, Ginny was certain he would have been giggling hysterically. " *The secondmost symptom to be seen is the death of hair cells. With no air reaching the strands, the hair is deprived and perishes. In this state of oxygen-starvation, it turns a dark and vivid shade of scarlet, for the blood trying to revive it."*

"Okay, now you're just making it up!" Ginny said crossly.

She had no idea what happened next, except that the circumstances changed, and suddenly…

P is for Pigs Will Fly

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: OMG! OMG! OMFG! OMROFLFJANFSDEGGGG! Aaarghhh! Sorry. I love this chapter so much though. Be warned: it will make you squee. I can't stop squeeing! AAAH! SQUEE! Anyway. HAHAHAH! SQUEE!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Two: P is for Pigs Will Fly

" *You're quiet," said Grace to her two companions, lingering a few steps behind her, and, seemingly, being silent. "What's wrong?"*

Ginny didn't reply. To her, at least, there was a hell of a lot wrong.

Things that could, perhaps, in time be solved – Svengali. Her public embarrassment about the beaver and the Imperius-prompted kiss. Then, things that could probably never be solved – the murderer of Hogwarts. Why Vander of all people was targeted. And then, things too complicated to even consider how they would turn out. And that, in all certainty, burned down to one word, one syllable, three letters: ***Tom.***

The days grew warmer as spring set in; crystal snows melting, giving way to the boldest of flowers that battled through ice. More students took to hanging about outside, as the need for gloves, scarves, hats, hoods, and army-boots diminished. Ginny saw this through a stained-glass window to the left of the hallway she walked through, and smiled.

Spring. She thought of Easter – of lots and lots of chocolate, actually. Forget the holiday. It was all about the chocolate. She thought of flowers and fluffy bunnies. And, twelve days away, she thought of the pagan holiday for love. Feburary the fourteenth. In all reality, the redhead detested the holiday. Girls either getting giggly 'in love', or hysterically 'heart-broken'.

You know neither , she said bitterly, glaring (unintentionally) at one of said giggly girls passing by. Her mind strayed to a bespectacled boy long gone. Then she crunched her brain down, squashing such thoughts, and thought again of chocolate. Lots and lots of chocolate.

Happy again, Ginny hummed tunelessly as she made her way down the third-floor corridor, swinging her schoolbag boredly in front of her. A fifth-year had blown up several Dungbombs in the Slytherin common room, and the seventeen-year-old Prefect found herself now heading in the direction of the library, a refuge where perhaps her Muggle Studies and Potions homework would miraculously complete itself.

Or not .

She pushed open the library doors. Casting a hazel gaze across the available tables for her to work upon, she surveyed the people sitting at each one.

A group of Ravenclaw girls investigating love-potions… *ew no.*

Two sulky-looking Gryffindors having an arm-wrestling match, while their friends watched and cheered (albeit quietly, so as to avoid the wrath of Madam Crofton)… *definitely not.*

Hufflepuff first-years writing studiously… *I could scare them away. Or I could try and make friends.*

Abraxas Malfoy, with a heavy-set Slytherin seventh-year girl, both deeply engaged in the educational theory behind snogging. *NO.*

And… Ginny smirked. A table in the far corner, partly in the dark, well away from society, with a flickering lamp to illuminate the table top… Tom Marvolo Riddle.

She crept up to the table as quietly as she could, preparing to bang her schoolbag down onto the work surface as loudly as she could, scaring him from his book-engrossed state… lifting the bag, and-

"Hello, Peregrine," said Tom absent-mindedly, not looking up from his thick, dusty book.

Ginny's mouth fell open in surprise and annoyance. "How did you-" she spluttered.

Tom's eyes flashed up to her. "You're not a quiet person, Peregrine. Don't even try."

*I **am** a quiet person* , Ginny thought indignantly. *I was a spy in the War, so you can stick **that** in your juice box and drink it!*

Keeping that to herself, she dropped into the chair opposite him with a huff. She pulled her books, parchment and writing utensils out of her bag and dumped them on the table. "Anyway," she said, fully and gleefully aware that she was interrupting Tom from reading in peace, which would irritate him, "where's ' *Peregrine'* suddenly come from? Whatever happened to 'Ginevra'?"

The Head Boy watched her carefully, as if trying to gauge if she was serious. Ginny self-consciously tilted her chin defiantly up at him. Seemingly finding what feature in her face that he was looking for, Tom said, "Alright. Ginevra, then."

"Yay." Ginny grinned, and then opened her book to the correct page, pulling a piece of parchment towards her and scrawling across the top: *Ginevra Peregrine, Slytherin, Year Six. 2 nd February, 1959.* Then she glanced back up to Tom, finding herself inordinately curious. "Whatcha reading?" she asked, leaning across the table and peering, upturned, at the page he was looking at it.

Upside down, she read the letters: *tiorgrettapS* .

"Spattergroit?" she asked, looking up back to Tom's face. "Rather morbid interest, don't you think?"

"It's for a History of Magic project," Tom informed her. "The history of magical diseases and maladies over time." He lifted his book to show her the cover, which depicted a gruesome image of a wizard covered in green, pus-leaking boils, and being sick everywhere.

"Lovely." Ginny sat back down into her seat.

"It is, actually," Tom commented as she began to scribble the title for her Potions homework.

Ginny raised her eyebrows at him, still mostly paying attention to writing the introduction to the Potions essay on the full uses of asphodel in conjunction to chicle roots. "Is that so?" she asked cynically.

"Indeed it is," Tom replied smoothly, and a smirk was pulling at his lips that made the redhead immensely suspicious. "Have a listen to this extract, why don't you?"

Narrowing her eyes at him, Ginny continued writing, though her attentions were now on Tom.

" *Spattergroit* ," Tom reading, his smirk doubling in size. " *Tis a deadly infliction of the macroscopic anatomy-* "

"The what?" Ginny echoed incredibly.

"Macroscopic. It means the parts of the body that you can see without enlarging your vision – for example, by spell or by Muggle microscope," Tom explained. "The opposite of microscopic."

"Oh."

" *Tis is deadly infliction of the macroscopic anatomy. The disease attacks from the inside, by way of devouring its path out. The symptoms are obvious…* " Here Tom's face seemed ready to crack, he was smirking so much. He forced his face impassive of his glee, and continued calmly. " *The first and foremost symptom is the dying skin. It becomes pockmarked and blemished with fair, light brown spots, generally accentuating the paled skin* ."

Ginny frowned. "What are you getting at?"

" *Sometimes this early symptom is thought to be a mere case of birthmarks spreading, brought out in sunlight and given the pet name of 'freckles* '," Tom completed his sentence, great amusement glittering in his dark eyes.

"Hey!" Ginny cried. "That's not fair!"

"No, wait, there's more." Had Tom been a normal person, Ginny was certain he would have been giggling hysterically. " *The secondmost symptom to be seen is the death of hair cells. With no air reaching the strands, the hair is deprived and perishes. In this state of oxygen-starvation, it turns a dark and vivid shade of scarlet, for the blood trying to revive it."*

"Okay, now you're just making it up!" Ginny said crossly.

" *The symptom that truly affirms the state of the spattergroit present in a person's genes is stunted growth* ," Tom continued, riddled with smug hilarity. " *The Inflicted may shown signs of having inherited shortened genes from their parents as a child, but reality soon sets in that having a pygmy-state of height is less than average, and the Inflicted is perilously ill* ."

"It does NOT say that!" said Ginny furiously. "Give me that!"

She lunged across the table, but Tom rocked easily back on his chair, out of reach, and continued reading happily aloud. " *As the illness progresses, the Inflicted begins to find that the hair, now at its*

most astonishing shade of crimson, becomes near impossible to handle – or even comb. "

"You're mean!" Ginny howled, stretching her arm as far as she could. "Mean, Tom, *mean* !"

" *Also, the Inflicted soon develops a compulsive obsession for sweet food – most often, commonplace, cocoa* ," Tom said. His eyes were dancing with wry entertainment.

"MEH!" Ginny sat back heavily down into her chair. She pouted. "I hate you." Deciding that if he wanted to make fun of her, he could do it by himself, she began to sweep her books, ink, quill, and unfinished homework into her schoolbag.

"Where are you going?" asked Tom innocently, setting the book down.

"You're horrible," Ginny told him, and stood up to leave.

"You're not *seriously* going to run off just because a book says that you're hazardously ill, are you?" Tom said, lifting one eyebrow.

"No, I'm leaving because you're being mean to me!" Ginny folded her arms and marched away. People were staring, but what the hell. "Good *bye* , Mr. Riddle!"

"Come back, you idiot," said Tom bemusedly.

" *See what I mean ?*" Ginny shrieked at him. She wasn't *really* that hysterical, but it was fun to be melodramatic. With a swirl of 'dying hair cells' and her black school skirt, she marched away.

"Ginevra…" Tom called after her, a sort of warning tone in his voice, like *don't make me have to stand up and come after you* . Then, he did stand, and followed her. "You're being really childish," he said in an extremely un-Tom sing-song voice.

" *I* am not the childish one here," Ginny said crossly, whirling back to face him, and abruptly finding herself in far closer proximity to Tom than she had expected. Regardless of her surprise, she continued to rant at him. "I'm not the one singing their words. I'm not the one making up huge portions of text just to annoy me! I'm not the one being absolutely *horrible* ! In fact, you're being *so* nasty that I think I'm going to-"

She had no idea what happened next, except that the circumstances changed, and suddenly Tom had stooped his head and kissed her.

Her hazel eyes widened about double in size, and she completely froze. She vaguely felt her toes going numb, but she had no idea what else was happening to her.

Then, with a great start, Tom seemed to realise what he was doing, and jumped backwards. He literally drained of all colour, and the first words out of his mouth were, " *Oh shit* ." Then this exclamation of horror was followed by: "Oh God, I'm sorry. I'm – I'm sorry." Shortly after a stammered apology that didn't really make any sense, he shoved a hand roughly backwards through his tidy hair, wheeled around and disappeared through the library doors.

Ginny stared blankly ahead at where he had just been. She could hear her heart throbbing in her ears. She'd actually stopped breathing entirely, and she had to tell herself to suck in a breath. She glanced sideways, seeing that Tom had left his school-things behind and that hundreds of people were staring, but not taking any of it in.

What in the name of Merlin just happened?

She had no idea.

One thing, however, that she *did* know, hit her like an arrow being fired, and it made her feel sick to her stomach. She stumbled from the library and ran towards the Slytherin common room.

"Hey!" said Grace cheerily as her friend came through the doors. Then she saw Ginny's face – as though someone had just died. "Ginny, are you okay?"

Totally disregarding the question, Ginny said, "Grace, do you remember what I said four months ago, at the Hallowe'en Ball?"

Grace frowned. "You said a lot of things, and most of it was drunk crap. Why? What's wrong?"

"You asked…" Ginny had to choke out the words. "You asked if I had any feelings for Riddle, and I said, 'pigs will fly before I fancy that tosser'. Right?"

"Yeah…" Grace didn't understand.

"Well, guess what?" Ginny's voice was getting high-pitched and hysterical. "Pigs have flown."

A/N: AAAHHHH! I LOVE IT SO MUCH! THEY KISSED! THEY KISSED! –dance dance dance- Anyway. Just to let you know, from here it will start to get very fluffy, very fast.

Next Time:

"Okay, let's go over this one more time," Grace said calmly. " *He did **what** ?"*

The three turned right and headed towards the grand Entrance Hall doors, which were already open and allowing the sweet scents of approaching spring to waft in. Then, there, in the doorway, he was. Ginny stopped. Grace and Alden followed her gaze, and they stopped as well. The brunette cleared her throat and quietly sang, " *Awwkwaaard.* "

P is for the Painful Truth

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: So sorry for the wait. I went on half-term holiday and there was *zilch* internet connection. Or even electricity, for that matter. Anyway. It's going to get rather fluffy, rather fast. Please enjoy.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Three: P is for the Painful Truth

She had no idea what happened next, except that the circumstances changed, and suddenly Tom had stooped his head and kissed her.

" *You asked…" Ginny had to choke out the words. "You asked if I had any feelings for Riddle, and I said, 'pigs will fly before I fancy that tosser'. Well, guess what?" Ginny's voice was getting high-pitched and hysterical. "Pigs have flown."*

"Okay, let's go over this one more time," Grace said calmly. " *He did **what** ?"*

Ginny groaned and hid her face in her pillow.

"So… you were yelling at him… and then he just suddenly snogged you…" Grace said slowly. "Is that right?"

"No!" Ginny snapped. "Well. Yes. But no!"

Grace puffed her breath out of the side of her mouth. "This should be complicated," she muttered.

"Why?" Ginny moaned. "Isn't it complicated enough?"

"How was it complicated before?" Grace frowned. "You both fancied each other since you met."

"Er, *no* , Grace. Check the fact-sheet."

"The what?"

"Never mind. I just mean that Ikind of *hated* him since we met. So I'm not really sure when you got this whole 'fancying for all of eternity' idea from," Ginny said, staring up at the ceiling.

"You argued *all the time* . Hell *oo* ? Everyone knows that opposites attract," Grace said coolly.

"Yeah. Opposites. The midget and the BFG," Ginny said sarcastically.

"The what?" Grace echoed for the second time.

Ginny rolled her eyes. "The Big Friendly Giant. It's a Muggle story."

"Oh. Yeah. Except that Riddle isn't that friendly, no offence." Grace made a face. "Until, of course, he starts to kiss you."

" *Ehhhh* ." The redhead rolled over and buried her face in her quilt. "This is even worse than being Imperiused and doing it on *accident* ." She couldn't believe her bad luck. First of all, her beaver was found. Secondly, she was Imperiused into kissing Tom. And thirdly, *Tom* kissed *her* . In front of about thirty people. Hell, no wonder he ran away.

"Imagine how *he* feels," Grace pointed out. "This has basically destroyed him. For seven years, he's been the cold-hearted arsehole who doesn't give a damn about anyone. And then, a transfer student turns up and he snogs her."

"He didn't *mean* to."

Grace raised her eyebrows. " *Sure* he didn't. Now come on, it's time for dinner."

The Great Hall doors banged open, and all eyes snatched onto Ginny, Grace and Alden.

Oh God.

One lone wolf-whistle burst out from the Gryffindor table, and then the dining room exploded into hurried whispers as gossip moved down the room. Ginny was sure that her face had just caught fire, her cheeks were so hot. Holding her head high as if she really couldn't give a damn, she made her way towards the Slytherin table, and slipped into a seat beside some second-years.

"That went well," Alden said jokily.

Ginny smiled weakly at him, and started to pile lasagne onto her plate, avoiding the incredulous looks that everyone was sending her.

" *I knew it. Ever since she kissed him in Defence Against the Dark Arts."*

" *They're so weird."*

" *Do you think she noticed that he's a head taller than her?"* (insert giggle here)

Ginny stared determinedly at her pasta and began to shovel it violently into her mouth. Then, feeling brave, embarrassed, and also curious, she lifted her gaze and swept the Slytherin table, looking for the pale, dark-haired young man that, until recent months, she had despised with a loathing all her life. She couldn't find him, but wasn't really surprised. There was no way in hell that he would have surrendered himself to the brutal mercy of the other Hogwarts students.

Another forkful of lasagne. And another. And another.

Just eat. Don't look up; just let them think there's no place else you'd rather be.

"Muddy… muddy… muddy bloody…" sang the shrill, tuneful voice of Claude Felina Bastet, making her way towards Ginny, Grace and Alden. "So Peregrine. I had to admit that with Reeve, you'd landed yourself pretty well. Philips…" she sent Alden a look of disdain, "not so much." Now she laughed. "But *Riddle* ?"

Ginny felt herself going red. "What's wrong with him?" she asked defensively.

"Aw. Protecting him? How cute." Claude pinched Ginny's freckled cheek.

All embarrassment was washed out and overwhelmed by a wave of hatred. "If you ever do that to me again, I'll bite your hand off," she snapped.

"Ooh. Touchy," Claude pouted. Then she said, "so is he a good kisser?"

" *GET LOST* !" Ginny yelled, standing.

"What's all the commotion?" demanded Professor Selene, the Divination teacher.

"Nothing, miss," said Claude sweetly.

Her jaw set and her lips curled in distaste, Ginny stepped over the bench that she had been sitting on, and, leaving her food abandoned and unfinished, she stalked out of the Great Hall. She was grateful when Alden and Grace immediately got up and followed her from the dining hall. "Thanks," she told them with a smile as they moved out into the Entrance Hall. "Shall we go outside?"

"Okay."

The three turned right and headed towards the grand Entrance Hall doors, which were already open and allowing the sweet scents of approaching spring to waft in. Then, there, in the doorway, he was.

Ginny stopped. Grace and Alden followed her gaze, and they stopped as well. The brunette cleared her throat and quietly sang, " *Awwkwaaard.* "

She was inwardly firing mental pikes at Grace, but still with her gaze fixed on Tom, who had frozen absolutely still by the door. There was no way to move on - Ginny couldn't keep going as though she wasn't bothered, because he was in the way, and he didn't seem to plan on moving anytime soon. She couldn't turn and walk away, because that would be cowardly and would also destroy what friendship they had built. The safest bet would be to say something (*like what* , the sensible part of Ginny's brain asked. *Like telling him that you think he's really hot? Haha – no*), but she didn't dare to. Not in front of Grace and Alden. Not only would that be uncomfortable for her, but *he'd* be mortified beyond human recognition.

Ginny was totally clueless as to what to do.

However, it turned out that she didn't need to worry, as Tom tore his gaze from hers and quickly stepped out of the way. Grace and Alden took a step forwards, expecting that the three of them would continue on their merry way, but Ginny didn't move.

"Er. Ginny?" Grace called.

She was still watching Tom. Seeing that she wasn't going to step through the doors by herself, the seventeen-year-old Heir of Slytherin pushed past her, his head bowed so that she could barely glimpse the angry, discomfited red, stark on his pale cheeks.

A silence followed.

"It could have been worse," Alden pointed out. "Come on, let's just go back down to the common room."

Ginny stared gloomily into the fireplace, cradling her Butterbeer in her hands and ignoring the jeers behind her. She needed a hug. And she needed some chocolate.

" *Leave her alone* ," Ginny heard whispered from Alden to Grace. " *Just give her some space.* "

" *Why* ?" Grace asked.

" *She's just been embarrassed, and then ignored by the person who embarrassed her, Grace!* "

"… *Fine.* " The two Slytherins' footsteps retreated away into the quiet of the Slytherin common room, and Ginny found herself wishing that Alden hadn't interfered, that Grace *had* come to see her, because she was feeling very bored and lonely.

Ginny wringed her hands. She wished – wished *so hard* – into the dancing, flickering flames that she hadn't met him in the library. That she had sat with Abraxas Malfoy or those Hufflepuffs. That she hadn't been offended by Tom's light teasing about having spattergroit. That she hadn't marched away, turned back around, ranted on him and then –

But then she took it all back. Because the painful truth was that she'd liked it, and the feel of his lips on hers would never fade away.

Slowly the chatter of the common room faded to silence as everyone made their way to their beds. Ginny was one of the last. She continued to stare into the fire – now glowing embers, flames tamed by the sinking cold of the night. She sighed. Her eyes were tired, and she stumbled to bed.

Darkness quickly fell thick and near-impossible to see through, but the snores of the Slytherin female sixth-years' dormitory did not include Ginny's. She lay awake, gazing up at the ceiling, and

wondering what in the name of *Merlin* she was supposed to do about this big mess.

Actually, an answer came to mind, but Ginny didn't think she had the heart – or even the stomach – for it.

For a very long time, the redhead lay beneath her quilt trying to think of another option. Then she realised that there simply *wasn't* an another option.

Ginny rolled over and looked at the clock on her bedside table. Its Mickey Mouse hands spoke ten o'clock. It wasn't curfew yet – half an hour until – but on school days, most people went to bed early, so that they could get better marks. Therefore, if she got up and left the common room, she wouldn't actually get in trouble.

She crawled out of her bed and, tiptoeing to her trunk, pulled on her purple swing-skirt and cream-coloured jumper over the top of her pyjamas. These garments were shortly followed by her Quidditch boots, as she was unable to find anything else, and her Slytherin scarf.

The redhead felt as though she was going to be sick. She could do this. She could do this. She could-

Oh God, she couldn't.

With a muffled cry of dismay, Ginny ran into the bathroom to scrub at her teeth. The minty flavour always made her feel better (once, shortly after Scott broke up with her, she sat in her bed and ate toothpaste for two hours).

Drawing in a deep breath tinted with courage, Ginny set off again. Her hands were shaking, but she could do it, damnit, and she was going to.

Coming up the stairs, past the library doors, she saw the portrait of Robin the Rich open; Eleanor and two other seventh-years girls

came out.

"Oh, hello!" said Eleanor. She glanced over at her friends: "I'll catch up with you later."

"Hi," said Ginny, anxiety clinging to her features. She hoped it wasn't too obvious.

"Is there something you wanted?" Eleanor enquired.

"Er. No." Ginny crossed her fingers behind her back and prayed to whatever angels existed that the pretty Head Girl would go away.

" *Ohhh* ," said Eleanor, with a knowing nod. "You're here to see Riddle, eh?" she winked.

Ginny frowned at the openly suggestive behaviour. "Yeah."

Eleanor grinned, and looked as though she was going to head after her friends, when she suddenly became sombre, and said, "Ginny, can I ask you a serious question?"

"I s'pose."

"D'you fancy Riddle?" Eleanor asked blatantly. "And I want a brutally honest answer here."

Ginny's cheeks heated up. "Um." She made a flippant gesture with her hand. " *Well.* Er. Sort of. Yeah."

A broad beam spread across Eleanor's delicate face. She winked again, and then hurried after her friends, high heels click-clacking on the stone floor.

*What the hell was **that** about?*

"Interesting… very interesting…" said a bored drawl from behind Ginny. "I may be a painting but I hear a lot of things, you know. Things including you, surprisingly."

"Like what?" the redhead demanded, turning to face the portly Robin.

Robin the Rich examined his reflection in his sword. "Oh, nothing. I suppose that you want to come in and declare your love for dear Monsieur Riddle?" he asked unenthusiastically.

"Of *course* ," Ginny said sardonically. "And since when have *you* been French – *Monsieur Robin ?*"

The man in the painting looked very offended. "My father was a Frenchman, and so was his father, and his father, and his father before that! I am also one-quarter Greek, and my great-great-grandmother is Italian, I will have you know-"

"I'm really sorry… but I care because why, remind me?" Ginny asked, being mean to cover the butterflies in her stomach and the painful throbbing of her heart. "Just let me in."

With a huff, Robin the Rich swung forwards, revealing the hexagonal portrait-hole into the Head common room.

Ginny's little finger twitched.

She stepped inside.

"I thought you were leaving, Fio-" said a weary, irritated voice from the main sofa, but then Tom stood and turned and saw the figure by the portrait-hole. He swallowed hard, and Ginny could tell in the slightly-widened eyes that he was quickly conjuring a lie to tell, followed by a speedy escape route.

Her hands trembling and her heart spluttering, she marched forwards to him. Then, her words coming out very fast and rather garbled, she told him sharply, "Don't you dare run away because I got just as embarrassed as you in the library but I didn't feel the need to hide from the rest of the world and anyway *this* is going to be

a hell of a lot more embarrassing and probably not going to work so shut up and-"

By this time she had reached him and, cutting off the rest of her planned sentence, she grabbed his robes; pulled his shoulders down, bringing his head with them; stood on tiptoe; closed her eyes; covered his mouth with hers; curling her fingers into his dark, not-quite-curly hair; sinking into the sheer, untainted bliss of having him kiss back-

Then it was over and they were left standing together in the center of the common room, their foreheads almost touching (Tom bent noticeably so as to reach her), Ginny's hands still twisted into his wavy tresses, so close that she could feel his throbbing heartbeat as well as her own, looking up, hazel eyes into dark eyes, her breathing shallow and her knees wobbly.

With a short exhalation, Ginny bobbed back down from her tiptoes, pulled back, stepped away, and then averted her eyes from the gaze that seemed to be killing her. She'd done it.

"Er. Goodnight, Tom," she said quietly, and then she backed away a few feet, cheeks painted scarlet and a faint smile on her lips, before turning and vanishing through the portrait-hole.

"For a declaration of love, that was rather quiet. I did not hear much speaking," commented Robin the Rich as she exited.

"You're too nosy," Ginny told him, and then she hurried back towards the Slytherin common room, as time had progressed significantly, and it was now five minutes until curfew.

Slipping through the entrance to the Slytherin House, Ginny's face split into a grin that she could no longer contain. She twirled happily across the stone floor and the plush green carpets to get to the stairs for the girls' dormitories, and the skipped down the worn steps. As she arrived in her dorm, she found a groggy Grace awake.

"Where've you been?" Grace mumbled.

Ginny didn't answer. She undressed back down to the pyjamas that she wore underneath her clothes, leapt onto her bed; reached underneath her head, snatched up her pillow, and covered her face with it. There she squealed happily into her pillow, hugging it tightly, and fell asleep with a grin on her freckled face.

A/N: TEEHEE! More snogging! And, just to answer several people's questions – no, that first time, in the library, Ginny didn't kiss back. She just sort of froze solid. And this time… EH! And, I'd like to add that this was two chapters merged together. The chapters were far too short, so I squished them together. There was supposed to be more build-up but… -shrug- I guess we've had fifty-two chapters of build-up.

Next Time:

"Oh *God* , there's a *Prefect meeting* before lunch!" she cried. She slapped herself in the forehead. "Oh, screw this," she complained. "I'm running away and becoming a hermit."

"Any other notes to be added to the meeting?" Tom enquired, glancing coolly over the rest of students sitting present. "None?" (a shake of heads) "This meeting is adjourned." He stood, and, as if he was the popular one whose decisions ruled all actions, everyone stood after he did. Ginny got her feet and pulled her schoolbag onto her shoulder. "Hang on-" An uncertain pause. A swallow around a lump in the throat. A shaky intake of breath. "-Peregrine, if you could stay behind."

P is for Peculiar Ways

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: YAY! More squeeing-ness!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Four: P is for Peculiar Ways

Then it was over and they were left standing together in the center of the common room, their foreheads almost touching (Tom bent noticeably so as to reach her), Ginny's hands still twisted into his wavy hair, so close that she could feel his vacillating heartbeat as well as her own, looking up, hazel eyes into dark eyes, her breathing shallow and her knees wobbly.

" *Where've you been?" Grace mumbled. Ginny didn't answer. She undressed back down to the pyjamas that she wore underneath her clothes, leapt onto her bed; reached underneath her head, snatched up her pillow, and covered her face with it. There she squealed happily into her pillow, hugging it tightly, and fell asleep with a grin on her freckled face.*

Ginny opened her eyes to the faint green glow of the Slytherin dungeons. She remembered what had happened last night, and remembered the dizzying happiness. And then actually considered what she'd done. She loudly groaned a swearword vulgar, and then got out of bed reluctantly.

"Why the miserable swearing?" Grace asked, stifling a yawn, sitting up in bed. "And where did you go last night?"

"I'm not miserable," Ginny said, and it was true. She was far from miserable. She only prayed that Eleanor hadn't set up spy-cameras in the Head common room and hadn't seen the fervent kiss she'd given Tom. Then she realised that she was being totally ridiculous, shook her head, and began to get dressed.

As she put on her shoes, something awful hit her.

"Oh *God* , there's a *Prefect meeting* before lunch!" she cried. She slapped herself in the forehead. "Oh, screw this," she complained. "I'm running away and becoming a hermit."

"Why?" Grace frowned. "What in the name of Merlin is wrong now?"

"Mmmff…" Ginny mumbled. "I kissed Tom. I went up to his common room and kissed him."

"…Ah." Grace made a face. "Come on, you're braver than me, you'll be fine." The brunette dragged her friend to her feet and then hauled her out of the door up towards the Great Hall.

Fortunately, no-one knew about what had happened in the Head common room at approximately ten-fifteen pm.

Unfortunately, everyone still had not given up on what had happened in the library.

Ginny pretended that she couldn't give a damn, and piled bacon onto her silver-rimmed plate. Then she promptly began to shovel it into her mouth, thinking that perhaps if she ate as quickly as possible, she'd finish earlier, putting as much distance as possible between having to see Tom and finishing breakfast.

Regardless of these tactics, the hour for breakfast drew to a close, and Ginny had to go to Transfiguration. However desperately Ginny pleaded silently with the clock, time flew by, and then it was Charms, and *then* up to the third floor and attend an extremely awkward Prefect meeting.

"Good luck," said Grace with a wry smile as Ginny picked up her schoolbag and left the classroom

Does she know something I don't?

She was made very suspicious when Grace started whispering frantically to Alden, but she ignored it and continued on her way down the sweeping stairs.

"Back again, are you?" asked Robin the Rich wearily when Ginny turned up in front of him.

"Yeah. *Condolesam* ." Ginny couldn't be bothered with chatting to him. At least she knew that was sort of late, so she wouldn't be stuck alone with Tom.

The painting swung open to admit her, creating a faint gust that ruffled the carpet behind the portrait-hole. Stepping through, Ginny scanned the sofas, and saw that almost everyone was present. She saw the pile of black curls that was Scott; the black cornrows, Antonia; the short blonde hair, Eleanor; the brown pigtails, Mia; the pale blonde hair, Gareth; the slightly darker blonde hair of Jack; and the dark bob of Olive Hornby. And then, finally, the meticulous near-black waves that Ginny had come to be able to recognize from miles away.

"Hey," said Ginny brightly, looking around the people sitting as she weaved her way through the maze of sofas and sitting beside Antonia.

"Hi, Ginny," said Eleanor. "We're just waiting on Robert." She twirled a strand of strawberry-blonde fringe around her slim finger boredly.

"Coolsville," Ginny replied, who had found that now the fifties' slang was like second-nature to her. "How are you?" she asked Antonia.

"Oh, I'm good. Except I broke my favourite eyeliner. You know, that really bright blue liquid one?" Antonia pouted.

"That sucks," Ginny agreed sympathetically.

Then the podgy Robert Harris came through the portrait-hole, panting for breath. "Sorry I'm late," he apologized, slipping into a seat beside Gareth.

"Right. I convene this Prefect meeting, the third of February, 1959," Eleanor said, pulling a piece of parchment towards her and dipping her quill in ink. "Now, we need to discuss what fund-raising event we're planning for Valentine's Day."

"Another Ball?" said Mia Brown hopefully.

"No," said Eleanor. "Sorry. But having a Ball is really expensive, and we've already had two. It almost costs more to make the Ball than the money we get for the tickets, and we need to buy new broomsticks for the first-years' flying classes."

"If they break the brooms, they should pay for them," grumbled Jack.

Ignoring this unhelpful input, Eleanor looked around the members of the meeting. "Any ideas?"

"We could do a bake-sale," Antonia suggested. "That was fun last Easter."

"Yeah!" Mia gasped. "With heart-shaped cookies and things. *So* cute."

The boys looked less than enthusiastic.

"It'll be fun," Antonia told them. "Trust me. For us, the food is free." Robert and Scott's faces lit up; even Jack looked mildly pleased with this prospect.

"A bake-sale, then," said Tom tonelessly, speaking up for the first time. "Would we be cooking the items ourselves?"

Ginny looked up at him upon hearing his voice; his eyes flashed to hers, almost as though he'd felt her watching him. She held his gaze for a few seconds before biting her lip and looking away. She could feel her face getting hot.

"That'd be fun," said Gareth, who liked to bake. "I could whip up a big cake. In a heart shape, I guess, for the occasion."

"Good idea," said Eleanor warmly. "Any another donations to the cause?"

"Don't look at me," said Mia, shaking her head so that her light brown pigtails flew out. "I'll poison everyone."

"Okay, it looks as though we're relying on you, Gareth," Eleanor said cheerfully.

"Any other notes to be added to the meeting?" Tom enquired, glancing coolly over the rest of students sitting present. "None?" (a shake of heads) "This meeting is adjourned." He stood, and, as if he was the popular one whose decisions ruled all actions, everyone stood after he did.

Ginny got her feet and pulled her schoolbag onto her shoulder.

"Hang on-" An uncertain pause. A swallow around a lump in the throat. A shaky intake of breath. "-Peregrine, if you could stay behind."

Mia stuck her hands into her mouth and let out a piercing wolf-whistle. Everyone laughed.

"Very funny," Ginny said sarcastically, though her heart was threatening to spontaneously combust from the over-exertion it was getting inside her ribcage.

Eleanor swept her things into her schoolbag, and, humming tunelessly, made her way towards the bookcase. Ginny and Tom's

eyes were upon her as she selected a thin purple book, sank into the nearest armchair, and open it. "Yes?" she asked innocently, looking up at them.

Tom glared at her.

"It's my common room, too," the blonde Head Girl said defensively, before turning a page of her book absent-mindedly and continuing to read, as though having the most evil of death stares fixed on her creamy face didn't bother her in the slightest. "Just because you want to flirt with her doesn't mean I have to leave."

Ginny puffed out her breath, extremely uncomfortable with the conversation passing before her as though she wasn't there.

With a heavy breath, Tom stretched out one hand, rested it against the wall, and looked briefly heavenwards as though asking for help with this stubborn blonde girl, before fixing his eyes back onto said stubborn blonde girl. "Fionn, I mean this in the nicest possible way when I say *get lost* ."

Eleanor huffed. "Fine." She stood up, smoothed her pleated skirt, and then flounced away with her purple book, disappearing through the portrait-hole.

Silence ensued.

Ginny shifted her weight from her left foot to her right. "So," she said cheerily, "Hi. You wanted…?"

Tom pushed his weight off of the wall. "Er."

He *actually* said 'er'. Mr. Correct-Language said 'er'. It was almost ridiculous enough to make Ginny burst out laughing. Except that she didn't.

"Do you mind if I cast a Silencing Charm on the door?" Tom abruptly asked, looking at the portrait-hole.

Ginny frowned. "Yeah, go ahead… can I ask why?"

"I've lived with Fionn for seven years, and there is no way that she has gone without a fight when she knows full well that something that I find awkward and uncomfortable is happening," Tom said smoothly, and, non-verbally, turned to the door, and flicked his wand.

"You find this awkward and uncomfortable?" Ginny asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Not *this* , right now, but…" Tom cleared his throat, suddenly unable to meet her eyes. Staring fixedly at a spot on the ceiling, he began to speak very quickly and very precisely. "I had intended to *say* something awkward and uncomfortable, which, now that I think about it more closely, would probably fit well into what I'm saying now, so I think that I'll just go ahead and say it, it being that, as you probably know – well, I think that I made it rather embarrassingly clear-"

Hell . He rambled when he was nervous. When he had given her a flower, he had ranted on for about two minutes. And now he was talking at the speed of a runaway steam-train, all the while not looking at her and steadily finding his face filling with more colour.

"- is that, er, so to speak, I have recently acknowledged that my – my, shall we say, *affections* , for you, that is – er – have progressed beyond the level at which affections would be maintained for the friendship owed previously," Tom finished lamely.

Ginny's frown deepened. "So…" she translated, her heart pounding, "is that your peculiar way of telling me… you fancy me?"

A smudge of pink, as if he'd put on light blusher, appeared on Tom's cheeks rapidly. "In short, I suppose that is how it could be put, in a simpler approach," he amended. Then, the steam-train attitude starting up again: "And, er, I am assuming from your seemingly spontaneous actions last evening that, er, in a manner of speaking, your affections have progressed similarly – at least, that's what I am

as of now fervently hoping, because if I'm wrong then this will turn extremely embarrassing, extremely fast, so I was perhaps wondering if this particular slice of, shall we say, *interesting* information, could be digested by your own person and corrected if need be."

This took another pause for Ginny to understand. "Is that your peculiar way of asking if I fancy you as well?" she asked dumbly.

Tom swallowed again. "Of sorts."

Ginny was finding it hard to breathe. She stared at the floor, and then up at his strong features. "Er." She, like him, had begun to stammer. "Well. Actually..."

From what she could see of his face, she knew that Tom had prepared himself for a rejection. His jaw was set and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling where she couldn't see them, probably because he'd realised that his eyes were where she could read his feelings best. He'd show no disappointment, and Ginny's heart went out to him.

Her brain whirled.

To lie or not to lie. To lie or not to lie. To lie or not to lie.

"Yes-" she blurted out, red blood cells swimming like fish up to her face as fast as they could.

Tom's eyes flashed down to her, failing to disguise sheer disbelief. "W-what?"

Another deep breath. "Yes," she repeated. And then, as a lame joke, "of sorts."

The Head Boy inclined his head in a slight *I-see* gesture. Then, a nervous sort of half-smile on his lips, he said, "I had a speech preparing for the event of this answer as well but I'm not sure I actually expected it."

With the beginnings of a grin tracing her lips, Ginny said, "So where do we go from here?"

"I suppose I could attempt my speech…"

"It being…?" Ginny asked.

Again, Tom's eyes returned to the ceiling. "Now having confirmed that such, er, affections, are shared, I had wandered some thought as to what would come afterwards in the event of you miraculously – and, in my own opinion, very stupidly – agreeing to that, then, er-"

His speaking pace stepped up from a steam-train to that of a jet-plane.

"-I had thought that perhaps we could progress from here by way of, er, bywayofcourting."

Ginny couldn't translate that one. "Come again?" she echoed. "By way of what, exactly?"

There was no doubting it – Tom Marvolo Riddle, Head Boy, Heir of Slytherin, future Lord Voldemort, went red. "Courting," he said shortly.

Brain… processing… brain… processing…

"Is that…" Ginny stuttered. "Is that you asking me out?"

Tom attempted sarcastic humour. "In my peculiar way," he said weakly, quoting her previous words.

Ginny needed to sit down. It was too much to contemplate. Opening up to someone she really cared for again – probably getting hurt. It was what she sometimes called the Heartbreak of Harry, all over again. But that wasn't even what she was worried about:

She was being offered the opportunity to *date Lord Voldemort* .

Looking up into his dark eyes, which were trained nervously on her face, she said softly, "Yes."

And didn't regret it at all.

Tom Riddle. My boyfriend. I could get used to that.

Tom took a moment to understand what she said. Then he smiled, the simple, easy twist of his lips lighting up his pale face to a level that Ginny never thought possible, and his eyes danced with wild happiness. He raked a hand roughly backwards through his hair, spinning away, still grinning like an idiot.

"Are you okay?" Ginny giggled. "You look like you're on drugs."

"It's a change from being a beaver," Tom said simply. Then he looked at her. "What now?"

"Hm." Ginny tilted her head. "We could try lunch. Big, dramatic entrance. Lots of whispering and staring. Should be fun."

" *Fun* ?" Tom mock-frowned disapprovingly.

"Fun," Ginny repeated, and then, feeling daring, stepped closer and curled her fingers through his.

It was definitely going to be the most dramatic entrance that Hogwarts had ever had – they didn't even make it down into the Entrance Hall before the jeering started up.

"Oh, look, the lovebirds have decided to show their faces together, then?" Claude sneered from the bottom of the stairs.

"Yep!" said Ginny cheerfully, who, suddenly and inexplicably, found that nothing could bother or hurt her.

"Riddle and Peregrine, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G," sang Avani quietly, smirking to high heaven.

Ginny, turning her head slightly to Tom, raised her eyebrows in question. The young Heir of Slytherin was reluctant (that being an understatement), but he nodded, and so, in front of Claude Felina Bastet, Avani Mohana, Ramira Xau, Jack Swithin, Abraxas Malfoy, Ilivan Yaxley and Orion Black, Ginny stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

Gasps rang out, followed by furious giggling and whispering.

Then she twisted away, stared down at them all, and said, "What? You started it."

Still being stared at, Ginny continued down the stairs with Tom – her *boyfriend* – the words had a nice ring to it – she grinned – and through to lunch.

"One thing," hissed Tom to her before they made their grand entrance. "Never make me do that again."

"Which," Ginny teased. "The kissing in public or just the kissing?"

Tom gave her a withering, which-do- *you* -think look. At this, Ginny merely smiled, held his hand tighter, and laid her cheek against the top of his arm; truly the happiest that she'd been in a long time.

A/N: Awwww. I told you. Squee! Did you like it? Please review.

Next Time:

The walls were lined, surprisingly, with books. Most were books on extreme levels of Charms, Ginny found, scanning the spines on a few select volumes that her gaze landed upon, but then her hazel eyes found a title she had not expected: *Svengali* .

P is for Parseltongue

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: SVENGALI IS BACK! Dun dun dun. Thanks for the amazing reviews! EIGHT-HUNDRED. Woo. I'm trying to update this faithfully every day but I'm not making any promises. Should be fun fun fun from here on, but there'll be some fluff. And some angst. And some funny stuff. And some SQUEEING! Hehehe. Anywhooo. Enjoy this chapter. And REVIEW! (At the end, of course.)

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Five: P is for Parseltongue

She was being offered the opportunity to ***date Lord Voldemort*** *. Looking up into his dark eyes, which were trained nervously on her face, she said softly, "Yes." And didn't regret it at all.*

At this, Ginny merely smiled, held his hand tighter, and laid her cheek against the top of his arm; truly the happiest that she'd been in a long time.

Hurried whispers.

Wide-eyed stares.

Rumour-spawned giggles.

Even the odd jealous glare.

All were directed at Miss Ginevra Peregrine, and all bounced off her as though she was sealed in a bubble, and no insults nor degrading comments could penetrate its walls. A week had passed, and still the redhead radiated happiness like a nuclear bomb radiates poisonous fumes. Grace summed up the entire attitude for everyone by complaining, "Oh, crap, she's happy again."

Today, the new Charms teacher that was to replace Professor Vander was turning up, and, as they had Charms first period after breakfast, Alden, Grace and Ginny were feeling rather pleased with themselves.

"I wonder if it'll be a man or a woman," Alden said thoughtfully.

"I hope it's not a woman," said Ginny firmly. "Charms is to most people considered a soft option, and I don't like how all of the subjects that people think are useless are taught by women." She began to count off her fingers. "Herbology – Professor Ornella. Divination – Professor Selene. Muggle Studies – Professor Gladwyn."

"Preferably a big, macho man!" Grace joked.

However, the quip died down when they lined up for class, for at the door was probably the most massive, muscular, and evil-looking man that they'd ever seen. His hair was thick, straight, and dark brown, though it was so streaked with gray that it looked more like the coat of a tortoiseshell cat, and his face was etched with lines that gave him a severe look of absolute awareness and control. What the Slytherin trio found amusing was the sheer musculature bulging from underneath close-fitting Professors' robes.

" *Whoa* ," Ginny whispered. "Someone likes bench-presses."

Grace gave her a weird look.

"Never mind."

"Alright, you lot – *shut up* ," the man snapped. "My name is ProfessorAlcippe, and you will address me as either *sir* or *Your Majesty* ." He smirked. "Take your pick." He stared around at them with beady grey eyes like a tempestuous storm. "Any questions?"

Ginny put up her hand, ignoring the confused looks that her friends were giving her.

"Yes, shortie at the back," Alcippe said.

Putting on her most charming smile despite the insult carelessly thrown at her by a teacher, Ginny enquired, "Your Majesty, will we have assigned seats?"

Flutter eyelashes. Blink carefully. Pretty smile.

Alcippegrunted. "I haven't decided. And by the way. Calling me *Your Majesty* was a joke," he pointed out, raising one hugely bushy eyebrow.

"But what if I happen to like calling you Your Majesty?" Ginny sassed back, before sweeping into an elegant curtsy, at which people in the queue giggled.

Eyes narrowing, Alcippe told her, "That'll be two points from-" (he glanced at the colours of her robes) "-Slytherin, for cheek. And five points back because I like your spunk."

Ginny beamed, and as soon as his back was turned, hissed gleefully to Grace and Alden, "Piece of cake."

Her companions grinned back at her.

Interested to see what'd he'd done to the classroom to make it his own, Ginny headed through the door after the students in front of her, and peered curiously around.

The walls were lined, surprisingly, with books. Professor Alcippe, apparently, for all of his gruffness and macho-ness, was a great

reader. Most were books on extreme levels of Charms, Ginny found, scanning the spines on a few select volumes that her gaze landed upon, but then her hazel eyes found a title she had not expected:

Svengali .

Ginny looked over in shock at Alcippe. He seemed oblivious to the class, as he was waving his wand over the board and creating the words: *Sixth-Years – Knowledge Test* .

Deciding in an instant that she was going to steal it, she sat as far from it as possible. She wouldn't be suspected if she was on the other side of the room. Grace and Alden moved into seats nearby.

"Now," Alcippe boomed out. "I have been given a syllabus of what you've already done and what I am to teach you, but I'm going to set a test of your skill and genuine knowledge. One by one, you will accompany me into the ante-chamber and demonstrate the spells that you know in a series of challenging situations."

He flipped open a list. "First… Harry Aldridge."

The bright, cheery Hufflepuff that had chided Grace last lesson for attempting to destroy her desk in the duration of Conjuring matches, stepped up to the front gleefully. He returned shortly, looking worried.

"Next… Claude Felina Bastet."

Claude got to her feet and model-walked forwards. She turned to Ginny briefly, and gave her a narrow-eyed stare, which the second girl understood perfectly: *there's going to be a threat for the student who wraps him around their finger* .

Ginny sent a look back: *do I give a flying* **(censored)** *?*

With a haughty sniff, Claude disappeared through the doors.

Ginny waited patiently until her own turn, because after that… the book would be hers. Growing anticipation mounted inside of her as

Professor Alcippe called the names, and she spared a glance at the bookcases.

Then, finally: "Ginevra Peregrine."

She stood and crossed the room nonchalantly to the ante-chamber. "Hello, Your Majesty," she said conversationally, drawing her wand.

There she was tested – the more basic spells, such as *lumos* and *wingardium leviosa* , followed by such higher-level spells as Summoning and Banishing, and then coming up to the spells they had recently covered.

"Try some Conjuring," said Alcippe glancing up at her.

Come on. You can do this .

If she could successfully Conjure something fabulous, she'd be the teacher's pet, and safely out of suspecting-range after she'd stolen the book.

She stared firmly at the tip of her wand. Then she pictured an image in her head, building up a fantastic level of detail; screwed up her nose in concentration, her tongue slightly poking out as she focused one-hundred-percent on the air at the end of her wand… "Orior ortus!" Shimmering faintly, there appeared on the floor where her wand was pointing, a cup of coffee, complete with whipped cream.

Inwardly screaming with glee at how well this was working, Ginny Levitated the mug over to the Professor, just to show off. "Coffee, Your Majesty?" she asked innocently.

Alcippe laughed. "I like you, kid. Okay, next – bring in Alden Philips," he told her.

"Alden," Ginny called as she came out, and then-

The redhead gave a yelp as she fell over the Professor's chair, staggered a few feet, and snatched furiously at the bookcase to stop

herself from falling on her face, swung towards it, and, panting wearily, pushed herself off it. "Oops," she giggled, and returned to her seat.

And, once seated, Ginny took the book from underneath her robes and slipped it into her schoolbag.

Grace gasped. " *You stole a book* ," she hissed.

"Relax…" Ginny told her gently. "I'll bring it back. Anyway, I need it."

The brunette looked sceptical and uncertain, but she agreed to keep quiet, and even offered that if she needed help smuggling it out, she could take it and slip away (at this Ginny's heart swelled with affection for Grace, who was one of her three closest friends in the fifties').

"Okay, then," thundered Alcippe after he had sent back the last student, Thomas Yates. "You've all done well, and will be getting your results shortly. Now – get out of my sight."

Not waiting for any other notice, the students scrambled away, but Ginny stayed behind. "Your Majesty, could I possibly have my results now?" she enquired sweetly, knowing that when he discovered the loss of his book (if he did), he would guess that his suspect had fled the scene immediately. And therefore, Ginny, who had hung around afterwards to get her marks, would be eliminated from the guilt-list.

"No, you can't," grunted Alcippe. "But you did well. And that's all I'll say."

Ginny pouted. "Fine." Then she skipped from class, unable to contain the wicked smirk that twisted her lips.

Saturday morning sun pulled itself into the air, and a drowsy Ginny rolled out of bed. Rubbing her eyes, she yawned, and then blinked around at the rest of her dormitory. They were all sleeping – she had

long since stopped screaming in her sleep, and hadn't had any seizures for Merlin knows how many months. Grace was on her stomach, snoring heavily, and at a glance Flora could be seen, curled up beneath her pink quilt.

Padding to the end of her bed, Ginny retrieved her schoolbag and pulled the dark volume on Svengali out of it. Then she leapt nimbly back onto the messy covers of her bed, snuggled down, and opened the book.

She was faced with a blank page. A frown furrowing her brow, she skipped several pages to see if there was *anything* written in the book. There were indeed writings on its slightly-yellowed parchment pages… not, however, any of it in English.

What the…?

It wasn't a language that Ginny recognized, and she knew instantly that it wasn't Albanian, as she might have presumed.

"Damn," she hissed quietly. She scanned line after line of intricate, swirling foreign text, but none it was made any clearer to her, nor did she have a burst of inspiration and understanding.

Smashdangnabit .

Then, remembering that Tom studied Ancient Runes and was top of the class, she quickly thought to 'conversationally bring it up', and went about memorising one of the intricate letters.

"Whatcha doing?" mumbled Grace, a few seconds after Ginny vaguely noticed in the back of her mind that the loud, annoying snores had stopped.

"Learning an age-old rune so that I can translate a book on Dark magic," Ginny told her absent-mindedly.

"That's nice," said Grace, and went back to sleep, not having listened to a word of what the Prefect had said.

"Toooomm…?"

"Yes?"

"What's the significance of the Knell formation when divided by a factor of eighty-two?"

Tom turned around in his chair to look at her. "Are you doing your Arithmancy homework, or am I doing it *for* you?" he asked bemusedly, arching one eyebrow.

Ginny smiled at him innocently. "Now, Tom, dearest, where would you get an idea like that?" she cooed sweetly. "Now answer the question."

"What would happen, I wonder, if I refused to tell you?" Tom asked, smirking.

A gasp came from the redhead sprawled on her stomach on his once-tidy bed (now screwed up from her wriggling around on it as she tried to evade doing her homework for as long as possible). "Why – I'd *fail* !" she declared. "You wouldn't let me *fail* , would you?"

"I make no comment," said the seventeen-year-old Heir of Slytherin at his desk, before turning back to his own homework assignment.

" *Meh* !" Ginny complained, dropping her chin down with resignation. "I hate Arithmancy. And I hate you, too." She dipped her quill in the ink and absent-mindedly began to draw the rune she'd learnt, not lifting her jaw from the bed.

Just as she was boredly colouring in the last bold serif of the rune she was sketching, Tom gave an exhalation – a clink of quill being

set back into ink-pot – stretched slightly – he was finished with *his* homework.

Lucky you , though Ginny sourly.

He turned again in his chair, and looked over at what she was doing. "What are you drawing?"

Time to set the plan into action.

"Just a rune I found," she nonchalantly. "No idea what it means though." She scrutinized it, but then shook her head.

"Give it here," said Tom.

Trying to conceal her glee, Ginny handed over her sheet of unfinished Arithmancy homework. The Head Boy took it and scanned it carefully, his dark eyes flashing over the slightly-yellowed paper like fire.

After a moments pause, he said, seemingly out of the blue, "Wynn."

Ginny raised her eyebrows at him. "Excuse me?"

Tom handed back the paper. "It's a rune called 'wynn', in Base Archaic."

"Oh, cool!" Ginny said. "I understand. No… no, I don't. What?"

"Base Archaic," Tom repeated, very slowly, as though talking to a stupid person. He turned his wooden desk-chair around and sat. "Archaic is the language, that, in theory, was spoken during the time period of none other than Jesus Christ. Then we have *Base* Archaic. It was too complicated for everyone to learn, so they simplified it into Simple Archaic, which is what dear old Jesus spoke. Base Archaic is the oldest language is the world – very difficult, and very dark. It set the standard for creating every other language globally spoken."

Whoa.

"So what does 'wynn' mean?" Ginny enquired.

Tom gave a non-committal twitch of his head; his way of shrugging. "It's just a letter. It sounds like… well, I'm not going to say it, so you'll just have to take my word for it being a letter. It's basically rather a lot of spitting and hissing." He stood, and crossed to his near-empty bookcase.

"Like Parseltongue?" Ginny abruptly asked, thinking of something.

As if a switch had been flicked, Tom froze, spun to face her, and stared at her with narrowed, wary eyes.

"What?" Ginny rubbed the back of her neck, self-conscious under the sudden change of attitude.

Seeming to be satisfied with something that he'd seen in her facical features, Tom lessened the intensity of his famous microscan gaze. He turned fully towards her. "Base Archaic is the oldest, darkest language known to man," he began smoothly. "Simplified Archaic was – as intended to be noticeable in the name – simpler. However, it was still far too complicated to be retained as a language. It instead became a rare and dark skill."

A shiver ran down Ginny's spine, and, instinctively, she hugged her schoolbag. She was met with the feel of the fat and lumpy Svengali book, and she quickly buckled her bag so that Tom wouldn't see the real place that she'd found the rune.

"What skill?" she ventured curiously.

"Someone who speaks it is these days almost like an endangered species," Tom said, and there was a hint of irony lacing his slightly-accented words. "The speaker goes by many names these days. Disciple of the Dark… Serpentstriker… Archan…" Tom's dark eyes snapped to Ginny's. "…and, most commonly – Parselmouth."

Ginny's eyes widened.

Bloody hell! I speak freakin' ARCHAIC!

*That's how he knows the rune! Not because he **learnt** it in **class** ! But because he **speaks** it!*

Then… why can't I read the Svengali book?

"How different are the Base and Simplified Archaic?" Ginny asked innocently, rolling onto her back and stretching like a cat.

"Fairly dissimilar," Tom replied, returning to his bookcase now that he sensed that the dangerously dark topic was drawing to a close. "And," he added, taking a book from the shelf, "by the way, the significance of the Knell formation when divided by a factor of eighty-two is three-point-eight to the axis of seven."

Ginny squealed. "Thank you!" She scribbled down the answer. "I knew you wouldn't let me fail." Then, seeing her pocket-watch glint from within the fathoms of her schoolbag, told him, "And, I apologize earnestly, but this is where I bid you farewell."

"You said that *I* talked like an encyclopedia," Tom tutted. Resting his book at its open page, he stood, and albeit awkwardly took Ginny into his arms. There he softly kissed the top of her messy-haired head. "Hopefully, I'll see you tomorrow."

"Mm," Ginny mumbled in agreement, into the front of his school jumper, and then, once released, scurried away down the stairs from the Head Boy's dormitory.

She had a *lot* to think about.

A/N: WOW! Haha. Sorry. I had to say it. Yes, we'll be learning a lot more about possession and evilness and svengali. Hold onto your hats! Or whatever that corny saying is. XD

Next Time:

"Madam Crofton?" she enquired, coming up to the stern librarian's desk. "I'm interested in learning a second language in my own free time, but I haven't decided which language I should choose."

"AND YOU'RE TELLING THIS TO ME, BECAUSE…?" said Madam Crofton, who had maintained a burning dislike for Ginny after the 'scary midget lady' comment.

"Well, I was wondering if you could tell me what language translation books are in the library, and I could decide for myself amongst what's available," said Ginny innocently, with a smile.

P is for Perfect

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for the reviews! So sorry. FF seems to hate me, it keeps closing for no reason. Anyway. It's getting *verrrry* fluffy now. WOOP!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Seven: P is for Perfect

" *Archaic is the language, that, in theory, was spoken during the time period of none other than Jesus Christ. Then we have* ***Base*** *Archaic. It was too complicated for everyone to learn, so they simplified it into Simple Archaic, which is what dear old Jesus spoke. Base Archaic is the oldest language is the world – very difficult, and very dark. It set the standard for creating every other language globally spoken."*

Seeming to be satisfied with something that he'd seen in her facial features, Tom lessened the intensity of his famous microscan gaze. He turned fully towards her. "Base Archaic is the oldest, darkest language known to man," he began smoothly. "Simplified Archaic was – as intended to be noticeable in the name – simpler. However, it was still far too complicated to be retained as a language. It instead became a rare and dark skill. Someone who speaks it is these days almost like an endangered species," Tom said, and there was a hint of irony lacing his slightly-accented words. "The speaker goes by many names these days. Disciple of the Dark… Serpentstriker… Archan…" Tom's dark eyes snapped to Ginny's. "… and, most commonly – Parselmouth."

She had a ***lot*** *to think about.*

Scanning the pages, Ginny tried for what seemed the hundredth hour to translate the endless lines of Base Archaic.

She could make nothing of it when read in English; even Parseltongue translated little. Using the foreign language of serpents pulled a phrase here and a phrase there from the odd chapter. Writing down a list of words she understood, she found at the end of three hours that she had understood five different words out of a whole volume.

The words were as such: *death, darkness, endless despair,* and *soul-destroying* .

"Lovely," she muttered to herself.

"What's lovely?" Grace asked, coming in. "Oh, *Ginny* !" she cried exasperatedly. "You're not *still* working on that stupid book, are you?"

Ginny scowled. "It's not stupid," she said defensively.

"Okay, either *it's* stupid, or *you're* stupid," Grace said firmly. "Open your eyes! It is in *another language* ! And not one that you speak!"

"I'm getting closer," Ginny said, protective of her own intelligence and the book's usefulness.

"Really?" Grace laughed. "How many words have you got now?"

The redhead pursed her lips, knowing that the answer would not impress her friend. "Five," she muttered dejectedly.

" *Precisément, mon amie* , *precisément* ," Grace chastised.

Ginny raised her eyebrows. "You speak French?"

"Hell no." Grace guffawed. "I copied that from this Belgian fourth-year upstairs complaining into the fireplace to her friend in

Beauxbatons." She tugged on the Prefect's arm. "Come *on* ! Lighten up."

"I do not need to lighten up," Ginny retorted. "If I were any lighter, I'd float away."

" *Lighter* !" Grace yelled. "Look at me! I'm *flying* !"

"No, Grace," Ginny corrected. "You're not flying. You're *insane* ."

The brunette huffed, and flopped onto her bed. "So…" she drawled. "Valentine's Day tomorrow."

Ginny gave her friend a sharp look. "I am *aware* . What point are you trying to make?"

"Have you got a date with Riddle?" Grace prompted.

"No." Ginny frowned. "It isn't a Hogsmeade day."

" *So* ?" Grace threw her hands in the air. "Who *needs* Hogsmeade? Me and Alden just find a cupboard somewhere and-"

" **NO** !" Ginny yelled. "Stop *right* there!" She sighed with annoyance. "Grace, you and Alden are my best friends here – and I would *prefer* to keep our friendship intact by *avoiding* scarring mental images!"

"Geez, okay." Grace shrugged.

Ginny puffed out her breath. "Screw this," she muttered. "I'm going to the library to see if I can find a translation."

"For what?" Grace said sarcastically. "A language that the world's forgotten about? Good luck with that!"

"Thank you again for the support, Hartwin," Ginny called irritably over her shoulder as she vanished up the stairs.

Ginny pushed open the broad, wooden library doors. Most people were concocting love potions today, as it was the day before the one and only holiday of love, or with their friends worrying about their love lives or lack thereof. Therefore the library was mostly empty, and the ink-stained, slightly dusty air didn't hold the chatter of loud students trying – and failing – to be quiet.

"Hm." Ginny scanned the shelves. Where could she start?

In the Dark Arts section or the Ancient Languages?

Deciding that Ancient Languages would be the most probable place for locating a translation (if it existed at all), the redhead headed towards that area of the library. Starting at the further end and working her way up, Ginny looked at the title of every book, and skimmed through likely-looking volumes, but to no avail.

GAH, damnit.

She then searched the Dark Arts area. Followed by the Foreign Languages area. Followed by the History area.

All for naught.

"Madam Crofton?" she enquired, coming up to the stern librarian's desk. "I'm interested in learning a second language in my own free time, but I haven't decided which language I should choose."

"AND YOU'RE TELLING THIS TO ME, BECAUSE…?" said Madam Crofton, who had maintained a burning dislike for Ginny after the 'scary midget lady' comment.

"Well, I was wondering if you could tell me what language translation books are in the library, and I could decide for myself amongst what's available," said Ginny innocently, with a smile.

Madam Crofton eyed the seventeen-year-old with suspicion. Then, finding nothing to complain about, the librarian flipped open her

records (which Ginny had returned after 'borrowing' it) and scanned the rows of neat text. "WE HAVE FRENCH, GERMAN, GREEK, RUSSIAN, DUTCH, MANDARIN CHINESE, CANTONESE, RUSSIAN, SWEDISH, GOBLIN, TROLL, MERMISH AND LATIN," she read out after a moment.

"Oh." Ginny tried to hide her sinking heart and disappointment, because that would be a give-away. "I think I'll try Latin, then. What's the best book on translating Latin to English that the library has?"

Her reasoning was that if all languages rooted back to Base Archaic, then surely the older the dialect was, the easier it would be. It hadn't worked with her Parseltongue idea, but it was worth a shot.

She was lead to the right book and then she checked it out. Seeing no point to stay any longer, she thanked Madam Crofton and departed the room of books.

She walked in long, easy strides back towards the stairs, her brain in full gear for trying to work out the mystery behind Svengali. If only she hadn't lost the first Svengali book. If only this new one was in English. If only-

Her thoughts were cut off by her own scream as a hand grabbed her and pulled her through a tapestry.

HELP! I'M BEING ATTACKED AGAIN! ***HELP!***

And then, as abruptly as she had been snatched, she was let go, and through the gloom of the secret passageway, her breath shallow and her heart a-mile-a-minute, she peered up into the face of her attacker.

As she'd suspected.

" *God* , Tom, you scared me!" she snapped at him, whacking him on the elbow, hoping that her anger would cover her heart-pounding fear.

"Why?" Tom asked.

"Er, maybe because it's not really *normal* to drag people into alcoves! How anti-social *are* you?" Ginny said crossly. Unsure why, she admitted her fear: "And… that's what happened last time."

He understood her softly spoken words without asking for a repeat; a nod from the silhouette before her indicated everything.

Scowling up at his shadow, she smacked his arm again. "That hurt," she complained.

"I apologize," said Tom, and then he swept into a spontaneous and startling bow.

"What the-?"

Still bowed, the Head Boy took her thin wrist and pressed his lips to her hand. Then, straightening, he said smoothly, "May I have this dance?" and extended his arm formally to her.

"A – what? – dance?" Ginny spluttered. What in the name of Merlin was going on?

"Indeed." She could see his eyes glittering in the darkness. "A dance."

She stared at him incredulously. "There's no music, you dolt."

"Isn't there?" Tom tilted his head slightly. And then, in a whisper: "Or perhaps you're not listening hard enough."

Ginny listened intently to the sounds around her…

Nothingness. Absolute silence.

And it was beautiful.

Tom extended his arm again; Ginny took it; and together they waltzed in perfect peace through the darkness.

"Yum-yum-yum!" Ginny teased as she, Grace and Alden mounted the stairs from the dungeons. "Lots of cakes for me – none for you!"

"Not fair," Grace groaned, holding her stomach. "You're cruel, Ginny, cruel, I tell you." She looked to Alden for support. "Isn't she cruel?"

"Very cruel," Alden agreed as the redhead began a charade of eating lots of iced buns.

Then they passed through the stone door and were in the Entrance Hall. The two non-Prefect Slytherins waved goodbye and went off to breakfast, while Ginny headed off to help make the stand at the side of the Hall, where she could see Scott, Mia and Gareth struggling with a very large table; she could also see Olive Hornby sulking in a corner and refusing to cooperate, though her help would have been much needed.

"Hey," Ginny called. "Is everything alright? D'you need some help?" At the grunts of approval from her fellow Prefects, she lifted her wand and added her efforts of *wingardium leviosa* to the moving of the table.

"Thanks," said Scott with a warm smile; Ginny fired him a look of haughty disdain in return.

A moment later, Eleanor came click-clacking down the stairs, looking, Ginny had to admit, extremely attractive, in the fleecy pink jumper, the dark pink poodle skirt, and the bronze stiletto-heels that she wore. Ginny scowled to see that Scott was staring at the Head Girl with his mouth slightly open.

"Ooh, looks great," Eleanor said enthusiastically, seeing Mia spread the pink, heart-adorned table-cloth over the table. "Gareth, have you

got the cakes? Lovely. Scott, be a darling and help me to Conjure some plates."

Students began to pile eagerly out of breakfast as the last item was set up; most wearing pink. Ginny remembered that the fifties was the time of the famous Think Pink trend, and looked down with a grin at her own fluorescent magenta attire.

"Wow, what's that?"

"Can I have one of those?"

"Ooh, that looks good."

" *Henry* , that was the last one!" –pout- "No fair!"

Money began to flow from the hands of students into Eleanor's pockets, and Ginny mused that if the cakes were so popular, then they must be more than half-decent.

"Can I take a break?" Ginny asked Eleanor. "Have a cupcake or two?"

The Head Girl nodded, not really listening, following the conversation of two of her friends, before bellowing at them, " *Not true* ! That was a dare, I didn't do that on purpose!"

Happily, Ginny picked up a heart-shaped cupcake and bit into it, savouring the soft pink fondant-icing and the tiny silver crystals on top.

Yum .

Cramming the last few crumbs into her mouth, the redhead swallowed hard, and returned to her post behind the bake-sale table.

"And which one d'you want?" she asked a very small, timid-looking first-year.

"Um – um, that one, please," the first-year stammered, pulling nervously on her dark pigtails.

"Okay," Ginny replied kindly, and handed a pink cookie to the eleven-year-old, who stuttered out a thank-you and then fled as fast as possible, evidently having heard rumours about the terrifying Ginevra Peregrine, O Mighty Wielder of Bat-Bogey Hexes.

Then, inexplicably, she felt someone's presence hovering nearby.

She didn't immediately turn around, nor did she do it deliberately, but when picking up a stray fork from the stone flooring, she allowed hazel eyes to flicker across the Entrance Hall, and there, behind a pillar, a few feet away, was the far-flung shadow of someone tall and thin.

Straightening up, Ginny placed the fork back onto the table and moved her face close to Antonia's ear surreptitiously, before hissing, "Cover me?"

The dark-skinned Prefect agreed, and then Ginny slid out from behind the table, making her way towards the pillar that hid someone very bad at hiding.

"Aren't you supposed to be helping with the bake-sale?" Ginny chastised lightly, setting her thin hands on her hips.

"Firstly," said Tom nonchalantly, as though he hadn't just been discovered lurking in the shadows, "I was assigned the task of sorting out mine and Fionn's patrol rotas – which I have just finished, upon the completion of which, I decided why not see how much of a disaster this idea had turned out to be-"

Ginny raised her eyebrows.

"- *and* , secondly, I dislike the holiday with quite an unexplained passion."

"Doesn't everyone?" Ginny rolled her. "Except for the dippy third-years who think you're exceedingly handsome, of course," she teased, with a jaunty wink.

Tom gave her a withering look, but then enquired, "You don't like Valentine's Day, am I right?"

She nodded, wondering why he wanted to know.

He gave a short sigh of relief. "Okay, that's easier for me, then," he admitted. "I was concerned that you might demand roses or something of the like."

"Urgh, no." Ginny made a face. "Hopeless romantic, yes, but I'm not big on flowers. I'm allergic to rose petals, anyway." She gave an exaggerated shiver. "My face swells up twice its normal size and I go red and blotchy. Not flattering." She fluttered her eyelashes at him. "How *ever* , I wouldn't say no to a box of chocolates… hint hint… wink wink, nudge nudge."

Tom would usually have arched an eyebrow, but he seemed anxious. "Well, I haven't got chocolate for you, but I have something else – I suppose that compared to roses and chocolate, it's hardly decent, but you could always have *nothing* if you preferred, so you can take it or leave it or-"

"Tom!" Ginny said sharply. "Rambling again."

The seventeen-year-old Head Boy swallowed. He pulled a piece of folded paper from within his robes, handed it to her, and then stuck his hands into his pockets. His dark eyes were averted from hers, and he lowered his head, causing a miniature tidal wave of near-black hair to fall over his brow.

Huh?

Frowning slightly, Ginny unfolded the parchment and saw line after line of small, neat, black handwriting that was unmistakably the script

of Tom Marvolo Riddle.

Distantly, she recalled: " *I'm not supposed to **be** that person! The one with guitars and stupid poems and – and a giant beaver, for God's sake!* "

… *Stupid poems?*

"Is this… Is this a poem?" she echoed softly.

"… of sorts."

Ginny could see the smudge of pink on his cheeks.

"AH!" she shrieked. "I have suddenly and spontaneously gone blind. I can't see…" she put on a sad face. "I can't read the poem. Someone will have to read it to me…"

"No," said Tom flatly, as if there was a line that was not to be crossed, and Ginny had just crossed it. He did not read out poetry.

"Pleeease?" Ginny cooed, fluttering her eyelashes up at him.

"Ginevra, no." Tom sighed. "I have to go now, anyway. I think that Dippet wanted to see me about something; and, I may add, you're the only sensible person in the Prefect circle, and if you don't return to your bake-sale then the others will probably set something on fire or explode a cake."

Ginny pouted. "Fine."

"Read it later. Not now; not here." Tom looked down at her, meeting her gaze again. "Okay?"

She nodded, and then on tiptoe to press her lips softly against his, placing a small hand on his shoulder. "See you," she chirped to him when they drew apart, and then, with a last smile, she skipped back to her table. Her heart was swelling inside her chest with the sweetness – and the weirdness – of it all.

Tom had written her a Valentine's Day poem.

Lord Voldemort had written her a Valentine's Day poem.

Weird.

"I'm back!" she told the others enthusiastically, and began to sell the remaining cupcakes at a cheaper price to get them all sold before classes started.

"Honestly, I can *not* believe that Claude had the nerve to say that in front of everyone," said Flora angrily as she got into her pyjamas, who Ginny had become closer to than she would have thought.

At dinner, Claude had marched over to Ginny with a song she'd written. She then loudly began to serenade the redhead with her song – a ballad about two Mudblood rejects falling in love, being hated by society, and then dying painful deaths. She'd been given a detention by Professor Gladwyn, but the damage had been done.

Ginny sorely wished that Grace and Flora had let her slap the stupid bimbo.

"I hate her," she said bitterly. She crammed her hands into the pockets of her bomber jacket – it didn't exactly *complete* the pink, fluffy Valentine's Day outfit, but hey! Who gave a damn? It was comfortable – and there felt the crinkle of folded paper.

Her hazel eyes widened as she remembered what Tom had given her, and quickly slipped it under her pillow which she could look at it at length in the privacy of her own bed.

"Well, I'm going to hit the sack," Grace yawned, clambering underneath her blankets. "If Claude comes in and I eat her, don't restrain me. I've been waiting seven years for this opportunity."

"Yeah…" Flora agreed sleepily, jumping onto her mattress.

"You ready for light's out, Ginny?" Grace asked, leaning over to the lamp, to extinguish the warm glow on the *okay* from her red-haired companion.

"Er, you can turn off yours," Ginny said. "I'm just going to be a minute."

"Suit yourself."

There was a unanimous click of lamps being turned off, and then the dormitory was plunged into darkness, save for the flickering light of Ginny's own bedside-lamp.

Glancing at the two other Slytherin females, Ginny retrieved the parchment, opened it, and investigated what words lay inside. Her breath caught.

In small, serif-adorned, neat letters lining the page:

Ginevra

Set alight to water

Flowing through the air

Falling around a face

Fit for angels

The smallest of blushes

And the smallest of smiles

Carves a heart

Out of freckles

Russet butterflies

Flutter for eyes

Of tea

And of gold

And of jade

Dance through the flames

Faster, faster

A whirlwind of colour

A whirlwind of…

Heart

Ginevra

Ginny didn't know what to say; even what to do. It was so lovely that it made the corners of her eyes sting. She gave an exhalation of an emotion she couldn't put into words, and then flopped down onto her pillow. She clicked her lamp off and slid the letter back under the plump cushion that her head rested on. And then she smiled into her blankets and fell asleep.

A/N: Awwww. How cute. Please review!

' **Ginevra', by Tom Riddle, is copyright. I wrote it; don't steal it. If you really suck at poetry, you can borrow it if you ask me first. But then you have to mention that I wrote it. :P**

Next Time:

And it was at this, not at all of the crude insults thrown at her, that Grace sucked in a gasp of shock. Her blue eyes blurred with tears,

and she slapped a hand to her mouth to stop herself from exclaiming in shock – a tiny cry leaked out.

Ginny alone could see the pain hidden in Alden's eyes before he turned away. Then Grace turned on her heels, pushed through the crowd of watching and jeering students who had gathered, and fled towards the main doors, her sobs resounding behind her.

P is for Proud

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Thanks for the reviews! I'm so sorry that the last chapter was so late. But the next-next chapter will SO make up for it! And by the way there's censorship in this. Because I have a phobia of certain words. Call me weird, but whatever…

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Eight: P is for Proud

There was a unanimous click of lamps being turned off, and then the dormitory was plunged into darkness, save for the flickering light of Ginny's own bedside-lamp. Glancing at the two other Slytherin females, Ginny retrieved the parchment, opened it, and investigated what words lay inside. Her breath caught.

Ginny didn't know what to say; even what to do. It was so lovely that it made the corners of her eyes sting. She gave an exhalation of an emotion she couldn't put into words, and then flopped down onto her pillow. She clicked her lamp off and slid the letter back under the plump cushion that her head rested on. And then she smiled into her blankets and fell asleep.

"Wakey wakey, rise and shine," Grace called in a sing-song voice, leaning over the sleeping form of a redhead, huddled under blankets. "Time to get *uuuup* !" she sang.

"Hooray," mumbled Ginny blearily. "Because, of course, the first thing I want to hear in the morning is the sound of a cat being run over."

"What did you say?" Grace frowned, furrowing her brow.

"Neffermin'." Ginny buried her face into her pillow.

"Get up," Grace complained.

"Dunwanne."

"Up. Now."

"G'wayshmey."

"Ex *cuse* me?"

"Go *away* , smelly!" Ginny yelled, sitting up and hurling her pillow at Grace – who ducked – the pillow kept going – and hit a bewildered Professor Slughorn in the face.

Grace gasped.

Ginny swore.

" *Well* !" Slughorn straightened his robes with an affronted huff. "That'll be a detention on Wednesday night for the assault of a teacher. And shouldn't you be getting out of bed?" (Grace gave the other Slytherin a smug look.) Slughorn self-consciously patted his gingery moustache, and then strode away, back up the stairs.

"Thanks a lot," Ginny grumbled. "You know he hates me." She sent a baleful look at the brunette, before rolling out of bed and stumbling into the bathroom. "Go up to breakfast without me," she called around a mouthful of toothpaste. "I might take a while."

"Okay, then."

A moment later, Ginny re-emerged, looking fresher and more awake than she had done when she had entered the *salle de bains* . She looked around; Grace had heeded her words and already left. The Prefect dressed quickly and headed up the stairs.

However, she never even made it to breakfast, because, as it turned out, neither had Grace or Alden, and their lack of eating would the undoing of her own hungry stomach.

"What is *wrong* with you?" Grace snapped. "What, are you PMS or something?"

" *See* ?" Alden yelled, totally un-Alden-like. They were standing in the center of the Entrance Hall, bellowing at each other. " *This is* ***exactly*** *what I mean* ! You're always cracking stupid jokes when it's *totally* inappropriate!"

"That's just part of who I am!" Grace said defensively.

"Well then, I DON'T *LIKE* WHO YOU ARE!" Alden bellowed, seeming to completely lose his temper.

Grace was silent. She gaped at him and then came up with a small, shocked stammer of "w-what?"

"I'M SICK OF IT!" Alden shouted. " *EVERYTHING* ! IT'S ALWAYS SO EMBARRASSING FOR ME!"

"WELL, I'M *SORRY* !"

"YOU HAVE NO IDEA! I'M THE LAUGHING STOCK OF THE WHOLE BLOODY HOUSE BECAUSE MY GIRLFRIEND IS OLDER THAN ME – TALLER THAN ME – AND REALLY *WEIRD* !"

"YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T CARE!"

"YEAH, AND *YOU* SAID THAT YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT ME GETTING YOU FLOWERS! AND OF COURSE, THAT'S WHY YOU HAD A BIG SULK AND REFUSED TO TALK TO ME WHEN I DIDN'T GET YOU ROSES!"

" *EVERY GIRL LIKES FLOWERS* !"

" *HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT?"*

"I DON'T KNOW!" Grace was absolutely screeching now as well. "TO BE HONEST, I'M RUDDY *SICK* OF YOU! EVERYTHING YOU DO WRONG IS *MY* FAULT, BECAUSE YOU'RE TOO **(censored)** PROUD!"

Alden was turning red.

"PROUD?" Alden laughed. Cold and humourless. It sent a chill down Ginny's spine. "IS PROUD FEELING STUPID WHEN YOU'RE IN THE PUB AND YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S GULPING FIREWHISKEY WHILE YOU DRINK BUTTERBEER LIKE SOME TEN-YEAR-OLD? IS PROUD PRETENDING NOT TO *KNOW* YOUR GIRLFRIEND FOR YOUR OWN SANITY WHEN SHE STARTS TO DANCE DRUNKENLY ON THE TABLES? *IS THAT PROUD* ?"

"YOU *KNOW* THAT I ACT STUPID SOMETIMES!" Grace countered. "YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN THAT I WAS UNIQUE AND ORIGINAL AND HEY, A BIT KOOKY SOMETIMES-"

A crowd was gathering. Ginny tried to get them to calm down. They ignored her.

" ***KOOKY*** *? IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL IT?* GRACE, YOU'RE NOT ORIGINAL OR UNIQUE OR KOOKY – YOU'RE *WEIRD* ! YOU'RE A TOTAL FREAK SOMETIMES AND IT'S *EMBARASSING* !"

Grace stopped shouting. Oddly, no tears were in her eyes. Her expression was hard. "I thought that you knew that, and didn't care," she said. "I thought that you said that it was one of the things you loved about me."

"Yeah?" Alden sneered, and, for the first time, Ginny saw the Slytherin in him. "I lied."

Now Grace laughed; a short snort of disbelief. "You don't lie, Alden, you're too much of a **(censored)** goody-two-shoes," she said icily.

"Goody-two-shoes *this* ," said Alden coldly. "I don't give a flying **(censored)** about you."

And it was at this, not at all of the crude insults thrown at her, that Grace sucked in a gasp of shock. Her blue eyes blurred with tears, and she slapped a hand to her mouth to stop herself from exclaiming in shock – a tiny cry leaked out.

Ginny alone could see the pain hidden in Alden's eyes before he turned away. Then Grace turned on her heels, pushed through the crowd of watching and jeering students who had gathered, and fled towards the main doors, her sobs resounding behind her.

"Well done, you arsehole!" Ginny yelled at the male Slytherin who had caused the fight. "Some friend!" Then, not waiting for a reply, she tore after Grace.

"Grace!" she called over a whistling wind that stung Ginny's eyes and snarled her hair into knots. "Grace, where are you?"

A sob answered her from nearby, and Ginny found her friend huddled by the wall, crying into her hands.

"It's okay, Gracie, it's okay," Ginny said softly, taking the taller girl in her arms and holding her close. "Shh, don't cry. He's just being weird today, it's fine. Shall we go for a walk – get you to calm down?"

Grace bobbed her head slightly, and, still clinging to each other, they started down the winding path.

As they walked, Ginny couldn't help but feel awful. She'd received a poem from Tom and probably had the sweetest – admittedly, not the most publicly social and friendly – boyfriend in Hogwarts. Now she felt horrible because Grace's relationship with Alden was doing so badly.

And, of course, just when things couldn't get any worse, Tom appeared on a nearby path, and nodded at the two girls.

Without removing her arms from around Grace, Ginny rapidly made a slashing movement at her throat with one finger, staring at him and willing him to go away. Something told her that Grace *wouldn't* feel any better if Tom was cooing over Ginny.

He didn't seem to get the damn message.

" *Not now* !" she hissed furiously at him when he was close enough, and, ignoring the confused and hurt look hiding behind the as-ever masked features, and also ignoring the guilt threatening to choke her, she turned her back on the Head Boy; kept walking.

"Why are you being so horrible to him?" Grace choked out. "He really cares about you and – and – and -"

"Would you *prefer* for me to go and cuddle him?" Ginny pointed out.

A pause. "No…" Grace snuffled, and burst into tears again.

What has the world come to?

Tears dried up eventually, and, while Grace chose to hide in her bedroom for the first class because she couldn't face seeing civilisation, Ginny had to continue with her life, and, reluctantly, the redhead headed off to Astronomy.

As she ascended the stairs from the dungeons, she was met with a horde of noisy seventh-years pushing past her, presumably heading for Potions.

Oh, great , she thought as she realised that they were robed in yellow and green. Slytherin and Hufflepuff. That would include:

"Tom!" Ginny called brightly, seeing the tall young man ignore her completely and march briskly down the stone steps.

He stopped, and turned to send a blank, *do I look bothered* stare at her, his eyes slightly narrowed in all that expressed that he was pissed off at her. "Yes?" he asked, polite enough, though his words had a biting edge to them.

Ginny frowned down at him. "What's your tie in a knot?"

Self-consciously, Tom's long-fingered hand went to his silver and green school-tie, before he dropped it, and scowled at her. "Nothing," he said coldly.

She gave him a withering look.

"Well." He shifted his schoolbag on his shoulder and stared down the steps at where his classroom was, away from *her* . His next words were an angry mutter. " *If you didn't like the poem then that's your own opinion* ."

Her heart sank. Of course. She'd forgotten that she wasn't going out with a normal person. She'd forgotten that she was dating a sort of socially-inept Head Boy who took everything personally.

"Tom," she said, almost patronizingly, "I wasn't being mean to you because your poem sucked."

He gave her a sharp look, his dark eyes slits.

Reverse, back-track!

"I mean, it didn't suck," she hastily corrected. "That came out wrong. I didn't avoiding you because of the you thought that your poem to you was – oh God, I can't even speak English anymore." She slapped her forehead with her hand. "Rewind." She took a deep breath, and tried again. "I know that you think that I avoided you because I didn't like your poem. *But* it was because Grace and Alden had a massive fight, and I didn't think that, you know, you talking about giving me Valentine's Day poetry-" (here he went pink, high on his hollowed cheeks) "- would make her feel any better. And you

didn't seem to see that every inch of my body language was screaming: *go away, not now, I'll talk to you later* ." She gave a nervous laugh. "Because *actually* , I thought that your poem was just about thenicestthingsincechocolate." Another nervous laugh. Her face was heating up. She scratched her head. "So… yeah. I'm sorry."

"So you should be," said Tom coolly, but he was pink and he was smiling his evident glee at having his work complimented so highly.

Ginny grinned up at him. "I *think* ," she said, looking at her pocket-watch, "that I've made you very late for Potions, and made myself even later for Astronomy, so I'll see you later-" (she stood on tiptoe to kiss one cheek) "-and will talk to you later-" (she kissed the other cheek) "-goodbye." (She kissed him lightly on the lips.)

Then she scurried away, her heart feeling lighter – but at the same time, chained down by the fact that her best friends at 1950's Hogwarts had made the same boy-girl-friendship mistake. The mistake being to make friends – to go out – and then to break up spectacularly, destroying any possibility of remaining friends.

This world, twisted by the proud.

"Can you tell Alden to pick up my quill, please?"

"Alden, can you pick up Grace's quill?"

"What, you mean the one that she stupidly hurled across the room?"

" *Alden* ."

"Tell Grace that she can get it herself."

"Grace, get it yourself."

"I can't be bothered."

"Grace, get the goddamn quill."

"Why are you on *his* side?"

"Alden, get the goddamn quill."

"No!"

" *Fine* ! *I'll* get the bloody quill!" said Ginny crossly, and, as usual, ended up compromising by doing the task herself. She stood, weaved around the front of her desk, snatched the eagle-feather quill from the stone tiles, and placed it neatly on Grace's desk.

"You could've Summoned it, you know," Alden pointed out.

"So could've you!" Ginny bit back. "Now shut up."

"What's all the commotion?" asked the olive-skinned, Italian Professor Ornella, raising her dark head from her desk.

" *Nothing* ," chorused the three Slytherins sweetly.

"Then get back to work."

This Herbology lesson, they weren't having a practical but were instead answering questions from their textbooks to prepare them for the sort of questions that what be appearing in their up-coming NEWTs. Ginny was thoroughly bored, and even picking up quills was more interesting than writing out a thousand times that Bubotuber pus isn't poisonous to hedgehogs.

"I don't see why we have to do this," complained Grace quietly.

"And that's why you fail," Alden retorted snidely from beside Ginny.

" *Funny* ," said the redhead, looking at them both with a curious expression her freckled face. "I swore that you weren't talking to each other."

The two fighting Slytherins huffed, and returned to their writing.

Ginny sighed. She hated being the owl, delivering messages – but much more that she had to constantly break up violent arguments. She missed her fifties' best friends, and they just weren't themselves since they'd broken up. Grace had stopped acting hyper and mental; Alden had retreated into his hermit-habitation known as the library and buried himself in books. She wanted the people she'd originally made friends with. She wanted them back desperately.

She was seeing less and less of Tom as his time was now almost completely occupied – NEWTs revision, careers advice (when she heard this, she struggled desperately to blank the part of her brain saying, *what advice do you need for Evil Dark Lord?*), Head work, patrols, and sometimes even being used to watch over the firsties' and secondies' detentions (he scared them. He scared them a *lot*).

Snatched kisses in empty corridors. Entwined hands in vacant classrooms. Dancing in secret tunnels to no music. Hugs behind the library bookcases.

Such was what their relationship had steadily declined to, though, gratefully, every few days or so, there would be a free period where Eleanor took over double-patrols for their sake (the redhead felt she'd never be able to thank the blonde enough times), where Dippet was busy, where Tom had no homework and sacrificed his revision time, where he was completely and entirely hers.

Ginny thought wistfully of the 'good old days' as she threaded her way through the library shelves, a heavy book on extra Arithmancy – her worst subject – in her arms. She stopped beside the librarian's desk and waited patiently to check out her book. Madam Crofton wasn't there.

Where is that blasted librarian?

Ginny scanned the book-room rapidly, before turning back to the desk, and her eye was caught upon a sheaf of paper sticking out the edge of a drawer on the other side.

Did she dare?

In an instant, Ginny had leant over the desk, and snatched at the paper. Of course, it being half-shut in a drawer, it ripped in half.

Oh CRAP!

"Alohamora!" she hissed at the drawer. It trundled open, and Ginny grabbed the other half of the paper. "Reparo!" The parchment sealed, whole again. Then she stuffed it in her pocket and fled.

She knew what it was. It was the list of all the books in the library, including those in the Restricted Section. She'd stolen it previously, but her search had been *far* too narrow. *Svengali* . Of *course* it would draw naught. But if the search changed to, say, *archaic?*

Pressing her back against the library bookcases nearby, Ginny glanced sideways for anyone who might be watching her. Then she cast a careful gaze upon the parchment in her hands.

No… no… The Art Of Archaic … she memorized its whereabouts and its reference number… *no… no… Base Archaic And Other Tongues Most Evile* … she memorised this, too, and then tucked it into the pages of a nearby book, not caring if someone poor person found the book and was caught with the stolen document.

Her job done, she proudly left the library, smiling broadly. She knew now where the books on Archaic were. Now… to *get* them.

A/N: Lalala… I hope you liked it… quite a lot happening… please review… I luff yerwww.

WARNING: THE NEXT CHAPTER! OMG! OMG! OMG! O-M-FREAKIN'-G! AHHHHHHH! It's literally my FAVOURITE chapter in this whole thing! And – and – ARGHHHH! HURRY UP AND REVIEW SO I CAN POST THE NEXT ONE! ARRGHH!

Next Time:

The Head Boy dropped onto the edge of his bed, resting his elbows on his knees and hanging his arms between them. Then he said, his voice muted and tired, "Come here."

Ginny crossed the room and sat beside him.

"Can you keep a secret?" Tom wasn't looking at her.

P is for Parasite

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: This is my favourite chapter in the whole fic. I FINALLY FINISHED IT! Not posting it, but I finished writing it. And I'm thinking of doing a sequel… Anyway. I LOVE this chapter. The start is funny, and then we have this AMAZING thing that's all like DUN-DUN-DUNNNN and then its SO FLUFFY AND EHHHHH!

HOLD ONTO YOUR HATS, PEOPLE!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Fifty-Nine: P is for Parasite

Ginny sighed. She hated being the owl, delivering messages – but much more that she had to constantly break up violent arguments. She missed her fifties' best friends, and they just weren't themselves since they'd broken up. Grace had stopped acting hyper and mental; Alden had retreated into his hermit-habitation known as the library and buried himself in books. She was seeing less and less of Tom as his time was now almost completely occupied – NEWTs revision, careers advice Head work, patrols… Snatched kisses in empty corridors. Entwined hands in vacant classrooms. Dancing in secret tunnels to no music. Hugs behind the library bookcases. Such was what their relationship had steadily declined to.

*Her job done, she proudly left the library, smiling broadly. She knew now where the books on Archaic were. Now… to **get** them.*

Happiness. Sheer *bliss* .

It was the only thing going through Ginny Peregrine's head as she wound her arms tighter around Tom Marvolo Riddle's neck, on tiptoe, eyes closed, her mouth sinking into his. As they drew apart after what seemed like several bright and sunny summer days, she recalled her plan to get the books on Archaic, and waited briefly until the timing was *just* right, before cooing, "Tommy dearest…"

"Oh God." Tom folded his arms, looking down at her with irritation and bemused curiosity. "What do you want?"

"Why, nothing, my sweetheart," she wheedled.

"Fine," said Tom, arching an eyebrow.

"Well, there is *one* thing," Ginny said thoughtfully. "I dunno… maybe… you could get me a pass to the Restricted Section?"

"And *how* did I know?" Tom dropped into his armchair. "No can do. Firstly, it would be rather obvious that I'd given you a pass for no reason, and secondly," he stretched nonchalantly, "I see no reason to."

"Oh, but *please* !" Ginny pleaded, falling to her knees and putting on her best puppy-dog face. Hey, it usually worked.

"I am not going to fall for the doe eyes, Ginevra," Tom told her firmly.

We'll see about that.

She didn't answer, but sat back on her heels, looking at the ground. A few seconds passed. Then, slowly, she lifted wide, round hazel eyes that were glistening with tears, and looked through her fringe at him, staring sadly straight into his dark eyes.

"Stop it," said Tom, annoyed. He looked away. "Stop it."

No reply. She kept staring at him miserably, tears threading her russet eyelashes.

He glanced back to her.

She blinked at him, and her lower lip began to tremble.

"Oh, *alright* ! If you'll stop doing the doe eyes," the Head Boy grumbled, cross at having been defeated. He folded his long arms and glared at the arm of the chair, taking his anger at being powerless to her puppy-face out on the piece of defenceless furniture.

" *Yay* !" Ginny leapt up and hugged him tight. "You know that you're wonderful, don't you?"

"I still can't get the pass for you. It's far too suspicious. I can get the books for you, though," Tom said, his lilting voice muffled by her hugging him.

Oh . Ginny grimaced into his shoulder. For that, she'd have to tell him the book. And then he'd want to know why she wanted the book. Oh dear. This could end up awkward. *Hmm.* It was as good as it was going to get. "Okay." She hopped off him and stood in front of where he sat.

"May I inquire as to which book it is that you require from the Restricted Section?" Tom asked coolly, leaning into the back of his armchair and watching her quietly with observant eyes.

"Um." *Here we go.* " The Art Of Archaic or Base Archaic And Other Tongues Most Evile ."

Tom frowned. "Archaic? Why do you want books on archaic?" he asked, his tone polite, as always, though not casual enough to hide the wary tone of suspicion. He could have left his inquiries at that, but they kept flowing out, each question becoming tighter and sharper. "What book needs an archaic translation?" he narrowed his eyes at her. "That language is thousands of years old. What on earth do you need to translate?" He shook by one sleeve and absent-mindedly scratched at the top of his wrist.

Her heart pounded.

She *could* tell him. She trusted him; almost more than anyone else. And, as Head Boy, he would have access to areas that she couldn't go to. He could help her understand what was going on…

"Svengali," she blurted out.

Instantly she realised that it was a bad idea. The first sign was that he immediately stopped itching his arm. The second was how he kept his head low, but, through his fringe, his eyes snapped up to hers at the speed of a runaway train, so suddenly that had his gaze been a pushing force, she didn't doubt that she would have fallen over. Even so, she took a step backwards, before continuing.

"A book on Svengali," she clarified bravely. Seeing that his dark stare wasn't lightening, she hurried ahead to explain. "Someone – something – is going around and attacking people. Myrtle Tristanebury, Professor Vander, you, me… and I think it's under the influence of Svengali. And if I knew more about it, then maybe I could understand what the thing or person was, and then… and then *who* it was, if it was a person, and…" she faltered. "And then, I dunno. Save the day?"

Even around her, Tom had an impassive mask to some degree. He wasn't Mr-No-Emotions when he was alone with her, but by no means did he open up and allow anyone to see that he could be terrified or distraught or troubled. However now, for just a split-second, his strong façade crumbled, revealing an upset, vulnerable face, almost like a child. Then, as abruptly as it had appeared, he set his features again to invincibility. He gave a loud sigh, dropped his face into his hands; jerked himself to his feet violently, and crossed the room, raking one large hand backwards through his wavy hair. She thought she heard: "I knew this was going to happen", muttered.

The Head Boy dropped onto the edge of his bed, resting his elbows on his knees and hanging his arms between them. Then he said, his voice muted and tired, "Come here."

Ginny crossed the room and sat beside him.

"Can you keep a secret?" Tom wasn't looking at her.

Ginny nodded, and was left wondering what he was going to say, wondering what she *expected* him to say-

"It's me."

Not that.

She stared at him. The word on the tip of her tongue was 'huh?' but she kept it to herself. She didn't think that she could talk anyway.

"Just… just give me a minute, okay?" Tom asked quietly, his voice almost pleading. "A minute of your time, maybe two. And then, sure, run off and tell the world I'm a psychopath if you want to."

Ginny nodded again.

Another sigh. "You know Salazar Slytherin, I'm presuming?" he didn't look to her for confirmation, "He… he had children. And… a hereditary set of cursed genes was passed down through the ages. Two children. Any Slytherin descendant would have two children – most commonly, twins. And something that became increasingly common was the attitudes of the children." He swallowed. "Exact opposites – one sarcastic, one friendly. One sweet, one sour. One good, one… not so much."

She saw where this was going. But it sounded like something in a fairytale… it was just ridiculous.

"Here's a story for you," Tom said, not meeting her gaze. "Two of these descendant siblings… their names were Merope and Morfin. A girl and a boy. The female, Merope, was the pure-hearted of the two… well. As pure-hearted as a Slytherin can get," he commented dryly. Again he gulped, his anxiety showing plainly. "Except that

Merope did the worst thing possible for the Slytherin family. She… she fell in love with a Muggle. The Muggle was… Tom Riddle."

Following the plot, Ginny frowned. She was bursting with questions, but didn't want to interrupt.

"She gave the Muggle love-potions, and they got married. When she was pregnant, she… she decided that Riddle would love her even if she was a witch, because she was carrying his child. Or rather, due to genetic tradition, *children* . Well, she was wrong."

Ginny was watching his face carefully. He still wasn't looking at her, but his jaw tightened and his eyes flashed.

"He wanted nothing to do her… he snatched her up on his horse, rode away, and then threw her off. He was probably hoping that she'd either be killed by the fall, or would at least hit her head and lose her memory. He couldn't bear the shame of having anyone know that he'd…" Tom trailed off. Ginny wondered how he knew all of this. A deep breath, and he plundered on. "Merope was hurt, but she stumbled into the nearby town. She was bruised and battered, but otherwise fine. However, the unborn children weren't…"

Ginny's eyes widened.

"Twins. As always. But one of them was crushed and dying. The dominant child – the, shall we say, immoral one – was weaker now, and did the only thing it could to stay alive." Tom's voice was getting quieter and now sounded strained. "It… became a parasite."

Her heart froze.

"A few…"

Tom's voice cracked. He stopped, swallowed hard, and started again.

"A few months later… she had her child. Dying. She never saw her…" another stop, "her son. She never knew that she hadn't had twins. She never knew that… that her …her child wasn't normal. Parasitic. No-one knew. The baby looked normal. He hadn't absorbed extra limbs… or anything like that. The only difference was that… was that the baby had two minds."

Tom's voice was barely audible.

"She told the woman who had delivered her baby… to call the 'children'… Tom and Marvolo." He swallowed. "The immoral, Marvolo, after her cruel father. The… the good, Tom, after the person she loved. … The midwife was confused, because there was only one child. And thus," he finished bleakly, "Tom Marvolo Riddle."

Ginny suddenly found that she couldn't breathe. "My arm…" she said. "Myrtle… *Vander* …"

Tom stood very suddenly. "You know, I think that my two minutes is up," he muttered, his eyes on the floor, which was unusual, as he usually held his head high and looked at the ceiling. "You can… you can go now."

And then… Ginny realised something that wrenched her heart into pieces. His smooth, lilting voice was choked. And his head was down. And his hands were clenched. His jaw was set rigid. That was something Ginny had seen a thousand times on everyone around her in the War – furiously refusing to show pain and fighting back… *tears* .

She had finally accepted that Tom – this Tom – wasn't evil. And now… so many attacks. So many… *deaths.* All at his hand.

But , she realised with a start, ***were*** *they all at his hand? Someone was controlling him… he had no choice. He didn't even know.*

And she remembered her first-year. Forced to attack, attempt murder, injure… without any choice in the matter. She remembered

how, after the diary was destroyed, everyone accused her. They didn't understand. People who barely knew her loathed her because of what evil she'd unknowingly fostered inside her.

For the first time in her whole life, Ginny saw that Lord Voldemort, too, had once been a child, and she saw that child in the Heir of Slytherin trying hopelessly to reject her as if he didn't care.

Tears in his eyes – though he was much too macho and impassive to let her know. A problem that he could never solve. Barely holding it together.

And a memory: *a girl, sitting on her bed. Tears in her eyes. Barely holding it together. A diary clenched in her hands.*

She ran forwards, making the decision in an instant, and wrapped her arms as tightly as possible around the thin frame of the Head Boy; burying a messy, red-haired head into the worn material of his jumper. Her heart was drumming wildly, and screaming three words, eight letters, that somehow she couldn't grasp and couldn't understand.

"Er…" said an awkward voice from just above her. "You… can go."

"And what," said Ginny fiercely, lifting her face towards his, "if I don't give a damn for leaving?"

Tom looked confused. "I… I don't…" he frowned, looking again like a clueless ten-year-old in an oversized body. "You don't mind… that I'm a descendant of Slytherin?"

A wry smile made itself present on Ginny's lips. "If I was a Gryffindor or Hufflepuff, I'd probably run away screaming, but… I'm not, am I?"

He didn't look any less puzzled at this. "And… and you don't mind that… that I'm a Parselmouth?" he enquired worriedly.

She didn't think that this would be a good time to tell him that she was, too. "Am I supposed to?" she replied, raising her eyebrows to push her point.

Now the final hurdle – the biggest. Tom looked extremely uncomfortable. "And… and you're not bothered… by…" he trailed off, and gestured ambiguously at himself.

"What – you mean, am I bothered by the fact that you have a second soul living inside you that sometimes turns demonic and tries to kill the people around you?" Ginny asked coolly.

His eyes snapped to hers. Dark eyes were suddenly bottomless again, glowing like coals from the burning fire. His expression was close to murderous.

She took hold of one elbow and looked up into his chiselled face. "Not in the slightest," she said softly. And then, fathoms below, Ginny saw the bottom to the bottomless pit, glittering with obsidian.

He swallowed, hard. "Do you mean that, or are you just trying to make me feel better when you're actually terrified of me?"

"If I was that scared of you, d'you think I'd do this?" she asked teasingly, her voice soft; she bobbed up onto her tiptoes and kissed the corner of his mouth, the touch lingering there, before ducking down again and smiling up at him.

Tom's face had cracked into a smirk, his thin lips curving upwards, and he was watching her with a kind of calm happiness in his strong features, his dark eyes sparkling with something that she'd never seen before.

It lifted her heart and sent her soaring into the clouds; when suddenly his face fell again, looking slightly troubled. In the past five minutes, he'd been more open, more defenceless, than he'd probably ever been in his life. He looked straight into her heart-shaped face. "Ginevra…"

"Yeah?" she enquired, curious. The Head Boy seemed nervous, and he was breathing hard, as if summoning courage. "You know you can tell me anything."

Then, blurting the words out as if he was scared that they were going to bite him, he said quickly, "I think I lo-"

DONG. DONG. DONG.

She saw his lips move, but couldn't read them. "Damn. Sorry," she apologized. "I forgot about time passing. I have to be back to the common room, I'll get in trouble." She said sorry again, and then kissed him again. "You'll tell me later, okay?"

"…Yes," he agreed, but there was a look in his eyes that made Ginny feel rather sad.

"Tell me later," she repeated, smiling; but as she scurried down the stairs, little did she know that she'd never hear him say it again.

A/N: ARGH! WOW! REVIEW! TELL ME WHAT YOU THOUGHT! I know, it's sort of weird and unrealistic and bit like a cliché fairytale, but whatever.

Next Time:

Ginny laughed; turning to her brown-haired friend. "Don't worry, dearest, but I'm sure that-"

" *Kill* …"

The voice rang clear, and Ginny froze. Her blood ran cold. She knew now what the voice entailed. She'd thought it was over. Seemingly not. But what now? That was the real question – *what now?*

P is for Possessed

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Firstly, this is quite a freaky chapter. More censorship. Fluffy, though. Don't be alarmed. And secondly, what's happened to everyone? Not to sound arrogant, but I used to have loads of people reading this, and now… I dunno. Sorry if I got you bored or something.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty: P is for Possessed

" *What – you mean, am I bothered by the fact that you have a second soul living inside you that sometimes turns demonic and tries to kill the people around you?" Ginny asked coolly. His eyes snapped to hers. Dark eyes were suddenly bottomless again, glowing like coals from the burning fire. She took hold of one elbow and looked up into his chiselled face. "Not in the slightest," she said softly. And then, fathoms below, Ginny saw the bottom to the bottomless pit, glittering with obsidian.*

He looked straight into her heart-shaped face. "Ginevra…" Then, blurting the words out as if he was scared that they were going to bite him, he said quickly, "I think I lo-"

DONG. DONG. DONG. *She saw his lips move, but couldn't read them. "Damn. Sorry," she apologized. "I forgot about time passing. I have to be back to the common room, I'll get in trouble." She said sorry again, and then kissed him again. "Tell me later," she repeated, smiling; but as she scurried down the stairs, little did she know that she'd never hear him say it again.*

An early April sun caused the green glow of the light from the Lake, above the Slytherin common room, to gleam brighter on the stone tiles of the sixth-year girls' dormitory. A blonde was on her bed, doodling on a jotter pad; a brunette curled up, her nose in a large book; and a small redhead on the ground, flicking through the pages of homework, checking for mistakes.

"I'm *bored* ," said Flora, lifting her head from where it was resting next to her notebook.

As Ginny opened her mouth to say something in return, there was a fluttering of wings and a small knocking noise came from the tiny doors on the side of the room. As the Slytherin dormitory was underground, all through the dungeons there were small chutes that owls flew down into and then waited patiently behind little doors until they were opened.

The seventeen-year-old Prefect rolled to her feet and then crossed to the door of the owl-chute. Opening the doors, a large, elegant-looking tawny owl flew into the room and landed upon the desk with a dignified air.

"That's…" Flora spluttered. "That's *Gulistan's* owl!"

Gulistan? Ginny racked her brain for a few second, before remembering that Gulistan Kurtz was the handsome Ravenclaw for whom Flora had a crush bordering obsessive.

"Really?" she enquired. "Hm."

Flora scrambled up and hurried to the owl. "Hello," she said breathlessly. "Have you got some post for us?"

The owl boredly extended a leg, to which was attached a faintly-yellowing letter.

"Ooh!" Flora exclaimed with a squeal. "Thank you!" she tore the letter away from the bird and began to eagerly open it.

"Hang on." Ginny frowned at the front of the envelope, which was pointed in her direction. "What does the front say?"

"Huh?" the Slytherin holding the letter looked confused. She flipped it over, and as her soft latte eyes scanned what was written on it. Gradually her pretty face drained of colour. "G… Grace," she finally stammered.

"Yeah?" the brunette looked up, seemingly not having been paying attention to anything that was going on.

Flora held up the envelope. "Grace," she repeated quietly. And indeed, scrawled untidily across the front were the words *Grace Hartwin.*

"Oh." Grace held out a hand. "Give it here, then."

Her hand trembling slightly, Flora passed over the letter. Grace took it and clumsily ripped it open. Then she began to read, as Flora and Ginny waited patiently.

After a moment, Grace gave another small 'oh' and sat on her bed.

"Well?" Flora demanded, her tone more angry than Ginny thought was necessary.

"Um." Grace glanced again at the letter in her hands. "He says… he says that, er, I'm… well. To be concise… he wants to go out with me."

Ouch .

For several painful moments, Flora didn't move. Then her eye twitched. Then her eye twitched again. And then she shrieked, "WHAT?"

Ginny was suddenly immensely worried for Grace's health; she leapt forwards and grabbed Flora's arms, thus restraining her from attempting murder.

"You're not…" Flora gasped out. "You're not *considering* it, are you?"

The brunette bit her lip. "I don't know." She looked anxious. "I mean, I don't like him, but… but this what I need to show Alden that I don't care."

"I apologize for interrupting, but I see the smallest flaw in this fabulous plot," Ginny chimed in, from behind Flora. "You *do* care."

"Yeah, but *he* doesn't need to know that, does he?" Grace snapped.

"That doesn't matter!" Flora cut in abruptly. "She's *not* going to say yes." She glared at the taller girl. " *Are* you?"

"Flora…" Grace tried.

"NO! You're *not* going to!" Flora exclaimed hysterically. "Three years, Grace! Three *years* I have liked him, and you know that! Please!"

"I don't actually like him! I just want to prove to Alden that I'm over him-"

"Which you're not," Ginny piped up helpfully.

"-I mean, we're not going to *kiss* or anything-"

Flora tore free from Ginny's grasp and flew at Grace; wand drawn, pointing dangerously; brown eyes narrowed. "You – wouldn't – *dare* ," she hissed vehemently.

Ginny yelped, and jumped at Flora, dragging her back. "Whoa! Bad crazy blonde!"

"Please, Flora, only for a while to show Alden that I-"

" *Leave my lovelife out of this* !" Flora snarled. "You *know* how I feel about him! You stupid cow!"

"Flora-"

"How the *hell* could you do this to me?" Flora shrieked. "What, have you been sneaking around and flirting with him behind my back, trying to seduce him the whole time? How long has it been going on, then?"

"Flora, you're being ridiculous!" Grace yelled.

"Ridiculous? RIDICULOUS? *I'm* not the one who's going to break *two* hearts in order to settle a stupid tiff with her boyfriend!" Flora shouted.

"HEY! It is *not* a stupid tiff!" Grace snapped. "He's an arrogant idiot, and, to be frank, I'm *sick* of him! He's always nagging on at me to do this, and do that, and be better behaved, and not to be so weird! I can't help it if I'm weird, and I told him that if he really fancied me, he was going to have to see past that! But he's too much of a retard to go along with it! I'm TIRED of it!"

"And so you're trying to make him jealous." Ginny shrugged. "Well, it makes perfect sense."

"You stay out of the fight!" Grace bit out. "You have *no* reason to get involved! You have a perfect relationship! Private cuddling and – and – hugs when you think no-one else is looking and-" she strode furiously across the room and wrenched something from Ginny's bed, who made a small noise of protest, "-and bloody *poetry* !"

CRAP, how did she find that?

Ginny went bright red. "Keep him out of this!" she snapped, snatching the poem away and stuffing it in her pocket.

"Ooh, I love you Ginny, you're marvellous, Ginny," Grace mocked in a high voice that no-one could possibly ever associate with Tom Marvolo Riddle. "Yeah, we get the idea! So shut up and stop rubbing it in my face that he's perfect!"

"Two things, Grace!" Ginny shouted. "One: I have *never* rubbed it in your face! And, two: he is *far* from perfect!"

"So what was that I just had, toilet paper?" snapped Grace sarcastically, staring pointedly at where Ginny had crammed the poem.

"He is not perfect," Ginny repeated adamantly.

"Give me *one* example of how he isn't perfect," Flora said angrily, cutting in with her slice of cake.

Well, how about we start with the fact that he has an alter-ego that murders teachers? Then, hey, we can follow up with his wonderfully charming personality!

Ginny kept quiet.

"Exactly!" Grace shouted. "You haven't got any *idea* , have you, how it feels to lose someone you care about?"

Her blood ran cold.

*How… how **dare** you.*

"You shut the hell up." Ginny's voice made penguins cold. "Whatever you've been smoking, it must be really strong. You know that my life is far from perfect, and yet you have the *audacity* to pick on me! You know that the only reason I came to Hogwarts is because my whole family and everyone I cared about was murdered in front of me. Tom is just about the *one* good thing in my life right now, but even that's too much for you! Screw the fact that you've got a *home* and your *family* and your *friends* ; never mind that you're *rich* and that people

love you; never mind that you'll always feel safe and *happy* ! The fact that you've had everything in your life served to you on a silver plate doesn't count for anything, does it, because all of that's *trivial* to the fact that I have a boyfriend and you don't! Isn't that right? You only care about yourself, don't you? Since you and Alden fell to pieces, *I've* been the one who's been hit hard. *I* have to ferry between you, *I* have pick up the broken shards once you've shattered. And I'm bloody sick of it. And do you think that *this* ingenious plan of yours will make it any better? *No* , is the answer, it won't. I'm just left wondering why you can't let sleeping dogs lie and *move on* , for God's sake!" Ginny yelled.

Tom had made her forget about what she'd lived before. When she was with him, she could just pretend that she'd been at this Hogwarts for six years, and that when holidays came, everything would be fine. Now she was forced to remember. Blood – pain – war – screaming – Harry – mum – Ron – dad – Luna – Hermione – *Harry* -

Grace ducked her head; when she raised it again, Ginny was alarmed to see tears glowing in her blue eyes. "I love him," she whispered.

And for some reason, the middle word in that short, emotional phrase struck a spear deep into Ginny's heart, digging a wound that stung and stung and stung for reasons she couldn't even begin to try and understand.

Luckily, Grace wasn't a person to hold grudges. Soon after the argument, the two Slytherins apologized, grovelled, and their friendship came out of the situation stronger. Not only this, but Grace seemed to see sense. She rejected Gulistan, much to Flora's delight. She was even getting on better with Alden. As well as all of this, she was becoming herself again – cramming herself full of food, dancing, and bouncing around twenty-four-seven, that is.

"Well," declared Grace as they headed up from Potions towards the Great Hall for lunch. "I think that for Alden's birthday, we should go to a park and have fun and make daisy-chains in the fields and-"

"-and then," said Ginny, mock-enthusiastically, "we can vomit rainbows! Hey, why not even a bunny or two?"

Grace huffed. "Fine," she said haughtily. "What do *you* want to do?" she asked, turning to the birthday boy in question.

"Not including a nice, long visit to the library?" Ginny teased.

Alden rolled his brown eyes. "Very funny," he told her. "No, I'd just be happy hanging out with you guys."

Ginny noted that, finally, it was *you guys* as opposed to *you* , which generally indicated her, and not Grace. She smiled at this.

"Fine." Grace shrugged. "Don't expect any presents, then," she teased. A thoughtful look crossed her round face. "I wonder what's for lunch… I hope there's sausages. I feel like having sausages today. I'm in a sausages sort of mood."

Ginny laughed; turning to her brown-haired friend. "Don't worry, dearest, but I'm sure that-"

" *Kill* …"

The voice rang clear, and Ginny froze. Her blood ran cold. She knew now what the voice entailed. She'd thought it was over. Seemingly not. But what now? That was the real question – *what now?*

"Are you okay?" Alden frowned, looking over at her.

"You're sure that…" Grace repeated, trying to continue the conversation, with an ambiguous wave of her hands.

"Er – m'sure that they're'll be sausages," Ginny said hastily, "buuut, *right now* , I have to go."

"Okay," said a bewildered-looking Grace, but by the time that the one confused word had left her lips, Ginny had disappeared.

She ran away, up the stairs, veering around corners, and shoving through small crowds of alarmed students, who leapt out of her way, as many had come to recognise that wild expression of *move now or DIE* commonly present upon Ginny's freckled features.

She didn't bother following the voice. She had worked out that it would take her to where Tom had been… *possessed* , if that was the right word to use. And the Prefect wanted to know where he was, not where he had been.

Oh, if there was ever a time to have Marauder's Map… she thought desperately as she sprinted up the stairs towards the library – towards, that is, the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets, where Tom would be doubtlessly headed.

If Tom's even still Tom .

Her breath was coming shallow; she was slowing down to try and ease the stitch that was building in her side from her sudden burst of speed, when something moved in the shadows, and there was a muffled groan.

Ginny gasped, needing no confirmation that the soft, slightly lilting voice that had groaned in the dark corners of the hallway was that of the person she was looking for.

"Tom," she cried, swooping towards him like some bizarre, concerned bird of prey.

He was slumped inelegantly against the wall, his arms at a sharp angle, over his stomach and holding himself tightly; his face, a contorted mask of pain.

People were staring now; squinting into the darkness to see the sight of a barely-conscious, twitching Head Boy, and his girlfriend, hissing

his name frantically.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

"Can you hear me?" Ginny whispered urgently, grabbing his shoulder.

Then his eyes flashed open, and Ginny almost jumped backwards in fright – the complete lack of sharp focus that they usually held, red-rimmed, totally black, and somehow blurred. Then they flashed, and she saw the person she knew – a snatch of agony, of raw emotion, flickering through the features that she knew, and then he collapsed.

"No," she gasped out, and dived to catch him. He was lighter than she expected – but he was still pretty damn heavy. He dragged her down with him, and then she was kneeling on the ground beside him.

Now a large crowd had gathered; pointing, staring, whispering.

"What are you looking at?" she snapped at them, and then, as quickly as possible, dragged Tom through a nearby tapestry.

A groan pulled itself from Tom's mouth as he started to wake up again, and Ginny pulled him to his feet. He leant heavily on top of her; she wound her free arm around him and started to pull him up the secret passageway to the third floor.

Ginny was determined to take him to safety. However, this did become more difficult when his twitching transformed into fully-fledged shuddering – shaking – muttering at high speed – hissing angrily –

"Come on," she whispered to him, and then they were out of the tunnel, hurrying across the corridor, going through the Head common room portrait hole (Ginny snarled, "OPEN" at Robin the Rich; he didn't question her authority) and stumbling up the stairs.

His legs were giving out – she couldn't hold him up – he was *falling* – and then he staggered by himself to the bed and crumpled upon it.

Oh Merlin have I just KILLED him?

He wasn't dead.

But when he proved that he wasn't dead, Ginny had no way of knowing how to help and if it was the slightest bit better, him being alive.

Pulling up tight in a ball – curling long fingers into twisted claw shapes – clenching the sheets – shaking uncontrollably – snarling – hissing –

"Tom!" she shrieked, kicking into action and running across to him when she saw him digging his nails into his arms; blood blotting his shirt-sleeves. "Tom, stop it!"

A strained choking noise came from the young Heir of Slytherin as he twisted to stare up at her.

Eyes – flashing – black – dark – blank – bleary – unfocused – sharp – evil – pained –

"Get…" he gasped out, "get… the ***(censored)*** *ing hell* out…"

"No," Ginny said stubbornly, trying to find something to calm him down. "I don't give a damn about your pride or-"

" *I will kill you* !" Tom snarled. "What part of that do you not **(censored)** ing *understa-* " He cut himself off as he seemed to choke again, and then curled even tighter into a ball, squeezing his eyes shut.

He was starting to shake again – so hard that the wooden posts of the four-poster bed were trembling against the floor. His eyes were open, more red-rimmed than ever, and the whites of his eyes were

totally black, though red-tinged. It was something out of a Muggle horror movie. It was every child's nightmare.

The seventeen-year-old redhead did the only thing that she could think of doing. She sat beside him on the bed, grabbed one of his claw-formed hands and held it as tightly as she could, whispering endlessly to him, "It's okay… it's okay…"

Tom began to hiss – Ginny could understand it as Parseltongue. " *Kill them* ," he was saying in a voice that wasn't his own. " *Kill them all. Leave no survivors. Murder everyone* ." But then suddenly the words were changing – sometimes he said it in English, sometimes in Parseltongue, twice in French, and once even in what sounded like Irish, but all the same words: " *Don't hurt her. Don't hurt her. Don't you dare* ***(censored)*** *ing hurt her."*

Keeping one hand in his, she laid her cheek on the old sheets beside where his cheek was pressed into the mattress and gently flattened his soft, fluffy dark hair, smoothing it back from his pale, damp forehead and kissing the top of his head.

She had no idea of how long she lay there. Slowly the shuddering subsided to a small tremble, and his breathing slowed. He was asleep, and Ginny heaved a sigh of relief, before allowing herself to drift to sleep beside him.

The first thing that registered in Ginny's brain as she was dragged reluctantly from sleep was the sharp, panicked, and rather alarmingly high-pitched word of " *Shit* !"

She blearily opened her eyes and frowned.

The speaker wavered into focus, and Ginny saw that it was Tom, who was sitting up with his face pale and his eyes wide. Then, seeing her wake up, he gasped and pushed a hand roughly backwards through his hair, dropping down to sit on his heels instead of kneeling next to her.

"Oh Merlin," he muttered, setting his face in his hands. Raising his gaze, he glared at her. "You have no idea how scared I was, do you?" he snarled.

"Er." Ginny sat up, scratching her head. "Well." *Scared?*

"Try to see this from my point of view, for a second," Tom told her agitatedly. "I sometimes get… I sometimes kill people. By accident. I know that I've been… I don't know, possessed, shall we say. All that I remember is the person I l… the person… my… my girlfriend, refusing to leave. And then I wake up, and the first thing I see is blood, and my girlfriend next to me, unconscious, not moving, and… and, and - for God's *sake* !"

Ginny now felt awful. She bit her lip. "Sorry…" she mumbled.

"You *idiot* ," Tom sighed, and then he pulled her into a hug, resting his chin on her shoulder.

"That's me," Ginny agreed softly, resting her temple against the side of his strong jaw.

There was a silence – peaceful – and Ginny felt that it would be bad to break it, but she was curious.

"Tom, it's not usually like that, is it?" she asked gently. She guessed this, because he hadn't cut his arm with a knife – or hers.

He twisted his head sideways to look intently at her. "No," he murmured, after a long a pause.

"Why not? Why was that different?"

His expression was bleak and he tore his eyes from hers. When he finally replied, it was hard to hear. "Because I resisted."

Ginny leaned back into him. Did he just give in, all of the other times? When he felt the agony of his ex-brother rising inside him, did he simply stagger to the Chamber of Secrets and then let go?

"Why didn't you resist before?"

"You ask too many questions."

She turned to look seriously at Tom. "Why didn't you resist before?" she repeated, setting a pause between each word to stress the inquiry, to make sure that he answered this time.

Tom released a short breath and quietly tangled his fingers with hers, turning her hand over and observing it carefully. "Because before, I didn't have anything that I needed to protect."

Ginny's heart swelled. "Protect?" she whispered. She recalled his furious, hissed words earlier: *don't hurt her. Don't you dare hurt her.*

Tom didn't answer. He pulled her closer, holding her comfortably in his arms. They sighed as one, simultaneously, closing their eyes, intertwined hands, and silently both wondered what the hell was going to happen to them.

A/N: Aww. How sad. But sweet. But slightly weird. Sorry that this has sort of gone all supernatural now. Oh well. At least I didn't make him a vampire. :) Please review.

Next Time:

I wonder what ole' Dippet wants with me now, she mused as she continued down the corridor to the secret corridor that would lead her very close to the Headmaster's office.

"You don't understand, do you?" said Professor Dippet wearily. The way that he said it, it wasn't even a question. He began to explain.

Ginny's mouth fell open.

P is for Parchment Metaphors

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: I'm sorry that it's getting so cliché now… sorry… YAY! REVIEWS! Hehe. Almost as good as chocolate. I have some chocolate right now. C'est tres yummeh.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-One: P is for Parchment Metaphors

She turned to look seriously at Tom. "Why didn't you resist before?" she repeated, setting a pause between each word to stress the inquiry, to make sure that he answered this time.

Tom released a short breath and quietly tangled his fingers with hers, turning her hand over and observing it carefully. "Because before, I didn't have anything that I needed to protect." They sighed as one, simultaneously, closing their eyes, intertwined hands, and silently both wondered what the hell was going to happen to them.

"Can I ask you a question?" Grace asked as she and Ginny climbed the stairs to the Astronomy Tower on March the tenth, 1959.

"Er, as long as it has nothing to do with the homework, which I'm not letting you copy, by the way, then sure." Ginny shrugged. "Shoot."

"Where were you yesterday?"

Ginny made a face inwardly. Oops.

"I collected your homework – whoop-de-doo for you, I guess– but where the hell were you, anyway?" Grace enquired, frowning.

"Um." Ginny waved a hand vaguely. "You know."

Grace raised an eyebrow at the redhead.

"I didn't feel well," Ginny lied hastily. "Now can we drop it?"

"If you didn't feel well, why did you run away like you were on fire or something like that?" Grace probed further.

Ginny gave a huff of annoyance. "Okay, Grace, imagine this: you are a dog. This topic is a toy-ball. You are a well-behaved dog, so when I tell you to, you *drop it* ."

"Huh." Grace nodded. "Cool anamoly."

Ginny rolled her eyes, and set up a little roleplay where she didn't know the weird tall girl who was following her to class. She was being stalked. She did *not* know her.

They lined up outside Astronomy, and, when given the 'okay' from Professor Rowney, a small, mousey-haired man who had replaced Vander as the Head of Hufflepuff, entered the classroom (well, Grace fell into the classroom, as she tripped over her own feet on the way in).

The two female Slytherins selected seats quite near the front, as they both loved Astronomy ("MOON GEEKS!" they sometimes yelled and high-fived each other), and began to get their books out.

"Alright, get your things ready, we'll be taking notes on the formation of the Ariel satellite every twelve years," Rowney told them, drawing his wand, and, with a flick, creating words to appear on the blackboard that gave them instructions.

Page two-eight-seven… chapter nine…

Ginny flipped her textbook open to the according page and began to scrawl down line after line of untidy Astronomy notes. She could always write it out more neatly later, if she needed to revise or something.

As she was turning to the third page of notes to copy down, there was a tapping on the door. Ginny didn't really pay attention to it; she glanced up, saw nothing of interest, and continued boredly writing her classwork. Professor Rowney stood, and crossed to the door. He opened it, and in flew a paper bird, who flitted through the air and landed neatly in the Astronomy teacher's thin hands. Ginny looked up again as Rowney was unfolding the little parchment creature, and watched his face carefully for give-away emotions as his sharp grey eyes read whatever was written upon it.

He looked up at the class. "Miss Peregrine," he called. "Miss Peregrine, if you could go to Professor Dippet's office, please, that would be appreciated. Pack up your things – no! Wait, write down your homework…"

Ginny grabbed a quill, and scrawled the words: *TWELVE INCH ESSAY ON ARIEL FORMATION DUE THURSDAY* on the back of her hand, before chucking her school stuff into her bag and slinging in over her shoulder.

"Righty-ho," she said. "To Dippet's office."

She gave a jaunty wave to the rest of her staring, scowling classmates, and then swung around the doorframe, through the door, and promptly landed on her face on the other side.

What is it with that door?

She picked herself up, dusted her skirt off, and jogged down the stairs as though landing like toast-butter-side-down on the stone tiles was a perfectly normal everyday thing for her.

I wonder what ole' Dippet wants with me now, she mused as she continued down the corridor to the secret corridor that would lead her very close to the Headmaster's office.

" *Ancillary* ," she told the gargoyles. "Just let me in, okay? I got a message from the Head honcho himself. I dunno why, but I did. S'that good enough for you?"

The two stone monsters eyed her warily, but allowed a staircase to appear out of nowhere in the wall.

With a smug look over her shoulder at them, Ginny mounted the steps and ascended to see what trouble she was doomed for now.

"Hey," she called through the door at the top of the stairs as she rapped her knuckles upon it. "Er. It's me. Ginny Peregrine? You know, the cool one? Because, weirdly there is actually another Ginny at Hogwarts. I thought it was a really uncommon name, but apparently not because there's a third-year called Ginny Dulwey. But her name is short for Virginia, not Ginevra, so I guess it doesn't really count. *Any* way, the point is that I'm the cool one, the Slytherin, not the lame Hufflepuff – no offence if you were once a Hufflepuff, but… are you even *in* there?"

She pushed open the door and peered through; she was met with the sight of a bemused-looking Professor Dippet watching her from his desk.

"Oh, hi," she said. "Why didn't you answer?"

"I hardly had an opportunity," Dippet pointed out. "Have a seat."

Ginny obliged. She dropped into the chair opposite the Headmaster, and looked up expectantly at him. "So…" she drew out.

"Did you read the book I sent you for Christmas?" Dippet prompted.

"From cover to cover," Ginny lied.

"What was it called?" Dippet asked, raising his eyebrows.

"Er." Ginny racked her brain. " Time Travel At Its Finest ?" she guessed.

Dippet shook his head with a sigh. "No." He steepled his fingers and peered at her over the tips of them. "Let me give you an important point of time-travel that the book covers… when someone is sent back in time, they are sent with a task to achieve. And when that task is completed, they have no more purpose to remain in the time period that they were sent to."

Ginny frowned. She didn't understand what he meant or what he was getting at.

"Now, I don't know what your task was, or why you were sent here… but, apparently, it's finished," Dippet told her.

*Kill Tom? Er… I don't **think** so, dude.*

"I've been talking to the centaurs. They know a lot about the stars and everything like that. Great astrologists, as I'm sure you already know," Dippet said. "Now, I'll cut straight to the point. According to the centaurs… the planets have been, for quite some time, shifting ever so slightly out of their normal places. They didn't pay much heed to it, as every so often, these things happen, but they usually right themselves quickly enough. However, they didn't. The universes have steadily been pulling apart."

Ginny twisted her mouth into an expression that read: *and… what do you what **me** to do about it?*

"You don't understand, do you?" said Professor Dippet wearily. The way that he said it, it wasn't even a question.

"Um. No."

"Miss Peregrine, it means that an unnatural is twisting the very fabric of time – messing with the strands of space and creating a hole where no hole should be," said Dippet gravely.

Huh?

"It *means* ," said Dippet, clearly irritated with her total failure to grasp what he was getting at, "that your own time is pulling you back."

Not possible!

Not possible!

Simply *not bloody* ***possible*** *!*

Ginny tore through the Slytherin common; ran down the stairs to her dormitory; threw her schoolbag on the floor; and wrenched open her trunk. She ripped through it, desperately trying to find what she was looking for.

Aha .

She pulled out a small package, which she greedily ripped open. Two things fell into her hands. The first, a Time-Turner. The second, a piece of paper upon which she had written the prophecy.

Unfolding the parchment hastily, Ginny scanned the text and tried to see a glitch in her task that would send her home *without* killing Tom. Either that, or Dippet was more off his rocker than she'd previously thought.

When He rises up again,

It will signal the very end.

Of wizards, and Squibs, and Muggles alike,

All destroyed because of His spite.

But there is one to save the world,

And that is a terribly ordinary girl.

Blessed by her ignorance,

rescued by insolence.

Born the day that He first fell,

Growing up strong, and to rebel.

The youngest and fairest and purest of seven,

His number.

To free the world,

She destroys His heart

Else, should our world

Fall apart.

Beware the girl with the signature red,

To save the world, you must heed what I said.

She read the words silently; under her breath; and then aloud. No matter how she looked at it – in a mirror, upside down, with one eye shut – it didn't give her any help.

And then she noticed a line of the prophecy that she hadn't properly registered.

To free the world

She destroys His heart

Else, should our world

Fall apart

Destroy his heart… it wasn't *literal* ! She wasn't *supposed* to kill Tom… Of course. It was a bloody *metaphor* . It was emotions-wise. But what?

Break his heart?

Teach him love?

Get him a snog?

Ginny sank down, sitting desolately on the floor with a heavy thump. She realised only now how much she loved 1959. Their queer sayings… their eccentric but wonderful clothing… and the people. In the twenty-first century, they'd all be in their sixties. Some might even have died. And Tom.

Not Tom.

Lord Voldemort.

But then again, maybe if she went back, and she'd fixed things, then her family and friends would still be alive. Maybe Ron, and Hermione, and Luna… and Harry… maybe they'd still all be okay.

I could never see them the same way. I'd always be paranoid, that now I had them back, they'd only die again in front of me. Total fear at all times of abandonment. And then I'd have nothing. Zilch. Whereas here…

Ginny felt tears blur her eyes. She wanted to stay. She wanted to stay *so badly* . However, according to Dippet, that simply wasn't an option.

She gave a yell of frustration and hurled the Time-Turner across the room. It bounced off the wall, and landed, hard, on the floor, but

remained intact.

"Stupid Time-Turner!" she shouted at it. "I don't want to go back! I love it here! I *hate* you! I *hate* you I *hate* you *I HATE YOU* !"

The door opened.

"Um." Grace's head poked through the doorway; an alarmed and worried expression on her face. "What's going on?"

Ginny gave a low moan and slumped down next to her bed.

"Are you okay?" Grace asked, coming fully through the door and standing before the miserable redhead. "You look like someone just died. *Did* someone just die? Because then that would've been really insensitive of me. Was it your grandma? No, wait, your grandma's already dead. Sorry, that was insensitive too. What's wrong?"

Ginny hid her face in her hands. "I'm going," she muttered.

"What?" Grace said.

"I said, *I'm going* ," Ginny repeated, lifting her face to look up at her closest friend.

"Yeah, I heard what you said," Grace said. "It was more of *what the hell no way* 'what', as opposed to a *what was that I didn't hear you* 'what'. But… just... *why ?* Where *to ?* Are you coming back?"

"To those three questions, I answer 'don't know', 'don't know', and 'no'." Ginny stared sadly down at the floor. "I'm going to leave. And then I'll never see you again."

"But…" Grace stammered. "But…"

"And you can't tell anyone!" Ginny urged. Dippet had told her that she was to disappear without a trace. No-one must know, or they'd ask questions. "Not Flora… not even Alden. And," she added, reluctantly, " *especially* not Tom."

"Why not?" Grace frowned. "They'll want to say goodbye."

"It's… it's complicated," Ginny sighed. "Please, Grace. Please."

With tears welling in her blue eyes, the tall brunette agreed. "Okay… but only if *I* get to say goodbye," she compromised.

"I can't promise anything," said Ginny sadly. "I could… I could go at any time. Seriously."

Grace gave a whimper of a cry and hugged Ginny tight, wrapping her arms around her and snuffling down into her shoulder. "Please don't leave," she begged. "Apart from Alden and maybe Flora I guess, you're like… my best friend ever."

"I know… I'm sorry…" Ginny murmured. "I don't want to go any more than you want me to." In fact, she wanted to go even less. She wanted to *stay* . Wanted it so much that her heart hurt. And tears were in her eyes. She didn't know why she was crying, but the only image that came to mind was of a tall, dark-haired young man with his head bowed quietly.

Ginny and Grace had decided that they were going to live life to the fullest while the redhead was still around. And by living life to the fullest, they meant every extreme. Holding the painting of the Fat Lady hostage until they were paid a ransom of two pounds of Honeydukes (Ginny felt slightly guilty, as the Fat Lady was like an old friend to her). Bombing younger students with eggs from the roof of the Hog's Head. Cheeking Madam Crofton and seeing how many times you could chip into the conversation a discreet knock at her height before she noticed and threw you out of the library.

Life was good.

However, the guilt of seeing Tom – *knowing* that some time soon, she'd just be sucked away, and never see him again – was almost

unbearable. Some days, she was fine. Other days, she just hugged him and tried not to show how worthless she felt.

"So when are you going to leave?" asked Grace quietly, over two Butterbeers, a round table and a candlestick in the Three Broomsticks. They mostly avoided the topic, as though it were taboo, but sometimes it just came up.

Ginny rested the back of her head against her seat. "I don't know," she replied after a moment's thought.

Dippet had said that the universes were *being* pulled apart. That insinuated that the hole in time wasn't complete yet. She had some time left. She should have thought to ask him for how long had the centaurs been aware of the hole; that might've given her some idea as to how long it took for the hole to bigger… and how long she had left in what she truly knew as home.

"You don't *know* ?" Grace echoed. "So, what, are you just going to suddenly be sucked out of the corridor on your way to Potions or something?"

Probably.

"I *said* , I don't know," Ginny repeated firmly. "Do you remember what I said about the dog and the toy-ball?"

"Yeeesss," grumbled Grace. " *Drop it* , I know… I just…" she flailed a hand as her sentence trailed away. Then she picked up her Butterbeer, drank a large quantity of it, and then stared morosely into the bubbly golden liquid.

"Shall we go?" Ginny asked, seeing that staying in the Three Broomsticks was going to be a gloomy experience for both of them.

Grace nodded. "Yeah. My Butterbeer's mostly just froth now," she said, and duly poked her index finger into her drink. It came out covered in yellow-brown foam. "Let's roll."

"Roll, indeed," Ginny agreed, and, linking elbows, they marched out of the Three Broomsticks, leaving their money behind them to pay for their drinks. And as they chatted amiably about the weather and Quidditch and homework, both were wondering quietly if that conversation would be the last they ever had.

A/N: WAAAA. Sorry. The worstest, most clichést thing ever. Oh well. Take a guess at what crappy plot I have in mind… : Please review!

Next Time:

Then there was a rattling noise, and with a swirl of black smoke that was evidently a Boggart, a large floor-length mirror appeared. Ginny looked over in confusion at Tom; his face was screwed up in a wince, his eyes narrowed so that he didn't have to see it properly. He whirled his wand; red flew out; *bang* – and the mirror transformed-

"Secondly…" she looked up at him curiously. "The second thing that your Boggart turned into, I can understand… but why the mirror? I haven't been bothered by anything else that you've told me - does it look like I'm going to bothered by your phobia of mirrors or any explanation behind it?" Ginny said exasperatedly.

"Someone dropped a mirror on me when I was four years old," Tom replied coolly.

"Okay…" said Ginny, nodding. "Now tell me the truth."

P is for Phobia

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: YAY FOR PREDICTABLENESS! AND YAY FOR CLICHÉNESS! Thanks for all of the B-E-A-Yootiful reviews…. By the way, Morning-Sunset, thatanaphobia is a phobia of death… WHICH I HAVE! Yeah, not as cool as a phobia of mirrors but still. I have 900-something reviews! WOOOP! Anyway. ENJOY

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Two: P is for Phobia

" *Roll, indeed," Ginny agreed, and, linking elbows, they marched out of the Three Broomsticks, leaving their money behind them to pay for their drinks. And as they chatted amiably about the weather and Quidditch and homework, both were wondering quietly if that conversation would be the last they ever had.*

The Slytherin common room was quieter than usual. Everyone was at class except for the sixth- and seventh-years, who always had a free period just before lunch on a Tuesday. However, the seventh-years had the mocks for their NEWT exams, so the sixth-year Slytherins had basically taken over the common room.

"Hey, check it out," called Ilivan Yaxley, an obnoxious dark-skinned boy, from across the room. He pointed to leaflet on the notice-board that Ginny hadn't noticed before. "Apparation lessons are starting soon!"

There was an immediate scramble to see when the class dates were.

"Wow!"

"Aw, that's *ages* away!"

"Not really. It's only in April."

"I'm already seventeen, I should learn *now* , I think."

"Malfoy, no-one cares about your opinion."

"Shut it, Hartwin!"

" *Hey* ! Break it up!" Ginny yelled, standing between the two fighting Slytherins. "Immat *ure* sville?"

Grace grumbled. "He started it."

Ginny raised her eyebrow. *Actually, you did.* She kept quiet, and instead turned her attention back towards the Apparation notice. April the tenth. That was only a few weeks from now. She made a note to write it somewhere… on a calendar or something.

"I'm bored," declared Grace loudly, as the crowd of sixth-years was disintegrating, to return to their old places. "I want to spy on the NEWT people."

"Or we could always spy on the SALAMANDER people," said Ginny jokingly.

Grace stared at her. "Ginny. That was so unfunny that it's making my left eye burn."

"Screw you."

Ginny and Grace stood still for a moment, glaring at each other, before simultaneously heading for the door to spy on the seventh-years doing their NEWT mock-exams.

"Where are the Slytherins?" Ginny whispered to Grace as they crept down the examination corridor.

"Oh, *I* get it…" Grace whispered back, with a wink. "Slytherin seventh-years… of *course* you came along."

"Shut up," Ginny hissed, scowling.

Grace chuckled. "I'm so evil."

Ginny slapped her lightly on the arm. There came a crash from a nearby classroom. The two sixth-years scurried to the door and peered through.

A seventh-year called Electra Racquel was heading towards the door that the two sixth-years were hidden behind, followed by Devin calling through another doorway, "Next please – Mr. Riddle?"

Ginny squealed before she could stop herself. Then she clapped her hands over her mouth. Grace lapsed into silent roars of laughter. The redhead glared at her. " *Not a word* ," she hissed fiercely.

They ducked out of the way as Raquel came through and then moved back to the door. Cross with herself for squealing, Ginny stood on tiptoe to continue looking through the glass window.

Tom stood in the center of the room, standing tall and looking forwards coolly, seeming to not notice the audience of two clustered at the door. Then, so fast that Ginny thought that if she'd blinked, she'd have missed it, spells were firing out from all directions.

A blue shield – ducking - a green counter-curse – weaving - a yellow shield – spinning - an explosion of sparks – dodging – red streaks – like a strange, colourful dance –

Then it was over. And Tom stood in the same position he'd started in, not even bothered. Then it started again, and he was moving backwards, and sparks were colliding and ricocheting around the

room. Red, yellow, blue, green, white, purple, silver, pink, red again, and back to blue…

Stillness followed, and then various creatures were crawling across the floor, and the classroom had been transformed into something dark and dank and strange, where the animals were in their element and people weren't.

However, Ginny thought quietly to herself, *this isn't a normal person. This is someone who can disappear in the shadows when there are none. This is someone who can hide in an empty room. This is someone who can stand in a crowded corridor and not be seen by anyone. This is someone who would go on to invent spells, and, later, to rule the world. This is the Head Boy, the cleverest male in his year. This… is Tom Marvolo Riddle.*

She beamed. *This is my boyfriend.*

A Blast-Ended Skrewt was up-ended and a Dugbog was cast against the wall. An Acromantula's legs fell off, and a small dragon roared in pain. A cluster of Doxies exploded into silver glitter. A Red Cap was stunned and then thrown to the side. A Dementor whooshed from the darkness – and Ginny panicked.

He can't do Patronuses! He can't do Patronuses! He can't do Patr-!

Silver-white light burst out.

Ginny frowned.

A wild-cat had landed, and, had Tom been an animal, was doing what he would have been doing for the past seventeen years of his life – spine curved, claws out, ears flattened, and hissing *get the hell away from me* at the Dementor as though their was no tomorrow.

He can do a Patronus.?

It was both a question and a statement. She was confused.

Then there was a rattling noise, and with a swirl of black smoke that was evidently a Boggart, a large floor-length mirror appeared.

Ginny looked over in confusion at Tom; his face was screwed up in a wince, his eyes narrowed so that he didn't have to see it properly. He whirled his wand; red flew out; *bang* – and the mirror transformed-

Come on, you can do it…!

Ginny's eyes flashed back to the Boggart.

And then back to Tom.

And then back to the Boggart.

Huh?

There was a Tom whose face held a mixture of a wince and a glare… and another Tom, whose head was slightly tilted to the left in his famous sarcastic-arrogant-disbelieving look, and smirking, lips twisted into the cruellest of smiles. There was something about the second Tom's cold face that wasn't quite human-

Grace snorted.

Ginny looked over at her. "What?"

"Nothing." Grace straightened her face into a solemn look. Then laughed again.

" *What* ?" Ginny demanded.

"Come on, your boyfriend's scared of his reflection," said Grace, laughing. Ginny didn't answer. She stared with narrowed eyes at her brunette friend. "I mean, seriousl- … okay, shutting up now."

Bang . The second Tom disappeared, and so did the dark, frightening landscape around him.

"Well done, Mr. Riddle. Next – Ms. Sullivan!" Devin called.

"Meh. I suppose you're going to ditch me, then, for him?" Grace suggested as the Head Boy moved towards the door where they stood.

Ginny put a finger to her chin and considered it. "Mm… yeah."

Grace huffed and rolled her eyes. "Whatever. I'm going to try and distract Harold Tanner when it's his turn so that he fails. He threw a bagel at me last week. See you later."

"Okay," Ginny agreed, deciding not to question the other sixth-year's reasoning. The door opened. "Hello!" she said brightly.

Tom frowned. "Why are you behind a door?"

"Because me and Grace were spying on you," replied Ginny cheerfully.

Tom looked over at Grace; she beamed and waved at him. He turned back to Ginny. "Thanks," he muttered sarcastically, and began to walk away.

Ginny hurried after him. "Hey, are you okay?" she asked. "I mean, I know you must be kind of pissed that me and Grace were watching your mocks, but it doesn't matter because you were really good!"

He gave the smallest twitch of his shoulder – a Tom-Riddle shrug. Didn't answer.

The red-haired Prefect studied what little of his face she could see from her height. She pieced things together, and guessed the last few pieces. "It was just a Boggart," she said softly.

Instantly, he gave her a sharp look, his jaw tightening. "I know that," he said stiffly, but he looked away, back down the corridor, and continued walking.

Ginny tried to fall into step with him, but his legs were too long, and she ended up doing a funny shuffle-hop in order to keep up. "So," she said. "Two things. Firstly, you're being very stubborn about the fact that someone else saw that you can, in fact, be scared of things-"

Tom stopped dead and stared at her. *Jackpot* .

"-and," she blundered ahead regardless of the look he was giving her, "secondly…" she looked up at him curiously. "The second thing that your Boggart turned into, I can understand… but why the mirror?"

He didn't respond. He kept walking.

"I haven't been bothered by anything else that you've told me - does it look like I'm going to bothered by your phobia of mirrors or any explanation behind it?" Ginny said exasperatedly.

"Someone dropped a mirror on me when I was four years old," Tom replied coolly.

"Okay…" said Ginny, nodding. "Now tell me the truth."

Tom glanced down at her and saw the obstinate expression in her hazel eyes. He gave a short exhalation that was close to a sigh, and asked, "Do you have a mirror with you?"

"Er." Ginny looked around, and quickly tore the mouthpiece off of a nearby suit of armour. "I do now."

The young Heir of Slytherin looked around warily before moving into a more secluded corridor. Then, noticeable uneasiness glinting in his eyes, he held the mouthpiece across from his face and tilted it so that Ginny could see his reflection.

She jumped.

It was Tom… but it wasn't. The eyes were solid black, with no pupils or irises, and rimmed with red. The face was almost solid white, waxen and blurry, like someone had smeared a crayon drawing. The hair was pitch-black, straight (unlike the real Tom's wavy tresses) and hanging into his face. And the not-Tom smirked, with the expression of a lion watching a deer squirm under its paw.

And it spoke.

" *Look at me* ," he-it-not-Tom purred.

Ginny glanced up at Tom and saw that he was staring determinedly at the wall to his left, an expression on his face as though he was trying not to be sick.

" *Look at me, damnit* ," his brother, Marvolo, snarled. " *You have to!* "

The mouthpiece of the suit of armour was starting to shake violently – not the mouthpiece, Ginny realised, but the hands of the person holding it. In one fluid movement, she swiped the curved piece of metal out of his fingers – it soared across the corridor and smashed against the brick wall on the other side.

Tom stared after it. "You're going to get in trouble for vandalising school property, you know," he said quietly.

"Oh well," responded Ginny cheerily. "Come on, then. Where are you headed next?"

"Nowhere. I'm just going back to my dormitory, I suppose."

Memory flashed back to her. "You have a mirror in your bedroom, though."

"Ninety-nine percent of that mirror's life is spent under a sheet so that I never have to look at it," said Tom coolly in reply. "The other one percent is when I think I absolutely must use it, in which case it

is bewitched to temporarily shield it from any unknown presence before the sheet even comes off."

"Oh." Ginny understood. "Hm. Interesting."

"What's interesting?" asked Tom.

"Well, *I* always thought that to maintain that ever-present devilish charm and debonair, you'd have to practice it nightly in front of the mirror," said Ginny.

Tom lifted an eyebrow. "Devilish charm?"

"And debonair," Ginny added. She shrugged. "I guess it just comes naturally."

"That it does," said Tom, smirking. A nice smirk, though. Not the evil kind that the parasite gave.

Ginny's jaw dropped. "Was – was – was that a *joke* ?" she gasped. "From the legendary Tom Riddle?"

"Am I legendary?"

"Indeed you are, Monsieur."

They linked hands and walked off into the distance.

A/N: Those last three lines were really weird… yeah… sorry that is so unpredictable now… and sorry that I'm not review-replying. It's just that I can't be bothered… I know that it sounds mean… but I'm so busy… I mean, my summer holidays just started! :O Honestly. MEH, I'm sorry though. I *am* writing a sequel, yarm, about Ginny though… and I won't say anything more about it… but I'm having writer's block, so it's kind of stuck. I have about three chapters typed up for what's going to happen in the middle… and then nothing else. It doesn't really have much of a plot yet… but I am writing something

else! It doesn't have a title yet… and it's not an FF. It's an original. :D About vampires. Yay. I love supernatural-y stuff. Mm. I'm on a chocolate-high. Does anyone here read Twilight? I'm so obsessed with it… rawr. EdwardxBella reminds me of my version of TomxGinny… I love them so much… and I just got Eclispe today! YAY! Because I need to read Eclipse before Breaking Dawn comes out… yeah, I'm slow… sorry, I'm rambling. This is a *long* author's note. If you read this far, get a cyber-cookie, and tell me in a review that you got one. And then I'll know who cares enough to read my author notes… OH, my school-house won the Sport's Day thing… and I came second in 1500m, which is something to be proud of, because I can't run very far for very long… yay… I'm sort of musical-y now… learning to play a Kina Grannis song on guitar… beautiful, beautiful song. Search her on Youtube. Massive inspiration for stories. There are songs that describes my characters so nicely. Can't remember which they are right now… will try to remember… probably won't. OMG I watched this creepy music video… anyway, I'll probably get told off for writing all this… by FF or something… so I'll stop NOW.

BUT THERE'S MORE! Hehe. I forgot to say this: PLEASE REVIEW. :D

And this: thanks massively to the TV show series *Heroes* , as Nikki sort of inspired the idea of Tom having an alter-ego.

Next Time:

"Get off," Alden grumbled, pushing her away.

Ginny pouted. "Now who's being the mean one?" she complained. "I've professed my love for you and been rejected. Now what?"

There was a shallow breeze behind Ginny, and Grace pointed over her shoulder. "I don't know – maybe try coddling your *boyfriend* instead?" she said sarcastically.

Ooh, UnreasonablyJealous!Tom comin' up…

P is for Pink Rabbits

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: ZOMG! There's a Henrietta Branford Writing Competition for the UK and I entered and I WON! I WON! It's fan-freakin'-tastic! YAYYYYY! … Aaanyway. SO MANY REVIEWS! I opened my email, and was like "whoa". I had 95 unread messages! And about half of them were revies. I love you all so much!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Three: P is for Pink Rabbits

It was Tom… but it wasn't. The eyes were solid black, with no pupils or irises, and rimmed with red. The face was almost solid white, waxen and blurry, like someone had smeared a crayon drawing. The hair was pitch-black, straight (unlike the real Tom's wavy tresses) and hanging into his face. And the not-Tom smirked, with the expression of a lion watching a deer squirm under its paw.

They linked hands and walked off into the distance.

If you were to stand in the Entrance Hall at approximately ten in the morning on April the first, 1959, you would *most probably* have been ambushed by two very large pink rabbits.

A small first-year with blonde hair in pigtails was making her way towards the Great Hall for breakfast. Her eyes were blue and wide. She had a badge on her robes that told anyone who saw it that she was in Gryffindor. She was alone.

"RAWRR!"

Two pink rabbits leapt out from behind a pole; one fell over and landed on its face with a loud, "Ow."

The first-year screamed.

"We will kill you in your sleep. We know where your family lives. We know your secrets. *And we know how many teeth you have* !" roared the rabbit that was still standing.

The first-year screamed again.

"Geez, you scream loud," said the second bunny.

The first-year screamed.

"Can you stop it?" asked the second rabbit irritably.

The first-year screamed.

"Please – *shut up* !" said the second rabbit.

The first-year screamed.

"Why, you little-" snapped the second rabbit, reaching for the first-year's throat menacingly with her large pink fluffy paws.

The first-year gave one last scream before fainting.

" *Thank* you," said the second rabbit, dusting off her paws as though pleased with herself.

"Dude. She might have been rabbitaphobic or something," said the first rabbit.

" *Rabbitaphobic* ," scoffed the second. She paused. "Well. I dunno." She poked the first-year with her foot. "What should we do now?"

"I say we dump her in the Lake."

" *Ginny* !"

"What? She's a Gryffindor!" the first rabbit protested.

There came a groan from behind them. "Oh *God* , please tell me you didn't go through with the stupid giant-rabbit April Fools' Day scheme," said Alden, coming into view and slapping his forehead with his palm.

"It was Grace's idea," said one rabbit, pointing at the other.

Alden stared at the first-year Gryffindor on the marble tiling. "… What did you *do* ?"

The second rabbit pulled off its head, revealing Grace Hartwin. "I did nothing."

The first also removed her head. "Liar."

"She wouldn't stop screaming," Grace protested, lifting her hands as though to say, *what was I supposed to do?*

Alden rolled his brown eyes. "I give up on you two," he muttered.

Ginny turned to Grace. "I actually don't remember what our original plan was."

"I do," said Grace, shocked at Ginny's blasphemy – not knowing the plan? Disgraceful. "On April Fools' Day, we dress up as massive Easter bunnies and shout 'Happy Thanksgiving' to whoever we see."

"Oh *yeah* …"

Again, Alden slapped his forehead.

"Why didn't you join in?" Ginny asked the short dark-haired boy, interrupting halfway through in order to bellow "OOGLY-BOOGLY AND A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!" at a group of passing Ravenclaws, who all muttered, " *crazy* ," to each other.

"Oh, I wonder," he replied sarcastically.

"Quick, here comes Eleanor," whispered Ginny, stuffing her head back into the rabbit mask, complete with shiny nose and long pink ears. "Let's get her."

"Indeed," said Grace, following suit.

They hid behind a column (they dragged Alden behind it as well, as a single Slytherin standing around would be suspicious) and waited with bated – and giggly – breath as Eleanor Fionn and her friends trotted down the steps to the Entrance Hall.

"One…" Ginny whispered. "Two… *three* !"

They jumped out, paws outstretched and waving in a sort of rabbit-jazz-hands.

"HAPPY KWANGIZING!" was what came out of their mouths – a combination of Ginny shouting 'thanksgiving' and Grace yelling 'kwanza'.

"When is kwanza?" asked Ginny.

"Not sure. I think it's in June," replied Grace.

"December," Alden corrected, sticking his head out from behind the marble column.

"Anyway…" said Grace. "RAWR!"

Eleanor and her companions burst out laughing. "Hey Ginny, hey Grace," they chuckled.

"How did you know it was us?" demanded Grace, tugging off her rabbit-head.

The Head Girl raised her eyebrows. "Who else dresses up as the mascot of the wrong holiday and shouts the greeting of *another*

wrong holiday?"

One of her friends piped up, "Actually, Sheila Muggins did that two years ago. Except that she was *totally* egged by the fifth-year boys, and she cried. And then she never did it again."

Ginny and Grace gave each other wary looks. Egged? They shrugged. Ah well. What was a little raw egg-yolk to ruin their fun?

"Is Tom coming down soon?" asked Ginny gleefully, being struck with a wonderful idea.

"Er, yeah," said Eleanor. "I heard him coming downstairs just before we left."

Ginny cackled maliciously, and leapt behind the column again, fixing her mask onto her head. "Shh," she hissed out at the Head Girl and company, "I'm not here."

"O *kay* …" giggled Eleanor, and she sashayed away.

Grace joined Ginny, and they reached out to grab Alden, but he was too far – they would have to run out – they heard muted footsteps – they saw long legs and a shabby cloak – *damn* ! – they ran behind the column again.

As they pressed themselves to the marble pole, the two sixth-years had great difficulty stifling their manic giggles.

Any minute now…

Ginny prepared to leap out –

"Philips," said a cool, flat voice. Tom acknowledged the existence of Grace and Alden now, but was far from friendly.

"Hey, Riddle," Alden replied. "How are you? And by the way, Ginny and Grace are behind the column in giant rabbit-suits."

" *ALDEN* !" the two Slytherin females complained, stepping out, tugging off their rabbit-heads and glaring at him.

"Rawrr?" Ginny tried half-heartedly, clawing at her tall, and bewildered boyfriend. "You spoilt it, Alden!" she turned on her friend. "MEHHH!" she whacked him soundly around the face.

"OUCH!" Alden yelped, jumping backwards. " *Jesus* , Ginny!"

"Nice," gasped Grace, staring between them.

"Oops." Ginny went red. "Didn't mean to do it that hard."

"That *hurt* !" Alden exclaimed.

"Don't be a baby," said Ginny crossly, but she put her arms around him and hugged him. "There, there, darling, I'm sorry." She patted his dark-haired head. "You know that I love you, right?" she cooed.

"Get off," Alden grumbled, pushing her away.

Ginny pouted. "Now who's being the mean one?" she complained. "I've professed my love for you and been rejected. Now what?"

There was a shallow breeze behind Ginny, and Grace pointed over her shoulder. "I don't know – maybe try coddling your *boyfriend* instead?" she said sarcastically.

Ginny turned, and realised that the breeze had been the swirl of Tom's cloak as he left. "Gah," she groaned. "My bad." She hit her forehead with the palm of her hand. "I'll meet you in the Great Hall, you two." Then she hurried away up the stairs.

"Hey!" she called after him down the corridor. "Hey, Tom! Come *back* !" she waddled after him. She could usually run quite fast, but she was wearing a massive rabbit-suit which was hot, stuffy, and difficult to manoeuvre in.

A group of second-years were staring.

"What're *you* looking at?" she snapped. "Toooom, *WAIT* !" she howled.

It was a very funny sight to have seen.

Finally the Head Boy slowed down a bit, but he didn't stop. "'Morning," he said icily, not looking at her, and swerving sideways to disappear through a painting.

"Hey, what's wrong?" asked Ginny, trotting awkwardly after him, having to squeeze her large rabbit-arse through the tunnel diagonally. "Tom, please slow down, I'm in a bloody rabbit-suit!"

"That is not *my* problem," said Tom coldly, "it's *yours* ."

"What if I get stuck?" she said sadly, struggling as the tunnel became more narrow. " *Toooom* ! Come back! I'm going to get *stuck* !"

"Get Philips to help you," were the words thrown glacially over his shoulder. "I don't care." And, in a lightning-strike of understanding, she realised what was wrong.

"Oh *God* , Tom, you're not *jealous* , are you?" she said exasperatedly, stopping from trying to follow the young Heir of Slytherin.

He stopped. "No," he said stiffly, and started walking again. She was right though, she knew it.

" *To-om* , he's my best friend," she told him wearily. "I'd never go out with him-"

"May I remind you that you did?"

"Okay, *firstly* , that was to make Grace jealous so that Alden and her would get together, *secondly* , that was only for a month anyway, and *thirdly* , HAH! You just proved that you're jealous," Ginny gloated.

Tom folded his arms and turned around to frown at her. "No, I didn't," he said. "And I'm not."

"You don't *have* to be," said Ginny. "I'm going out with you, aren't I? What more proof do you need that I fancy you and only you?" She swore that she saw him flinch when she said that final sentence, but she must have been imagining it.

He shifted awkwardly on his feet and muttered something incoherent.

"What?" she frowned.

He coloured faintly. "…I said… why?" he mumbled.

"Why?" said Ginny incredulously. "What do you mean *, why* ?"

"It's fairly simple!" Tom suddenly burst out – not shouting, as he hardly ever did. But his voice was raised and strained, as it often was when he was upset and trying to stay calm. "Just answer the bloody question! Why? *Why ?* Why *me* ? Look at you, for God's sake! You're smart and you play Quidditch and you're popular and you're brave and you're loyal and you don't care about other people's outside-shells because you can practically read their minds anyway and you're bloody *beautiful* , okay? You could have had anyone in this school. You could have even had a teacher, so help me God, if you'd decided that was who you'd set your sights on, but – but – you didn't. You – chose – *me* ."

Ginny raised her eyebrows. "Would you rather I went out with Professor Devin?" she asked.

"Stop it," Tom snapped. "Stop trying to make everything *funny* , I'm being serious!"

The redhead fell silent.

The only noise was the heavy breathing of the still-upset Head Boy, a few metres away in the gloom of the narrow tunnel.

She was at a loss of what to say. She was so used to being funny and stupid – she was in a *rabbit costume* – that she didn't really know what to do. In truth, what she was terrified of was being honest.

She took a deep breath. "You're tall," she said quietly.

Tom looked at her sharply, his hands in tight fists and his dark eyes flashing.

"You're… you're sort of comfortable to hug. You're mysterious. You're nice when you're not being evil. You're a challenge. You're not afraid to argue with me. You can be an arsehole. You can be the sweetest person on the planet. You write poetry just for me. You have funny hair that isn't quite curly and isn't quite straight. You have really dark eyes. You go pink when your embarrassed, but pretend that you're fine. You're a bit insecure. You have a fluffy jumper perfect for snuggling into. You have lots of cool books. You speak Parseltongue. You're the Heir of Slytherin. You have an evil side. You always smell sort of like ink. You have abnormally long fingers. You're pretty when you smile. You hardly ever smile. You're like a game – try and make Tom smile! And the prize? I get to see your smile. You're funny when you want to be. You ramble when you're nervous. You talk really formally when you're nervous, too. You hate using the word 'er' but it sometimes slips out. You like pears. You don't like chocolate much. You love Butterbeer, but you pretend that you don't. You're good at comforting me. You always listen, even when you're not interested. And then suddenly you *are* interested, and you don't butt in with stupid comments. You give me yellow flowers. You hold my hand when you think no-one's looking, but the world is watching and you don't even notice. You look like a ten-year-old when you're confused. You don't realise, but you have the damn cutest puppy-dog face that you don't know you have. After that eventful Prefect meeting, you went and rescued the beaver – I know because I saw it in your room in a position of importance on your bedside table. You're smart. You

can keep secrets. You trust me. You *like* me. You're the Head Boy. You're *you* . You're Tom Riddle."

There was a silence.

Ginny's heart was pounding. There. The truth. No jokes, no silly quips. No teasing. No interruptions. Just what she felt.

Tom was looking at the ground, a slightly stunned expression on his face. Then, after a few moments, all that he said nervously was: "The world was watching?"

"Mm-hm," said Ginny. "Just like they are now. Watching a confused Head Boy and an over-sized pink rabbit who's stuck in a secret tunnel."

His lips twisted into the faintest smile. "A rabbit and a beaver," he said coolly, stepping closer. "I think it goes nicely."

"Yeah…" Ginny shifted. "Don't you think it would go even better if I could move?" she nodded towards her rabbit-figure, tightly jammed between the two walls.

The dark-haired young man in front of her smirked. "Oh?" he said softly, stepping closer still, angling his head so that his face was inches from hers. "I think we're fine here."

Ginny grinned.

A/N: Aww, how sweet. I loved writing that "reasons why I like you" bit. Did anyone else pick up on *why* he got jealous? Yes, he's a bit of a dipstick who gets jealous easily, but he had a special reason this time… -gasp- Because she said "I love you" to Alden, even though it was just a joke, and Tom loves her, and she never said that to *him.* Aw. Sad. Anyway… yeah, the rabbit thing was really random. But so funny to write. I was sort of on a sugar-high when I wrote it… and I was inspired by this advert with a massive dancing rabbit on TV.

Hmm… only FOUR PEOPLE got a cyber cookie. Shameful, shameful. And I thought you loved me. Sniffle. Anyyyywaaay. Please review!

Next Time:

"Come with me," Ginny blurted out, before she even ran the words through her brain and thought about what they meant.

He stopped. And then he continued to walk again. And then he stopped again. And then he turned.

Or are you just scared that you're falling in too deep?

She blinked. Where had that thought come from? And, more importantly… who was it addressed to?

JUST FINISHED ECLIPSE. Whoa, I can't wait until Breaking Dawn comes out! It's so…. ARGH! Eddie and Bellie are getting MARRIED! WHOA!

P is for Pay No Attention

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Awww, I LOVE This chapter. It's so sweet, and also so sad… and sort of cliché. GAH! I need to get my own ideas… anyway. Um. I had something else to say… what was it… um… oh yeah! In here, it mentions Astronomy stuff – I've NEVER done Astronomy, okay? Or anything close to it. I made it all up, so don't chase me with pitchforks and telescopes, please.

NOTE: This chapter can be improved if you listen to **Bubbly** by **Colbie Caillat** while you read it. Or just anything sort of slow and fluffy.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Four: P is for Pay No Attention

" *It's fairly simple!" Tom suddenly burst out – not shouting, as he hardly ever did. But his voice was raised and strained, as it often was when he was upset and trying to stay calm. "Just answer the bloody question! Why?* ***Why*** *? Why* ***me*** *? Look at you, for God's sake! You're smart and you play Quidditch and you're popular and you're brave and you're loyal and you don't care about other people's outside-shells because you can practically read their minds anyway and you're bloody* ***beautiful*** *, okay? You could have had anyone in this school. You could have even had a teacher, so help me God, if you'd decided that was who you'd set your sights on, but – but – you didn't. You – chose –* ***me*** *."*

The dark-haired young man in front of her smirked. "Oh?" he said softly, stepping closer still, angling his head so that his face was

inches from hers. "I think we're fine here." Ginny grinned.

April was passing. And with every day, Ginny knew that she was twenty-four hours closer to leaving this world behind. How was she supposed to sit around and pretend that everything was okay? Just attend lessons… go to Hogsmeade… as if she was going to stay here forever. It was stupid. And it was painful.

She was sitting on the top of the steps into the Entrance Hall, watching as the others students slowly grew cold and filtered back into the castle… until only she was left, curled up under the glow of the setting sun.

It seemed impossible that *anything* could last forever in balanced serenity, never-changing, always identical to the last time you saw it… and yet, the sun was living proof. Each time it rose, you could count on it. It would be round and orange and warm and happy. It wouldn't one day rise missing a piece, or a different colour.

And as she looked at it, hanging in the darkening sky and spreading its dying rays, with tears glowing in her eyes, she knew that she wanted to hold onto this moment forever.

The redhead leapt to her feet and ran towards her dormitory. She barrelled past people, skidded to a halt beside her bed, ripped her blankets off, and sprinted up back to the grounds.

She was through the grand wooden doors, barely five minutes before curfew, five minutes before those doors would close and lock and-

"Where are you going at this time of night?"

Ginny froze. Then, biting her lip at being caught, spun to face him. "Um."

Tom raised an eyebrow. "With blankets, no less."

Nervously fidgeting with the frayed hem of her quilt, she mumbled, "I want to sleep under the stars-" She hastily cut off the rest of the sentence: *while I still have the chance* .

"Right," said the Head Boy, folding his arms. "And, you're going to pay no attention to safety or security or the fact that paedophiles and prisoners might get into the Hogwarts grounds and attack you… because *you* want to sleep under the stars."

Ginny scowled. "I can look after myself."

" *I* know you can," said Tom. "However, in Dippet's eyes, every student has the mental capacity and maturity of a ten-year-old, and must be coddled and looked after at all times."

"But-"

"Just… do what you like," Tom interrupted. "I'm not really bothered. Sleep outside if must. I'll see you tomorrow." He gave her a short nod, and a quirk of the lips that was a slight smile, and then turned to head back indoors.

"Come with me," Ginny blurted out, before she even ran the words through her brain and thought about what they meant.

He stopped. And then he continued to walk again. And then he stopped again. And then he turned.

There was a funny expression on his face. It was a sort of mingled disbelief… and something else. That something else that Ginny saw more often than not.

Her heart was pounding in her chest.

What the hell did I just say?

"Please," she tried.

Reluctance flashed in his eyes. "I… I don't want to get in trouble," he said.

Or are you just scared that you're falling in too deep?

She blinked. Where had that thought come from? And, more importantly… who was it addressed to?

"Neither do I," said Ginny.

Tom frowned. "You're not making any sense," he told her.

She smiled. "I know."

He looked stubborn as ever. He wasn't going to do it. He was just going to walk away and-

"If we caught, I'm blaming you," Tom told her, and, with a last wary glance into the Hall, closed the doors. Then he looked back down into her face and gave her an eyebrow-raised look of *well? Now what?*

She didn't remember how or why, but suddenly they were hand in hand, and they were spinning, and they were dancing, and she was lost in his arms, and then they were sitting on the quilt under the willow tree, looking up at the stars.

The sky was a dark blanket, seamless and creaseless, smooth as though it had been ironed, and then silver sequins sparkled of different sizes and different angles. The moon was the button, white as snow and glowing as though tonight was the moon's night, and it wasn't just the two people underneath the willow tree who were ecstatically happy.

"Do you do Astronomy?" Ginny asked suddenly.

"No," replied Tom smoothly. "I have never done it, and never will."

"Why not?" she twisted sideways to look at him.

"It is," he said slowly, drawing the words out, "a stupid subject."

"No, it's not!" Ginny protested.

"Prove it," said Tom, and from the little light that the moon gave, she could see amusement in his pale features.

"It's really interesting," she informed him. "See that star there? That's called Ariel."

Tom dropped his head onto her shoulder and pretended to be asleep.

"Hey!" Ginny elbowed him in the ribs. "You've at least got to pay attention, you berk."

"Ow," he grumbled. "Yes, yes, Ariel, stars, got it."

"It symbolises good luck and wealth… it makes a formation with six other stars that looks like a big shoe. Or at least, I think so. Professor Rowney says that it looks like a spade, but it's a bit of a weirdly-shaped spade if it is… and it can only be seen once every two-hundred years," Ginny finished.

"Hm. So this is the one and only time we'll ever see it," mused Tom.

"Well, unless you live to be two-hundred-and-seventeen, then yeah, basically," Ginny said softly.

"I might," said Tom, and stretched his mouth in a yawn.

"And we could the longest-standing relationship that the world has ever seen," Ginny said with a smile.

Tom looked at her, his eyes glowing again with that emotion that Ginny couldn't place, as well as a sort of hopeful pride. "Would you stay with me for long?" he asked quietly.

She hadn't thought of it that way.

She curled both of her arms around one of his and rested her head on his shoulder. "Definitely." As the word settled in the air, from her position on Tom's shoulder, she felt him sigh, his breath rushing out next to the top of her head, ruffling her fringe.

Despite the serenity of the moment they shared, curiosity was building up inside Ginny, like a builder piling up mortar and bricks. "Tom?" She twisted around to face him, looking up slightly into his face.

"Yes?"

She felt slightly awkward and mean for wanting to mention Tom's misfortune, but her interest propelled her forwards. "Sorry for bringing it up… but… why does it happen?"

A frown creased between his dark eyebrows.

"No, wait, hang on. I didn't phrase that right." She pondered for the right wording. "I meant… like sometimes… like, *now* , you're fine. And then, a few weeks ago…" She trailed off, hoping he understood.

Tom was still frowning. He didn't look very comfortable with discussing this. "Well…" He seemed to struggling for words. "I worked out that… it's – it's…" He drew in a deep breath. "Emotions. I think."

Ginny tried to imagine how that would work. She couldn't. "I don't get it," she admitted.

He was silent for a moment. Then, very quietly: "If I'm angry, or upset, then it's easier, for… for… it to happen."

A rush of understanding flooded through the redhead next to him. Tom was like an impassive statue. He always hid his feelings. He didn't open up to anyone because it made him fragile. It made him vulnerable. He wasn't aloof and distant because he wanted to be – though, she suspected, that was probably seventy percent of the

reason, but at least twenty-five percent of the reason why he pretended to hate everyone was because of this susceptibility.

"A few weeks ago… what happened then?"

Tom tensed. "Yaxley."

"What about him?"

His reluctance was casting his eyes downward, not letting him meet her gaze. "Nothing."

"Tell me."

"No."

" *Tom* …" she said threateningly, "whatever trouble Yaxley may be in for what he said will be *nothing* compared to what I'll do to you if you don't tell me."

"He… he called you a Mudblood. He also said… he said that I was little better, and least we could only contaminate each other."

Ginny's face darkened like a sudden storm-cloud. That arrogant idiot, Ilivan Yaxley… Why, she'd like to… She was finding that breathing evenly was becoming difficult. "Right," she fumed. "Right. *Right* . Come on, Tom."

He blinked at her. "What? What's happening?"

She sat up. "We're going to murder him. The whole castle's asleep. No-one will find out." Her tone was murderously furious.

"Ginevra, calm down."

"No! Did you hear?"

"Yes, because I was the one who just *told* you, Ginevra."

"I'm going to *kill* him! Filthy, stupid pureblood with his *beautiful* , untainted blood!" She realised with some shock, that, until recently, she had been one of them. This only fuelled her anger. "Come on, Tom!"

"Calm *down* !"

"What's your problem? You've killed people befo-"

She froze solid before the words had even come out of her mouth. She hadn't even completed her sentence when Tom had flinched back, away from her, and she realised what she'd said.

Her eyes widened in horror. "I'm so sorry," she whispered.

From a distance away, Tom looked at her through his fringe of thick hair. For the briefest second, hurt echoed like a foghorn in his intense eyes, then it disappeared and she could read nothing in his face. He didn't speak. His lips were pressed into a very thin line.

"I'm sorry…" She swallowed. "That was totally out of line, I'm sorry. That was stupid. I'm just… a bit emotional."

Ever since Dippet had informed her of her present-time trying to drag her back, she'd been sensitive and ridiculously emotional about everything. The tiniest sarcastic remark would make her explode, or a single similar remark would make her burst into tears. It was humiliating, and she hated it.

For a while, there was nothing. Then, very quietly, Tom said, "It's fine." His words were strained.

She didn't dare to ask more. She was curious, but she couldn't run the risk of saying something horrible again.

You can do it. It's alright.

After a moment of self-encouragement, she plucked up the courage to ask. "Why doesn't it happen so often now?" Her words were soft,

but he heard them.

He sighed, and dropped back into his original seat, right up next to Ginny. "I'd have thought that would have been obvious," he mumbled, closing his eyes.

Ginny said nothing. She hoped that her silence conveyed the message of ' *yeah, well, it's not obvious to me, so out with it* ' as she had intended, as she was still too hesitant that she might offend him again.

"It's because I'm… happy," he said tentatively, as though he was trying out the word, not quite sure if it was the one he was looking for. "It's… it's because you're here."

Her eyes were filling with tears of joy and affection. "Oh," she breathed, and then she just flung her arms around the Head Boy, burying her head into his shoulder.

They lay there like that, cuddled together under the stars in silence. It was a few minutes before Ginny realised that he wasn't breathing weirdly, as she had originally thought… he was talking very quietly. And as she tuned carefully into what he was saying… he wasn't even talking. He was singing under his breath.

"I would join in, but firstly I don't know the song, and secondly, my singing is best compared to that of a cat being stood on by someone in spiked football-boots," she said.

He abruptly stopped. "Sorry."

"No, it's nice."

"It's strange having someone who knows what football is," said Tom softly.

Ginny chuckled. "It's strange having so *many* people who *don't* know what football is."

"I keep forgetting that this is only your first year here," said Tom with the smallest of laughs.

And my last.

"Fit in that well, do I?" Ginny quipped.

Tom didn't answer. She looked up to see if he was okay, and saw that he was fine… he was just watching her, almost sadly, yet the happiest sadness that she'd ever seen. It was weird and complicated and yet so simple. When he saw that she'd noticed, he looked away.

"You know, you don't have to pretend that you don't think I'm pretty," Ginny teased.

But, with a serious look in his eyes, and pink on his cheeks, he said quickly, "You're not pretty, you're so much than even beautiful." Then he gained that familiar look of thinking he'd done the wrong thing, like an awkward nine-year-old boy trying to hand over a box of Love-Heart candies to his crush, instead of a seventeen-year-old young man.

She didn't really have anything to reply with. What was she supposed to say? *Thanks* ? *Nah, I'm not* ? *That was corny* ? She wasn't really the type of person who dealt with ridiculously romantic situations very often.

Deciding that her safest option was to not say anything, the seventeen-year-old red-haired Prefect moved closer to her beau, curling her arms around him comfortably. She was surprised but pleased when he plucked up the courage to shyly hold her around the waist, the majority of his arm resting softly on her stomach, his chin leaning against the top of her fluffy-haired head.

"Goodnight," she said gently, closing her eyes and floating towards that inner peace that was slumber.

"Goodnight," whispered Tom in reply. And he didn't cut off the word 'good'.

A/N: AWWWWWW. I don't really have much to say here. Um. I'm listening to Colbie Caillat on repeat… yay me. SUMMER HOLIDAYS! I'm trying to finish posting the WHOLE story before I go away… which probably won't work… because there's still a few to go… but yeah. I'm trying, 'kay? NEARLY FINISHED. But really… not at all. Anwho. REVIEW!

Next Time:

PAIN.

Ginny sat bolt upright. Gasps wrenched from her mouth like puffs of smoke from a steam-train. Agony was coursing through her chest, like something was ripping her heart in half. She looked around at the dormitory. Silent. Sleeping. She looked across at the clock. Ticking, it quietly spoke of five minutes past two in the morning. She squeezed her hazel eyes closed. It was actually excruciating. And she knew exactly what it was, somehow, without the slightest edge of doubt to blur any thoughts. The hole in time was big enough now. She was going to leave.

Q: What's red and shaped like a spade?

A: A red spade!

P is for Pain

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: This chapter's kind of short… and very sad… oh well. Listen to a sad song or something. Um… I cried. That's a warning. If you're an emotional sap like me, have some tissues handy. Or something. Anyway. Thank you so much for the reviews! NEARLY THOUSAND! Yayy! WAAAA. It makes me so sad. It's a sort of… omg-gasp chapter. You'll see. –sob-

I recommend **Stay Just A Little** by **Kina Grannis** .

IMPORTANT NOTE!! I'm thinking of changing the title. Because the sequel's title has to match, and nothing match-y fits with The Letter P. And don't suggest 'The Letter (blank)'. Any suggestions?

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Five: P is for Pain

Deciding that her safest option was to not say anything, the seventeen-year-old red-haired Prefect moved closer to her beau, curling her arms around him comfortably. She was surprised but pleased when he plucked up the courage to shyly hold her around the waist, the majority of his arm resting softly on her stomach, his chin leaning against the top of her fluffy-haired head.

" *Goodnight," she said gently, closing her eyes and floating towards that inner peace that was slumber.*

" *Goodnight," whispered Tom in reply. And he didn't cut off the word 'good'.*

PAIN.

Ginny sat bolt upright. Gasps wrenched from her mouth like puffs of smoke from a steam-train. Agony was coursing through her chest, like something was ripping her heart in half. She looked around at the dormitory. Silent. Sleeping. She looked across at the clock. Ticking, it quietly spoke of five minutes past two in the morning.

She squeezed her hazel eyes closed. It was actually excruciating. And she knew exactly what it was, somehow, without the slightest edge of doubt to any thoughts. The hole in time was big enough now. She was going to leave. She was going…

Home?

No, she realised. Because this was her home. 1959 Hogwarts. With her friends – goofy Grace, and studious Alden, and cheeky Eleanor, and gossipy but sweet Flora. With her enemies – Claude, Malfoy, Scott, Vegrandis. She probably had more enemies than friends. And then… Tom. Tom Marvolo Riddle. The insensitive arsehole who made her heart swell twice its normal size and beat three times faster.

Home. Home was definitely not the twenty-first century, not the old, war-torn Hogwarts where she had seen her life collapse around her. Not where Harry had fallen, and where Hermione had been mutilated, and where Ron had been tortured before disappearing forever, and finding his body in the words, mangled and bearing signs of werewolf attack. Not where Luna had been cursed to the point of haemorrhaging.

Fiercely telling herself that if she cried, she'd get a good slap around the face, Ginny untangled herself from her blankets and padded near-silently across to her trunk, where she burrowed about for her things.

She returned to her bed, and sat cross-legged. There she dipped her quill into the black ink and began to scrawl her handwriting across it,

as tidily as possible, though her hand was shaking.

Dear Tom,

She paused. She told herself again that if she cried, she'd get-

She cried anyway. Without being able to help herself, tears welled up in her eyes and fell almost in slow-motion, blotting the parchment and smearing the 'de' of the word 'dear'. Still she continued, and then, as the clock ticked on and her companions snored amiably, not knowing that one of their room-mates was preparing to disappear from their midst.

The last letter of her name was curved onto the paper, and she neatly folded it, before slipping it into a cream-coloured envelope. On the front of the envelope she wrote *Tom* again, and then tucked it closed.

" *Oh* ," she cried, and then grabbed her pillow, burying her face in it so that she couldn't be seen, and trying hopelessly to restrain great, hiccoughing sobs.

Quilts crinkled. Someone in the bed next to Ginny sat up. "Ginny?" Grace whispered. "Ginny, is that you?"

The Prefect didn't answer.

Grace clambered out of bed and sleepily stumbled across to her friend. Her messy brown curls were sticking up in all directions, and she'd clearly forgotten to wipe off her eyeliner the night before, as she was making a stunning impression of a panda just by standing still. She sat on Ginny's bed and wound her arms around the skinny redhead.

"What's wrong?" she whispered.

"I…" Ginny choked out, lifting her face from the pillow. "I… today." She swallowed hard. "Today. I'm going today. I know it."

Grace's bleary eyes widened and focused. "What?" she seemed to struggle for words. "How do you know?"

"It hurts…" sobbed Ginny, curling into Grace's arms. "Don't tell Alden. Don't tell Flora. Don't tell anyone. Please."

"Ginny, you're going to never see any of these people again! You could just…" Grace tried, but trailed off.

"Please," Ginny whispered, tears glistening on her pale, freckled cheeks.

Reluctantly, the brunette Slytherin agreed. "Okay," she said. "Okay. I won't." She awkwardly patted Ginny on the back, trying to make her feel better, and decrease the volume of hiccoughs. "You just cry, 'kay, Ginny? I can be brave enough for the both of us this once."

Ginny felt a rush of affection for Grace, and cried even harder.

The girl had a big smile. Her light brown hair was in untidy waves, as if the tresses could not decide whether to be curly or straight, and from under a fringe sparkled blue eyes. "I'm Grace Hartwin," she replied. "Where did you transfer from?"

Immediately, there, standing right in front of her, was a boy. With a Head Boy badge gleaming on his chest. That meant that he was Head Boy. And that meant that he was Tom Riddle. And that meant that he was Voldemort. Her breath stopped in her chest, and her heart skipped several beats as she stared up at him in fear. He was the one who'd haunted her childhood nightmares, though he had always, in dreams, had crimson eyes and vampire-like teeth. Now he was before her, living and breathing and very real.

" *I don't!" chirped Grace, flinging her arms out and twirling in a circle. "I hope it gets colder and colder and colder until it snows, and then we'll have snowball fights and make snow angels, and then it'll be Christmas, and they'll be mistletoe, so Gin can get snogged by Scott Reeve and-"*

Unsure what was coming over her, and probably influenced by her emotional, tearful state, Ginny tilted her face up to Scott's, fluttered her eyes closed, and before she could kiss him, he kissed her.

" *Oops!" said Grace, looking up at who she had bumped into. A blonde boy gave them a haughty look of disgust, and then brushed past them. As he left, the brunette's cheeks flushed bright red. "Ohmigod," she hissed, "he was really* ***hot*** *, as well!"*

" *Okay. This year's Slytherin Quidditch team. Keeper – Celem Magnus. Beaters – Jack Swithin and William Nomens. Seeker – Palmer Vegrandis. Chasers – Abraxas Malfoy, Rupert Flax, and…" he grumbled audibly, before reluctantly muttering, "Ginevra Peregrine." Ginny moved away, and was swept into a bear-hug by Alden, Grace, and – Ginny was pleasantly surprised – Flora. "You got in, you got in, you got in," they chanted. Ginny grinned.*

" *Hi, Myr," said Ginny, grinning. "You don't mind if I call you 'Myr', do you? I mean, Myrtle is just kind of long, dontcha think?" she twirled a strand of hair around her finger, trying to seem as stupid and shallow as possible. "My name is, like, so long! It's Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine! I mean, seriously! Like, what were my parents thinking?"*

The world exploded in purple light. A few metres away, near the door to the Great Hall, was Tom Marvolo Riddle. He looked angrier than Ginny had ever seen him. The swift transition from 'aloof, cold, but still harmless Head Boy' to what could only be described as Lord Voldemort was petrifying. And it had happened… for her.

She leaned over to replace her wand upon the table when she saw something hiding behind the box of Cauldron Cakes. She plucked it between finger and thumb and brought it close to her face. It was a small, perfect flower. A yellow primrose, almost in full bloom, but with a few buds still curling out from their winter beds.

All that existed was the poignant, smooth, tuneful ballad that rang like fairy bells; their soft, shallow breathing; that one dark wave of hair that had come separate from the rest and was curling into his

eyes; the slightly dark, but comforting smell of sandalwood and ink; the rustling of Ginny's wide merlot skirt against the snow-

Ginny yelled out, frightened; whirled around so fast that she forgot she was on stairs, stumbled, fell. With the world blurring around her, she crashed down several steps and then finished in a heap on the stair just above where the speaker was. She stared, dizzy, at a pair of extremely long shins. "You're supposed to be in your room," she said crossly to the shins.

" *I'd say… Honeydukes!" Ginny declared. Then, seeing Tom's frown, and remembering what happened last time, she hopped in front of him. "Halt, Sir Riddle," she said in a deep, ridiculously macho voice. "We form a treaty here today – I, Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine, sweareth that under no circumstances doest I re-attempt poisoning thee. Shouldst this accord beeth brokest, then I shalt cutteth mine own head from mine own shoulders." Tom stared incredulously at her. She extended a hand. "Now shake my hand," she commanded.*

" *I am not the childish one here," Ginny said crossly, whirling back to face him, and abruptly finding herself in far closer proximity to Tom than she had expected. Regardless of her surprise, she continued to rant at him. "I'm not the one singing their words. I'm not the one making up huge portions of text just to annoy me! I'm not the one being absolutely horrible! In fact, you're being so nasty that I think I'm going to-" She had no idea what happened next, except that the circumstances changed, and suddenly Tom had stooped his head and kissed her.*

Then it was over and they were left standing together in the center of the common room, their foreheads almost touching (Tom bent noticeably so as to reach her), Ginny's hands still twisted into his wavy tresses, so close that she could feel his throbbing heartbeat as well as her own, looking up, hazel eyes into dark eyes, her breathing shallow and her knees wobbly.

Ginny needed to sit down. It was too much to contemplate. Opening up to someone she really cared for again – probably getting hurt. It

was what she sometimes, cruelly, called the Heartbreak of Harry, all over again. But that wasn't even what she was worried about: She was being offered the opportunity to date Lord Voldemort. Looking up into his dark eyes, which were trained nervously on her face, she said softly, "Yes." And didn't regret it at all.

Snatched kisses in empty corridors. Entwined hands in vacant classrooms. Dancing in secret tunnels to no music. Hugs behind the library bookcases.

He was starting to shake again – so hard that the wooden posts of the four-poster bed were trembling against the floor. His eyes were open, more red-rimmed than ever, and the whites of his eyes were totally black, though red-tinged. It was something out of a Muggle horror movie. It was every child's nightmare. The seventeen-year-old redhead did the only thing that she could think of doing. She sat beside him on the bed, grabbed one of his claw-formed hands and held it as tightly as she could, whispering endlessly to him, "It's okay… it's okay…"

Tom didn't answer. She looked up to see if he was okay, and saw that he was fine… he was just watching her, almost sadly, yet the happiest sadness that she'd ever seen. It was weird and complicated and yet so simple. But, with a serious look in his eyes, and pink on his cheeks, he said quickly, "You're not pretty, you're more than even beautiful."

Ginny had no tears left. Her sobs were more of funny, dry choking noises.

"Grace," she said shakily. "When… when I'm…" she tried again. "When I'm… *gone* … can you give this to T-Tom?" she held out the envelope, the parchment trembling in her hands.

The brunette nodded in agreement. "Now go to sleep," she whispered. "I'll see you in the morning. Trust me – you'll still be here."

Ginny nodded; she tried to go to sleep, but couldn't. Not when she knew, clear as daylight, that within twenty-four hours she would leave. Leave them all.

"Come on, then, up to breakfast," said Grace brightly, beaming at Alden and Ginny. "Toast and scrambled eggs today, eh? Yum."

Ginny was surprised at how calm and normal Grace was being. She truly was an amazing person. Able to be strong and incredible no matter what was happening. Unlike Ginny, who broke down in explosions of emotion.

"I do love scrambled egg," Alden agreed.

"Same," said Ginny. "I love pepper on scrambled eggs. But I hate when they put salt on them. Bleurgh."

"Ms. Anti-Salt," commented Alden wryly.

" *Mrs* . Anti-Salt," corrected Grace gleefully. "She's *married* !"

Ginny was reminded briefly of pretending to be Tom's fiancée in order to get into St. Mungoes'-

Don't think about that !

"I'm not married," she argued. "I'm only sixteen."

"My cousin's sixteen, and *she* has a baby," pointed out Grace unhelpfully.

Ginny rolled her eyeliner-outlined hazel eyes. "Yeah, well, that's because-" She was cut off as she sucked in a deep breath of pain, her hands winding around her stomach as ache pounded through it.

"Are you okay?" asked Alden. Grace was staring at her with wide eyes.

Grinning, Ginny straightened up despite the agony. "I'm fine," she said cheerfully. "I just forgot my Potions books."

Alden didn't believe her for a second, but didn't question her; Grace, however, flashed her glance instantly to Ginny's bag, and then back up to her face, horror-stricken understanding echoing in her blue eyes.

"It's now, isn't it?" she said softly.

Ginny nodded shortly, keeping her head held high to disguise how scared she was.

"Is what now?" demanded Alden, glancing from side to side. "What's happening?"

"Nothing," said Ginny and Grace simultaneously.

"I'm just going to get my Potions books," said Ginny, trying to talk normally past the pain as time tried to rip her away from the fifties'. "I'll see you later, okay?" she hugged Grace tightly, and then Alden. "You're both brilliant, you know that, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know," said Grace jokingly, her voice clear and strong. She was always so brave.

"Okay…" said Alden, bewildered. "Just get your Potions books. It's not like you're going to die."

Oh, but I think I might…

She nodded, and then hurried away down into the dungeons. Her heart was drumming a mile-a-minute in her ribcage as she thundered down the steps.

No! I can't do this! I need-

She pushed thoughts of him from her head.

I don't need him. I want him, but I don't need him. I want-

Tears were forming in her eyes. Oh Merlin, she needed him. She needed to see his happy smile, his sarcastic smirk, his unhappy fallen-face. She needed to wrap her arms around his thin frame and bury her face in his jumper one last time. But she couldn't. If she saw him, then this pain in her heart would take a step up to absolute agony that she wouldn't be able to withstand.

PAIN -

She slammed through the door to the Potions classroom-

No-one was there-

But something was there-

A bright blue light-

An oval shape through which she could see nothing-

PAIN-

TOM-

FORGET HIM-

I CAN'T-

WHY NOT-

BECAUSE I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM -

She gasped; her arm went slack and her schoolbag hit the ground. It was true. She hadn't been able to see it before. She *loved* him. She did. And-

PAIN-

Tears were streaming freely down her face now. She reached under her shirt and pulled out the Time-Turner around her neck, clinging to it so tightly that it was cutting into her palm. Blood was trickling down her wrist…

Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine stepped into the light.

AGONY-

And then she was gone.

And then everything was dark.

She wondered if something had gone wrong.

Then she was spat out.

There was a thud – her knees gave out –

She looked up, tears still swimming in her eyes.

She saw the exterior of Hogwarts castle.

And she saw the new banners on the Quidditch stadium that hadn't been built until 1973.

She was back.

And she saw the rubble. And the smoke. And the flames.

She was back.

But absolutely nothing had changed.

A/N: OMG!! REVIEW!! AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED. Though you can probably guess.

Next Time:

Tom opened his eyes. Something felt wrong.

Q: Why did the chicken cross the road?

A: SCREEEEECH – *thump* . Now we shall never know.

P is for Pears, Butterbeer and Her

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: This chapter is even shorter… another sad makes-you-cry one… sorry… but I had to show you the aftermath.

I recommend **Stay Just A Little** by **Kina Grannis** again.

Apologize by **OneRepublic** works too.

So does **Fall To Pieces** by Avril Lavigne.

And **Firefly** by **Breaking Benjamin** .

Is that all? I think so. Anyway. Enjoy it!

IMPORTANT NOTE!! I like Intricacy's idea of Chasing History – for off the top of your head, that was pretty good! :D – but I'm still open for suggestions from everyone.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Six: P is for Pears, Butterbeer, And Her

*She gasped; her arm went slack and her schoolbag hit the ground. It was true. She hadn't been able to see it before. She **loved** him. She did. And- **PAIN-** Tears were streaming freely down her face now. She reached under her shirt and pulled out the Time-Turner around her neck, clinging to it so tightly that it was cutting into her palm. Blood was trickling down her wrist… Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine stepped into the light. **AGONY-** And then she was gone.*

She looked up, tears still swimming in her eyes. She saw the exterior of Hogwarts castle. And she saw the new banners on the Quidditch stadium that hadn't been built until 1973. And she saw the rubble. And the smoke. And the flames. She was back. But absolutely nothing had changed.

Tom opened his eyes. Something felt wrong.

It must have been his imagination, as he couldn't see anything that was wrong. He was intact, and therefore everything was fine. Nothing could possibly be wrong. He'd had another of those bad dreams, but that was nothing abnormal. Yawning cavernously, he sat up and stretched slightly. It was another day. Another morning. Another NEWT mock-exam.

Hooray.

He made his bed and dressed quickly; packed his books for the day, and combed his hair neatly to the left, as always. He washed his face, brushed his teeth, and shaved (*to avoid the beaver look again* , he thought with some amusement). Then he made sure that his tie was neat, and headed downstairs.

"Hello, Tom!" chirped Eleanor from the sofas in the common room, surrounded by her giggly friends.

Tom eyed them suspiciously. Had they done something? It would explain why he'd woken up feeling as though something had gone horribly wrong. Nothing seemed out of place, and he nodded at them. "Hello," he said coolly, and then continued through the common room towards the portrait-hole.

The Head Boy moved swiftly down the stairs, his footsteps muted but sharp. The Entrance Hall doors were open and a warm summer breeze was drifting in. He glanced about the Hall with a keen gaze. Ginevra was nowhere to be seen. That was odd. He usually met her

at the bottom of the stairs and then ate with her, much to fright of that Roosevelt sixth-year girl who always had flowers in her hair.

Then he remembered that today, scrambled eggs were served. On such days, she usually ate with Hartwin and Philips, as she wanted, so quote, "to relish in the joy of scrambled eggs with other egg-appreciators". Apparently he didn't love eggs enough to join in.

I don't love anything, though, so it's hardly fair. Except Butterbeer. And pears. And her.

Tom Riddle made his way into the Great Hall and ate breakfast alone. There seemed to be something wrong with Philips and Hartwin, as they were at the end of the table, looking rather teary-eyed, and didn't come to say hello. He wasn't quite sure if the absence of their daily 'good morning' was a good thing or not.

Once finished, he looked around once more. Still no Ginevra. How odd. Perhaps she wasn't feeling well.

I'll go and visit her after Transfiguration, he decided, if that was the case.

As he made his way out of the Great Hall, he caught the eye of Hartwin. She looked a complete mess. He wondered if she was alright, but didn't stop to ask. After all, he was Tom Riddle. He cared for no-one.

Except her.

He tore his dark eyes from her weeping face, and walked on as though he didn't really give a damn what was wrong. After all, he thought with an inward dry chuckle, I don't.

Eight-forty-five, Tom discovered the time was, looking at his pocket-watch. He could always be early for Transfiguration and look over his homework essay one more time. *You can never check your essays too many times.*

Agreeing mentally with himself, he headed back up the stairs. The young Heir of Slytherin was halfway down the corridor to the next flight of stairs when he heard footsteps running behind him.

"Hey – Riddle – Tom-"

Tom turned, a cool expression on his face despite his curiosity. "Yes?" he said coldly, looking at the crying figure of Hartwin. She was trying not to sob, which, he had to say, wasn't working very well.

She swallowed hard, and wiped her eyes. Then she dug inside her robes and produced an envelope. "This is for you," she said softly.

He took it in his long fingers, his curiosity growing. Turning it over, he saw the slightly untidy scrawl of Ginevra Peregrine, producing the messy name: *Tom* .

"It's from Ginny," said Hartwin, though he already knew. He suppressed a shudder at the use of her infantile nickname. "Well… I'll leave you to it…" she mumbled, and stumbled away.

Leave me to what? he thought with a slight smirk. *It's just a letter. Get over it.*

However, he was feeling rather nervous; Tom neatly opened the envelope and plucked out a yellowed piece of parchment, covered in Ginny's writing.

His anxiety mounted.

Dear Tom,

I don't know how to write this. Believe me when I say that this is probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do – harder, even, than Arithmancy, and that's saying something... Tom, I'm leaving. Not leaving you , but… but it would probably be easier if I did, now that I think about it. Easier for both of us. I can't say where I'm going, because I don't know. And I can't say why, either. And I also know

that you'd tell me off for starting a sentence with the word 'and', because that's not proper grammar and la-dee-da. I'm sorry that I didn't get to say goodbye to you… you would have told me to stay, and I can't. Seeing you would have made going such much more painful that it already is. I'm so sorry. Count that night under the stars as my farewell. My snuffly 'bye' would probably be less romantic than that night could ever be, anyway… I've told Grace to give this to you once I've gone. I'm sorry.

Stay safe, and I wish you all the best of luck. Not that you need it.

Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine xxxx

His smile was frozen in place as he read it. He finished the letter fairly quickly, as he could read very fast.

Nothing sank in.

Still smiling, he read it again, and this time understood. His smirk slipped off his face. He read it a third time. And then a fourth.

And then a fifth.

And then one more time, very slowly.

Classes were beginning, and he was blocking the corridor as he stood stock-still in the centre of the passageway, hundreds of students trying to get to their studies. He didn't move.

He read it the seventh time. His favourite number.

She was leaving.

No.

' *I told Grace to give this to you once I've left* '

She'd *left* .

You… you can't.

Tom tried to breathe, but found that he couldn't. Why was that? His windpipe was completely blocked. Where were his lungs? Where was his stomach? He thought he'd left them in his bedroom, as he certainly didn't have them now.

He needed to breathe.

He couldn't.

He couldn't.

He couldn't breathe!

His chest was constricting as he found the need for oxygen beginning to burn, but nothing was functioning.

She was gone.

She was *gone* .

His fingers went limp as realisation hit him full on in the face, and he dropped the envelope.

Someone stepped on it.

" *No* !" he cried, not caring about how many people were around to see him break down, and he swooped down to snatch it up – he needed it – he had to read it one more time – *the words!*

THE WORDS!

Where are they?

He frantically searched the text.

Three words. Eight letters. One meaning.

WHERE ARE THEY?

Tom's heart hurt. No, it didn't. He didn't *have* one. It was so painful that it had been removed. There was a massive, rough-edged hole where something had been torn out and taken from him. He couldn't breathe.

WHERE ARE THEY?

They weren't there.

I love you .

They weren't there.

I love you .

He'd never told her.

I love you .

She hadn't said it.

I love you.

He gave a groan as his breath suddenly came back and was replaced by absolute agony. He turned and ran away.

I love you .

A/N: -SOBSOBSOB- Yeah, had me crying like a baby. Ah well. I hope that this is to your satisfaction… nearly finished! Oh well. I'm contemplating writing two alternate endings. I already have one ending sketched out, but I can think of two other endings that would work. Hm. Please review!

Next Time:

"Well done. I see that Professor Dippet *has* indeed been over this with you," Dumbledore praised. "What I didn't see before, Miss Weasley, is that those words are not, in fact, literal. Death, destruction and dismay are not required. All that is needed is for his heart – the heart he had previously held – meaning a cold, aloof persona – to be destroyed." Dumbledore observed her over the top of his half-moon glasses. "He was supposed to fall in love."

Her heart stopped.

He loved me.

"So… if Tom, in theory," she said, her mouth very dry, "loved me… then that made me come back… so why has nothing changed?"

Q: What's brown and sticky?

A: A stick!

P is for Pensieve

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Sorry…. Definitely no Tom in this chapter… haha… considering that Tom existed, what, forty-eight years ago? Hahaha… Yeah… YAY! LOTS OF REVIEWS! Thankyewsss. Lalalaa… Um. I had something to say… what *was* it… um… OH YEAH! I'm saying sorry. This is a kind of boring chapter… not mucho interesto. Oh well. Read it anyway.

IMPORTANT NOTE!! YEW GUYYYSSS. I need more suggestion ideas for the new title of The Letter P. I only have three options so far. Pleeeease. Thanks!

Dedication: I am actually going to dedicate this to someone. :O I know, it's enough to make you die, it's so unusual. But not quite. Anywwaaayy. It's dedicated to Intricacy , who made me almost wet myself by laughing so much when I saw her review… Here, I'll even post the review….:

Very nice chapter. Lol, I was remarkably stupid when you said,

"Three words. Eight letters. One meaning.

WHERE ARE THEY?"

With my great counting skills, I thought that the three words were "where are they," and I was like... well, that was anticlimactic.

HAHAHHAHAHAA. Yeah. Anyway. Move on. Read the chapter. DO ITTTT! RAAAHAENJKGNANGFJDKSAGNFSDA. Sorry.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Seven: P is for Pensieve

She looked up, tears still swimming in her eyes. She saw the exterior of Hogwarts castle. And she saw the new banners on the Quidditch stadium that hadn't been built until 1973. And she saw the rubble. And the smoke. And the flames. She was back. But absolutely nothing had changed.

He frantically searched the text. Three words. Eight letters. One meaning. WHERE ARE THEY? Tom's heart hurt. No, it didn't. He didn't have one. It was so painful that it had been removed. He couldn't breathe. WHERE ARE THEY? They weren't there. I love you. They weren't there. I love you. He'd never told her. I love you. She hadn't said it. I love you. He gave a groan as his breath suddenly came back and was replaced by absolute agony. He turned and ran away. I love you.

Something, somewhere, somehow, had gone horribly wrong.

Everything was exactly the same as when she'd left.

Ginny stared around. What had gone wrong? Sure, she hadn't killed Tom… but did they really expect her to? And anyway, if nothing had happened, then why had she come back? Her head was swimming. There was one person who could help her.

She hurried towards the castle, and began to run up the stairs that had become so familiar to her in a different circumstance. She threaded through the corridors, and was surprised when the door she came to at the top of the stairs read: *Professor Albus Dumbledore* as opposed to *Armando Dippet.*

Taking a deep breath, Ginny knocked on the door.

"Come in, Miss Weasley," said a tired voice from within.

Ginny stood outside, waiting to be allowed in.

"Miss Weasley?"

She gave a start. *Oh yeah* , she gasped. *That's me.* Reddening slightly, she pushed through the door and looked upon the weary form of Albus Dumbledore.

Whoa.

"It's weird seeing you with grey hair," she blurted out, before realising that she was being rude, and going even redder.

Dumbledore gave a wry smile. "You're back," he said simply.

Her shoulders slumped. "Why?" she asked. "I mean… you said that the chances of me coming back were tiny…"

The Headmaster sighed. "I made a mistake, and by the time I acknowledged my mistake, it was too late to contact you and let you know. It was the wrong spell I put on you to send you back in time. I didn't research the spell enough – you are sent back with a task in mind, and once that task has been completed, you return."

Ginny blinked. "Yeah, Dippet told me that - but I didn't *do* it!" she exclaimed. "In case you failed to notice, I accidentally-" she cut herself off, deciding that it was probably best not to tell him that she'd fallen in love with the Dark Lord.

"Fell in love with him," Dumbledore finished for her, watching her carefully over the tips of his steepled fingers. Seeing her gape, he raised his eyebrows. "I *was* there, Miss Weasley."

She looked shamefacedly at her feet.

"Now. The mistake… I failed to properly understand what the prophecy *meant* ," said Dumbledore gravely. "Do you remember what it said?"

"Sort of…" said Ginny.

"Allow me to remind you: *When He rises up again,*

It will signal the very end.

Of wizards, and Squibs, and Muggles alike,

All destroyed because of His spite.

But there is one to save the world,

And that is a terribly ordinary girl.

Blessed by her ignorance,

rescued by insolence.

Born the day that He first fell,

Growing up strong, and to rebel.

The youngest and fairest and purest of seven,

His number.

To free the world,

She destroys His heart

Else, should our world

Fall apart.

Beware the girl with the signature red,

To save the world, you must heed what I said."

Ginny nodded. "It's a metaphor. It never actually mentions killing him."

"Well done. I see that Professor Dippet *has* indeed been over this with you," Dumbledore praised. "What I didn't see before, Miss Weasley, is that those words are not, in fact, literal. Death, destruction and dismay are not required. All that is needed is for his heart – the heart he had previously held – meaning a cold, aloof persona – to be destroyed." Dumbledore observed her over the top of his half-moon glasses. "He was supposed to fall in love."

Her heart stopped.

He loved me.

"So… if Tom, in theory," she said, her mouth very dry, "loved me… then that made me come back… so why has nothing changed?" She was very confused.

"Miss Weasley, I think that what you have failed to understand is that, indeed, you destroyed his heart. You changed him. You taught him friendship and love and compassion. Because of that, you left. And… *because* you left… you undid all the work that you'd done." Dumbledore had a severe look in his blue eyes. "Do you understand now?"

Oh no…

She recalled what he'd told her, that last night under the stars.

It's easier for him to lose control to svengali when he's emotional. When could you possibly get more emotional then when you lose your first love?

"I know that what happened was not your fault, but I feel I must make you aware of what you've done. During the War that *you* knew, for some period of time we held strength over the Death Eaters for one thing – we had a power that Lord Voldemort didn't. That power was love. However, in this time, he knows love. He knows its wonders and he knows its agony. *He – is – invincible* ," Dumbledore stressed.

Ginny swallowed. "I – I just – he wasn't – he couldn't have been – he – he *loved* me?" she stammered.

"Step this way," said Dumbledore, standing. He moved to his pensieve and stood beside it, twirling the silvery waters with his wand. Ginny joined him. "May I produce for you… the Graduation Dinner at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, 1959."

They plunged into the pensieve.

For a while, everything was dark. Then the Great Hall wavered into view, and Ginny saw lines of seventh-years with their graduation hats upon their heads, all looking quite pleased. There was Eleanor, and her friends. There was the arrogant Ilivan Yaxley. And there, at the end, was Tom. Except that he looked exactly how Ginny had first imagined him. Tall, cold, distant, and uncaring to everyone around him. He'd let his shields fall for one person, and he'd built them up twice as high afterwards.

It hurt her to see.

" *Congratulations!" cried Dippet after a few long and tearful speeches. "May we now welcome to the podium our very own Heads, Eleanor Fionn and Tom Riddle!"*

There was scattered applause as the two seventeen-year-olds ascended to their speaking-point. First Eleanor rambled for a while about how much she loved Hogwarts – she was eventually taken from the podium, crying hysterically through her sorrowful laughter.

Then, finally, Tom stepped up. He looked down at his classmates. "I don't have anything prepared in the ways of a speech or a tearful rant," he said tonelessly. "I suppose I'll miss Hogwarts in one way or another. Goodbye." He stepped down from the podium again.

Dippet stepped back up. "And, finally, we have an anonymous speech that has been requested that I read out, for privacy reasons."

He cleared his throat and brought out a rather long piece of parchment. "It is 'Silhouette'."

There was a silence of bated breath as everyone – including Ginny – wondered what he was going on about. Then he began, and Ginny recognised it instantly.

" *A ballroom empties*

No-one there

All that's left is he

He who fears to pirouette

Dance from the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

A yellow primrose

Held afore

All that's left is he

He who lives for etiquette

Lingers in the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

A night full of stars

A chill, a smile

All that's left is he

He who sings a solo duet

Singing in the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

An empty classroom

Hands entwined

All that's left is he

Cold, aloof and hesitant

Smiling from the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

A sheet of words

Listen intently

All that's left is he

Fading with his brief vignette

Sighing in the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

Truly, madly, deeply

Gone

All that's left is he

His poem is not over yet

Silent as the shadows

Silhouette, silhouette

If you actually hear me,

Then, angel, hark to this

Silent as the shadows

Silhouette… silhouette."

No-one clapped. No-one cheered. They were in a stunned silence at the magnitude of raw emotion now seeming to crackle in the air. Professor Dippet applauded, startling everyone else into following his example…

Ginny was tossed back into reality. There were tears in her eyes.

"I didn't know," she said softly, her short russet eyelashes glowing with her crying. "I didn't know that he… he loved me. I didn't even know that *I* loved *him* until… until I was gone…"

Dumbledore merely looked at her. He had nothing to say. Emotions swirled in his eyes: anger – she'd destroyed the Wizarding World. Pity – it wasn't her fault. Guilt – it was actually his own fault. He sighed, and turned away, moving back to his desk.

The redhead didn't move. She didn't know what to do or say.

"I think I should talk to him," she said finally, softly.

The Headmaster's eyes snapped up to hers. "Certainly not! You will do no such thing."

"If I could just-"

" *No* !" He gave me a stern look, but then his wrinkled features softened. "It's late, Miss Weasley. You should get to sleep. Time-travel is exhausting."

Ginny realised that she was shattered. She nodded blearily.

"Do you want me to re-open the Gryffindor common room?" he enquired.

An instinctive Slytherin repulsion rose into her at the word. She didn't say anything, but her lip curled.

He frowned. "Slytherin?"

Ginny was torn. She would feel far more comfortable in the Slytherin house, but the memories there weren't worth it. If she slept as a Gryffindor tonight, she would be dragging herself back into the nightmares, back into the horror that she'd lived before. If she slept as a Slytherin, then she'd remembered the life that she'd, unconsciously decided to stay in forever, before being ripped away.

She wanted to shake her head, but forced herself to say, "Okay." She was a big girl. She could handle it.

Dark was already falling as she made her way through the familiar hallways. The halls were cold, not warmed by the flickering light of the torches on the walls. She stopped in front of where she knew the bust of Salazar Slytherin to be. It was one of the only statues still intact.

" *Ophiuchus* ," she murmured by instinct.

The snake twined away from Salazar's stone neck. " *That has not been the password for decades* ," it hissed.

Ginny was too tired to argue. " *Please. Let me in.* "

Reluctantly, the snake twisted back into place. The bust disappeared, and the door opened. She stumbled through, and looked around at the common room.

The fireplaces were empty of even ashes. Cobwebs lined the walls and dust was layered on every surface. The sofas were covered by dark sheets, to protect the furniture. There was broken glass on the

floor and parchment. It was strange. Ginny hadn't thought that the Slytherins would have been affected by the attack of… The words *Lord Voldemort* wouldn't even be spoken in her brain. It hurt too much. She couldn't. There was a gaping hole in her chest, but she momentarily stuffed it with meaningless chatter from her thoughts. On her way towards the dormitories, she stretched out a slim hand and trailed one finger through the dust, creating a perfectly straight line. Her eyes followed the line once she'd lifted her hand away. Then she silently traced in the neatest handwriting she could get away with, the word *love* .

Quiet filled her ears as she looked over what she'd written. Love. What a silly thing.

The hole in her chest hurt, and she resisted the urge to curl into a ball and twine her arms around herself tightly to try and stop the aching.

She hurried onwards, towards where she'd slept for only a few months – yet it felt like her whole life.

The beds would be cold. She knew it instantly. No-one had slept in them for a very long time. They, too, were covered in sheets, but Ginny tugged one off, releasing a cloud of dust into the air. She coughed and spluttered for a moment, pinching her nose. Then she looked morosely at the bed, and climbed in.

It was indeed freezing. Ginny thought that it would be difficult to sleep, but it was surprisingly easy to drift away…

The green light flashed brighter than anything, and a single tortured scream rose up from everyone present as their only saviour fell. Ginny was screaming louder than anyone. The green eyes of her first love widened, bulged, and then his glasses fell. And Harry tumbled forwards lifeless; Ginny ran to him, screaming, screaming, ***screaming*** –

She was running to him as fast as she could, faster than she'd ever run before – why? Because he rolled over, and he was taller than usual, and thinner; his glasses fell off and his scar faded and suddenly he was ***Tom*** *. Blood was coming from the corner of his mouth-*

" *TOM!" she screamed, but arms caught her and pulled her away. She was sobbing as she turned around to see who'd caught her. And she was looking up into the comforting face of her boyfriend, just as he'd been when she'd left him. "Tom," she sobbed, but then he smirked, and his lips twisted… twisted… and he was getting paler, and his eyes were narrowing and turning red-*

" *NO!" she screamed. "DON'T! IT'S NOT* ***YOU*** *!"*

Voldemort pulled his wand from his black robes and pointed it at her heart. She couldn't breathe. He wouldn't kill her. He couldn't. "I LOVE YOU!" she shrieked at him. Someone dived in front of her to protect her – Tom.

Wait. What? She knew then that she was dreaming, as there couldn't be Tom ***and*** *Voldemort simultaneously, but all rational thought left her when she saw red light flash.*

" *CRUCIO!"*

" *NO!" Tom was writhing on the floor, screaming – then he was shaking, and his eyes were black, red-rimmed…*

" *Tom?" Ginny whispered. He stood, towering over her, an evil, twisted smirk on his face, evil glowing in his blank, unfocused eyes. Then he turned his wand on her- "TOM!" Someone grabbed her, dragging her away. It was Grace, and right behind her, Alden. And then, in the distance, Harry and Ron and Hermione, beckoning for her to hurry.*

" *You're safe now," soothed Harry. "Ginny? I love you."*

Ginny looked up in alarm. "What? But – I love Tom. You love Luna!" she whispered in horror. No, this wasn't fair. Not after she'd gotten over him.

" *GINEVRA, I LOVE YOU!" yelled Tom from afar, his eyes sparkling with life and love. Grace and Alden and Flora and Eleanor were all beside him, grinning.*

" *Tom!" she cried.*

" *What, so you're just going to leave us?" demanded Ron. Behind him was Hermione, Harry, Luna, the whole Weasley family.*

" *NO!" she sobbed. "This isn't FAIR! I want you BOTH, don't make me CHOOSE, this is just a dream… it's just a dream."*

Light exploded, and blood was everywhere, and they were ***all*** *dead. "Now you can't have either," sneered Lord Voldemort, and she was* ***SCREAMING-***

Her hands were in agony, she couldn't see, she was awake now, it was okay- Why did her hands hurt? She was pounding on the door, trying to escape, having in her sleep already tried to run away.

"LEAVE ME ALONE!" she screamed, tears streaming like a waterfall down her face. Shadows were everywhere. It was Voldemort and the evil Tom and Ron and Harry and Grace and Alden, trying to grab her. "GO AWAY!"

Then the light faded from her eyes and she passed out in a heap on the ground, grateful for peace.

A/N: Aww. What a twisted childhood she had. Cute. Haha. Sorry, that was creepy. Anyway… ***my heart's crippled by the pain that I keep on closing, you cut me open and I, keep bleeding, keep keep bleeding looooooove…*** **0o I felt like singing. I'm sorry. Hehehe. I'm bored. RAWWWWRRR. Sorry. I'm in a weird mood.**

Anyyywaay. Please review! And I'll update. That's a fair exchange, right?

Next Time:

She felt like one of those tragedies who could go into shock at any moment.

A week had passed, and still Ginny had no solid plot for what she intended to do. Yeah, she had the basics – waltz up to her ex-boyfriend, say hi, explain that she wasn't dead, and then ask him nicely not to take over the world. Sort of.

A: Knock-knock!

B: Who's there?

A: You-Know!

B: You-Know-Who?

A: RAAAAHHHH!

Hahaaha. That joke was courtesy of an anonymous reviewer called Alex. With a full-stop. Skills…

BOO!

If you read this far, you get a cyber-cookie. :D

P is for Past The Pain

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: Wow, it's amazing, isn't it, how predictable this was… oh-he-became-Voldie *-because* -she-left turn of the plot… oh well. Thanks for the reviews! Yeah, I'm updating really fast, because I want to get it finished before I go to military camp (I'm hardcore :P) for a week. Which means… I have to post like four or five chapters by… tomorrow, 12 o'clock GMT. :O

I NEED MORE TITLE SUGGESTIONS! Look Back : I like it. Chasing History: I like it. GIMME MORE!!

I found this new song by OneRepublic called Mercy. It's great!

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Eight: P is for Past The Pain

" *LEAVE ME ALONE!" she screamed, tears streaming like a waterfall down her face. Shadows were everywhere. It was Voldemort and the evil Tom and Ron and Harry and Grace and Alden, trying to grab her. "GO AWAY!"*

Then the light faded from her eyes and she passed out in a heap on the ground, grateful for peace.

Blearily, past the pain, Ginny opened her eyes.

Her head was swimming. She was curled up on the floor, in front of the door to the Slytherin common room. Tears and sweat were dried

on her icy-cold face. She sat up slowly, trying to get away with as little dizziness as possible.

Feeling dizzy anyway, she got to her feet, using the door behind her as support. She felt like one of those tragedies who could go into shock at any moment. Glancing over, she saw painful-looking scratch marks on the wood of the door. Ouch.

One thing's for sure , she told herself. *I'm not staying another night here* .

She knew that she needed to talk to Tom… even though it was probably a stupid, stupid idea. Stupid, stupid. *She* was stupid. This whole place was stupid. Everything was stupid. She felt like kicking something, and she did, and felt even stupider when she hurt her foot.

Morning was rising, just as gloomy and desolate as every other time of the day now, under… *his* rule. She headed upstairs, still in the clothes that she'd worn yesterday, and slept in. She couldn't be bothered to change.

Ginny didn't go to the Great Hall. She wasn't hungry. She went outside and looked at the spot on the grounds where she had appeared. The grass there was slightly charred, as if someone had lit a fire there. Except that instead of ashes, all that was left behind was a miserable red-haired girl who was determined to break every rule in the book by attempting a conversation with the leader of the Wizarding world.

It was a ridiculous notion, Ginny knew it, but it was worth a try. So far no-one else had tried going up to Lord Voldemort and saying, "I love you, sorry I ditched you for forty-eight years", so maybe that was why they'd lost the War.

Even to *her* , the plan was dubious, and she didn't even know what she was going to say. And that was looking past the fact that she'd probably never get anywhere near him. The Death Eaters would

strike her dead before she got within a mile of the Dark Lord. Plus the fact that Dumbledore would have a fit and chain her up if he knew.

Well , she thought defiantly, *what he doesn't know won't hurt him.*

A groan tore from inside her.

Oh, what am I thinking? This is insane.

With a heavy sigh, she turned and decided to have breakfast despite her lack of appetite. Perhaps she could plan better once she had a pancake or two inside her.

A week had passed, and still Ginny had no solid plot for what she intended to do. Yeah, she had the basics – waltz up to her ex-boyfriend, say hi, explain that she wasn't dead, and then ask him nicely not to take over the world. Sort of.

Dumbledore was keeping a close watch on her, because, of course, it was a dangerous thing, sitting alone in the library on one of the dusty desks, and she needed to be baby-sat.

She'd felt a pang of sadness when she'd realised that one of the five surviving students – two Hufflepuffs, two Slytherins, and a Ravenclaw – had died. Another had disappeared, and the two Hufflepuffs had left for a safer place, probably pretending to be Muggles in Timbuktu or somewhere distant and dreamy. Now the sorrow was fading, and she was left to her own – and, right now, somewhat more important – thoughts.

How on Earth was she supposed to get close enough to the *wonderful* "Lord and Master of the Universe"?

Then an idea struck her.

Voldemort's name was tabooed.

If she dissed him, using his real name, then, sooner rather than later, he'd come to kill her. And *then…* but no. He'd just send a Death Eater to do it for him. *However…* if she said something that would hurt him, really hit home, then maybe he'd come to see what person was rude and blasphemous. And he'd make *sure* that this person who knew far too much about him – dangerous amounts about him – died. So he'd come along.

"Hey, did you know that Voldemort's real name is Tom Riddle?" she said loudly, as if she was talking to someone.

There was a silence. No-one popped out of the air to slaughter her. She didn't really expect anything to.

"And his middle name is really weird, too," she added. " *Marvolo* . Tom *Marvolo* Riddle. I mean, honestly. No *wonder* he changed his name to *Voldemort* ." She wondered if that was enough. "Only a stupid filthy *pureblood* would give their child a name like Marvolo. Don't you agree?" she continued the pretence that she was talking to someone.

She was going to continue her rant, but then the door to the Slytherin common room exploded open, and a furious-looking Albus Dumbledore stormed in.

"What do you think you're doing?" he snapped, livid.

Whoa. Calm down.

"I wasn't doing anything," Ginny said innocently, blinking wide eyes.

"You know *exactly* what you were doing, Miss Weasley, and it's unacceptable!" Dumbledore raged. "Have I wasted six years of my life trying to protect you for *no* reason? Have my efforts been for *naught* ?"

"Probably."

"Don't you get cheeky now. Do you realise what you've done? He'll kill *all* of us for your insolence! You've not just doomed yourself for a private slaughter, you've ruined us *all* !"

"All? There's only, what, four of us?"

Ginny was actually worried for a moment that Dumbledore would slap her. That would be far scarier than the prospect of chatting with Lord Voldemort.

"Miss Weasley, you knew *exactly* what you were doing. Do you *want* him to come here?"

She tilted her chin defensively. "And what if I do?" She was sassing a teacher and she shouldn't, but she couldn't help herself from retorting cheekily.

"If you do, then you are truly a selfish child, endangering us all to get your way! That's a despicable thing to do and I hope for all of our sakes that what you just told me isn't true."

"It is true."

Dumbledore swelled again with anger. "I *forbid* you from following through with whatever this silly little plot of yours is! You're going to get us all killed! From now on, you will be sleeping in the Ravenclaw common room, near my office, and you will not be allowed without myself as your personal escort! You are a *fool* , Miss Weasley-"

"PEREGRINE!" she yelled at him.

He looked rather taken-aback.

"Peregrine," she repeated, curtly. "My name is *Peregrine* . I've had nothing but misery under the name of Weasley, and I'd sooner ditch it in favour of a life where I wasn't always shadowed by siblings, or by the famous Harry Potter – in favour of the name from a place

where people liked me for who I was, and not what my blood was, or who my friends were."

"Miss *Peregrine* , then," Dumbledore snapped. He was never usually this angry with anyone, but Ginny supposed that if she *had* just doomed them all, then she probably deserved it. "Get your things. You're going to the Ravenclaw common room."

She wasn't sad to say goodbye to the Slytherin area. It wasn't her home now; dusty and dark, it only made memories painful.

Another week passed, fairly uneventfully. The Ravenclaw, the only other student remaining in the school, was a burly boy of about fifteen. He ignored Ginny to most extents and explored the castle glumly most of the time, leaving her to sit alone in the common room. She read books mostly, but nothing could entertain her. In reality, she was just waiting for Voldemort to show up.

Though consciously she believed firmly that he would arrive, deep within herself she knew that he'd probably never get close enough to her for her to try and persuade him.

She also didn't think that she had the courage to persuade him. It was easy enough to spill secrets to and admit to loving a handsome, sweet seventeen-year-old young man. Admitting to loving a snake-like, blurred madman was somewhat more frightening.

The nightmares had plagued her without stopping. She tried not to scream. While she was asleep, in her dreams, when faced with horrible things, she simply sat down, curled up, closed her eyes and clapped her hands firmly over her ears. Then she would usually wake up a few moments later, in exactly that position, either on her blankets, or more commonly on the floor.

Ginny turned to the mirror. She hadn't looked at her reflection in great detail since the Christmas Ball, that peaceful time where she

thought that, unconsciously, was when she'd fallen in love with Tom. Now she looked over herself.

Her hair was untidy and flyaway around her face; a face that looked thin and unhealthy, having returned to the War-torn Hogwarts. Her eyes were wide and sad. She wore her usual attire – brightly-coloured jeans and a bulky jumper. However, it didn't feel as comfortable as she remembered it feeling. Before she realised what she was doing, she had thrown it all off and wriggled into a knee-length floral dress with a pink belt. And instantly, looking back in the mirror, her face lit up. The fifties' style. It was almost possible to convince herself that Grace was behind her, reading a book and chattering about something meaningless.

She headed down for breakfast. Her appetite hadn't returned, and no matter how much she ate, she still felt empty, but she hated the idea of being starved thin, and ate despite her emptiness.

No pancakes today, she observed. She was getting some toast and spreading butter on it when there was a resounding *bang* , loud so as to hurt her ears. It shook the walls, and alarmed her into dropping her toast.

Dumbledore stood. His eyes were narrowed. "Mr. Higson. Escort Miss *Weasley* to the Ravenclaw common room."

"But I'm eating," Ginny protested. What was going on?

"You'll have time to eat later," Dumbledore said sharply. The redhead was shocked to see fear in his twinkling blue eyes. "Mr. Higson! To the Ravenclaw common room. Now."

The sulky fifth-year got to his feet. He grabbed Ginny's wrist and dragged her forcibly towards the door.

"Let go of me!" Ginny squealed.

He refused silently.

Then she understood what was happening.

He was here.

She sighed. "Fine," she muttered, following Higson closely so that he felt no need for concern. Their footsteps rang as one as they moved quickly up the stairs- " *Ow* !"

Ginny cried out and bent low, wrenching her arm out of Higson's grip.. "My foot," she gasped. "My *foot...* "

Higson stopped. "What's wrong?" he asked irritably.

"Just… my foot…" she gasped again. "It hurts so much…" Then she straightened up, and at the same time she was hurling her fist upwards as fast as she could, her heart-shaped face screwed up in determination.

WHACK.

With a yelp, Higson stumbled backwards and fell, clutching his face. Blood streamed through his fingers and stained his cheeks. Accusing eyes swimming with tears looked up at Ginny.

"Sorry," she muttered. "Had to be done."

Without further ado, she spun on her heel and sprinted back down the damaged marble stairs. Her blood was pounding in her veins like the repeated strike of a bass-drum – *du-dum du-dum du-dum.* She ran across the vast Entrance Hall, being frightened by ridiculous but intimidating images of Dumbledore coming from the Great Hall, seeing her bid for freedom and blocking her way.

He wouldn't dare tackle me to the ground , she hoped fervently, glancing sideways. She'd never feared the Headmaster before, but that was because she'd never had reason to fear him before.

Then she was through the doors and safe. Or at least saf *er.*

Dark clouds were gathering in the sky, blocking out the sun and creating a terrifying swirl of darkness and cold. It was still easy to see, though; Ginny prayed that it wouldn't rain, destroying what vision she had.

As if led by instinct or just something supernatural made by a deeper connection with the Dark Lord than anyone else had ever had, Ginny hurtled across the grounds, threading between trees, her ankles getting splashed with puddles of dew, icy morning grass snagging at her feet. Somehow she knew where to go.

Past the Lake… past the rubble that had once been Hagrid's hut… down the twisting path… as, against her wishes, rain began to fall, the path became slick and she fell down twice. She grated her hands, but ignored the blood trickling from her palms; she leapt up and continued to run. She could be seen by Dumbledore and taken back at any minute. And this was the only chance she had.

Only when she was a few bare metres from the Forbidden Forest, where she somehow knew that he would be, did she actually consider that maybe Professor Dumbledore was right – that maybe this *was* an insane thing to do.

She slowed her pace, close to stopping. Then she did stop, and stared forth into the pitch blackness of the Forest. She could see very little. Rain was bucketing down now, slicking her fringe into her eyes. She was reminded cruelly of running out into the rain on New Year's Eve in 1958 to find Tom. She bit her lip This was a very stupid thing to do, she realised. The safest, most sensible thing to do would be to turn around and go home.

Yet, for reasons unknown, she reached with bloody, grazed hands for her wand and held it before her. " *Lumos* " was whispered and she continued, more slowly now, with care.

The trees whispered. The rain roared. Her footsteps squelched. And she was walking ever closer to meet the twisted face of her dream – and her nightmare.

The wand-light coming from the tip of the stick of oak that she held was wavering. She realised that it was because her hands were shaking, and tried to still her shudders.

There was a low hiss.

Ginny jumped, and sideways saw a fat, angry-looking green snake. Nagini. She was close. She drained of colour as she watched the serpent slide away through the undergrowth. She followed its path uncertainly.

*This was a stupid idea, a very stupid idea. What am I **doing** ? Oh no, oh no…*

Another hissing.

"What's that?" a high, cold voice. Yet, now that she listened intently to the voice – just the voice, not the words – she could pick apart the ligaments of it. A formal edge, a cold twist… an accent that she couldn't place.

Her heart thudded.

"Hm. According to Nagini, there is someone heading our way. *Purposefully* ."

Her heart stopped.

A sweat was coming over her hands, making the open wounds sting. She held her wand tighter, but lowered it. It wouldn't do to be chatting to him with a defensive hold on her wand, pointing it at his face. No. That wouldn't do at all.

"Yes?" He was speaking to *her* now, in a soft and malicious tone. "I know that you're there. Is there any sanity towards approaching us?"

Her knees were locked. She couldn't move.

"Reveal yourself." His words rang with power, but there was curiosity lacing his voice. He couldn't hide his mild interest at what lunatic would deliberately set out to find them.

Ginny swallowed. Then, summoning all of the courage she had in her, she stepped forwards, into a small, vaguely triangular clearing where Lord Voldemort and a group of his Death Eaters stood. They could see her now. *He* could see her now. She lifted her face so that he could determine who she was, and pushed a strand of dark scarlet hair from her eyes.

For one chilling moment, nothing happened. The Death Eaters sneered, grumbled and laughed. Dread filled Ginny as she wondered if he recognised her at all.

Then she looked straight at him for the first time.

She wasn't sure what, in her stare, made him realise that she was really who he thought she was. But he flinched back. He closed his slit-like eyes. He took a deep breath. He opened his eyes again, and they were less ruby somehow, less snake-like. And he stared at her, pain evident in his eyes.

And he whispered, " *Ginevra* ?"

A/N: DUN DUN DUNN! Omg. Whoooooaaa. Review, and I'll update! XD HEHEHEE. Such a cliffie. Anyway… I lurvv you… *angel of mercy, how did you find, how did you pick up off the floor…* Lalala… review!

Next Time:

"Why – how - how are you standing there – like – as though – as thought it's been a day, or a week – not – instead of – years-" His voice cracked. He stepped closer. "Years and *years* …"

Then he inhaled sharply.

"Time-travel."

Still not looking at him, she nodded.

A: Doctor, doctor, no-one seems to like me.

B: … Get lost.

P is for Please

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: YAYYY! REVIEWSS!! My hands hurt. I've been packing for camp; trying to fit a lot of very big things into a very small space. Ouchies. Anyway. A nice, angsty chapter :) I hope you like it.

I NEED MORE TITLE SUGGESTIONS! Look Back : I like it. Chasing History: I like it.

MUST LISTEN TO: Mercy by **OneRepublic.** Suits the chapter very nicely.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Sixty-Nine: P is for Please

Then she looked straight at him for the first time.

She wasn't sure what, in her stare, made him realise that she was really who he thought she was. But he flinched back. He closed his slit-like eyes. He took a deep breath. He opened his eyes again, and they were less ruby somehow, less snake-like. And he stared at her, pain evident in his eyes. And he whispered, "Ginevra?"

The amount of sheer, raw emotion in those three syllables wrenched Ginny's heart into several pieces. It caused the other Death Eaters to look around at him in shock and bewilderment.

The redhead couldn't find her voice. She simply nodded.

Voldemort – Tom – Marvolo – swallowed. "Go." The word was sharp, and his eyes didn't leave Ginny's face. She was confused. Did he mean her? " *GO* !" he bellowed, whirling around to face his Death Eaters.

They leapt back, alarmed, and quickly obeyed, hurrying away through the Forest.

Once they had left, the clearing was silent. The only noise was Voldemort's ragged breathing; Ginny had forgotten how to exhale, and wasn't breathing.

He wasn't looking at her. Then, slowly, he turned, and trained his dark eyes on her face. They weren't scarlet anymore – those eyes were a familiar shade of almost-black. But they were hard and tight and frightening. "What… why…" The words weren't coming out right. "You… are you real?"

The question came out childishly and Voldemort winced hearing them coming out.

Ginny sucked in air, suddenly remembering that breathing was a good thing and that if she wanted to stay alive, she needed to breathe. She tore her eyes from his and looked at the ground to her right. For want of something to do, she shoved her wand back into her pocket. Though she'd put it away, she kept her fingers on it, ready. She didn't know this Tom. He could still attack her. "Yes."

"Why – how - how are you standing there – like – as though – as thought it's been a day, or a week – not – instead of – years-" His voice cracked. He stepped closer. "Years and *years* …"

Then he inhaled sharply.

"Time-travel."

Still not looking at him, she nodded.

"You… that's why… you came to Hogwarts half-way through your education, but you knew everything. You didn't get lost at all in the maze of corridors. You had no pictures of your friends or family. You hated talking about what had happened before you came to Hogwarts. You sometimes said weird phrases that no-one understood. You didn't understand *our* phrases…" He stared at her. "You were from the future all along."

She nodded again.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Her gaze flashed up to meet his. "What, and you would have believed me?" she snapped.

"Of course!" he retorted. A pause. "Well, I might have." A pause. "Maybe." His anger flared back. "You could have told me anyway!"

"What was I supposed to say?" Ginny shouted, desperate. "'Oh, hi, Tom! How do I know your name and everything about you, you say? Oh, that's simple. I'm from a future where you're the most evil man on the face of the planet – where you've destroyed my home and killed my friends and my family – and actually, I'm only here to kill you, but instead of saving everyone I care about I'm going to *fall in love with you* '?"

Voldemort stared at her in silence. When he did, finally, speak, it wasn't to shout or to curse her or to be horrified at the fact that she'd been sent to kill him. He just said, in a very small voice, "You loved me?"

Ginny's blazing expression softened, taking in the pained voice of the epitome of evil, taking in the twisted mouth and agonized eyes. "I still do."

"Then why did you leave?" he hissed, all sorrow dissolving into fury, salt into water.

"I didn't have any choice!"

"You could have said *goodbye* !" His moods were moving faster than a spinning-top – agony again.

"I left you a letter!"

"Oh, *a letter* ! A pathetic ruddy *letter* ! The *only* person in my life that I've ever cared for, that I've ever felt anything more than contempt for, that I've ever *loved* , being ripped away from me without warning – and a fragile sheet of biodegradable *paper* makes it all better, does it?" he snarled. Back to fury.

There were tears in Ginny's hazel eyes. "Tom-"

He wasn't done yet. "Look at you! Look at you, standing there, like nothing's changed! For you, nothing *has* changed, has it? How long has it been for you? A day, two? A week? A *month* , at most? *It has been FORTY-EIGHT bloody years* !" he shouted. "Forty-eight *years* that I've been counting the days, saying to myself, *she'll be back tomorrow* . Forty-eight years I've been tearing myself apart into Horcruxes so that I could rule the world! Because if I ruled the world, then everyone would obey me! And I could *find* you! Search the globe if I had to! And then… and then *he* took over, and it wasn't about you anymore, it was about the power and *his* greed for everything. I changed my name – Lord Voldemort. It made me sound better, more important. It meant that I never had to hear people whine *Tom* again. Not after I'd had that name called to me by the sweetest voice I'd ever hear."

"Please-"

" *STOP IT* !" Voldemort was actually shaking. His face was resigned, as he lost all will to fight and shout and kick and scream. The last of his energy had gone into shouting those two words at her. Now… nothing.

"I'm sorry," Ginny whispered.

He looked at her ruefully, grief showing in his abnormal face. For the longest time, they stood together in silence, in the pouring rain, staring into the other's eyes as they had long ago. Blood trickled down Ginny's fingers from where she'd grazed her hand falling down on the way, dropping onto the sodden dirt. One droplet, in a storm of rain. Her desolation, in a sea of misery.

"You don't have to do this," Ginny said softly, tears clinging to her eyelashes. "You're not a bad person. You can leave this all behind."

"I've killed people. Deliberately. I've laughed while watching someone writhe in pain. Torture amuses me. I-" Voldemort shook his head. "Ginevra… you don't know me anymore."

"I know you better than you think."

"How much do I think you know me?"

"Very little." There was an echoing regret and unhappiness in those two words.

The reaction her words had was heart-breaking. Silently, the tall, lean, most malevolent man of the time period let a single salt-tear of pain and of grief and of lost love run down his wasted, hollowed white cheek.

Tears were flowing in Ginny's own eyes now. "Don't," she whispered, stretching forwards her slim hand towards his face. "Please don't."

Swiftly, so fast that his hand was a blur, Voldemort – no. *Tom* – caught her hand and held it tight. It didn't hurt, despite the unnaturally strong grasp. His fingers were long and thin as ever; inhumanly pale, and cold to the touch. How tight he held her hand was almost enough to make her cry out. But she didn't. He held on as if he never wanted to let go. Almost as though he believed that if he let go of her slender fingers, he'd be letting go of his soul – of his heart. Then, with a look in his dark eyes as though it cost him a lot of effort, he dropped her hand, never letting it reach him.

Silently, the dam in her eyes broke, and the tears spilled down her cheeks. She was glad for the rain, because it mingled with them – salt-water and freshwater – disguising them. He never had to know how she was dying inside.

What happened next was unexpected. Slowly, forlornly, Tom reached out for her. He cupped her left cheek in his thin, elegant fingers; carefully, as if he knew that he was a monster, as if she was fragile, as if she was glass, as if the smallest touch could shatter her, take her from him again. Staring into dark, familiar eyes in entirely the wrong face, she couldn't help but tremble under his touch. Then, gently, he traced the line of her jaw with his ice-cold knuckles; his fingers lingered by the bottom of her ear.

"I am truly sorry… but you're too late for me."

He spoke quietly. So quietly that he was barely audible over the roaring of the storm. She recalled running out into a similar storm, screaming for him, forty-eight years ago, though for her it barely felt like a month. A month was a long time for her too, however – a desperately long time when she knew that she'd lost love all over again. Her… her *true* love. Not just some sad, unrequited infatuation with the Boy-Who-Loved. Not just a silly romantic notion for her brother's best friend. She loved him with all her life.

He looked deep into her eyes; dark brown into hazel. The void – into the disguise of the forest, green and brown.

"Don't go back to the castle."

Tom looked as though he longed to say more. His hand still on the rounded corners of her face, he bowed his head slightly. For one insane moment, Ginny thought that he was going to kiss her. The fact that he was trapped in the body of the Dark Lord; that he was about fifty years older than her – held no importance to her. She tilted her head up slightly-

"No."

The word was choked. He turned his face away, looking past his shoulder.

"I- … I'm sorry. I don't… I can't -" He looked back into her face. "Not like this."

"Tom-" She grasped at breaking strings. The rope was pulling away – she would throw herself off a cliff to grab it – sand slipping through her fingers – water running past her hands -

He dropped his hand from her face, seeming to take a huge effort. The glimmer of emotion in his now once-again masked face showed that the short movement caused him a great amount of pain. Without another word, he turned on his heel and walked quickly into the rain, into the distance. He disappeared through the trees in an instant, but Ginny heard his voice, echoing, far away, to his Death Eaters:

"Do not harm the red-haired girl. If she is hurt, I will kill you in the most excruciatingly painful way I know. Understood?" A pause, where perhaps they were agreeing. Then: "Storm the castle. Proceed as discussed."

Ginny fled before the dry, painful sobs could build up. She ran towards Hogwarts. This was all a horrible mistake. All her fault. She sprinted out of the Forest and up to the majestic stone building. Already there were flames and explosions. They were taking it down.

A scream was building in her throat as she threw herself through the door. "Dumbledore!" she gasped. She prayed fervently that he'd escaped – that he and that Ravenclaw she'd punched, Higson, were alright. She hurtled up towards the Headmaster's office as fast as possible. Regardless of where *they* were, she needed to get past the gargoyles at get to the ex-Transfiguration teacher's office.

The gargoyles were destroyed. They howled with misery as she hurried past them.

Up the steps.

Through the door.

In.

Dumbledore wasn't in there. He was probably out looking for her frantically. Guilt twisted her features, but it was nothing compared to the blame heaped upon her. She'd destroyed everything. She'd ruined the world. She'd killed her own family. She'd killed her own friends. It was all her fault.

She scanned every surface. Flames – curse-made flames, not real ones. Fiendfyre – were coming up already, filling the room with black smoke that made her eyes sting. The castle was being destroyed.

There ! Dumbledore's wand. The exquisite one. The one with the carvings on. The one that had turned her into a human Portkey. The one that would take her… *home* .

Ginny picked it up and turned it on herself. She reached under her clothes and pulled out the Time-Turner, warm around her neck. She had no idea how many times to turn it. " *Please* ," she whispered to it, and then spun the dial. Around and around the circles twirled, slowing… stopping. Then she pointed the wand at herself.

" *Portughhhh* !" she tried to cast the spell, but smog was filling her lungs and she couldn't speak without coughing.

Oh God. This was it, wasn't it? She was going to die. She was going to be asphyxiated. She'd never see any of her friends again. She would never see Tom again. All that she could hold onto was that moment in the rain, of agony and heartbreak.

No! I'm not giving up now!

Get that cough out, she told herself, and hacked and hacked until she felt sure that her cough was all gone. Then:

"PORTUS!"

Nothing happened.

Then light flashed, and the last of the Weasleys disappeared.

A/N: ARGH Well, I guess that everyone knows what's going to happen now… mergh. I need to be more unpredictable. I'm getting better at it… a bit. Anyway. If you cried, high-five! That rhymed. Wah-hey! So yeah. REVVIIIIIEWWWW.

Next Time:

Had she died? Was this it? Had she passed out and perished from the flames? Had that burst of light, in fact, been the white tunnel? She hadn't seen her life run before her eyes. She was glad of that. Sixteen out of seventeen years of her life held images that she didn't want to see a re-run of. It was so cliché, anyway.

Then suddenly she was falling…

This isn't a joke, just something that I thought of as a parody for this chapter.

"Are… are you real?" Voldemort stammered. He reached out a hand towards her face… and went right through her. He heaved a sigh. "Damnit. I knew I took too much cocaine this morning."

And also…

"ARGH!" Dumbledore jumped out of nowhere, knocking over a large fruit stand and sending melons flying everywhere. The stall-owner started swearing at him.

"Oh, !" Ginny exclaimed, and ran faster.

Hahahahaha… At least I made you laugh to make you feel better if you cried. Hm. Review! Press the big blue button. You know

you want to…

P is for Pathetically Cliched

A/N: Hello everyone

A/N: OMFG. I have so many reviews! Sorry I was away, I was on army camp, it was brilliant. THIS IS THE LAST CHAPTER. I'm trying to anti-cliché it, but as you probably tell from the title, it didn't work. Anyway. I love the suggestions for the titles, people! I'm going to list the titles at the bottom, and then you have to vote on it. I'll post an author's note as one final chapter, telling you which I've decided on. Thanks so much! I love you all.

MUST LISTEN TO: Make A Memory by **Bon Jovi.** Makes it so much better.

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

Chapter Seventy: P is for Pathetically Clichéd

Ginny picked it up and turned it on herself. She reached under her clothes and pulled out the Time-Turner, warm around her neck. She had no idea how many times to turn it. "Please," she whispered to it, and then spun the dial. Around and around the circles twirled, slowing… stopping. Then she pointed the wand at herself. "Portughhhh!" she tried to cast the spell, but smog was filling her lungs and she couldn't speak without coughing.

Oh God. This was it, wasn't it? She was going to die. She was going to be asphyxiated. She'd never see any of her friends again. No! I'm not giving up now! "PORTUS!" Nothing happened. Then light flashed, and the last of the Weasleys disappeared.

Colours swirled. Darkness was choking her. She couldn't *see* -

Had she died? Was this it? Had she passed out and perished from the flames? Had that burst of light, in fact, been the white tunnel? She hadn't seen her life run before her eyes. She was glad of that. Sixteen out of seventeen years of her life held images that she didn't want to see a re-run of. It was so cliché, anyway.

Then suddenly she was falling…

"And the House Cup goes to… RAVENCLAW!"

Cheers and applause and screaming rang out, and then Ginny hit the Hufflepuff table. She broke it, sprayed food everywhere, and, after a brief pause where everyone worked out what had happened, chaos ensued.

"What the devil is going on?"

Ginny sat up, rubbing her head. "Hm?" she blinked around her.

The Hufflepuffs were clinging to each other desperately, terror vivid in their eyes. She didn't blame them. She was dripping wet, covered in ash, now splattered with cake, and had just fallen from the sky.

"Er." She peeled a slice of cake from her clothes and dropped it on the table. Everyone was staring. This wasn't right.

She looked sideways at the Slytherin table. There was no-one there that she recognized. Crap. She looked at the Gryffindor table, and panicked, because there were people that she *did* recognize.

A very young-looking Lily Evans, eyes wide. James Potter, high-fiving a short-haired Sirius Black.

Again, she repeated in her head, *crap* .

She cleared her throat awkwardly. "This isn't 1959, is it?"

"No."

"1975?"

"1973, actually."

"Okay."

Take two. She sighed. *Please let me get it right this time,* she prayed silently in her head. She spun the Time-Turner around her neck, apologized profoundly to everyone who was watching her, and then disappeared.

"That's the homework, then, due for Friday, and-"

Falling… falling… and there was a loud *CRASH* as she landed on something hard and painful. Screams rang out around her.

"Don't panic, don't panic!" yelped a familiar voice. "No need to worry… what the hell do you think that you're doing?"

Ginny looked up, blinking soot out of her eyelashes. "Um."

Looking around, she saw that she had landed, quite unceremoniously, on top of a row of desks in the Potions classroom. She'd broken two desks and had up-ended five more. A livid Professor Slughorn was towering over her, and numerous third-years were staring at her in horror and fear.

"What's going on? Explain yourse– *Miss Peregrine* ?"

"Er." She clumsily got off of the desk and brushed some dirt from the floral dress that she was still wearing. "Apparation practice, sir. Sorry. I must have over-shot the Great Hall. Sorry."

"Where have you been?" Slughorn demanded.

Her heart sank. Had she gone too far? Was she years and years ahead of Tom's time? Had he already graduated? Had *she* should have graduated?

"I… went on a quick trip. Family stuff," she lied. Not bothering to try and be sneaky about it, she turned to look at the blackboard. There, written in chalk, in the top right-hand corner, was the date…

W *ednesday, May 29 th – 1959*

Relief sank her shoulders down, easing tension. It was okay. She was in the right place. A month and a half late, admittedly. But it'd do.

"I'm sorry, Professor, sir, for interrupting your lesson. I'll let you get on with it now," she said humbly, and then rushed out of the classroom.

There was smut on her face and dirt in her hair; people, just coming out of the ending classes, were staring as she ran through the corridors, in a filthy pink dress, covered in dust – and iced cake. She siphoned off the worst of the mess with her wand, and then tucked it back into her belt.

Wednesday. That meant that she would have just had Charms with macho Professor Alcippe. And that meant that *he* would have had Arithmancy.

She was already heading in the direction of the Charms classroom, but she spun on her heel and ran up the stairs towards the Arithmancy classroom. Her heart was thumping in her ears and her throat was extremely dry. There were vast crowds of other students to push through as they all escaped from their last classes. She peered over their heads, leaping into the air to see past them (she furiously cursed her shortness as she did so), searching frantically for a tall, dark-haired person who she'd come to recognise anywhere.

THERE!

He was just emerging from the Arithmancy class, a hundred yards away or so. He was one of the last to leave. His face was blank and careful, as it always had been before she'd tried her new attempt at getting through to him – being nice. And look where that had got her. His head was ducked slightly, and his eyes, even from this distance, were visibly cold and tight.

Ginny slowed down. " *Tom* !" she yelled.

The Head Boy froze solid, halfway down the corridor. He didn't move. His eyes were fixed on the wall, where they'd been passing over before she'd shouted for him.

" *Tom* !"

Very slowly, he turned.

His eyes landed on her and noticeably widened. His mouth fell slightly open.

And then she ran to him.

She'd been telling herself before this happened, *don't be pathetically clichéd, don't do that running-through-the-meadows thing, walk calmly, don't be pathetically clichéd, WALK, don't be pathetically-*

And she ran anyway.

The crowds weren't miraculously parting like they were supposed to. Instead, they were all being very annoying and standing still, watching with surprise and mild interest and Ginny struggled through the mass of students.

Faster – faster – faster –

Her legs were burning, but she couldn't get there fast enough-

In one fluid movement, she was in front of him and she threw her arms around his neck and he took hold of her and she kissed him

with everything she had.

Rational thoughts left her head as he caught her and lifted her so that he didn't have to bend, his arms strong around her waist, a hand at the small of her back, and they were pressed together, crushed together, tangled together, standing blissfully in the dead centre of the corridor, getting in everyone's way but not caring at all.

Then oxygen was a problem and she pulled away, only tightening her arms around his neck and burying her face in his shoulder, hugging him so desperately that tears came to her eyes.

"What are you – why-" he stammered. He lightly set her feet back on the floor. "I don't – you said – the letter – it-"

"I know, I know, and I'm so sorry, but I'm here now and I'm never going to leave…" Her voice cracked. She was perfectly aware of many people watching, but she hugged him so tightly that she was probably going to kill him, closing her eyes and breathing in that familiar smell of ink and sandalwood.

"GINNY!"

The sound of Grace's raucous scream dragged her away from her hidden alter-reality where she was with Tom. She turned her face and saw an ecstatic Grace and a stunned Alden at the other end of the hall. She grinned. She was back.

As Grace began to sprint the length of the hallway, Ginny thought of something, and turned back to look up at Tom, her expression deadly serious. "Tom?"

He nodded. He didn't seem able to speak.

"I was just wondering…" she already knew the answer, but she needed to hear it from *him* . From his lips, before they were snarled by evil and blurred by Horcruxes. She had to say it quickly, before Grace caught up ("WAH!" yelped Grace, her well-known I'm-falling-

over-onto-my-face shout. That gave Ginny more time.) "Are you… are you in love with me?"

Tom froze. Ginny could hear, pressed against him, his heart-beat skip three beats, and then hammer doubly faster. He swallowed, and pushed his face into her untidy red hair, kissing the top of her head and holding her tight. "I – I-" he was rapidly turning red. He said the next words very fast, in his usual nervous ramble: "I – I think so." His voice was strained. He swallowed. "Yes. Yes, I honestly think so."

She sighed with relief, burying her face in his shoulder and swaying gently in his arms. "Good," she murmured. "Because otherwise telling you that I love you too could have been really awkward."

He laughed nervously. "What?"

She smiled, her heart swelling until it to break the bars of her ribcage. "You heard what I said."

Tom Riddle, Heir of Slytherin, ex-Lord-Voldemort-to-be, held her tightly in his arms, as if he never wanted to let her go. "Yes…" he mumbled, very quietly, and for once, Ginny thought that he was totally, blissfully unaware of the people around them, staring incredulously. She could hear the smile in his voice. "I did."

Then she was wrenched away from his by her best friends – getting past, in such a short space of time, her beloved Hermione and Luna. They'd never be replaced, not even by Grace and Alden, but she could move on now – and wrapped in the hug to mother all bear hugs.

Slight pain moved up through her hand as she twisted away, but Tom still held on. In Grace and Alden's arms, she turned her face to him, looked in surprise at his long fingers coiled around her thin wrist. She could feel her heartbeat throb through her veins under his hand; so could he.

Swiftly, he ducked his head to her hand and softly pressed his lips against the inside of her wrist. And though she couldn't hear him over the babbling din around her, she could *feel* him whisper 'I love you' against her skin. Then he let go.

She bit her lip, watching him through her fringe, Grace's tearful chatter tuned down to minimum volume for now. The corner of his lips pulled up into a dizzy half-smile, transforming his face. His eyes glowed with a thousand nights, a million stars, shaming any astrology that dared shine. Then he wheeled away, leaving her to the wrath of Alden Philips and Grace Hartwin.

"Ginny," Grace sobbed. "Ginny, you're – but – you – and – you're – I – Ginny – you – *Ginny* …"

Alden said nothing, but held her tightly, a little shorter than she was, but a comfortable height for her to hug him.

With a snap of realisation, Ginny remembered her final vision, in the water of her *aguamenti* charm with dear old Professor Vander, spraying across the room spectacularly and showing the future.

Running, as fast as she could, throwing her arms around someone's neck, and kissing them as hard as she could.

She had understood the meaning of that scene in the instant she'd watched it. Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine had been due to fall in love. And she had. And she'd never been happier.

THE END

A/N: IT'S FINALLY FINISHED! I love you all so much, I have so many reviews. Yes, there IS going to be a sequel. It's after the summer, so Tom's now longer at school, and Ginny still is, and it's mainly fixed on their relationship and problems. Like, he's really insecure about losing her, and he's not going to see her all year. But that's the least of their problems…

Okay, voting time! This story is going to be a trilogy, so these are the ideas that I have, either made up by me, or, mostly, supplied by reviewers. (1) means it's the title for the Letter P, and (2) is the sequel, (3) is the third one, blah blah blah. Here we go.

1. Rewind 2. Press Play 3. Fast Forward

1. Chasing History 2. Pursuing Romance 3. Following Happiness

1. Looking Back 2. Looking On 3. Looking Forwards

1. Backfire

2. The Worst Plan

But for those last two, if you vote for that one, then you have to supply names for the second and third fics, which has to be related to the first title.

Thank you! Please leave your votes in your reviews, and I'll post an author's note telling you what I've chosen!

I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH.

Heart,

Me xxxx

Author's Note

A/N: Hello everyone

Disclaimer: Get the idea into your head. I don't own it. Now move on.

The Letter P

A/N:

Wow. Seriously, just… **wow.**

I have 1162 reviews. That's like…

Wow.

For my first HP fanfic, which was DracoxGinny (Montol, or The Stone Speaks. Haha. I referenced it in here but hardly anyone got it), I was so impressed when I got like 400 reviews.

SO TAKE THAT!

This is one hell of a long A/N.

Anyway… Here's the votes for what I'm changing the title too.

Looking Back – Looking On - Looking Forwards:

SEVEN VOTES. It's a shame. I liked this one. But oh well, I'm trying to please you guys, not me.

Backfire – Stillshot – Explosion:

ONE VOTE. Haha. I'm sorry, Jen103. The reason that no-one voted for it was because you only suggested it *after* I posted the voting chapter. Lol. I thought it was really good, though, thank you so much!

I'm thinking of doing another TomxGinny fanfic when I've finished the trilogy, based on Evil!Tom as opposed to Parasite!Tom, and I might use those titles! :D

The Letter P (keeping it this way) – The Letter L – The Letter (input random letter here **):**

QUITE A LOT OF VOTES. LOL. Sorry. I didn't count those, because I really want to change the name. But anyway, you didn't win the votes, so HAH. Just kidding.

And the winner…

REWIND – PRESS PLAY – FAST FORWARD

TWENTY-ONE VOTES. WHOOOOAAA. Lol. That's a lot of votes.

Lol, so I'll be changing the title once I've posted this chapter up, and then I'll be posting up the sequel, Press Play, soon enough. There **is** going to be a slight pause between posting it, because I've only got three chapters so far, because after I finished The Letter P – oops. I mean, Rewind – I started writing an original, as opposed to an FF. Which I have writer's block for anyway, so it was a bit pointless.

Plus, Press Play might be late, because… um… what was I going to say? Oh yeah. Because I'm still at that stage when the basic plot is laid out, but I need to think of little sub-plots to fill the spaces with. Like, the main plot for Rewind was Ginny goes back in time, people get murdered and attacked, she tries to find out who is killing them, it turns out to be Tom, he's a parasite, they fall in love, she gets sent back, he turns evil, she returns to the past and have a happy ever after. But then I needed all those other things like how she had a crush on Scott, and how Alden and Grace got together, and how she got on the Quidditch team, and stuff.

Yeah… do I have anything else to say…

Um…

OH! Here's the what's-it-called for Press Play. You know. The thing. I can't remember what it's called. Hehe.

REWIND.

First in the trilogy. War ends, but is by no means over. Discoveries remind us that you have to cut the roots for the tree to fall. However, confronting the enemy is never as simple as it seems. TomxGinny

PRESS PLAY.

Second in the trilogy. Sequel to 'Rewind'. You twist, you turn. Dreams change, hopes build. In life, in love, you have to be prepared for change. Even if it means coming close to losing everything. TomxGinny

I haven't got one typed up for Fast Forward yet, because so far I only have a tiny inkling of a plot for it. Which sort of sucks right now, so yeah.

Does it sound interesting? XD

Anyway, **THANK YOU SO MUCH** to everyone whose got this far, I love you all for reading it and for loving it and for helping me with stuff! Thanks to everyone who reviewed!

Hell, I'll do a thank-you list.

THANKS TO:

Heroes – the TV show, for giving me the idea of an alter-ego

Reviewers - duh.

JK Rowling – again, duh.

Edward Cullen, and my friend Jon – they both act a hell of a lot like how I imagine Tom, and they helped me to write him properly.

And thanks to Jon, for having amazing purple hair. Anyone vote that I should make Tom dye his hair purple at some point in the future? LOL. Juuust kidding.

The fruit stand – someone had to knock it over!

Um… - give me a second…

ME – hehehee.

I'm running out of people to thank…

SilvanXan – for being my beta for the first half of the fic… and then he mysteriously disappeared… and I don't know where he went. Anyway, I love yewww, thank you so much!

Patrick – for inspiring Scott Reeve. –scowl-

Oceane and Grace – my best friend and one of my really good friends, for reading this and loving it!! :D –huggle-

I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH.

I'LL SEE YOU SOOOOOOON…..

Heart,

Me xxxx

Rewind:

Started: 11th December, 07

Ended: 14th July, 08

Sneak Peek:

Hahahahaha… if you came down this far then you get a sneak peek at Press Play. Bwahaha… I'm diabolical..

Anyway, here it is. First couple of paragraphs:

Chapter One: Miss You

The train hooted its horn loudly and Ginny Peregrine cursed her wand furiously. "Stupid," she told it. "You're a *really* badalarm-clock, you know that?"

A impatient sigh came from just behind her. "Ginevra, talking to your wand for the umpteenth time isn't going to get you on the train any faster."

Ginny pretended that she hadn't heard this. Instead, she chose to talk to the train. "Don't you dare leave!" she howled at it. "I'm warning you!"

"People are staring," Tom hissed, following. "Just behave like a normal person until you get on the train."

"Okay, okay," she grumbled. She made to hurry onto the gleaming red-and-black Hogwarts Express, but Tom grabbed her hand and spun her backwards.

"Have you forgotten something?" he asked quietly, his face inches from hers. His dark eyes were oceans; oceans that could be calm or stormy or warmed by a midday sun.

"Um." The wit that she sometimes came up with was astonishing.

One of his eyebrows lifted, and his gaze flickered down meaningfully to her trunk, the handle of which he held in long, pale fingers.

"Oops." Ginny grinned. "Thanks." She took the suitcase from him, making a face as its weight shifted from his hand to hers…

Yeah. Exciting, I know. You can hardly wait, right? Talk about a cliff-hanger…

Lalala. Anywhoo. I luff yew, see ya soon-ios! xxx